

Chapter 5 – Open Space, Parks, and Recreation

Different Kinds of Open Space – Different Kinds of Parks

Our heritage of open space protection in Pennsylvania goes all the way back to William Penn when he plotted out parks in planning his “greene countrie towne” in Philadelphia.

In the year 2000, the over-riding message from the people of Monroe County throughout the planning process was the preservation of open space. This is reflected in all arenas: the passage of the open space bond, the countywide survey in 1998, the public participation process in 1999, and the adoption of this plan in 2000.

There are many different kinds of open space: agricultural lands, stream valleys, wildlife habitat, ridge tops, woodlands, meadows, and parks. The preservation of open space in Monroe County will meet a wide variety of needs including natural resource conservation, farmland protection, greenways, historic/cultural resource preservation, and recreation.

Just as there are different types of open space, there are different types of parks. Parks can range from small urban squares to multi-million acre national parks. Parks can be nature preserves. Parks can be athletic complexes for America’s pastimes. Parks are settings for the arts and culture. They provide corridors for wildlife. They can help to tell the story of our heritage. They can help us live longer and build strong family bonds. They build community pride and increase our property values. They attract business and industry. They contribute to a healthy economy. Some parks are heavily used while other parks are designed just to protect nature.

This chapter emphasizes parks and recreation facilities that are so important to the livelihood of Monroe County communities.

Protected Open Space

Public entities including state parks, state forests, state game lands, the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, agricultural easements and municipal and county lands currently protect approximately 64,000 acres. Private land trusts and conservancies protect another approximate 5,400 acres. This equals approximately seventeen percent of the County’s land area. Other properties protected, but not permanently, include “Clean and Green” lands under Pennsylvania Act 319 which protects approximately 105,135 acres and provides property tax breaks to owners. However, they are vulnerable because a developer can simply pay the back-taxes in order to develop the site (examples of this have already occurred in Monroe County).

Homeowners Associations' also protect open space through their commons. Numerous homeowners associations in the county range from small developments of 25 houses to large vacation communities such as Lake Naomi however public access is often restricted from these lands.

Open Space Components

Land not protected from development in any part of the county will eventually be developed. Through Monroe 2020 and this Open Space Plan, Monroe County has made the decision to manage growth. Since not all land can be purchased, a combination of methods must be used to preserve open space in Monroe County. The planning tools of *Growing Greener*, the open space bond, the Open Space Plan, regional multi-municipal open space plans, and local action plans can work together toward the common goal of preserving the treasured resources of Monroe County. Planning under *Growing Greener* is organized to help communities set priorities and design open space systems through limited land acquisition and ordinances that encourage conservation design.

The open space system for Monroe County would be based upon five categories:

Natural Areas

Using the criteria and strategies discussed in Chapter 3, key parcels aimed at protecting the County's natural resource base should be targeted for protection to preserve, conserve and enhance the County's rich biological diversity. Current properties that are owned by private non-profit organizations and land trusts amount to approximately 5,400 acres in the county.

Agricultural Preservation

The agricultural preservation program has preserved approximately 2,500 acres to date. Under the state program only parcels over fifty acres are eligible. Many viable farms in the county are under this acreage. The County's open space program should target important farmlands under this fifty-acre restriction.

Historic/Cultural Resources

Using the County's History Legacy report as a guide, historic sites and landscapes should be preserved and interpreted to tell the story of Monroe County's unique and important role in history to future generations and maintain the County's rich cultural heritage.

Greenways, Trail and Public Access Connections

The green infrastructure that serves to connect biological resources and human communities must be developed from a regional and countywide perspective. Corridor preservation is key to avoiding a fragmented geography that adversely impacts the County's wildlife and fisheries. It is also important to preserve transportation and recreational opportunities that can promote alternative forms of transportation and provide health benefits close to home.

Parkland

Parkland would consist of federal, state, county, and municipal parkland. Combined, these parks will help to protect significant natural resources while providing a full range of recreation opportunities in designated areas.

Types of Recreation Areas in Monroe County

Known as both a tourism destination and a desirable place to live, Monroe County is blessed with a mix of public and private recreation enterprises.

Commercial Recreation

According to the Pocono Mountains Vacation Bureau, Monroe County has the largest concentration of attractions of all counties in Pennsylvania. Commercial recreation provides a wide variety of recreation opportunities on a fee-for-service basis. These include:

- Campgrounds and Camps;
- Resorts that provide both winter and summer water- and mountain-based recreation;
- Hunting and fishing clubs (rod and gun);
- Golf courses;
- Riding stables;
- Attractions such as Memorytown;
- Restaurants;
- Hotels, motels, inns, cottages, lodges, and bed and breakfasts;
- Shooting ranges;
- Wineries;
- Bike rentals;
- Non-motorized boat rentals;
- Outfitters;
- Liveries;
- Playhouses;
- Country Clubs;
- Roller and ice rinks;
- Trout hatchery / Fee Fishing;
- Bowling Lanes;
- Movie Theaters;
- YMCA;
- Fitness Centers;
- Racquet Clubs;
- Living History Farm such as Quiet Valley;
- Ice Harvesting Demonstrations
- Tour operators;
- Sports resorts;
- Museums;
- Lodges;
- Art Galleries;
- Music, including jazz, rock, classical and country.

Private Non-Profit Providers

A YMCA is located in Stroudsburg. Recently Middle Smithfield Township and the YMCA organization came to an agreement on operating a park cooperatively. The acquisition of the 15-acre site was recently funded under the Keystone Community Grant Program. Additionally, church and scout organizations own several camps in Monroe County.

Public Parks and Recreation Facilities

Monroe County has a number of national and state parks, forests and game lands. These include:

National Parks

- *Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area* - A 60,000 acre national recreation area with almost 6,000 acres in Monroe County. The park offers swimming, biking, hiking and walking, wildlife and bird watching, climbing, fishing, paddling, camping, and environmental education.

State Forests, Parks, and Gamelands

- *Delaware State Forest* - 8,638 acres of this 80,000-acre state forest are in Monroe County. In keeping with the concept of the Poconos as a mountain playground, the State Forest provides a wide variety of outdoor recreation opportunities. Streams, lakes and ponds provide fishing. Wildlife is plentiful with deer, bear and small game. Opportunities include fishing, snowmobiling, ATV trails, trails for biking and hiking, nature study, environmental education, and camping.
- *State Gamelands* - Over 38,000 acres of land in Monroe County is owned by the Pennsylvania Game Commission. They offer outdoor recreation opportunities for hunting and trails. State Gamelands # 38 in Pocono Township offers five miles of snowmobile trails. State Gamelands #129 offers 14 miles of trails for snowmobiling and ATVs.
- *Big Pocono State Park/Camelback Mountain* – This park consists of 1,306 acres of rugged terrain on the summit and slopes of Camelback Mountain. Recreational opportunities include:
 - Picnicking - three locations, 50 tables;
 - Hiking - seven miles of trail;
 - Mountain biking;
 - Horseback riding - three miles of trail;
 - Hunting – in State Game Lands;
 - Skiing - downhill ski area operated by Camelback Ski Resort;
 - Restaurant - operated by Camelback Ski Resort.
- *Tobyhanna State Park* – This park consists of 5,440 acres. Recreational opportunities include:
 - Boating - non-powered and electric; overnight mooring;
 - Fishing - on Tobyhanna Lake;

- Organized group tent camping - 5 locations accommodating 30 campers each;
 - Camping - 140 sites;
 - Hunting - in designated areas;
 - Hiking - 5 miles of trails;
 - Swimming - beach open during summer;
 - Picnicking - four picnic areas with about 300 tables; pavilion (rental or drop-in);
 - Ice fishing;
 - Ice skating 1.2 acre area available, conditions permitting;
 - Snowmobiling - 5.5 one-way trail with support facilities.
- *Gouldsboro State Park* - The park has 2,800 acres. The park is operated cooperatively by the Bureau of State Parks and the Fish and Boat Commission. Recreational opportunities include:
 - Boating - non-powered and electric; concession offers rowboat, canoe and sail boat rentals;
 - Fishing - on 250 acre Gouldsboro Lake;
 - Hunting - in designated areas;
 - Hiking - 8.5 mile trail;
 - Swimming - beach open during summer;
 - Picnicking - five wooded areas with about 300 tables;
 - Ice fishing.

County Nature Centers and Parks

- *Kettle Creek Nature Center* - Owned by Monroe County and located in Hamilton Township the 120-acre site has a nature center and grounds dedicated to environmental study and the enjoyment of nature. The Monroe County Conservation District operates it. Monroe County funds about half of the operating costs with the Conservation District generating support from many other organizations.
- *Meesing Nature Center* - The 130-acre site is located in Middle Smithfield Township. The Meesing Nature Center is in the Delaware State Forest on ground owned by PA DCNR and leased by Monroe County. The Monroe County Conservation District operates it.
- *Monroe County Park* - The County Recreation and Park Commission headquarters is located in Snyder'sville. The site features an administration building and an 11-acre park with ballfields, trail and restroom. It is the county's only active recreation site. This is the only county park.
- *Burnley Workshop* - The Burnley Workshop leases land from Monroe County. The Workshop allows Monroe County to use the land for athletic fields.

School Districts

The four school districts in Monroe County are East Stroudsburg, Stroudsburg, Pleasant Valley, and Pocono Mountain. The school districts have facilities that are used for both

educational and public recreational use. School facilities include ballfields, game courts, gymnasiums, classrooms, auditoriums, and cafeterias. The school districts have reported that they have exceeded their capacity because of the rapid population increases. While all four school districts permit community use of the schools for recreation, they also report that they are not able to meet all of the requests for use of the facilities. Particularly pressing is the need for more ballfields and gymnasiums.

Municipal

Considering the 605 square miles and 20 jurisdictions of Monroe County, there are comparatively few municipal parks. The municipal parks are listed in Table 5.1. There are 44 local public parks in Monroe County totaling about 800 acres. Schools are the hub of recreational activity in the community.

Monroe County has received a *Growing Greener* planning grant in which municipalities, organized as a region, will be able to develop municipal park, recreation and open space plans. In the local planning process, the municipal parks, recreation and open space inventories will be developed in detail as is appropriate for that level. At the county level, broad information about local parks is being used for planning purposes. The goal is to create a big picture of public parks and recreation as it relates to the present and projected needs of the public in order to improve and expand public parks and recreation within the County.

Partnerships

Key person interviews uncovered a valuable mix of partnerships for parks and recreation facilities and services in Monroe County. Examples range from cooperative use of land and facilities to joint use and maintenance agreements. Several ballfields used for organized sports are located on fire company grounds. One resort allows use of a gym by youth basketball leagues. A township and a YMCA have collaborated on the development and operation of a year round recreational area that received funding from the state. These arrangements serve as models. Such positive working relationships provide the maximum public benefit at the least cost and serve as an inspiration to other providers.

Findings on Parkland

National and State Parks

National and state parkland serves tens of thousands of visitors annually. Their use is aimed primarily at visitors, especially tourists who come enjoy the natural beauty and outdoor recreation in these locations.

County and Local Parks

Monroe County has four park sites: The Park Commission Park in Snydersville, Burnley Workshop, and the Kettle Creek and Meesing Nature Centers. *There are virtually no true county parks in Monroe County in terms of size, and facilities and few local parks.* Although the County is fortunate in having a national park, three state parks, a state forest and conservation lands, they do not meet all the needs of county residents as county and local parkland serve different purposes from state and national parks.

A county park is a major park that offers the widest recreational opportunities of such a special nature that it attracts people within a 45-minute radius. Ideally it contains a minimum of 200 acres. In Monroe County, if property could be found contiguous to existing natural areas, this acreage could be reduced. It may include areas of natural and scenic beauty as well as areas that may be suitable for intense recreational development. By blending natural and scenic beauty with active recreation, the county park would have broad-based appeal to people of different ages, abilities and interests. Park visitors would go there to spend a few hours.

Local parks provide close-to-home recreation areas for citizens. They can range in size from small vest-pocket parks such as Michael Moore Park, to large community parks with up to a hundred acres such as Mountain View Park. Visitors to local parks stay there for a short time in a self-directed activity or for a scheduled program. With about 800 acres of local parkland for active recreation, there appears to be 6 acres of local parkland per thousand residents. However, some of the local parkland in Monroe County is for resource conservation such as the McMichael Creek Conservation Lands, the Polk Nature Park, and the open space areas in Middle Smithfield and Hamilton Township. This brings the active acreage to about 5 acres per thousand. Standards for parkland are based upon active recreation areas.

School Grounds and School Parks

School grounds offer the potential to serve as school parks. Through cooperative efforts, the school districts, county and municipalities could cooperate on making the most use of school grounds for public service. Since the schools are community hubs in Monroe County, this should be a consideration. With school construction and expansion underway, pursuing land acquisition and design of facilities jointly would make the most use of tax dollars.

Special Use Facilities

Other than the nature centers, there are no special-use facilities run by the County. Examples of special-use facilities include recreation centers, athletic complexes, swimming pools, art centers and so on.

Table 5.1 Municipal Parks in Monroe County			
Municipality	Park	Acres	Comment
Barrett	High Acres	21.68	
Chestnuthill	Chestnuthill Township	37	
Coolbaugh	Coolbaugh Township	77	
Delaware Water Gap	Shull	2	
E. Stroudsburg	Danbury	15.7	
	Zacharias Pond	25.1	
	Gregory's Pond	10	Approximate
	Miller	2	Approximate
Eldred	Chestnut Ridge Railway	14.68	
Hamilton	Old Mill	2	
	Schimpf	21	To be developed
	FSR Homestead	5	LL Park; Stone House Museum
	Open Space	2	Natural Area
Jackson	Jackson Memorial	4.9	
Middle Smithfield	Resica	37	Approximate
	Un-named	17	YMCA Partnership
	Open Space	5	Natural Area
Mt. Pocono	Mt. Pocono Borough	2	Ballfields
	Deerfield Oak Street Park	15	Approximate
Paradise	Paradise Township	10	
Pocono	Mountain View	81	
Polk	Nature park	18	
Price	None	0	
Ross	Saylorsburg Playground	14.09	
Smithfield	Waterfront	53.3	
	Minisink	25	
	Little League Field	11	Adjoins Zacharias Pond in East Stroudsburg
Stroud	Big Pines	25	
	Jay Albertson	5.37	
	Katz Park at Wedgewood Lake	7.2	
	Kovarick Lands	13	
	Michael Moore	.51	
	Daily Property	1.91	
	Laurel Street Pond	1.58	
	McMichael Creek Cons. Lands	107	10 acres shared with Hamilton
Yetter	15		
	Carl Dennis	31.19	Temporarily owned by Wildlands Conservancy
	Pinebrook	60	Leased with first rights to purchase
Stroudsburg	Third Street Park	3	

	McMichaels/Rotary	5	
	Glen Park	10	
	Stroudsburg Park	5	Part of high school
Tobyhanna	Blanche D. Price Memorial	26.4	
Tunkhannock	Township Public	21	
Total	44 parks	891.61	Owned, leased, or in land trust
Total	42 parks	800.42	Owned as parkland

Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Standards

The NRPA’s (National Recreation and Park Association) **1995 Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines** provides a framework for recreation planning that relies on local planning processes rather than arbitrary standards based on a ratio of facilities to a specified percentage of the population. The guidelines promote a comprehensive planning process that is based on local concerns and assessment of conditions to define a plan that meets community needs.

Goal for Standards

The participants in the recreation forums indicated that the County should establish standards as the framework for the municipalities to use. The standards in the County plan would serve as the basis for the development of standards in the regional park, recreation, and open space plans. During the forums, a sample park classification system was distributed and discussed. Consensus was that it provided a sound basis and could be modified as needed.

Public opinion generated through the Open Space Advisory Board, public forums, interviews, and the county recreation survey provided the basis for consideration of standards in Monroe County. The development of standards for the County included analysis of amount and distribution of existing and planned recreation resources and analysis of service area and determination of park classification for parks. Establishment of standards unique to Monroe County provides the framework for assessment of existing recreational opportunities and a basis for recommending future actions.

As with any planning effort, success is determined by the ability to assess changing consumer needs, flexibility, and to redirecting resources as appropriate. Monroe County’s recreation standards are based on the NRPA park classification system described below.

Distribution of Existing and Planned Recreational Resources

Although the County is fortunate to have about 64,000 acres of open space, this acreage is concentrated in the national recreation area, state gamelands, forests and parks, historic resources, and agricultural preservation. Less than .5 percent of the acreage is in local parks and less than .2 percent in county parkland.

Parkland at different levels of government serves different purposes. Local parks provide recreation facilities for the daily use of local citizens. Local parks provide facilities for scheduled recreation activities that serve people within about 15

minutes. County and state parks serve regional park visitors for special purposes related to the natural and cultural resources and not active or scheduled recreation on a regular basis. They draw on a service area of up to an hour away.

Service Areas

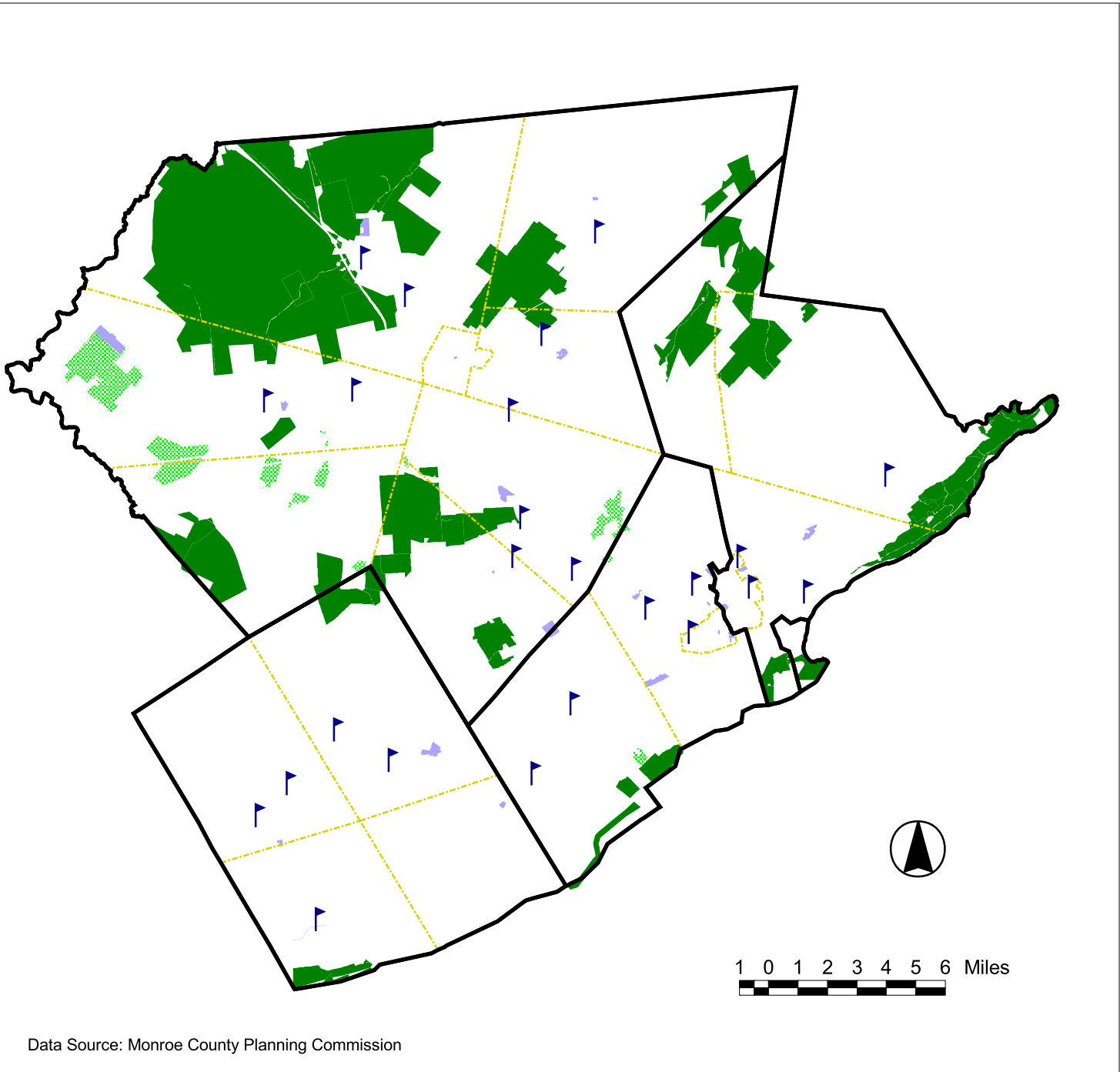
The planning process revealed that the school districts serve as the organizing basis for community services in Monroe County. This is consistent with findings in Monroe 2020 (Figure 1.1 – Map of Monroe 2020 Planning Areas). The service areas for parks and recreation could be based on the school districts as well. The size of the Pocono Area School District warrants the consideration of dividing it into service areas for parks and recreation. This would make a total of five service areas.

Figure 5.2 – *Existing Parkland* shows the distribution of existing parkland. The following conclusions can be reached:

- Parkland in Monroe County is not evenly distributed.
- There is potential to locate county parkland near existing natural areas in order to create county parks by buying smaller parcels next to larger parcels.
- Most recreation lands are national and state parks, gamelands and forest.
- Schools are well distributed according to population centers and can serve as school parks with planning.

County Open Space Plan

Monroe County, Pennsylvania



Map Legend

- | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|---|----------------------|
|  | Municipal & Co Parkland |  | Municipal Boundaries |
|  | State & Fed Lands |  | School Sites |
|  | Private Conservation Lands |  | Service Areas |

Existing Park Lands
Figure 5.1

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Park System Classification

The NRPA's Park, Recreation, Greenway and Open Space Guidelines classify park and recreation facilities into eight categories as summarized below. This classification system is presented to establish a classification system for Monroe County. If the County and the regions use this classification system, it will help build a countywide system of parks with roles and responsibilities appropriate for different providers of parks and recreation. Private parks and recreation facilities are included, as a significant number of commercial recreation operations exist in the County. They play a major role in the tourism industry as well as in meeting local recreation needs.

1. Recreation Nodes

- Definition: Similar to a neighborhood park with both active and passive facilities designed for a specific purpose.
- Size: Up to five acres
- Service Area: Less than a 1/4 mile service radius in a residential neighborhood, accessible by way of interconnecting trails, sidewalks, and low volume residential streets.
- Facilities: Based upon public input, facilities can include playgrounds, scenic areas and lunchtime seating areas.

2. Neighborhood Park

- Definition: Basic unit of the park system in meeting the active and/or passive needs of the neighborhood. Create a sense of place for a wide variety of ages living in the service radius.
- Size: 5 to 10 acres *minimum* Service Area: 1/4 mile to 1/2 mile service radius uninterrupted by non-residential roads and other physical barriers accessible from throughout its service radius by way of interconnecting trails, sidewalks, or low volume residential streets.
- Facilities: Neighborhood parks can be for active or passive recreation or a combination of both.

Facilities can include ball fields and game courts, picnic and sitting areas, play equipment, trails and passive areas with natural features.

3. Community Park

- Definition: Meets the broader recreational needs of several neighborhoods. Provides for both active recreation and preservation of unique landscapes. Allows for group activities neither desirable nor feasible in neighborhood parks.
- Size: 30 to 50 acres
- Service Area: 0.5 to 3.0 mile service radius, served by arterial and collector roads and accessible from throughout its service area by way of interconnecting trails.
- Facilities: Designed for both active and passive uses, facilities can include: large play structures, game courts, ball fields, ice skating, swimming pools, picnic areas, open space, unique landscape features, nature study and ornamental gardens, parking lots and lighting as appropriate.

4. School/Community Park

- Definition: Combines the resources of two public entities to allow for expanded recreational, educational, and social opportunities in a cost-effective manner.
- Size: Depends upon intended use. Size criteria for recreation nodes, neighborhood or community parks. School buildings are not considered in the acreage calculation.
- Service Area: Based upon distribution of the schools. The location can guide how it fits into the park system classification. Service area depends upon the type of use of the site.
- Facilities: Development should be based upon the criteria of other park classifications. If

athletic fields are developed, they should be oriented towards youth rather than adults.

4. Athletic Complex

- Definition:** Consolidates heavily programmed athletic fields and associated facilities in fewer sites to allow for economy of scale, improved management, greater control over impacts to neighborhood and community parks such as over-use, traffic congestion, parking and domination of facilities by those outside the neighborhood.
- Size:** Depends upon intended use. Consideration should be given to acquiring an additional 25 percent to hedge against unforeseen circumstances.
- Service Area:** Strategically located community-wide facilities within reasonable driving times; near non-residential uses if possible.
- Facilities:** Development should be based upon the specific types of fields and courts.

5. Special Purpose Facility

- Definition:** Parks and recreation facilities that are oriented toward a single purpose use such as historic landscapes, social sites, cultural features, indoor recreation facilities, environmental center, sports facilities such as a golf course or any other single purpose facility.
- Size:** Facility requirements determine the size required e.g. a golf course or a community center needs particular acreage.
- Service Area:** Strategically located facilities versus serving well-defined neighborhoods or areas of the community.
- Facilities:** Unique to the special purpose or program.

6. Natural Resource Area/ Preserve

- Definition: Parks and recreation facilities that are oriented towards the preservation of significant natural features, open space, special landscapes, buffering and visual aesthetics.
- Size: Dependent upon quality and extent of the resources and opportunity for preservation.
- Service Area: Areas that, when preserved, can enhance the livability and character of the community by preserving as much of its natural features as possible.
- Facilities: Resource rather than user based, natural resource areas can provide limited passive recreational opportunities such as trails and nature study areas. They can also function as greenways.

7. Greenways

- Definition: Linear trail corridors that tie park system components together to form a continuous park environment allow for safe uninterrupted pedestrian movement between the parks and around the community and provide people with a desired outdoor recreation opportunity. Greenways emphasize use to a greater extent than do wildlife preserves.
- Size (width): 25' minimum in a sub-division; 50' standard; and 200'+ desirable.
- Service Area: Most desirable location is in conjunction with trail system planning.
- Facilities: Developed for particular transportation mode most commonly for biking, hiking and in-line skating. Greenways can also be developed for canoes and cars.

8. Private Park/Recreation Facility

Definition:	Parks and recreation facilities that are privately owned yet contribute to the public park and recreation system.
Size:	Variable - dependent upon specific use.
Service Area:	Variable - from local to regional/national.
Facilities:	Depends on type of use.

Park Classification Applied to Monroe County

Comparing the existing parks in Monroe County with the NRPA park classification shows the following:

- There are no true county parks according to size. The county park at the Commission headquarters is by size classified as a neighborhood park and by functions as an athletic complex. A definition for a county park is needed for Monroe County.
- Monroe County has two natural resource areas / preserves: Kettle Creek and Meesing Nature Centers. The County owns the 120-acre Kettle Creek Nature Center. The 130-acre Meesing Nature Center is located in Middle Smithfield Township, in Delaware State Forest, on land leased from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.
- Counties typically have a county park system comprised of thousands of acres. Examples include Chester, Bucks, Montgomery, and Lancaster Counties all with at least 4,000 acres. These counties are used as comparisons because they are making similar strides in open space preservation through bond issues and open space planning. Counties in Maryland with the strong type of county parks and recreation role desired by the citizens of Monroe County have upwards of 10,000 county park acres.
- One of the difficulties in achieving significant county park acreage configured as typical county parks of at least 200 acres is the lack of large open parcels throughout the county. Parcels are generally smaller than 100 acres. Achieving large parcels for county parks will require: assembling contiguous parcels, acquiring land adjoining existing parks or buying large parcels from landowners such as resorts.
- The local parks in Monroe County are primarily recreation nodes or neighborhood parks. Mountain View, Big Pines, Blanche Price, Coolbaugh Township, and West End Parks are community parks. While smaller than a community park by definition, some parks serve as community parks such as Zacharias Pond and Saylorburg Playground. Interviews also suggested that there is cross over use of local parks in Monroe County by park visitors who reside in municipalities in other counties that border Monroe.
- While the state and national parks have trails within them, there are no trails connecting parks in Monroe County.

- Public opinion about the need for more parks and recreation facilities is consistent with the actual inventory. Public opinion states that:
 - There are not enough parks and recreation facilities;
 - Parks should be closer to home;
 - There is a great need for active recreation facilities;
 - The County is fortunate in having many natural areas. These need to be preserved. For park and recreation use, parks need to be developed that serve a broad base of users in one location with a balance between resource protection and active recreation;
 - The County needs to build county parks;
 - Indoor recreation facilities are greatly needed;
 - Trails connecting parks need to be established;
 - The County needs to take a strong role in developing and managing parks.

Level of Service: Municipal Park Acreage Standards for Active Recreation

At the present time, there are about 800 acres of municipal parkland, 11 acres of county parkland, and 250 acres of parkland in nature preserve at the nature centers in Monroe County. While the natural areas of the state and national parks are important, they are outside of classification for recreation purposes. They have been established as parks for their unique landscape characteristics and for resource protection. With a population of about 130,000 the County has the following level of service as it applies to public recreation:

- County parkland: 2 acres per thousand citizens.
- Municipal parkland: 5 acres per thousand residents
- This level of service is based upon census figures that do not include the unknown number of seasonal visitors who multiply the population by two to three times.

This level of service does not meet present needs. With projected growth of another 80,000 people, there is a great shortfall in parkland.

Studies of community recreation in other counties show that the minimum level of service is between 8 to 14 acres of land per thousand citizens for community recreation. This is consistent with the traditional “standard” of about 10 acres per thousand. This should serve as the working standard for Monroe County while the regional plans are being done. Each region could tailor its level of service based upon public opinion, inventory and goals within their region.

With over 38,000 acres of state-owned gamelands in Monroe County, there appears to be adequate hunting areas. This translates into an equivalent of about 292 acres of state gamelands per 1,000 residents. There would be no need for Monroe County to duplicate these facilities. The importance for Monroe County regarding gamelands would be to insure that the gamelands are permanently protected, to inform the citizens about the gamelands, and to coordinate with the state to maximize access and recreation opportunities for the public.

For county parks, the public participation process determined that the communities are looking for a strong county park and recreation system. To achieve this, the county needs two county parks per service area, based on the school districts. These should be configured as:

- One traditional county park that appeals to a broad range of park visitors with a mix of active recreation facilities and nature based areas. County parks should be at least 200 acres or contiguous to existing natural areas or parks to achieve the desired size.
- An athletic complex with at least 50 acres. The athletic complex should feature a combination of facilities for organized competitive sports as well as lifetime fitness, outdoor recreation, and sports facilities. These would include trails for walking and biking, roller sports, horseshoes, and other sports. Consideration should be given to facilities such as climbing and adventure sports that appeal to teens and young adults. Design of such a facility is important. Although these would be athletic complexes bringing nature in as a design element would be most important in Monroe County. Standards should be rooted in environmental sensitivity in materials, maintenance practices, and designing with nature. The desired level of service for municipal and county parkland is shown in *Table 5.2*.

Table 5.2 Existing and Projected Parkland Needs				
	Existing park acreage	Acres / 1,000 residents	Current park acreage needed	Projected park acreage needed by 2020
Municipalities	668 active 132 passive	5 active	1,300 for active recreation	2,120
Monroe County	261	2	2,000 minimum	3,200 based upon 10 county parks and a population increase of 60 percent

Identifying Potential Parkland

In order to identify potential sites for county parkland, a set of criteria was established. *Table 5.3* presents the criteria. Important factors include land characteristics desirable for county park use including a size of at least 200 acres, a water body/water access, forests, slopes, scenic beauty and location within the service areas created for park planning purposes that align with the school districts. The criteria provide a framework for guiding decision-making on land acquisition or preservation through other means.

Scoring Criteria to Establish Priorities

Monroe County could use the following scoring system to rate properties under consideration using the characteristics listed in *Table 5.3*. Using such a system will enable the County to rate and rank properties as they are considered. Weights could be given to different categories in order to focus on a compelling factor. The regions for their plans could adopt similar criteria so that open space planning is consistent at the county and municipal levels.

Scoring System

Very Suitable	3 points
Suitable	2 points
Somewhat Suitable	1 point
Not Suitable	0
Restricted	R

Finding Suitable Locations

Potential site locations were identified using available data sets in the county's GIS that meet criteria as outlined above to provide a first cut analysis. These results were used to help identify and rank over 40 parcels meeting the location criteria. However given the sensitive nature of land negotiations, land values, and public relations, and with respect to the Sunshine Laws, a confidential technical memorandum (in spreadsheet form) was prepared as a supplement to this report to aid County decision makers. This too is meant to be a dynamic tool that can be updated and revised as conditions change and new data becomes available.

Table 5.3 Criteria for Property Selection in Monroe County			
Land Characteristics	Purpose		
	County and/or Multi-municipal Park	County Preserve	Family Fitness Complex
Site Characteristics Assessed by GIS			
Contributes to scenic character of Monroe County			
Adjacent to other preserved or preservable lands			
Contiguous to existing protected open space or parks including local, county state parks, forests, gamelands or national recreation area			
Contiguous to existing or proposed schools			
Provides public land in area of the County without convenient access parks			
Property contains an important historic or cultural resource			
Property contains/is adjacent to a significant water body			
Preserves or protects environmentally sensitive resources (wetlands, forests, wildlife habitat, endangered or threatened species, steep slopes, riparian corridors, areas of ground water re-charge)			
Contains steep slopes			
Extrinsic Factors			
Has existing recreation facilities on-site			
Owner willing to sell property or easement/ development rights for an equitable price or donation			
Contains environmental hazards, pollutants			
Suitable size for proposed use. Greater than: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50 acres • 200 acres • 500 acres 			

Note: This is a sample matrix for a scoring system to be implemented in the County initiative.

Patterns of Use and Participation Rates

According to Pennsylvania's Recreation Plan 1991-1997 (now updated through 2002), the top five activities in which people from the Pocono counties participated were:

- Picnicking;
- Swimming;
- Jogging;
- Hiking;
- Fishing.

Although these data are relevant, they are about ten years old. *Table 5.4* presents information on participation rates in recreation activities that are more current. Information from the National Sporting Goods Association from 1998 shows participation in outdoor recreation activities as well as the changes in selected sports over the last decade. Information on changes was not available for all activities. *Table 5.4* also presents information on activity preferences from the Monroe County survey.

Interviews on Participation and Trends

In addition to determining the preferences of the general citizenry, it is important to determine the needs of specialized groups. Community organizations such as organized sports groups, art associations, and other groups with a special focus have special needs for facilities and services. At some point throughout their lifetime, organized sports touch just about everyone: whether through a direct experience, children/grandchildren playing, or a child who is involved.

Interview findings include the following:

- There are not enough playing fields to accommodate existing needs;
- Participation rates are up in soccer, softball, football, and basketball, especially among girls;
- Facilities that are counted as sports fields are not really playing fields but instead are areas of grassland on which groups place goals and markings. Native turf cannot withstand the wear and tear of sustained use. Wherever there is space for a field and permission is given, a field goes in. It soon becomes unsafe in terms of compaction, lack of turf, and poor playing surface;
- Existing gymnasiums cannot accommodate the number of requests for time;
- There are not enough swimming pools to accommodate the use desired;
- While the schools are very cooperative, their mission of education and their schedule make scheduling and holding organized recreation programs a challenge in terms of space and reliability of access;
- With the forecasted population increases and escalating participation rates, recreation facilities in Monroe County are woefully inadequate;
- The emphasis on activities throughout Monroe County with regard to recreation is on traditional types of sports focusing on competitive play. A look at participation rates nationwide, changing participation rates over time, and citizen preferences in Monroe County show that consideration needs to be given to other

activities. These include walking, hiking, mountain biking, roller sports, indoor recreation, fitness and wellness, the arts, and other family and lifetime activities;

- There is a very strong sense of collaboration and community in Monroe County. People help each other out in terms of facilities. This is quite notable.

Table 5.4 Participation in Recreation Activities					
U.S.A. Participation			Monroe County Survey Findings		
Activity	1998 in millions	% Change 1990-1998	Activity	% Participate in	% Who would like to do
Walking	77.6		Enjoy nature	87	9
Swimming	58.2		Music	65	23
Camping	46.5		Swimming	63	21
Exercise with equipment	46.1		Exercise	62	30
Fishing	43.6	-6.9	Arts & Crafts	54	24
Bicycling	43.5	-21.2	Hiking	53	21
Bowling	40.1		Fishing	45	26
Billiards	32.3		Volunteerism	45	26
Basketball	29.4	11.8	Biking	41	37
Golf	27.5	19.8	Golf	36	14
Hiking	27.2		Drama	30	28
In-line skating	27	643.9	Dance	28	27
Aerobics	25.8		Boating non-power	28	29
Boating/power	25.7		Self-improvement progs.	25	42
Darts	20.8		League sports	23	14
Hunting	17.3		Non-league sports	20	17
Baseball	15.9	1.8	Organized programs	17	32
Softball	15.6	-22.3	Boating -power	16	25
Mountain Biking	15.3		Horseback riding	14	35
Volleyball	14.8	-36	Snowmobiling	9	27
Backpacking	14.6				
Soccer	13.2	20.6			
Target shooting	12.8				
Tennis	11.2	-39			
Football	9.6				
Horseshoe pitch	9.6				
Mountain biking	8.6				
Ice skating	7.8	20.4			
Skiing	7.7				
Snorkeling	7.3				
Water skiing	7.2				
Canoeing	7.1				
Skateboarding	5.8	-22.9			
Bow & Arrow hunting	5.6				
Badminton	4.8				
Archery	4.8				
Martial arts	4.6				
Racquetball	4.0				
Climbing	3.9				
Snowboarding	3.6	149.8			

Sailing	3.6				
Kayaking	3.2				
Roller hockey	3.1	110.3			
Climbing (artif. wall)	2.7				
Cross country skiing	2.6				
Scuba	2.6				
Kickboxing	2.3				
Hockey	2.1				
Windsurfing	.6				

Indoor Recreation

Not included in the standard for the level of service for parks is indoor recreation. One of the primary needs in the County is for indoor recreation facilities. Indoor recreation facilities could be configured as follows:

- Stand-alone community recreation centers;
- Community schools in which recreation centers are built or added on as part of schools;
- Centers of various sizes based on needs.
 - Neighborhood centers - 10,000 square feet (about the size of a gym), about a mile radius
 - Community centers - 10,000 to 25, 000 square feet, about 2-5 mile radius
 - Regional center - 25,000 to 100,000 square feet with a service area of about 45 minutes and with most use coming from about 15-20 minutes away. Special facilities such as pools and ice rinks will draw participants from a larger radius.

For Monroe County, the indoor recreation centers should align with service areas, population centers and schools. *See Figure 5.3 – Schools Population Centers.* This would equate to five indoor recreation centers. Four of the recreation centers should be based with schools to build upon the existing sense of community achieved through the school. One regional facility should be considered for the Stroudsburg area, perhaps in Hamilton Township because of access, land costs and convenience to the population center in the Stroudsburg area. Planning for these centers should be in collaboration with the regions.

Art and Cultural Center

Monroe 2020 proposed that one or more multi-purpose cultural centers be established in Monroe County. These were envisioned as places in which the visual and performing arts could be created and experienced. A wide range of educational opportunities could be provided there for various ages and interests. A goal is to establish these centers as places in which people from various backgrounds and cultures can join together to share a common identity. One of the recommendations is already underway: the upgrading of the ArtSpace Building in Stroudsburg.

The 1986 Feasibility Study for the Pennsylvania Center for the Performing Arts proposed a performing arts center that was on a regional and national scale. While the study has good information and recommends establishing a unique regional arts

complex, the plan is without an action plan or strategies on how to accomplish the goal of establishing the arts center.

The countywide survey, interviews and public forums for this open space plan indicate that there is great interest in the arts. Based upon the fact that the concept of the arts center has been around for nearly 30 years, the performing arts feasibility study should be resurrected to serve as the base for discussions about moving this forward or not. Options could include exploring:

- School sites - This is especially related to the new high school at Pocono Mountain with its state-of-the-art stage. A joint effort among the school district, arts communities, business sector, and municipalities could explore options about sharing resources to operate the theater at the optimum level.
- Community centers - This plan is recommending a county recreation center in the geographic or population center of Monroe County. The concept of having an art center as part of the community recreation center could be explored. A good model is in Sunnyvale, California. Sunnyvale constructed a community recreation center in a campus-like setting with pods for studio arts, performing arts, crafts, sports, aquatics, and other units. Their performing art center is one of the few in the country that operates profitably.
- State/Federal partnerships -Working with the State of Pennsylvania and/or the National Park Service may create an avenue for developing the center in partnership.
- Monroe County Arts Council - Any pursuit of the arts center needs to include the county arts council. Discussion of the center in Stroudsburg as the hub with satellite operations throughout the County could be explored.

Lessons for Success

Research projects on establishing community centers, including arts components, produced information on common factors that contributed to success:

- √ Centers often start in other facilities until the need for more space for additional programs, prompted the community to develop a new center.
- √ The public had a high positive regard and understanding of the project and the leadership involved.
- √ A community group(s) acted as the catalyst to get the center built.
- √ There was often a “godfather,” a key individual, who stepped forward to make the project happen.
- √ People with clout need to be involved and committed.
- √ The project was prestigious in the community.

- √ The centers were not developed overnight, but there was a specific action plan that was results-oriented.
- √ All centers have growing pains.
- √ The most successful centers have creative, dynamic, professional leadership.
- √ Extensive programming was a hallmark of success.
- √ Involvement of community leaders is crucial.

Trails

Monroe County does not currently have trails or a greenway system. Trails are an important component of a park system because they provide safe linkages between residential areas, community centers, schools and parks, and enhance the livability of a community. Greenways are important because of the ecological benefit gained from connecting green areas. Monroe County has resources that could be used to develop a network of trails and greenways as discussed in Chapter 7.

Recreation Facilities

Recreation facilities should be provided to serve individuals, community groups, and organized leagues. Evaluation of existing facilities, input from user groups, consideration of demographic trends, and exploration of recreation trends and leisure activities has been completed.

The overall picture is that there is a great need for all types of recreation facilities:

- Soccer fields;
- Softball fields;
- Baseball fields;
- Football fields;
- Fields for sports that are emerging elsewhere including lacrosse and field hockey;
- Basketball courts;
- Tennis courts;
- Roller hockey courts;
- In-line skating paths;
- Paths for walking and biking;
- Trails for snowmobiling;
- Consideration of trails for ATVs;
- Equestrian trails;
- Swimming pools;
- Access to fishing and boating areas;
- Adventure sports;
- Picnic facilities;
- Gymnasiums;
- Indoor recreation centers;
- Ice skating;

- Cross-country skiing.

The exact numbers and configuration of recreation facilities need to be determined in further planning. These facilities should be developed through a mix of public and private partners including the county, municipalities, community organizations and the private sector. The facilities would be configured in a countywide system that includes both county and municipal parks.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The County currently has a park-like setting that is often taken for granted by its citizens. With the threat posed by population growth this setting will be lost unless strong positive steps are taken to insure it for future generations.

Protecting the wild and scenic beauty of the Pocono Mountains is vital to the people of Monroe County. Throughout the needs assessment, the message of the people was clear: do everything possible to preserve Monroe County as it is today. Public support of the open space bond issue is confirmation of the value people place on the natural features and open space here. As a part of the open space system, there is support for developing parks and recreation facilities to meet the needs of the residents.

The needs assessment determined the following:

1. Monroe County has tremendous assets in the national and state parks, gamelands, and forest and commercial recreation operations. These need to be complemented by county and municipal parks and recreation facilities to provide for the daily recreation needs of the citizens.
2. The parks and recreation facilities of Monroe County and the municipalities are limited. With about 261 acres of county parkland, there are only about two acres of county park acres per thousand people based on the existing population estimate of 128,000. With 668 acres of active local parkland, there are about 5 acres per thousand citizens. The County needs another 612 acres in local parkland and 1,019 acres in county parkland immediately. By the year 2020, an additional 1,100 county park acres and 1,408 active local park acres will be needed in Monroe County.
3. It is important to establish a countywide system of parks in Monroe County. The system would include a mix of public and private recreation providers. Through the county plan and regional plans, the system of parks and recreation facilities to serve the daily needs of residents should be established. This should be based upon the standards recommended in the county plan for park classification, acreage, location and year-round indoor recreation. Participants in the regional recreation forums supported this concept.

4. There was consensus on the need for parks that achieve a balance of recreation opportunities for people of all ages, interests, and abilities in all areas of the County. There was emphasis on the need to serve year-round residents.
5. Schools cannot accommodate all of the requests for use of fields and gyms.
6. Indoor year-round recreation facilities are needed.
7. The people of Monroe County are very interested in the arts. Music ranked high in interest among survey respondents. This mirrored Monroe 2020 interviews and public forums in which participants indicated their interest in the arts. A program and place(s) for the arts needs to be developed in partnership with the Arts Council. Consideration should be given to collaboration with the schools in use of new performing arts facilities in the new schools.
8. As a County focused on tourism, there is a great opportunity to capitalize on eco-tourism. This is a fast growing segment of the tourism industry.

Recommendations

1. One of the concerns that emerged in the public participation process was how the open space bond funds would be spent. The open space funds should be spent on land. The development of recreation facilities should come from other sources including grants, other county and local sources, sponsorships, partnerships, revenue bonds, or other bonds floated for this purpose.
2. Establish planning districts based on school district boundaries. This is consistent with Monroe 2020. Since schools serve as the hub of community activity, organizing parks and recreation around the schools makes sense. The school districts should serve as service areas with Pocono Mountain Area School District being divided in half due to its size. This would be a total of five service areas.
3. In order to keep Monroe County *Forever Green*, protecting at least half of what is left is important. This may be accomplished through the use of a number of tools such as *Growing Greener*, which sets a minimum of 50 percent open space as goal in all developments. Acquisitions, easements, rights-of-way, licenses, agricultural preservation, and historic and cultural resource preservation, however, will require an ongoing commitment by citizens and strong leadership.
4. Adopt a goal of obtaining 20 acres of parkland per thousand residents by 2020. The tag line for this goal could be “20 by 2020.” Parks would be a category or sub-set of open space. While the County should strive to protect half of the remaining open space, a certain portion of that should be for parkland for the County and municipalities. Although the County has about 64,000 acres of open space, this does not meet the needs of the citizens for close-to-home daily recreation, year-round recreation or special use facilities for recreation interests. Monroe County should strive towards a minimum standard of 10 acres of county

parkland per thousand citizens and 10 acres of local parkland per thousand residents.

County parkland should be configured with two county parks in each planning district for a total of ten county parks. Each planning district would have one traditional county park and one fitness/sports complex. The goal should be to have a minimum of 200 acres per county park and a minimum of 50 acres per fitness/sports complex. Since the county is short on large parcels of land, the options are to assemble contiguous parcels; seek parcels adjoining other public parks, schools or properties; or purchase easements or large parcels owned by resorts or camps. The tract of land being planned for business development by the County's Industrial Development Authority, Tegawitha, may be a good starting point for satisfying the need of creating one county fitness/sports complex. If fifty acres of this large tract, adjacent to a wetland corridor and the north campus of the Pocono Mountain School District, were devoted to recreation it could be a win-win for all parties and the citizens of the county.

For recreation facilities, the County should be looking at recreation facilities that are substantial enough to serve regional or countywide needs such as a regional recreation center, arts center, or fitness/wellness complex. Major facilities that municipalities could not develop or operate are more appropriate in a county system. Typical facilities found in county parks include ice rinks, swimming pools, campgrounds, golf courses, sports complexes, nature centers, trails, recreation centers, arts centers, and nature areas with special features such as lakes.

It is most important for the County to address providing access to facilities for recreation activities that are natural in Monroe County such as fishing, boating, and trails, water for fishing and boating. Many of the fishing areas are in fishing and hunting clubs. The needs assessment found that people are concerned about not having enough access to water or losing access. The County also needs to address equestrian trails as a recreation facility. Many equestrian trails are on private property through the goodness of the landowner. Other areas such as in Montgomery and Bucks Counties that are under development pressure are finding that as land ownership changes, equestrians are losing the privilege of using trails that have been available for decades. It would be important for Monroe County to address equestrian trails before they are lost.

5. Establish a natural and open space legacy for future generations. Protecting the open space for present and future generations was a focal point of participants in the planning process. There was a sense of urgency about getting the open space now. Concern for enabling future generations to make decisions about land was important. There was consensus that a percentage, such as 30 percent, of all open space obtained for parks should be reserved for future generations. A policy should be established that a designated portion of each property be reserved for a specified number of years. This would enable future generations to decide how land set aside could be used within the parameters of parks, recreation, and resource conservation. This would be a legacy of the open space program.
6. Configure local parks and recreation facilities in regional open space planning. Local parks and recreation facilities should be planned as part of the regional park, recreation and open space planning process. Local parks could include the

parques listed in the classification system in this chapter. They include: recreation nodes, neighborhood parks, community parks, trails and greenways, school/parks, sports complexes and special use facilities. Special consideration should be given to serving citizens throughout the community with appropriate park service areas.

Recreation facilities in municipal park systems should include a balance of active and passive facilities that meet the needs for close-to-home, daily recreation on a scheduled or self-directed basis. The regional recreation plans should consider planning facilities on a regional level to get the most at the least cost in terms of development and operating. The number of facilities needs to be based upon participation rates, growth trends, emerging sports, and population projections.

7. Adopt and implement a park classification system. The park classification system presented in this chapter should serve as the basis for developing the countywide park system. This will provide a framework in which different providers can classify their natural resources, greenways and trails, parks, and recreation facilities.

The NRPA classifications for parks, open space and greenways should be adopted with the addition of a definition for a county park. The existing county facilities including the athletic fields and the nature centers would fall under other park categories consistent with NRPA guidelines. The athletic fields would be considered a Sports Complex while the nature centers could be classified as Natural Resource Areas.

Monroe County Park

An area of 200 acres or more with natural or ornamental quality for outdoor recreation including picnicking, boating, fishing, swimming, camping, and trail uses. Play areas may accompany picnic and day use areas. However, they would be designed for informal use and not for organized league play.

8. Introduce new types of facilities into county and local parks based upon trends. Facility planning should provide both traditional facilities and facilities of the 21st century. New types of facilities should include roller sports, in-line skating, climbing, adventure sports, trails, and mountain bike areas as examples. Consideration needs to be given to the needs for trails for ATVs. The history and growth in these activities shows that they are trends not fads.
9. Develop a plan for eco-tourism. The Recreation and Park Commission, the Conservation District, the Pocono Mountains Vacation Bureau and Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Development Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania and other stakeholders from the public, private and non-profit sectors should collaborate in developing an eco-tourism plan. The plan should have dual functions: drawing tourists to the area for natural resource based tourism and preserving the valuable resources.
10. Integrate economic development and park, recreation, and eco-tourism planning. At present parks and recreation is separate from economic development. It needs

to be integrated into overall county planning. This plan is a good start as a spin-off of Monroe 2020. Parks, recreation, open space and tourism all stimulate economic development.

The resorts offer unique opportunity for Monroe County in terms of large parcels of land and facilities. With a dearth of large parcels of land, consideration should be given to acquiring resort land and/or facilities if they become available in order to preserve them, retain the quality of Monroe County, and use the open space. Consideration could be given to public/private partnerships. Private enterprise could operate various components of the resort, as could the County on an equitable basis to generate revenues to offset the cost of parks and recreation operations. A feasibility study should be conducted to determine the potential for acquiring and operating such a property. The County should also consider developing a planning program for the resorts to determine a strategy for informing property owners of the county's interest in keeping the large parcels of land as open space.

11. Develop indoor recreation facilities. Indoor recreation centers should be established near population centers as shown in *Figure 5.3 – Schools and Population Centers*. These centers could be designed as community centers while the center near Stroudsburg should be a regional center. Long term, each of the planning districts would have a population to support a community recreation center. Feasibility studies should be undertaken to determine the requirements of developing and operating such centers. The community centers in the planning districts should be developed in cooperation with the schools. The regional center near Stroudsburg should be considered as a stand-alone facility with up to 100,000 square feet including an aquatics center, two gymnasiums, indoor track, fitness center, and activity rooms. The center should have outdoor facilities so that the center is built in a park consistent with the theme of *Forever Green*.
12. Move the development of greenways and trails forward. Use the recommendations of this plan as the basis in regional planning.

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