

Washington County,  
Pennsylvania

*Comprehensive Recreation,  
Park and Open Space Plan  
with  
Master Plans for Mingo Creek  
and Cross Creek County Parks*



2000

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EXECUTIVE  
SUMMARY

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## Executive Summary

The Washington County Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan represents the culmination of a thirteen month planning process that involved extensive public participation, facility and program inventory, and an assessment of administrative and maintenance procedures in place within the County. This Plan will serve as an important tool of the County's Department of Parks and Recreation as it provides recreation opportunities for Washington County's population into the Twenty-first Century.

### *Background*

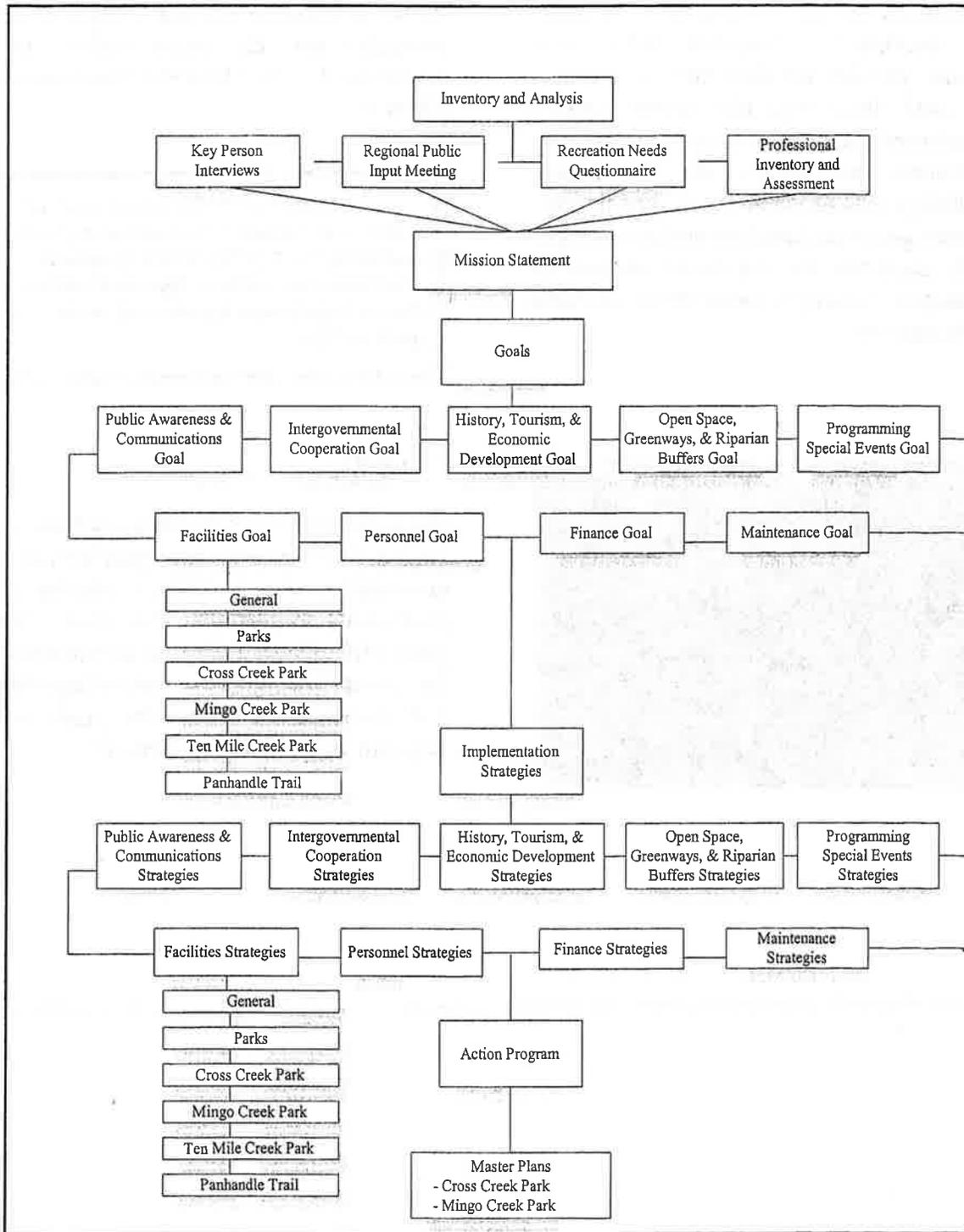
Washington County has experienced growth in recent years, resulting in changes to its rural landscape. This change brings with it the potential to affect recreational opportunities and the quality of life currently enjoyed by County residents and visitors. Opportunities to acquire railroad rights-of-way for trails and update existing County parks to meet the recreational needs of a growing population, along with the desire to preserve a rich history, prompted the Department of Parks and Recreation to develop a plan for the future of recreation within the County. Washington County Commissioners appointed the firm of Pashek Associates, PC to facilitate the development of a County Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan, with accompanying Master Plans for Cross Creek and Mingo Creek County Parks. The planning process used was designed to provide realistic and action-oriented strategies to be implemented over the next several years. (See figure ES.1)

### *Public Participation*

The public participation process was a crucial step toward the ultimate goal of developing recommendations for the future of the County Department of Parks and Recreation and leisure opportunities within Washington County. The public input process included a County-wide recreation needs questionnaire, four public input meetings held throughout the County, twenty-five "key person interviews" and four study group meetings, which added additional insight from those with a vested interest in recreation within the County. The key recreation needs of County residents, as identified through this public input process, are as follows:

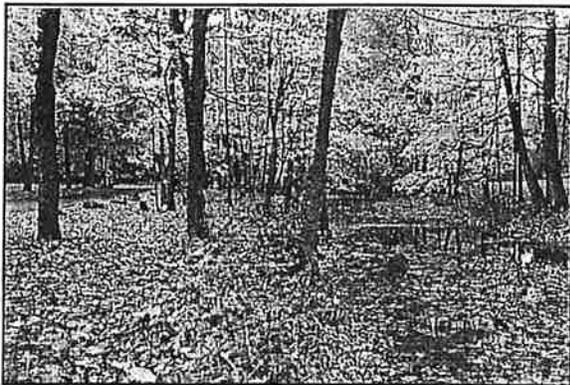
- Better collaboration/organization/cooperation between the County and local governments to avoid duplication of facilities and increase public awareness of recreation facilities within the County
- Improved amenities within existing County Parks
- More recreation programming, with 80% of respondents to the recreation needs questionnaire willing to attend County programs
- The development of a County wide recreation trail system that links the County parks, historic sites and other visitor destinations

**Table ES.1: Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Planning Process**



## ***Goals & Recommendations***

Building upon the public participation and professional assessment processes, a mission statement, goals and implementation strategies were developed. Together, these three elements provide the direction for building upon and improving the current parks, recreation and open space opportunities within the County and ensure their continued availability for future residents. The mission statement, goals and implementation strategies clearly facilitate the continued success of Washington County's Department of Parks and Recreation.



### ***► Mission Statement***

The Department of Parks and Recreation Mission Statement provides the overall theme for the development of goals, implementation strategies and the future actions of the Department. The Mission Statement is as follows:

*To provide for the leisure needs of residents and broaden the awareness of nature and history through regionally significant educational and wellness opportunities that bring all age groups together and enhance the quality of life.*

### ***► Goals***

Using the mission statement as the basis of the goal-setting process, nine goal topics were generated as a result of the public input and professional assessment processes. These goals offer direction for the improvement of the current Parks and Recreation Department, staff and facilities. The nine goals for the Department are listed in Table ES-2.

**Table ES-2: Goal Statements**

<i>Topic</i>		<i>Goal</i>
I.	<b>Public Awareness and Communications</b>	To increase awareness of events, programs and the location of County park facilities and communicate the mission of the County Department of Parks and Recreation.
II.	<b>Intergovernmental Cooperation</b>	To make available opportunities for the development of collaborative agreements and relationships.
III.	<b>History, Tourism and Economic Development</b>	To promote the value of regionally significant facilities as an impetus for the interpretation of the County's culture, heritage and stimulating tourism and economic development.
IV.	<b>Open Space, Greenways and Riparian Buffers</b>	To acknowledge and support preservation of unique natural resources and promote the value of greenways as linear parks for the enjoyment of future generations.
V.	<b>Programming and Special Events</b>	To provide educational and wellness opportunities and support for special events.
VI.	<b>Finance</b>	To ensure that an appropriate level of funds are available for the department to meet the recreation demands of current and future residents.
VII.	<b>Maintenance</b>	To operate parks in a safe, efficient and effective manner.
VIII.	<b>Personnel</b>	To clarify staffing roles and increase the level of staff/volunteers to meet the future demand for programming, safety and maintenance.
IX.	<b>Facilities</b>	To provide regionally significant facilities with an emphasis on nature and history to meet the changing leisure needs of County residents.
<b>A. Parks</b>		To maintain the unique character of each facility while expanding the number of safe leisure opportunities.
	1. <b>Cross Creek Park</b>	To develop a water-oriented park that supports fishing, hunting, boating, environmental education, trail use and group camping.
	2. <b>Mingo Creek Park</b>	To preserve the special qualities of the stream valley and to provide opportunities for special events, fishing, passive recreation, group activities, trail use and interpretation of the County's history.
	3. <b>Ten Mile Creek Park</b>	To provide boating access to the Monongahela River and offer a variety of passive recreational opportunities.
	4. <b>Panhandle Trail</b>	To develop a safe, regionally important linear County park.

► *Recommendations*

Expanding upon each of the goals developed for the Department, recommendations were made for the fulfillment of each goal. A few of the key recommendations are as follows:

- ◆ Refocus the role of the Director of Parks and Recreation, clarify and define the role of the Superintendent of Recreation, and establish the positions of Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation and of full-time year-round Naturalist or Program Specialist.
- ◆ Evaluate, investigate and maximize grant opportunities, sponsorships, volunteer activities and the Department's fee structure.
- ◆ Expand environmental and natural programs, public awareness strategies and program partnership opportunities.
- ◆ Provide an area to support special events.
- ◆ Develop a formal marketing plan.
- ◆ Implement the recommendations of the Cross Creek and Mingo Creek Master Plans, including expanded trail systems, improved site amenities and directional signs.
- ◆ Develop a written departmental policy manual, provide uniforms to park employees and institute a method of departmental self evaluation.
- ◆ Assume a leadership role in assisting communities in planning and facilitating the designation of greenway corridors.
- ◆ Encourage the coordination and collaboration between historical

societies and other agencies interested in the acquisition, preservation and interpretive programming of historic and cultural sites/resources.

- ◆ Educate local communities on the benefits of adopting local Park and Recreation Plans.

► *Implementation*

To facilitate the County's efforts in fulfilling this Plan's recommendations, detailed implementation strategies were developed. In order for the County to begin meeting the expressed mission and goals of this plan, the highest priority recommendations, as listed below, should occur or be initiated in during the plan's first year of use.

1. Begin to implement the numerous personnel strategies, including: defining the role of the Director of Parks and Recreation; clarifying the role of the Superintendent of Recreation; establishing the position of Assistant Director; and initiating the development of a policy manual.
2. Develop maintenance checklists.
3. Determine the feasibility of providing uniforms to Parks Department employees.
4. Locate employee safety stations at both maintenance facilities.
5. Clarify the role of volunteers in providing time toward maintenance/repair or completing special projects (prior to start of the heavy use

season).

6. Conduct Playground Safety Audit prior to use season and continue with routine inspections.
7. Conduct a feasibility study for acquisition and the development of Dams #3 and #4 for use as County recreation areas.
8. Initiate the development of a web page.
9. Maximize grants and other funding source opportunities to implement the goals of this plan.
10. Assume a leadership role in facilitating/ coordinating the designation of greenway corridors.

Refer to chapter three for a complete list of implementation strategies as part of the ten year implementation plan.

### ***Conclusion***

Key to the success of this plan is the continuation of the cooperative, mutually beneficial relationships between County and local officials, staff, residents, and outside organizations and groups. These productive relationships, guided by the recommendations of this Plan, will ensure the preservation of the quality of life and the fulfillment of the recreation needs of current and future Washington County Residents.

**ES.3: Inventory of Recreation Facilities**

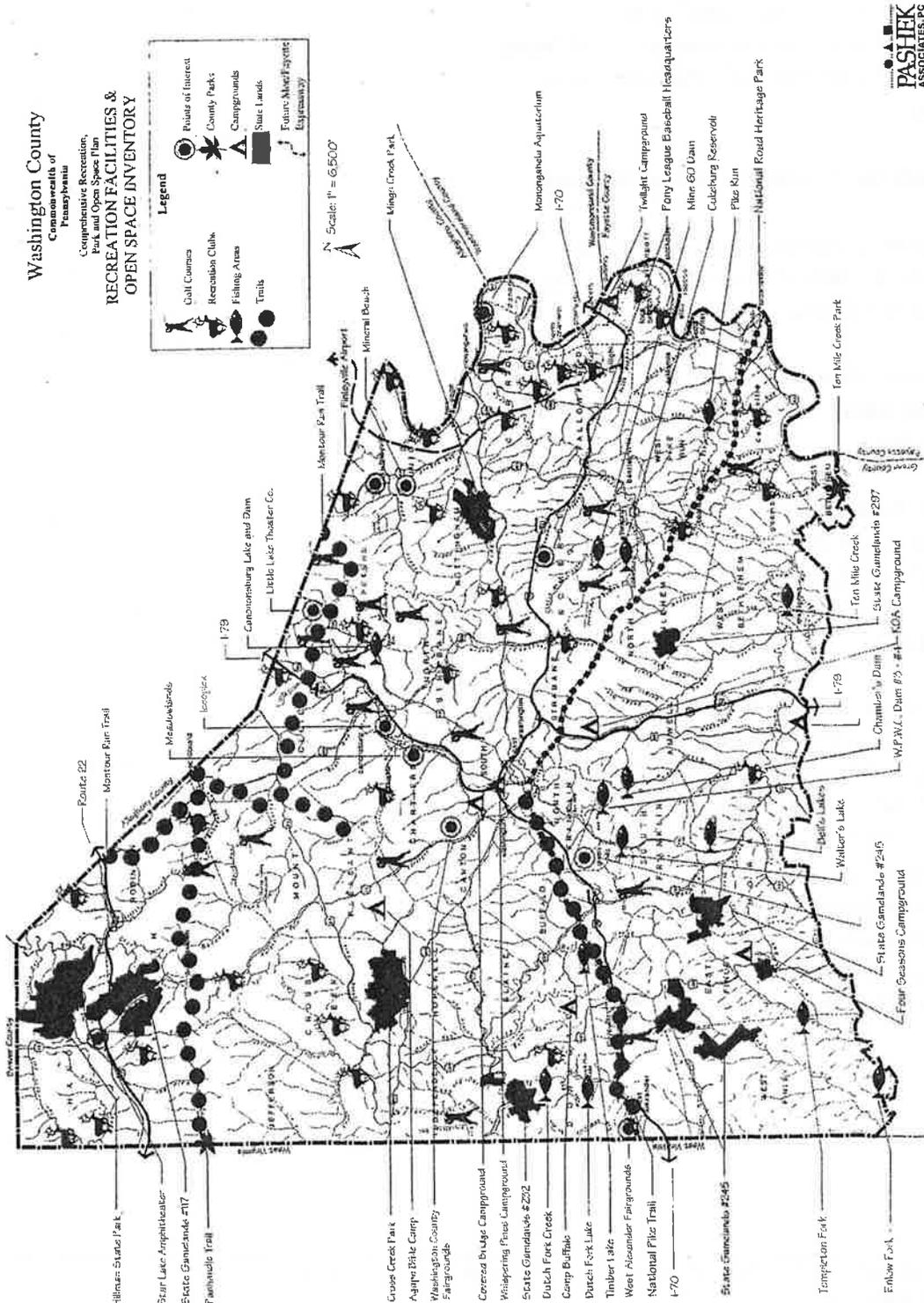


Figure ES.4: Mingo Creek Park Master Site Development Plan

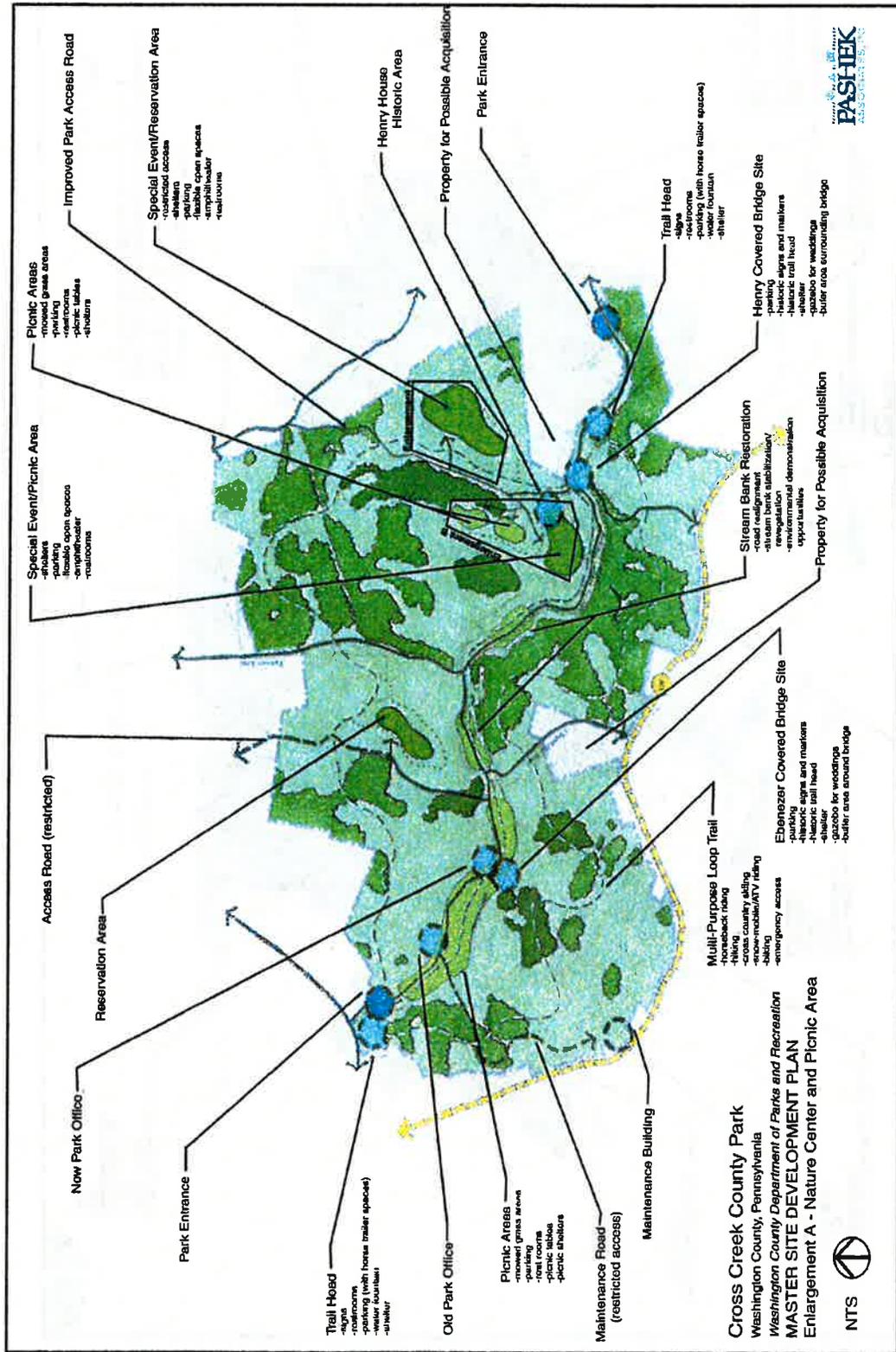


Figure ES.5: Cross Creek Park Master Site Development Plan

