

2017 Worcester County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan REVISION

January 22, 2019



Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks
Worcester County Department of Environmental Programs



RESOLUTION NO. 19 - 4

**ADOPTING REVISIONS TO 2017 WORCESTER COUNTY
LAND PRESERVATION, PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN**

WHEREAS, the County Commissioners of Worcester County, Maryland most recently adopted a Worcester County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan on February 20, 2018 by Resolution No. 18-6 (the Plan) which identifies specific actions for improving parks, recreation and open space preservation in Worcester County; and

WHEREAS, following local adoption and State approval of the Plan, a deficiency was identified with respect to the proximity analysis in the Recreation and Parks chapter of the Plan which did not previously recognize fields at the public and private schools in the County; and

WHEREAS, the Plan was been revised to update the proximity analysis to include fields at the public and private schools in the County which are available for public access through Joint Use Agreements; and

WHEREAS, the Worcester County Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on January 3, 2019, and considered public comment on the proposed revisions to the Worcester County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan after which they unanimously recommended adoption of the revisions to the Plan as proposed.

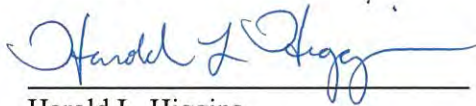
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the County Commissioners of Worcester County, Maryland hereby adopt the following proposed revisions to the *2017 Worcester County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan*:

1. Page 33/ Figure 2-9 Playing Field Access - Proximity Analysis to recognize fields at the public and private schools in the County;
2. Page 35/Figures 2-12, 2-13 and 2-14 - Proximity Analysis - Half Mile Service Area discussion to explain the apparent “gaps” in service;
3. Page 46-47/Tables 2-10A through 2-10D - revised to reference the Joint Use Agreements for fields at public and private schools in the County;
4. Page 68 - Updated total acreage of land protected by Lower Shore Land Trust; and
5. Appendix 2 - Copies of the Joint Use Agreements.

AND, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Resolution shall take effect upon its passage.


PASSED AND ADOPTED this 22nd day of January, 2019.


ATTEST:



Harold L. Higgins
Chief Administrative Officer

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF
WORCESTER COUNTY, MARYLAND


Diana Purnell, President



Joseph M. Mitrecic, Vice President


Anthony W. Bertino, Jr.


Madison J. Bunting, Jr.


James C. Church


Theodore J. Elder


Joshua C. Nordstrom

Worcester County Executive

Harold Higgins - Chief Administrative Officer
Kelly Shannahan - Assistant Chief Administrative Officer
Maureen Howarth - County Attorney
Kathy Whited - Budget Officer
Kim Moses - Public Information Officer

Worcester County Commissioners

Diana Purnell, District 2, President
Theodore “Ted” J. Elder, District 4, Vice President
Merrill W. Lockfaw Jr. – District 1
James “Bud” C. Church – District 3
Anthony “Chip” W. Bertino Jr. – District 5
Madison J. Bunting Sr. – District 6
Joseph M. Mitrecic – District 7

Worcester County Recreation & Parks Advisory Board

Albin Handy, Chair
Norman Bunting
Missy Denault
John Gehrig
Michael Hooks
Shawn Johnson
Chris Klebe

Worcester County Planning Commission

Mike Diffendal, Chair
Jay Knerr, Vice Chair
Betty Smith, Secretary
Brooks Clayville
Rick Wells
Jerry Barbierri
Marlene Ott

**Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks
Worcester County Department of Environmental Programs**



2017 Worcester County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan REVISION

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Chapter I: Introduction	2
Chapter II: Recreation Parks and Open Space	5
County Parks and Recreation Programs	8
Supply and Proximity Analysis	20
County Priorities	44
Public Participation	51
Chapter III: Natural Resource Conservation	56
Chapter IV: Agricultural Land Preservation	72
Appendix 1, Citizen Survey Comments.	82
Appendix 2, Joint Use Agreements	89

Executive Summary

Program Open Space law as most recently amended requires all Maryland counties to prepare local parks, recreation, and land preservation plans every five years. This is a pre-requisite for county participation in Program Open Space, which provides funding for land acquisition and capital improvements to parks. The last county plan was adopted May 11, 2012. State Guidelines require a new plan to be adopted by July 1, 2017.

The primary functions of the 2017 plan are to:

- Provide a brief update of the progress of parks and recreation since 2012. Analyze supply, identify deficiencies and describe goals for parks and recreation for the next 5 years, including a capital improvement plan.
- Provide a brief update of the progress of local agricultural and natural lands programs since 2012.

Chapter I provides a brief introduction to the county's geography and demographics.

Chapter II presents Worcester County's parks and recreation programming and a plan of action for development and direction for the next five years. Presented is supply and demand data, and an analysis of local needs for recreation land and facilities. .

Chapter III presents Worcester County's efforts to protect natural resource lands, and an analysis of performance and identification of needed improvements.

Chapter IV documents the progress made toward achievement of the agricultural land preservation goals identified in the 2012 County LPPRP

The key indicators of progress made since 2012 in land preservation:

- Over 700 acres annually were protected with various land protection programs.
- Less than 0.01% of the A-1 zone was subdivided for residential use.
- New zoning code was adopted in 2009 that continues to maintain the county's long-standing commitment to sound planning.

In conclusion, Worcester County has developed strong recreational and land preservation programs. The county recognizes that continued population growth (which is expected to enlarge the baby-boomer segment of the population, in particular) and development pressure necessitate continued support and development of appropriate recreational programming, as well as, continued county and state funding of land protection for agriculture and habitat preservation.

Chapter I: Introduction

Worcester County is the eastern most county in Maryland, with a large agricultural industry, and concentrated development on the coast that supports a significant tourism industry. The northeastern portion of the county serves as a second or retirement home for many. 21% of the population lives in Ocean Pines; 52% of the population resides in the northeastern quarter of the county, including Berlin, West Ocean City, Ocean Pines, and Ocean City (Figure 1-1).

Worcester County's population grew significantly from 1990 to 2000 (32.9%) and has continued to expand from 2000 to present (11%), most of the growth, and most of the population, in the northeastern part of the county. According to the Maryland Department of Planning's most recent projections (July 1, 2016), the current population is 51,444. Approximately 25% of the population is aged 65 or older (11% statewide are 65 or older)¹; 20% under age 19; 83% Caucasian, 14% African American, and 4% identifying as another race group².

It's important to note that population in Ocean City swells to 70,000, or more, on off-season weekends to up to 300,000 on summer weekends³. Assateague State Park and National Seashore and other campgrounds also attract another 100,000 in the summer months. This seasonal population places some demand on county resources, including recreation and parks facilities and programs, particularly in the northeastern portion of the county.

Worcester County, the 3rd largest county in the state of Maryland, is 303,900 acres, with over 100,000 acres in farming and over 150,000 acres in forest cover. The county continues to build on an existing system of preserved land through use of voluntary conservation easements. The county's focus has been on building on blocks of protected land in southern Chincoteague Bay and Pocomoke watersheds, for the sustenance of agriculture and natural resources on which the county's primary industries depend. Over 16,000 acres are protected with MALPF, Rural Legacy or other conservation or agricultural easements. The state of Maryland has protected 44,000 acres notably the Pocomoke State Forest and Chesapeake Forest Lands in the southern and western portions of the county through conservation easements and outright purchases.

There is abundant public access throughout the county to both passive and active recreation. The County owns and operates thirteen parks located throughout the county, as well as an indoor facility in Snow Hill. Other significant recreational opportunities are available to residents and visitors through the town (Pocomoke City, Snow Hill, Berlin, Ocean City) parks and park programs, Ocean Pines Recreation and Parks Department, and the State of Maryland, most notably Assateague Island State Park and Shad Landing/Pocomoke River State Park.

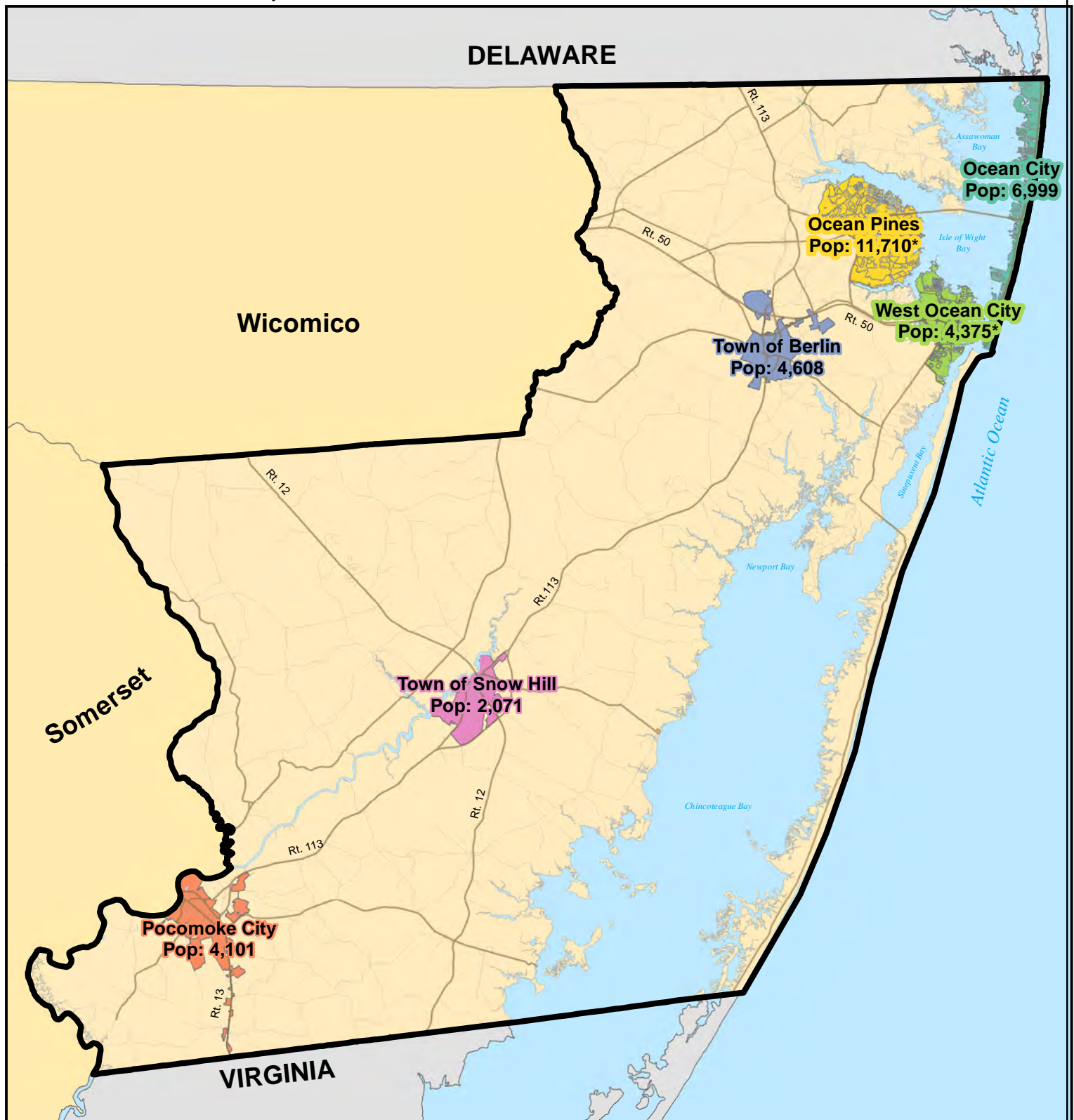
¹ Worcester County, Demographic and Socio-Economic Outlook. Maryland Department of Planning.

² Total Population by Race for Maryland's Jurisdictions, July 1, 2016. Maryland Department of Planning.

³ "Demoflush" data, 2006-2001. Worcester Co, Dept of Tourism

Figure 1-1 Population Distribution

DRAFT 2017 Worcester County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan



Total Worcester County Population: 51,444

Note: Population data is from the MDP 2016 Population Estimates.

* Population data is from the 2010 Census.



The 2017 *Worcester County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan* (2017 LPPRP) updates the county's 2012 *Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan* in accord with the state of Maryland's 2015 Guidelines and with Title 5, Subtitle 9 of the Natural Resources Article of the Maryland Annotated Code (Program Open Space Law). Current Program Open Space Law, requires each county and Baltimore City to prepare a parks, recreation and land preservation plan every five years.

The 2017 LPPRP addresses recreation, parks, agricultural land preservation and natural resource protection. It is a joint effort of Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks and Department of Environmental Programs. The Department of Recreation & Parks drafted Chapter II; the Department of Environmental Programs prepared the remaining chapters.

The purpose of the 2017 LPPRP is to:

- Address the recommendations for parks and recreation made in the State's 2015 *Land, Preservation and Recreation Plan*.
- Update parks and recreation inventory and the 15-year capital improvement program for short-, mid- and long-term.
- Provide a brief update of the progress of local agricultural and natural lands programs since 2012.

The 2017 LPPRP conforms with the Worcester County Comprehensive Plan (2006) and is a separate, functional plan as it is not specifically incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan.

The 2017 LPPRP is organized as follows:

Chapter II describes current recreational programming and facilities in detail. It also includes a proximity analysis and presents citizen survey results, and describes priorities for facility development for the next five years.

The county's top eight recreational facility and programming needs for the next five years are generally as follows:

1. To increase programming opportunities and meet local demand through the acquisition and development of additional field space in northern Worcester County.
2. To pursue the creation of passive recreational opportunities at Bishopville Waterfront Park.
3. Planning for, and development of, Grey's Creek Nature Park, in order to better serve passive recreational and educational needs.
4. Continued restoration and passive trail/access development at Ilia Fehrer Nature Preserve.
5. The creation and enhancement of trails throughout the park system.
6. The replacement of Stockton Park's playground.
7. Improvement of multipurpose field quality throughout the park system.
8. The development of additional parking at Northern Worcester Athletic Complex.

Chapter III and IV review the county's agricultural and natural resource lands protection programs' progress since the last plan was adopted in 2012.

Chapter II: Recreation, Parks, and Open Space

Overview

The 2017 *Worcester County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan* (2017 LPPRP) is a blueprint to guide recreational programming and land acquisition priorities over the next five years.

The purpose of this chapter is to:

- Describe state and county goals for recreational lands and programming;
- Illustrate how Worcester County's parks and recreational programming is compatible with the county's 2006 comprehensive plan;
- Describe parks and programming currently provided by the county;
- List new accomplishments since the adoption of the 2012 plan;
- Present a proximity analysis for land, facilities and rehabilitation;
- Describe the results of a citizen survey regarding needs and priorities for parks and recreation; and
- Identify the county's priorities for acquisition, facility development and rehabilitation.

The mission of the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks is to provide a variety of quality recreational programs, pristine parks, and facilities to enrich the lives of citizens.

Continued creation of recreational programming, and park development and maintenance should be a significant component of the county's public service to its citizens. Quality recreation programming and park facilities enhance healthy, vital towns, communities, and villages throughout Worcester County.

State Goals

Worcester County supports and promotes the state of Maryland's goals for recreation, parks, and open space preservation:

- "Make a variety of quality recreational environments and opportunities readily accessible to all of its citizens, and thereby contribute to their physical and mental well-being;
- Recognize and strategically use parks and recreation facilities as amenities to make communities, counties, and the state more desirable places to live, work and visit;
- Use state investment in parks, recreation, and open space to complement and mutually support the broader goals and objectives of local; comprehensive/master plans.
- To the greatest degree feasible, ensure that recreational land and facilities for local populations are conveniently located relative to population centers, are accessible without reliance on the automobile, and help to protect

- natural open spaces and resources;
- Complement infrastructure and other public investments and priorities in existing communities and areas planned for growth through investment in neighborhood and community parks and facilities; and,
- Continue to protect recreational open space and resource lands at a rate that equals or exceeds the rate that land is developed at a statewide level.”

Worcester County Recreation and Parks’ Goals

Worcester County’s parks and recreational programming goals are guided by the state’s goals and the goals and objectives of the county’s 2006 comprehensive plan.

The comprehensive plan’s goals include: to maintain and improve the county’s rural and coastal character, protect its natural resources and ecological functions, accommodate a planned amount of growth served by adequate public facilities, improve development’s compatibility and aesthetics, continue the county’s prosperous economy, and provide for resident’s safety and health.

The following objectives, stated in the 2006 comprehensive plan, direct the county’s recreation and parks programming:

1. Establish local standards for the creation, accessibility, and adequacy of public recreation facilities

2. Maintain and enhance the existing countywide recreation program
3. Develop programs and facilities able to meet diverse community recreation needs regardless of age, gender, income and abilities
4. Continue public participation in recreation program creation, operation and maintenance
5. Enhance public access to the ocean, bays and beaches
6. Plan for region-wide trail and bikeway system to link existing and new communities with commercial, institutional, cultural, and recreational activity centers (link county, state, and municipal parks and natural areas)
7. Integrate walking trails and bikeways into new developments’ greenway system
8. Plan new and renovated public facilities for multiple uses
9. Continue to require new development to provide for its internal passive and recreation needs
10. Require developers to pay for or provide the public recreation facilities necessary to support their development
11. Coordinate the county’s recreation program with the federal, state, and municipal parks and programs
12. Update and implement the land preservation and recreation plan as required by law

Figure 2-1 County Parks

DRAFT 2017 Worcester County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan

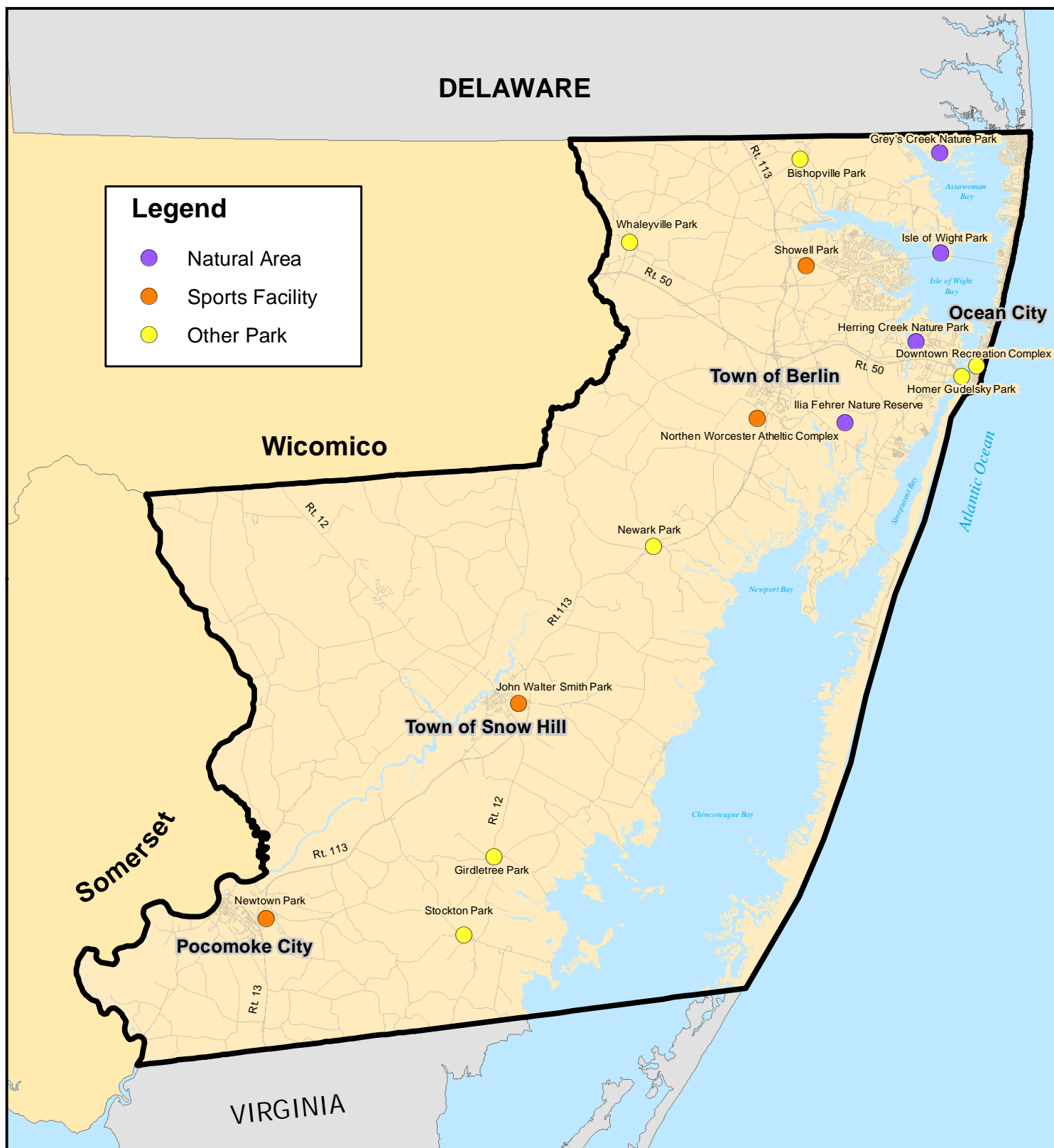


Table 2-1 Population Concentrations- Compiled from 2010 Census Data

City	Population
Pocomoke City	4,184
Towns	
Berlin	4,485
Ocean City	7,102
Snow Hill	2,103
Census-designated places	
Bishopville	531
Girdletree	149
Newark	339
Ocean Pines	11,710
Stockton	143
West Ocean City	3,311
Whaleville	124
Total Census Identified Population Centers	34,181
Total Worcester County Population	51,454
% Population in Census Identified Population Centers	66%

County Parks and Recreation Programs

This section describes Worcester County's recreational programs and park facilities including an update of the county's work, since 2012, to reach goals established in the 2012 *Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan*.

Parks/Facilities

As Table 2-1 indicates, Worcester County includes the city of Pocomoke, towns of Berlin, Ocean City and Snow Hill and seven additional 'Census – designated places' which include Bishopville, Girdletree, Newark, Ocean Pines, Stockton, West Ocean City and Whaleville. The combined population associated with these areas make up 66% of Worcester County's total population. It is important to note that past, present and future recreational facility

consideration have and will continue to take into account population metrics as a primary determinate of future development.

To date, The Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks has located major parks in planned population centers throughout the county. Additionally, Ocean City and Ocean Pines provide significant public recreational facilities and programs that support recreation in these densely populated locations. Small county parks are easily accessible to rural communities throughout the county (Figure 2-1).

Seven of the thirteen county parks are located in the northern part of Worcester County where most of the population is concentrated. Approximately 70% of Worcester's 50,000+ residents live in Berlin and to the north (Figure 1-1,

Chapter 1).

Since the *2012 Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan* was adopted, the county has mainly focused on park development and enhancements throughout the county. Improvements made since 2012 are as follow:

- In Northern Worcester Athletic Complex, two multipurpose fields have been transitioned to Bermuda grass, irrigation was added to the football field, and a 0.5-mile walking trail has been created. Both the Senior League and primary little league fields have been renovated and re-sodded. A planting project consisting of 24 trees occurred to provide shade for spectators. Finally, a black topped surface has been added in to provide ADA access to two remaining fields not serviced.
- In John Walter Smith Park a nine-hole disc golf course and a 1.2-mile walking trail were added. A tennis court renovation project and the creation of an additional nine-disc golf holes have been approved and will be completed in 2017. A new composite playground system was installed to replace the outdated playground and substantial repairs were made to the existing pavilion. The senior league baseball field was irrigated and Bermuda grass installed. Finally, a total of 68 shade trees have been planted.
- In Newtown Park a 0.5-mile walking trail was created amidst a five-acre tree planting project with complementary naturalized and wild flower areas. A one mile mountain bike trail was created within a forested area. Several upgrades were made to the playground; substantial repairs were made to the existing pavilion. Finally, the senior league baseball field and primary little league fields have been renovated and re-sodded.
- In Bishopville Park, nine native trees were added with educational signage. In addition, a large wildflower meadow, walking trail, a volleyball court and a soccer practice area have been created.
- In Showell Park, a volleyball court has been added in addition to a soccer practice area, the existing tennis courts have been completely renovated. We are currently in the process of establishing a walking trail.
- In Herring Creek Nature Park, a butterfly garden has been created in addition to an extensive wildflower planting. Bat houses were installed along with blue bird houses.
- Girdletree Park was created and opened to the public in 2013. This three-acre parcel, located in the Village of Girdletree, consists of a large composite playground system, a pavilion, naturalized areas and parking. The goal of the project was to create a recreational outlet for residents and visitors to the village while also attempting to build in sustainability. The grass parking lot features a reinforcement mesh which stabilizes the area for vehicles.

Ilia Fehrer Nature Preserve

In 2011, Worcester County obtained Ilia Fehrer Nature Preserve. This 420-acre property on Assateague Road (see Figure 2) includes headwaters of Ayres Creek and will be managed and protected in perpetuity as a nature reserve, in accordance with the conditions and restriction contained in the deed to the County for the property, the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) Final Guidelines, June 2003, and the federal CELCP grant award. The Maryland Coastal Bays Foundation (MCBF) is responsible for management of the preserve through an agreement with the county that was signed in 2011. Since that time planning and management has been on-going and the property is also being used for educational purposes by the organization. The Maryland Coastal Bays Program (MCBP) conducted a loblolly pine timber harvest in 2016 on a portion of the property as a first step to restoration. In cooperation with the county and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, MCBP is implementing restoration measures, as well as trails and access locations on the site. When open to the public, it will be available for use for passive enjoyment and environmental education for all ages.

Grey's Creek Nature Park

Grey's Creek Nature Park is a 574-acre parcel acquired in 2006 and located in the northeast of the county. The land was purchased by the state and transferred to the county with the intent to provide environmental education and passive recreation to the public, and to contribute to serving recreational needs in the northern area of the county.

In 2014 Maryland Coastal Bays Foundation (MCBF) and Worcester County entered a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) pertaining to the management of Grey's Creek Nature Park. The rationale was to leverage MCBP's expertise in site restoration and management and to promote environmental education in a manner consistent with Worcester County's 2006 MOU with the State of Maryland, which requires that the park provide public, passive recreation. As the only means of accessing the existing residential structure on the park property is through the Hidden Harbor neighborhood, MCBP arranged two community meetings with the residents in order to obtain general feedback and discuss public access. In late 2014, in response to the community's concern, MCBP and the county began working together to identify an alternate access option. In early 2015 direct access off of Williamsville Road was identified as the best access option. Locations for an upland trail and potential amenities have been identified. A Forest Stewardship Plan (FSP) for the site is under development, which will identify trail locations throughout the property, as well as describe woodland management actions.

In July of 2017, a request for technical assistance from DNR was signed by the County Commissioners. The purpose of the request is to have DNR evaluate the feasibility of the creation of water access and water trails. The initial site visit yielded promising potential, where two areas were tentatively identified for non-motorized water craft launches. DNR is currently in the process of compiling data. Once complete, all the potential recreational elements identified since

2008 will be placed in a comprehensive site analysis and conceptual plan, which will serve as the basis upon which a formal proposal will be developed.

The Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks and MCBP will work jointly on the preparation of the proposal and do so with technical assistance from Worcester County Department of Environment Programs and Department of Tourism. The finished submittal will account for sufficient funding, specific recommendations for land usage, and The Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks and MCBP considerations for programming with respect to environmental education opportunities. Finally, a suitable use for the existing house consistent with both the concerns of the community and the 2006 MOU will be determined. A 'pick list' of potential environmental based uses have been identified to date for inclusion in the final proposal, the County Commissioners will be called upon to finalize the final use(s). The proposal is scheduled to be complete by mid-2018.

Worcester County Recreation Center

The Worcester County Recreation Center located at John Walter Smith Park in Snow Hill has become a major recreational facility in Worcester County. This facility draws users from both within and outside of the county and region. The facility has contributed to the quality of life for Worcester County citizens. A study of the economic benefits of tournaments at the facility is underway by researchers at

Salisbury University. Total annual use of the facility appears to be growing. In 2014 the annual count of users was 13,644, and 2016 was 15,300⁴. The first half of 2017 saw 8,027 users. It is estimated that 90% of people using the facility are Worcester County residents.

Programs

Over the past five years, the county's recreational programming and administration has had a tremendous growth spurt. Table 2- 2 provides a comprehensive listing of recreational programming to date. New programs and events are indicated in red text. Effective marketing and social media has improved citizen awareness of these programs and events.

Program creation and enhancements are driven by program participant surveys administered at the conclusion of each respective program. In addition, the Worcester County Recreation & Parks Advisory Board provides feedback with respect to planning and development items. Finally, social media and the Worcester County Recreation & Parks website provide the means to provide updates and to receive comments on a continuous basis.

Since 2012, program participation has increased by 23.1 %, in excess of thirty programs have been added or expanded, and our list of special events and tournament offerings has continued to grow

Providing a variety of recreational opportunities to a diverse citizen population, continuing to meet the customer needs and serving the customers in a quality mode, remains a high priority in the Department's

⁴ Sign-in data collected by the Worcester Co Department of Recreation & Parks

program delivery as participation continues to grow.

The Worcester County Recreation Center (noted previously) provides recreational activities for all ages and various interests. A 6,000 square foot addition, which includes program space, a fitness area, and additional restrooms, was added in 2015-2016 at a cost of

\$1.48 million. This addition has allowed the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks to increase programming offered and participation numbers.

Table 2-2. Programs Offered by Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks.

PROGRAM	AGE	GENDER	CLASS	FORMAT	SEASON	CURRENT NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	CURRENT MULTIPLE PARTICIPANTS
YOUTH RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS							
Youth Outdoor Soccer	3+	Ind/B	Sp	Si	F	317 x 12 weeks	3,804
Youth Outdoor Soccer	3+	Ind/B	Sp	Si	Sp	232 x 12 weeks	2,784
Youth Indoor Soccer	3+	Ind/B	Sp	Si	W	300 x 12 weeks	3,600
Youth Basketball	5+	Ind/B	Sp	Si	F	45 x 12 weeks	540
Youth Basketball	5+	Ind/B	Sp	Si	W	155 x 12 weeks	1,860
Spike Express Youth Volleyball	9+	Ind/B	Sp	Si	W	26 x 12 weeks	312
Toddler Gym	18 – 48 months	Ind/B	So	S	Sp	18 x 12 weeks	216
Toddler Gym	18 – 48 months	Ind/B	So	S	W	24 x 12 weeks	288
Toddler Gym	18 – 48 months	Ind/B	So	S	F	25 x 12 weeks	300
Soccer – High School League	14 – 17	M/T	Sp	C	S	117 x 8 weeks	936
Field Hockey Clinic	5 – 13	Ind/B	Sp	Si	F	15 x 6 weeks	90
Tumble Tots	2 – 4	Ind/B	So/Sp	S/Si	W	11 x 12 weeks	132
Little All-Stars	2 – 4	Ind/B	So/Sp	S/Si	W	12 x 12 weeks	144
AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS							
After School Track	9+	Ind/B	Sp	Si	W	25 x 6 weeks	150
After School Zone	5+	Ind/B	Sp/So/A/C	S/Si	F/W/Sp	66 X 32 weeks	2112
Before Care	5+	Ind/B	So/F	S/Si	F/W/Sp	8 x 32 weeks	256
After School Dodgeball	9+	Ind/B	Sp	Si	Sp	18 x 6 weeks	108
After School Cheerleading	5+	Ind/B	Sp	Si	F	34 x 6 weeks	204
Kids Zumba	5 – 8	Ind/B	Sp	S/Si	W	21 x 12 weeks	252
After School Canoe	9 – 13	Ind/B	Sp/So	S/Si	Sp	15 x 6 weeks	90
After School Canoe	9 – 13	Ind/B	Sp/So	S/Si	F	15 x 6 weeks	90
After School Tennis	5 – 13	Ind/B	Sp	Si	Sp	10 x 6 weeks	60

PROGRAM	AGE	GENDER	CLASS	FORMAT	SEASON	CURRENT NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	CURRENT MULTIPLE PARTICIPANTS
After School Tennis	5 – 13	Ind/B	Sp	Si	F	15 x 6 weeks	90
After School Field Hockey	5 – 13	Ind/B	Sp	Si	Sp	11 x 6 weeks	66
After School Field Hockey	5 – 13	Ind/B	Sp	Si	F	13 x 6 weeks	78
ADULT RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS							
Adult Basketball League	18+	Team/M	Sp	C	F	43 x 12 weeks	516
Futsal League	18+	Team/M	Sp	C	W	77 x 12 weeks	924
Church Softball League	16+	Team/B	Sp	C	S	100 x 12 weeks	1,200
Adult Recreation Volleyball	14+	Ind/B	Sp	S/Si	YR		947
Adult Volleyball League	14+	Team/M	Sp	C	W	58 x 12 weeks	696
Adult Volleyball League	14+	Team/M	Sp	C	F	40 x 12 weeks	480
Adult Recreation Pickleball	18+	Ind/B	Sp	S/Si	F/W/Sp		305
Adult Recreation Indoor Soccer	14+	Ind/B	Sp	S/Si	YR		1,370
Adult Golf League	18+	Ind/B	Sp/So	S/Si	Sp/S	24 x 16	384
Flag Football League	18+	Team/M	Sp	C	Sp	56 x 12 weeks	672
Soccer League	18+	Team/M	Sp	C	Sp	63 x 12 weeks	756
FITNESS							
BOSU Fitness	18+	Ind/B	F	Si	F	22 x 12 weeks	264
Power Circuit Training	18+	Ind/B	F	Si	S	24 x 12 weeks	288
Total Body Bootcamp	18+	Ind/B	F	Si	W	30 x 12 weeks	360
Early Morning Fitness	45+	Ind/B	F	Si	F/W/S	78 x 12 weeks	936
Enhance Fitness	45+	Ind/B	F	Si	Sp	12 x 12 weeks	144
Tai Chi	45+	Ind/B	F	Si	Sp	8 x 6 weeks	48
Tai Chi	45+	Ind/B	F	Si	W	15 x 12 weeks	180
Zumba Gold	45+	Ind/B	F	Si	W	9 x 6 weeks	54
Zumba Gold	45+	Ind/B	F	Si	Sp	13 x 12 weeks	156
PiYo	18+	Ind/B	F	Si	Sp	17 x 8 weeks	136
Zumba	18+	Ind/B	F	Si	Sp	24 x 6 weeks	144
Fitness Membership	16+	Ind/B	F	Si	YR		407
AQUATICS							
Aqua-Nuts	18+	Ind/B	F/So	So/Si	YR	21 x 12 weeks	252
Youth Swimming Program (3 sessions)	3+	Ind/B	Sp	Si	S	146 x 2 weeks	292
SUMMER CAMPS							
Baseball Camp	6+	Ind/B	Sp	Si	S	23 x 4 days	92
Basketball Camp	6 - 9	Ind/B	Sp	Si	S	33 x 5 days	165
Early Bird Camp	6+	Ind/B	Sp	Si	S	186 x 5 days	930
Field Hockey Camp	6+	Ind/B	Sp	Si	S	32 x 5 days	160
Flag Football Camp	6+	Ind/B	Sp	Si	S	49 x 5 days	245

PROGRAM	AGE	GENDER	CLASS	FORMAT	SEASON	CURRENT NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	CURRENT MULTIPLE PARTICIPANTS
Lacrosse Camp	9 - 13	Ind/B	Sp	Si	S	22 x 5 days	110
Off-Site Day Camps	9 - 13	Ind/B	Sp	Si	S	16 x 1 days	16
Outdoor Adventure Camp	6+	Ind/B	Sp	Si	S	27 x 5 days	135
Recreation Sports Camp	6+	Ind/B	Sp	Si	S	155 x 5 days	775
Robotics Camp	7+	Ind/B	Sp	Si	S	16 x 5 days	80
Soccer Camp	6+	Ind/B	Sp	Si	S	65 x 5 days	325
Sports Combo Camp	6+	Ind/B	Sp	Si	S	71 x 5 days	355
Sunset Camp	6+	Ind/B	Sp	Si	S	194 x 5 days	970
Tennis Camp	6+	Ind/B	Sp	Si	S	74 x 5 days	370
Theme Week Camp	6+	Ind/B	Sp	Si	S	41 x 5 days	205
Track Camp	6+	Ind/B	Sp	Si	S	36 x 5 days	180
SPECIAL EVENTS							
American Girl Motorcoach Trip	All Ages	Ind/B	So	So	F	37 x 1 day	37
Cherry Blossom Motorcoach Trip	All Ages	Ind/B	So	So	Sp	35 x 1 day	35
General Health Fair	All Ages	Ind/B	So	So	F	117 x 1 day	117
New York City Own Your Own Motorcoach Trip	All Ages	Ind/B	So	So	F	51 x 1 day	51
New York City Own Your Own Motorcoach Trip	All Ages	Ind/B	So	So	Sp	53 x 1 day	53
New York City Rockettes Motorcoach Trip	All Ages	Ind/B	So	So	F	43 x 1 day	43
New York City Own Your Own or Rockettes Motorcoach Trip	All Ages	Ind/B	So	So	F	33 x 1 day	33
Philadelphia Flower Show Motorcoach Trip	All Ages	Ind/B	So	So	Sp	48 x 1 day	48
Tee Off for Youth Golf Tournament	18+	Team/B	Sp/So	So/C	F	72 x 1 day	72
Track or Treat Event	All Ages	Ind/B	So	So	F	844 x 1 day	844
Zombie Fun Run/Walk	All Ages	Ind/B	Sp/So	So/C	F	51 x 1 day	51

Key to abbreviations:

Class: A=Arts; C=Crafts; F=Fitness; Sp=Sports; So=Social;

Format: S=Social; Si=Self Improvement; C=Competitive

Gender: F=Female; M=Male; B=Both; Ind=Individual; T=Team

Season: F=Fall; W=Winter; Sp=Spring; S=Summer; YR=Year Round

Nature Education

The Maryland Partnership for Children in Nature is a public and private partnership that has worked collaboratively to provide opportunities for children to play and learn outdoors and promote environmental literacy. The Partnership was instrumental in helping to update the State's pre-K – 12 environmental literacy education program and to pass the first environmental literacy graduation requirement in the nation.

Since 2012, 250 students and 300 recreational program participants have been involved in a variety of nature education activities. The Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks has not only worked with local schools but has developed in-house programming in order to promote understanding of the importance of sustainability and environmental stewardship. Providing insights into the processes that compose our natural systems leads directly to a greater appreciation for it. In 2012, Pocomoke Middle school assisted with our Newtown Park Improvement Plan, the scope of which included the conversion of approximately 5 acres of open parkland into a mass planting of native tree species and naturalized areas as a basis upon which to develop a passive trail system. Since 2015 The Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks has worked annually with Stephen Decatur Middle School staff and students on a variety of service projects which have provided outdoor experiences and learning. The planning efforts have been student driven and have included developing park amenities, creating and placement of educational signage, the creation of butterfly gardens and wildflower

meadows. In addition, park clean ups have been arranged and construction projects such as the creation of benches and birdhouses have been pursued. Projects have been completed at Bishopville Park and Herring Creek Nature Park. The Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks and Stephen Decatur Middle School have identified Newark Park as the location for the next project and the planned improvements will be completed in the spring of 2018.

On the programming side, 192 square feet of raised gardens have been constructed and placed adjacent to the recreation center (Snow Hill). Over the growing season, children prepare and plant the beds with a variety of fruits and vegetables and harvest the yield on an ongoing basis for their personal enjoyment. The Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks also has developed a tree identification module where 15- 20 trees are tagged, identification keys are developed and participants go through the process of identification as well as learn practical uses for trees in a landscape. Furthermore, as will be discussed in more detail later, since 2008, a strong emphasis in developing sustainability has occurred within spaces throughout the park system not being used for active recreation. These spaces have been identified over the past several years as a means to satisfy the increasing need for trail development.

In addition, as Greys Creek Nature Park and Ilia Fehrer Nature Preserve (described earlier) move through their development stages, many significant opportunities to involve and educate the public will emerge.

Special Events

Since the 2012 LPPRP adoption, the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks has increased its special events offerings, as show in Table 2-3.

Some of these events have been developed to help provide families with ways to spend quality time with one another. Those include the Track or Treat Event and Motorcoach Trips.

Some events help to provide scholarship funds to youth who show a demonstrated need during our year round youth program. Those events include our Tee Off for Youth Golf Tournament and our Zombie Fun Run/Walk.

Other special events, which are conducted in collaboration with other state and county agencies, are: Worcester County Fair, National Night out Programs, and the Tortoise & Hare Dare Walk/Run.

Table 2-3. Special Events

- General Health Fair
- Zombie Fun Run/Walk
- Track or Treat Event
- Tee Off for Youth Golf Tournament
- Tree of Life
- High School Sports Play Days
- Various Sports Tournaments

50+ Adult Programs

The “baby boomer” population continues to increase in Worcester County. According to most recent estimates by the Maryland Department of Planning, the age group of 65+ is approximately 25% of the county’s

population; in 1990 this group was 17% of the county’s population. To meet the needs of the increasing number of “boomers,” a variety of programs are included in the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks offerings such as walking, jogging, or running on our indoor track in the Worcester County Recreation Center in Snow Hill. Pickleball courts have been added to the recreation center, and also pickleball lines have been added to outdoor courts in Showell Park and John Walter Smith Park. In addition, fitness and aquatics programs are offered that are tailored towards this age group. They include Early Morning Fitness, Tai Chi, Zumba Gold, and Aqua-Nuts. The new weight room in the Recreation Center can be used for workouts that can be geared to the individual by our Program Managers. The goal is to encourage participation of this age group in programs and classes to help keep them active and moving.

Adult Programs

Participation in adult programs has been increasing in recent years due to new program offerings. At the Worcester County Recreation Center, the staff emphasizes these new program offerings through innovative marketing to attract new participation in this age group. These offerings include soccer, softball, basketball, aquatics, volleyball, pickleball, futsal, flag football as well as walking and general fitness programs. Competitive and non-competitive leagues have been incorporated as well over the past years, as shown in Table 2 – 4.

The goal is to meet adults’ recreational needs and make them aware of the many life-long recreational opportunities available.

Children's Programs

Recreational programs for children ages 18 months – 4 years are listed in Table 2-5. Early childhood programs in sports and socialization provide opportunities for motor skill development, school readiness, and social development. The Worcester County Recreation Center houses new and exciting programs for children and their families. Early childhood programs should continue to grow as the demand for recreational programs continues to increase in the county. Programming that encourages young children to develop movement and social skills will be a new arena for the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks to embrace.

The Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks hosts a Toddler Gym program three times a year. During this program, children interact with each other providing them with necessary social time. A variety of stations, games, and activities are provided for parents to interact with their toddlers, in order to help develop their child's motor skills.

In addition to Toddler Gym, the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks also offers the Little All-Stars programs, which focuses on starting to learn the basic skills of different sports, such as soccer, basketball, baseball, and tennis. This program will introduce children to skill development and teamwork while enhancing self confidence and social interaction.

Tumble Tots is a new program to help introduce young children to the fundamentals of gymnastics, while improving their flexibility and coordination skills.

Table 2-4. Adult Recreational Programming

Water Exercise Class	Pickleball
Men's Slow Pitch Softball	Volleyball League
Fitness Programs	Recreation Volleyball
Walking Programs	Futsal League
Recreation Basketball	Golf League
Basketball League	Recreational Soccer
Flag Football League	Soccer Leagues

Youth Programs

The purpose of the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks's sports programming is to encourage physical participation, positive sportsmanship, self-esteem and knowledge of recreational skills. Non-competitive programs for youth in pre-kindergarten through high school are currently provided to Worcester County and out-of-county residents. Outdoor soccer, indoor soccer, basketball, volleyball, track and field, aquatics, after school programs, and summer camps, are examples of the programs currently offered at the Worcester County Recreation Center, listed in Table 2-5.

Table 2-5. Ages 18 months through 17 Recreation Programming

- After School Recreation Programs
- Youth Swimming
- Youth Recreation and Sports Programs and Leagues
- Summer Recreation and Sports Camps
- Track and Field
- Fitness Classes
- Toddler Recreation Program
- Toddler Sports Programs

Volunteer coaches are a necessity and serve as a basis for these programs to be provided to the children. Volunteers are selected based on knowledge of the programmatic area and the positive impact they will have on participants and the overall program. All volunteer coaches are required to have a background check completed prior to working with the youth participants. Coaches are also trained by a program manager on rules, expectations, and program goals. We also offer the volunteer coaches the opportunity to be a certified volunteer coach through the National Alliance for Youth Sports. In addition to the training, a Coach's Code of Conduct is signed by each volunteer coach. These volunteer coaches are encouraged to focus on developing a players' skill level through practice and game playing during the program. The Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks philosophy of every child will play regardless of experience and ability level is practiced in all youth sports programs. Continuing to develop a child's skill level, knowledge, sportsmanship, and self-esteem will be an ongoing objective for the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks. In addition, the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks conforms with and promotes the Americans with Disabilities Act in accommodating all potential participants.

Camps

The popularity of all-day camps is on the rise. Parents are looking for programs that will allow their child to be a part of a structured recreational camp in a safe environment during the work day. Over the past few years, a camp schedule has been developed in order to provide parents with a multitude of time choices

in order to meet their schedules.

Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks strives to offer diversity in camp offerings. These camps include Sunset Camp, Early Bird Camp, Tennis Camp, Soccer Camp, Basketball Camp, Volleyball Camp, Baseball Camp, Sports Combo Camp, Recreation Sports Camp, Track Camp, Outdoor Adventure Camp, Theme Week Camp, and Flag Football Camp.

In addition to traditional sports and recreation camps, the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks has added robotics camps to the program offering list. This addition was to help reach participants who may not be interested in an athletic camp.

In all of our camps the focus is based on sportsmanship and teamwork. We want everyone to have a positive experience while learning fundamentals.

The Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks received certification from the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to conduct all-day sports camps beginning in July 2005.

Financial Assistance

Financial assistance is available to all youth who wish to participate in the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks programs. To assist parents, legal guardians and youth the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks staff uses the criteria for financial assistance qualification that is used by the Worcester County Board of Education for the Free and Reduced Lunch Program. The Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks must be provided with the paperwork from the School Board indicated that they have qualified for the Free and Reduced

Lunch Program to receive the discounted rate.

In addition, the department implemented a reduced fee for the second child and additional children of each family with multiple youth participants in the county recreation programs.

The Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks has a strong commitment to including all youth who wish to participate in county recreation programs.

Seasonal Population Demands

The Ocean City, national seashore and state park beaches and Ocean City boardwalk are the primary recreational resources used by the seasonal population influx of up to 300,000 on summer weekends. Additional programming, not necessarily managed by Worcester County, also fulfills the seasonal demand. The Ocean City Recreation and Parks Department offers summer camps, ocean and beach recreational programs and many special events during the summer to meet the demands of the seasonal population. Likewise, there are many summer recreational opportunities such as the numerous aquatics programs offered by the Ocean Pines Recreation & Parks Department.

The Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks is host to several spring, summer and fall softball tournaments at various parks located in the northern part of the county.

Additionally, county youth summer recreational camps are offered at the Worcester County Recreation Center (Snow Hill) and the Northern Worcester Athletic Complex (Berlin) that

accommodate local as well as seasonal population.

Program Open Space and County Investment in Worcester County Municipalities

The Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks Director presents the municipalities and the County's Program Open Space Annual Program and their request for funding to the Worcester County Recreation & Parks Advisory Board members. The Advisory Board then makes recommendations for funding allocations to the Worcester County Commissioners. The County Commissioners make the final decision on the allocations for the County and the municipality park improvement allocations.

Worcester County recognizes the need for recreational facilities and space in the municipalities and in the past would allocate POS funds to each municipality for park land acquisition and development. The significant reduction in POS appropriations resulted in no appropriations to the municipalities for several years. However, \$20,000 was appropriated for each municipality in FY18.

The County has encouraged the municipalities to take advantage of the Community Parks & Playground Grants in lieu of POS funding. The municipalities have obtained Community Parks & Playground Grants, with total funding in the amount of \$647,355. This resulted in seven new open space park lands and park development projects for Worcester County citizens. Since 2012: the Town of Ocean City has received \$269,500 for three separate projects, the Town of

Berlin has received \$362,855, also for three projects, and the Town of Pocumoke, \$15,000 for a single project.

While the Ocean Pines Association's parks are not funded by the County as Ocean Pines is not an incorporated municipality, Ocean Pines has a multitude of recreational facilities. These include a community center, tennis courts, paddleball courts, swimming pools, parks, bike paths, a marina, baseball/softball fields, basketball courts, a golf course and playgrounds. Some facilities are open to the public. Other amenities have use requirements.

Supply and Proximity Analysis

This section of Chapter II includes:

Supply: An inventory of recreational lands and facilities currently available in Worcester County.

Demand: An assessment and estimates of public demand for specific recreational activities, based on a survey.

Proximity analysis: An analysis of needs for additional land and facilities.

County priorities: Identification of priorities for land acquisition, facility development, and rehabilitation designed to meet the needs identified.

Supply

An inventory of the lands and facilities available to support specific recreational is shown in Tables 2-10, A – D, provided at the end of this chapter. This is a list of all public recreational lands and facilities maintained in and by the county, municipalities and Ocean Pines Association. The facilities are described in detail below, as well, with focus on

the county-owned and operated facilities.

Worcester County Parks

Worcester County's population is concentrated in the towns of Pocumoke City and Snow Hill in the central and southern part of the county. In the northern portion of the county, population is concentrated in the towns of Berlin and Ocean City and also the unincorporated Ocean Pines and West Ocean City. 21% of the population lives in Ocean Pines; 52% of the population resides in the northeastern quarter of the county, including Berlin, West Ocean City, Ocean Pines, and Ocean City. The county's large parks: Newtown, John Walter Smith, Northern Worcester Athletic Complex, and Showell Park were developed to provide recreation needs, across the county, where populations are most concentrated. Smaller unincorporated communities have each been outfitted with 'Neighborhood' parks to directly serve the recreational needs of their citizens.

Northern Worcester County

The northern portion of Worcester County is the location of most of the county's population, the surge in summer population, and also is the planned primary future growth area in Worcester County (Figure 1-1, Chapter 1). This area includes Ocean City, West Ocean City, Ocean Pines, and Berlin. Figure 2-2 shows this area of the county and the parks that serve this area. As intensive residential and commercial development in northern Worcester County continues, planning for adequate access to waterfront for active and passive recreation is important. In addition, providing for active recreation

and a variety of programming for this growing population is important.

As discussed earlier, Greys Creek Nature Park, located in northeastern Worcester County, will eventually provide passive recreational and environmental educational opportunities, including water access and water trails, possibly.

Homer Gudelsky Park is a 1-acre parcel of sandy beach located at the end of Route 707, Old Bridge Road, in West Ocean City. The land is adjacent to the Ocean City Inlet on the Sinepuxent Bay affords a spectacular vista of natural features, as well as the Harry Kelley Memorial Bridge. An ongoing beach replenishment program has been established for this park, as sand dredged from the Shantytown Channel will be pumped on an annual basis, or as needed, onto the property. Beach replenishment and regular channel dredging is key in maintaining the recreational benefits of the ocean and the bays in northern Worcester County. Worcester County continues to work with multiple state and federal agencies to ensure adequate maintenance of beaches and boating access. The park plays a key role.

The Isle of Wight Nature Park is a twelve-acre wildlife sanctuary. With observation piers and an area to launch canoes and kayaks, this park offers opportunity for both wildlife appreciation and protection. Located at the intersection of Route 90 and Saint Martins Neck Road, in Bishopville, visitors can view both the Isle of Wight Bay and the mouth of the Saint Martin River. Formerly a part of the Isle of Wight Wildlife Management Area, creation of this park was a joint project

of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Worcester County.

The Herring Creek Nature Park provides a natural, bay front setting for passive recreation, including a pond, a wildflower meadow, a grassy knoll and wooded trails.

Showell Park in Showell, provides a softball/baseball complex while Northern Worcester Athletic Complex in Berlin, provides softball/baseball as well as soccer/lacrosse fields and a football field. A feasibility study is underway to explore construction of additional multi-purpose fields and parking areas, possibly at these two parks, along with fitness trails.

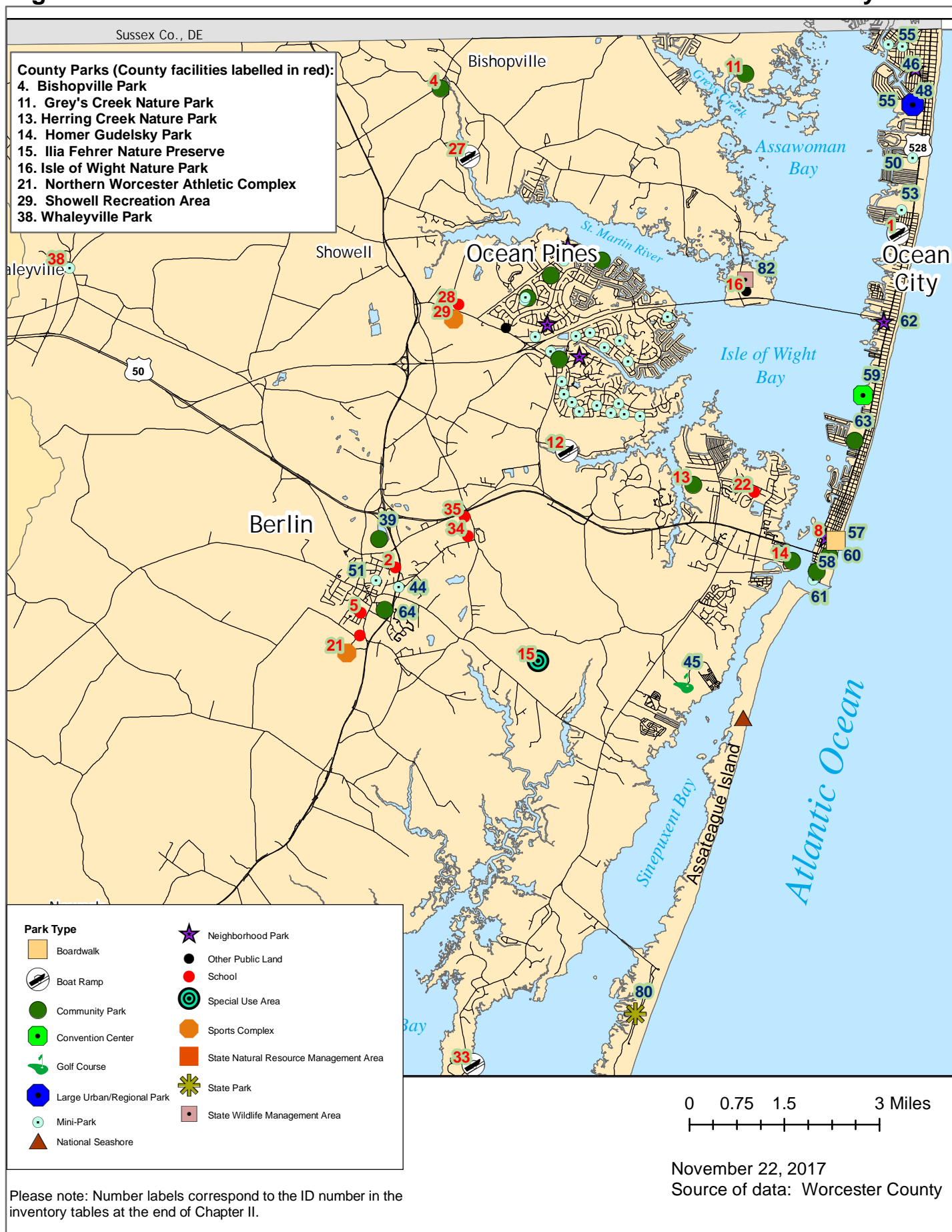
Two neighborhood parks, in Bishopville and Whaleyville, unincorporated villages, provide nearby recreation opportunity to these communities.

Beach replenishment and regular channel dredging are key to maintaining the recreational benefits of the ocean and the bays in northern Worcester County. Worcester County continues to work with multiple state and federal agencies to ensure adequate maintenance of beaches and boating access.

Non –County Recreational Facilities

Assateague State and National Parks provide beach and bay access to hundreds of thousands of users annually for swimming, fishing, boating/kayaking and other passive uses. Although the number one recreational attraction is the ocean beach, The Town of Ocean City includes 15 recreational sites and parks available for public use by both visitors

Figure 2-2. Parks and Recreation Facilities in Northern Worcester County



and year-round residents, including ball fields, crabbing and fishing, walking and jogging, picnic shelters, playgrounds and other recreational offerings.

Programming in exercise, fitness, swimming, creative arts and other areas as well as special events and outings are also offered. The town is in the process of developing a Recreation and Parks Master Plan. The Town of Berlin offers residents and visitors three parks, including a new park, still under construction located at a former poultry processing plant in the town. The park currently offers passive recreational uses. The Ocean Pines Association manages 14 parks available generally for public use to both residents of Ocean Pines and the area. There are seven (7) locations for boat/kayak launch, multiple short walking trails, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, and other amenities. Extensive programming is offered as well.

Central Worcester County

Central Worcester County's population center is Snow Hill. Figure 2-3 shows parks that serve this area. The Worcester County Recreation Center at John Walter Smith Park, located in Snow Hill serves the local population while also drawing visitors from the Delaware and the Eastern Shore of Virginia. The 36,000 square foot gymnasium provides a home for indoor track, soccer, basketball, volleyball, pickleball, and other sports.

As noted earlier, in 2016, the county opened a 6,000 square foot addition to the recreation center in Snow Hill, MD. This new space has allowed for more programs to be offered to citizens of Worcester County and the surrounding area. The addition includes a weight

room, aerobics room, conference room, childcare room, and additional bathrooms with a shower. In addition, the recreation center is the central administrative base for the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks.

A sports complex at this location also provides recreational resources to the citizens in the central part of Worcester County by providing multipurpose fields, baseball/softball fields, a playground, pavilion area, Frisbee golf course, outdoor basketball courts, sand volleyball court, and tennis courts.

Two neighborhood parks also provide recreational resources to the citizens in the central part of Worcester County. Girdletree Park includes a playground, pavilion, and picnic tables. The new park can easily be reached with a minimal walk or bicycle ride. Newark Park provides recreational facilities in the village of Newark.

Non –County Recreational Facilities

The Town of Snow Hill offers three (3) municipal parks. Byrd Park is the largest of the three town parks in Snow Hill and is equipped with a concession stand, 2 large pavilions, an eco-friendly playground and large expanses of green grass to accommodate festivals and specials events. Additionally, boaters will find ramps for canoes, kayaks, and motor boats. There is dockage available along with water, electricity, comfort stations, lighted parking lots, and spacious picnic areas. Just up the river from Byrd Park lies Sturgis Park. This charming spot is a perfect venue for evening dances in the summer time, church picnics, and special community

events. Snow Hill has a deep water port, with pump out stations, restrooms, and overnight availability for docking. Electric and water are available along with comfort stations and lighted parking lots. Finally, there exists Fisher Park, a small, simple space, equipped with two picnic tables.

Southern Worcester County

Pocomoke City is the population hub of southern Worcester County. Figure 2-4 shows the locations of parks serving this area. Newtown Park is a 58-acre parcel of land developed as an athletic complex to serve this portion of the county. One highlight of Newtown Park is an abandoned gravel pit that now serves as a scenic pond. Citizens use this section of Newtown Park as a passive park for fishing, walking or jogging. Additionally, a mountain bike trail system has been developed along this picturesque pond. A naturalized area has also been developed with a short walking trail and benches.

Newtown Park offers opportunities for recreational programs as well: baseball/softball fields, multipurpose fields, playground, and pavilion area.

A neighborhood park in the village of Stockton includes a playground and pavilion area.

Non –County Recreational Facilities

The scenic Pocomoke River is the setting for the Pocomoke River State Park which includes Shad Landing and Milburn Landing.

Located within the 15,000 wooded acres of Pocomoke State Forest in the Southwestern section of Worcester County the park provides a base for a vast array of outdoor and tourist activities. The forest is famous for its stands of loblolly pine and for its cypress swamps which border the wild and scenic Pocomoke River. The park's combination of swamp, uplands and 13 miles in biking and walking trails offers visitors the opportunity to experience a great variety of plant and animal life, including white dogwood and pink laurel in the spring, river otters and bald eagles, and over 50 species of fish.

Pocomoke River State Park offers boating opportunity, boat rental, camp fire programs, camp sites, park store, dump station, food & beverage, fishing, flat water canoeing, hiking trails, electrical hook ups, picnic areas, playgrounds, picnic shelters, swimming pool, and nature center.

Cypress Park, the municipal park in Pocomoke City, offers a playground, tennis courts and a beautiful 1.5 mile nature trail which begins on the city dock and winds around Stevenson's Pond to Winter Quarters Landing. The trail is enhanced by several sections of floating boardwalk, exercise stations, a 57-foot pedestrian bridge, 260-foot fishing pier, gazebo and canoe launch sites.

The Lower Shore YMCA in Pocomoke City, Maryland, bolsters the supply of recreational facilities in the southern section of the county. Amenities included are a fitness center, three gymnasiums, and an indoor swimming

Figure 2-3. Parks and Recreation Facilities in Central Worcester County

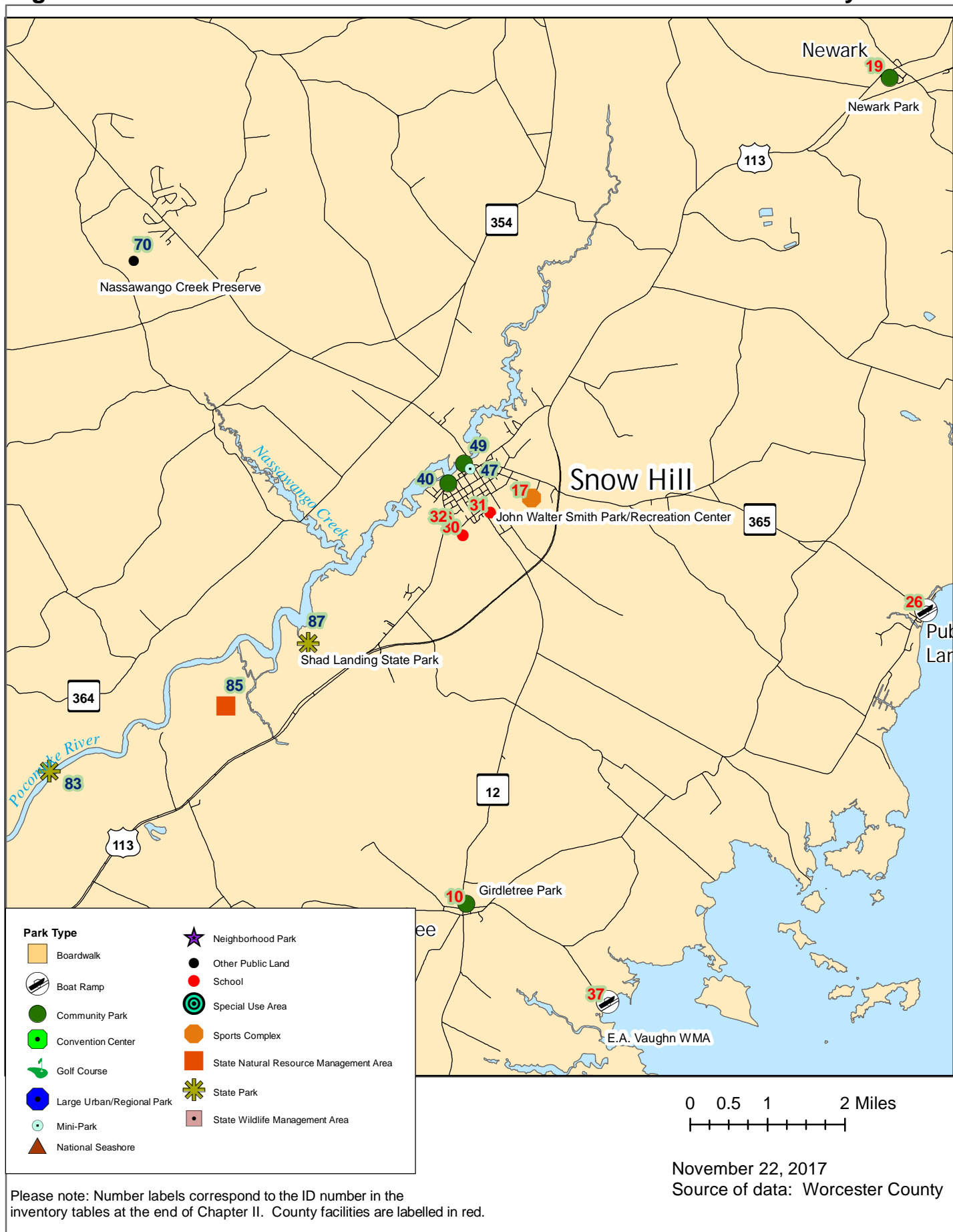
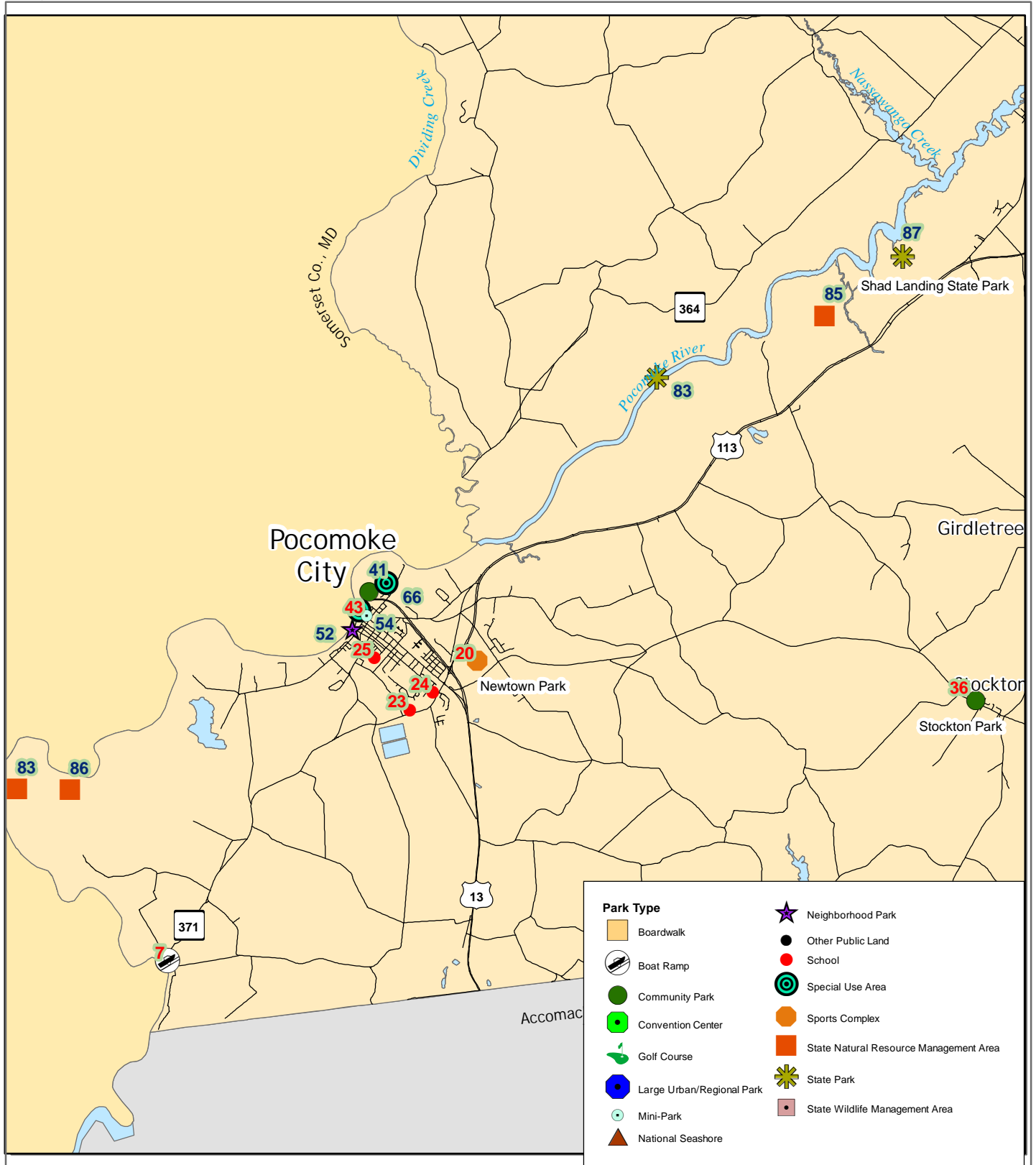


Figure 2-4. Parks and Recreation Facilities in Southern Worcester County



0 0.75 1.5 3 Miles

November 22, 2017
Source of data: Worcester County

Please note: Number labels correspond to the ID number in the inventory tables at the end of Chapter II. County facilities are labelled in red.

pool. In addition, zip lining, 4.7 miles of bike trails, and a multipurpose field are offered in order to promote outdoor recreation.

Playgrounds

Several playgrounds in Worcester County parks have been installed / revitalized in recent years. All new playgrounds must meet or exceed Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) guidelines and American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) standards. In addition to meeting CPSC guidelines and ASTM standards, all new installations are required to meet the accessibility standards set by the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). To date there exist a total of ten composite playground systems located throughout county parks. Three were funded with Community Parks and Playground grant funds, while the remaining seven were funded by Program Open Space along with Worcester County funds.

Since 2012 the county has replaced a playground at John Water Smith Park and added a playground as part of our Girdletree Park Development Project. In addition, the FY2018 Parks Budget will include a request for a new composite playground replacement at our Stockton Park location.

Trails

In an effort to build in sustainability and provide educational opportunities, a significant effort to develop nature/walking trails as a passive option for all ages has been emphasized for all parks, where feasible. Bishopville Park now includes a walking trail which

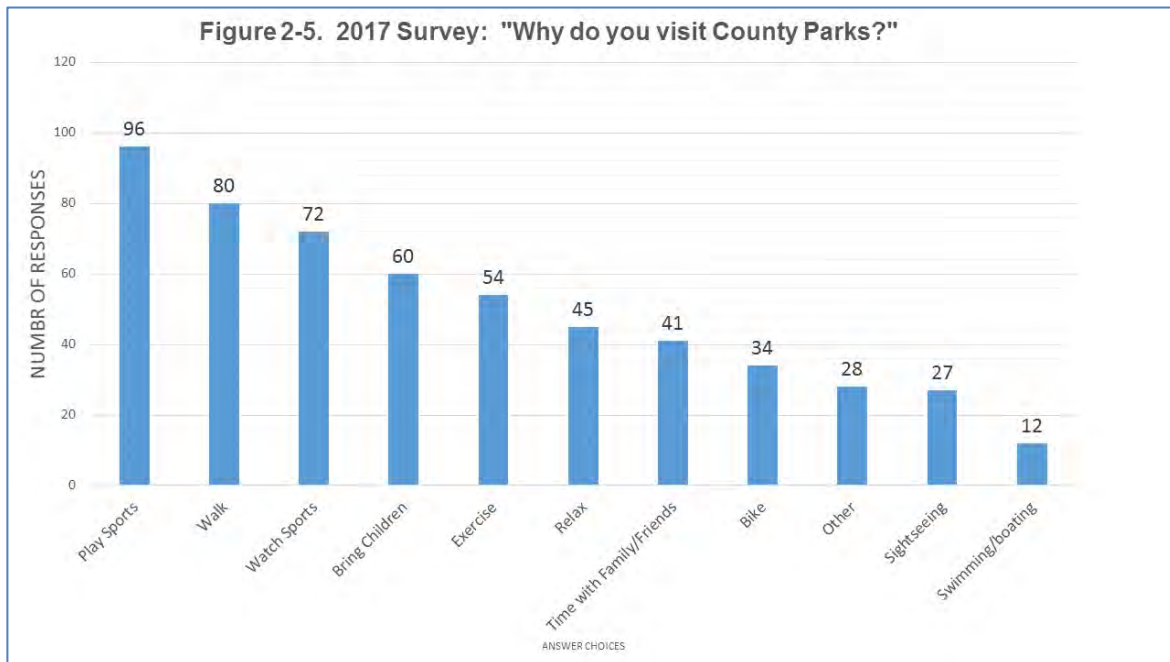
navigates the small park taking the user through a newly planted wildflower area and tree plantings with educational signage. In addition to Bishopville, since 2012, passive walking trails have been created at John Walter Smith Park in Snow Hill (1.2 miles), Newtown Park in Pocomoke (0.5 miles) and Northern Worcester Athletic Complex in Berlin (0.5 miles). Currently, the county is considering walking trails for Showell Park (0.5 miles) and Stockton Park (0.25 miles). Finally, larger trail systems within Greys Creek Nature Park and Ilia Fehrer Nature Preserve are being planned.

Playing Fields

Since 2012, a notable effort to improve the County's baseball and softball fields has occurred. The primary concern with the maintenance of ball fields, is the creation of large build ups of soil along the perimeter of the soil infield and grass outfield transition commonly referred to as 'lips'. Over the past five years, Parks staff has removed the turf and significant soil build ups, re-grade and sod the areas back to regulation dimensions. As of the fall of 2012, twenty-two fields have been addressed. At present, all playing surfaces on all baseball/softball infields located at the four major parks have been capped with Diamond Tex infield mix to improve playability, all existing grass infields re-sodded, and two grass infields added.

Local Needs for Recreational Lands and Facilities

Local needs for recreational lands and facilities were measured through the use



of a citizen survey, conducted April to November 2017, and proximity analyses.

Demand

The Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks used local user surveys, as well as staff interaction and experience with participants in local recreational programs, and other local recreation and demographic statistics to determine a baseline demand for programming and facilities.

Demographics and Park Usage

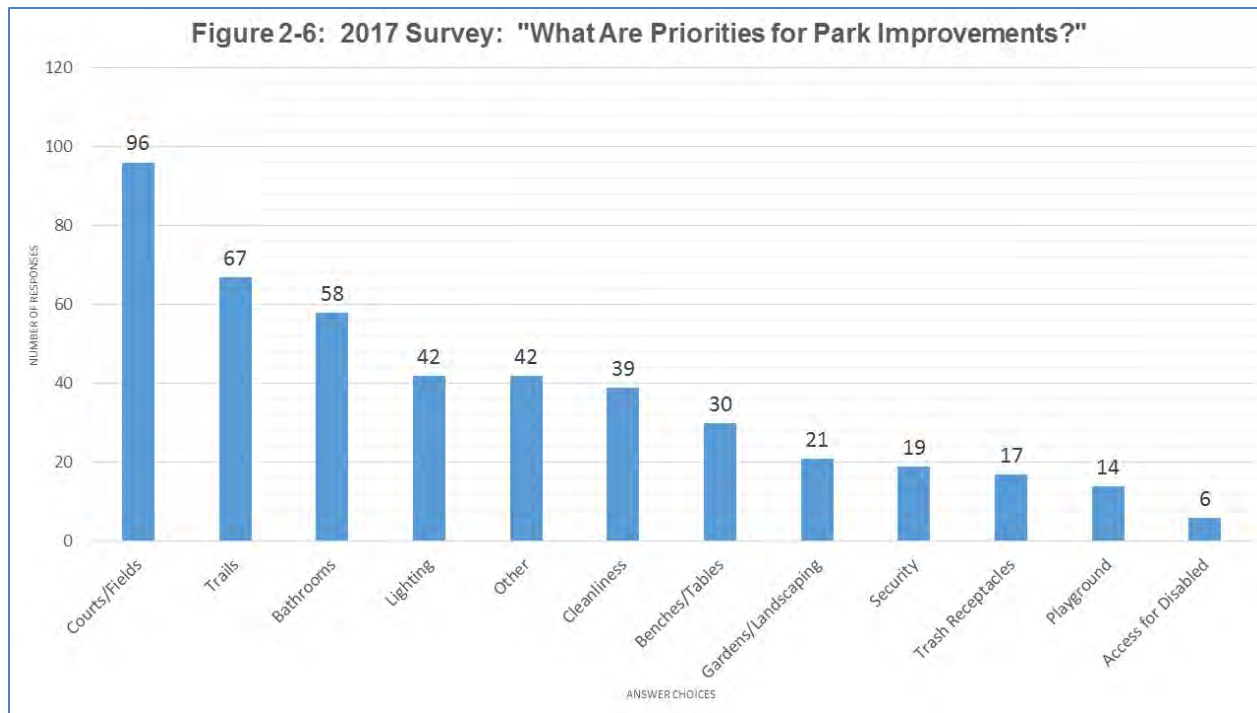
The growing number of citizens 50 plus years of age will place new demands on recreation and parks programming and facilities in coming years: 25% of the population is 65 years old, or older; this is projected to rise to 27% by 2020 and 29% by 2025⁵. This growing segment of the population requires low intensity

recreational options, such as walking trails. The northeastern area of the county needs to be a focus for expansion and for development of new facilities due to the concentrated and growing year-round and visitor population in that area. As noted previously, there is growing demand for the facilities at the Recreation Center: in 2014 the annual count of users was 13,644, and 2016 was 15,300. The first half of 2017 saw 8,027 users. While there is no hard data collected with respect to other park usage, the proximately analysis, that follows clearly supports the basis for the historically strong seasonal demand for multi-purpose field usage at the Northern Worcester Athletic Complex

Citizen Surveys

Figure 2-5 and 2-6 provides a summary of two questions asked in the citizen surveys that were conducted from April

⁵ Worcester County, Demographic and Socio-Economic Outlook, Maryland Department of Planning, 2015.



to October 2017. The opportunity to respond to the surveys was provided electronically to the entire e-mail data base of participants in county recreation programs. In addition, the surveys were linked on the county website and in social media. A press release describing the surveys was sent to local newspapers. Paper copies of the surveys were placed in all county libraries and at the Recreation Center for citizens to complete and submit; and handed out at fitness classes, swim lessons and summer camps.

The survey was answered by 188 people. The age breakdown of responses was as follows: age under 20: 1 response; age 21-40: 39 responses; Age 41-60: 93 responses; Age 60+: 36 responses (19 did not share age). 47% indicated a weekly use of a park. 8% indicated they use a county park daily. Respondents indicated their top reasons for using the county park or parks they visit are

playing sports (52%), walking (44%) watching sports (39%).

Most respondents (160; 88%) indicated they live in Worcester County: 66% with a Berlin, West Ocean City, Ocean Pines or Ocean City zip code; 14% from Snow Hill; 8% from Pocomoke City area. 4% indicated they reside in Delaware; the rest indicated residency elsewhere in Maryland or Pennsylvania, or did not indicate a zip code.

The survey asked if citizens feel there is sufficient access to water for passive recreation (kayaking, fishing, etc.) in Worcester County. Of the 106 who responded to the question, 32 (30%) indicated that access is not adequate in the county. Comments included “lack bay access for swimming and crabbing”, “would like to see lessons offered or rentals for paddle-boarding/ canoe/kayak”, “we need more places to launch kayaks”, “more access to Pocomoke River”. Four mentioned a

need for a public indoor pool. 52% indicated they had adequate access to water for passive recreation, and 18% indicated they had no opinion or did not have an interest in water access.

Respondents generally feel that fields, play equipment and courts are in good or better condition (85%). 21% responded that County parks, overall, are “excellent”; 28% indicated “very good”; 36% “good”. The rest indicated a “fair” opinion, except for 1 who indicated a “poor” opinion of the county parks.

Survey takers were invited to write in specific recommendations for improvements or additions to county parks: 58 (31%) commented on the need for more turf playing fields and/or improvements to playing fields, especially improved drainage. 37 (20%) remarked on a need for more trails, mostly for walking, but some mentioned cycling and horseback riding. Improved and additional parking was noted by 29 (15%) responders. All recommendations written in response to this question are listed, by category, in Table 2-6 and the responses are also available in their entirety in Appendix A.

inventory and population and other spatial data to generally determine where the public can easily access amenities and where they cannot.

Table 2-6. 2017 Survey: "Describe Additions or Improvements Needed to County Park System"

Recommended Improvement	Number of responses	Percentage
Bathrooms	7	4%
Bike Paths	4	2%
Concession Stands	2	1%
Dog Control	2	1%
Dog-Friendly Facilities	3	2%
Drinking Water Access	2	1%
Field Improvement/More Fields	58	31%
Indoor Facility (Berlin area)	9	5%
Indoor Fans	1	1%
Indoor: More Hours	2	1%
Interpretive Signage	1	1%
Lighting--fields	2	1%
Maintenance of Facilities	3	2%
Programs--Pocomoke	3	2%
Natural Play Space	2	1%
Nature Center	2	1%
Parking Improvement/More Parking	29	15%
Passive Parks	7	4%
Passive Water Access	1	1%
Pickle Ball Courts	1	1%
Shooting Range	1	1%
Swimming Pool	1	1%
Trails	37	20%
Playground--updated	1	1%
Unsure/No Needed Improvements	7	4%
Total Responses	188	

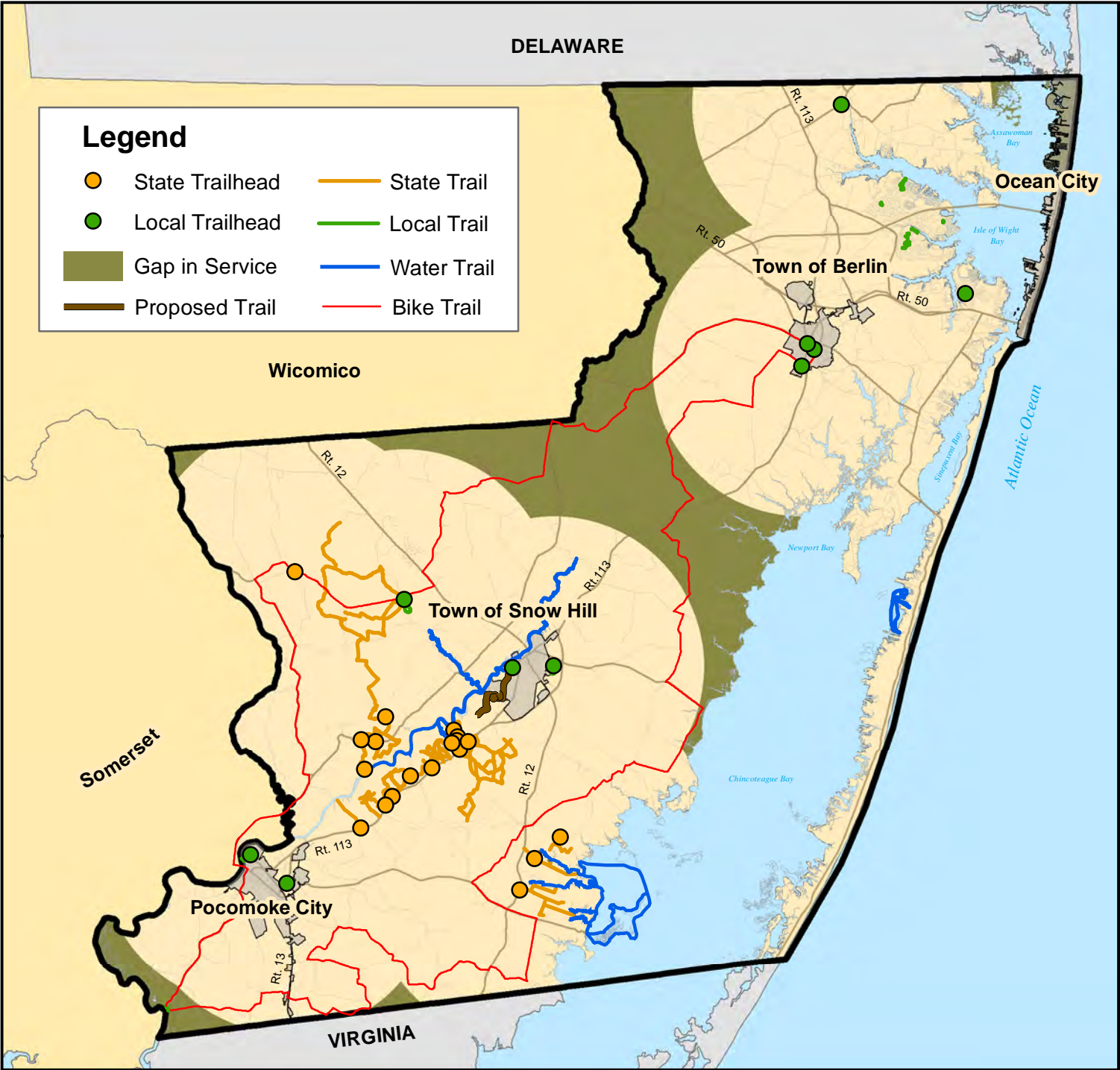
Proximity Analysis

In seeking to improve understanding of the level of service provided by recreational facilities in Worcester County, a “proximity analysis” was conducted to evaluate accessibility of trails, water access and multi-purpose fields. A proximity analysis uses facility

Trails Access

Figure 2-7 shows all areas of the county within five miles of any trail available to the public (water trails are included on the map but not the analysis since the emphasis in this analysis is access to walking trails). The analysis shows much of the central and northern area of the county has limited or no walking

Figure 2-7 Trail Access - Proximity Analysis
DRAFT 2017 Worcester County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan



Worcester County Total Population (2016) : 51,444
Estimated Population within Gap: 6,472
Estimated 13% of population within Gap in Service.

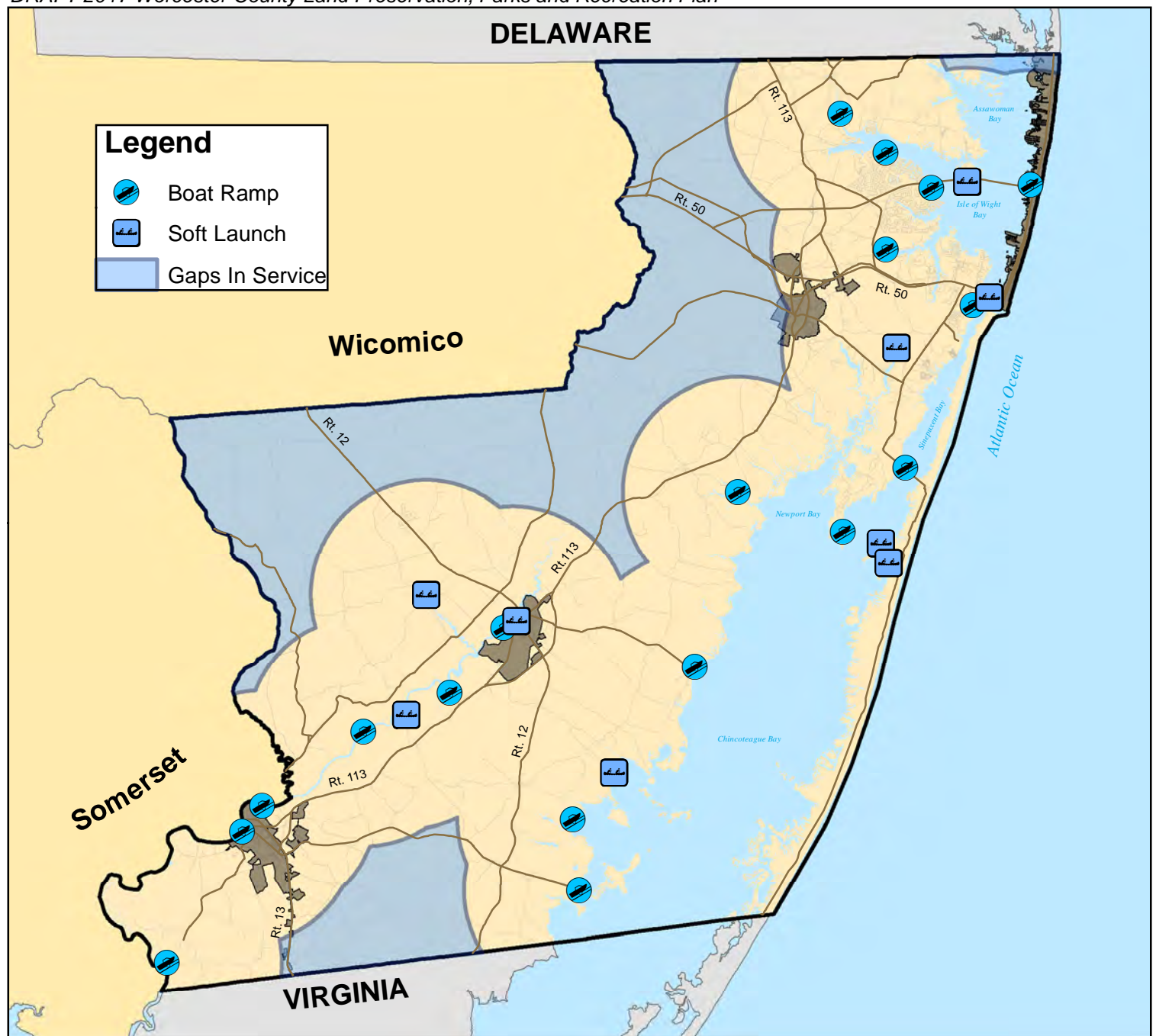


Note: A "Gap in Service" is any area within Worcester County greater than 5 miles away from a trail head. Bike trails, water trails and small local trails were not included in the analysis.

December 4, 2017
Source: Worcester County Dept.t of Environmental Programs
Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources

Figure 2-8 Water Access - Proximity Analysis

DRAFT 2017 Worcester County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan



Worcester County Total Population (2016) : 51,444
Estimated Population within Gap: 6,553

Estimated 13% of population within Gap in Service.

Note: A "Gap in Service" is any area within Worcester County greater than 5 miles away from a water access facility.

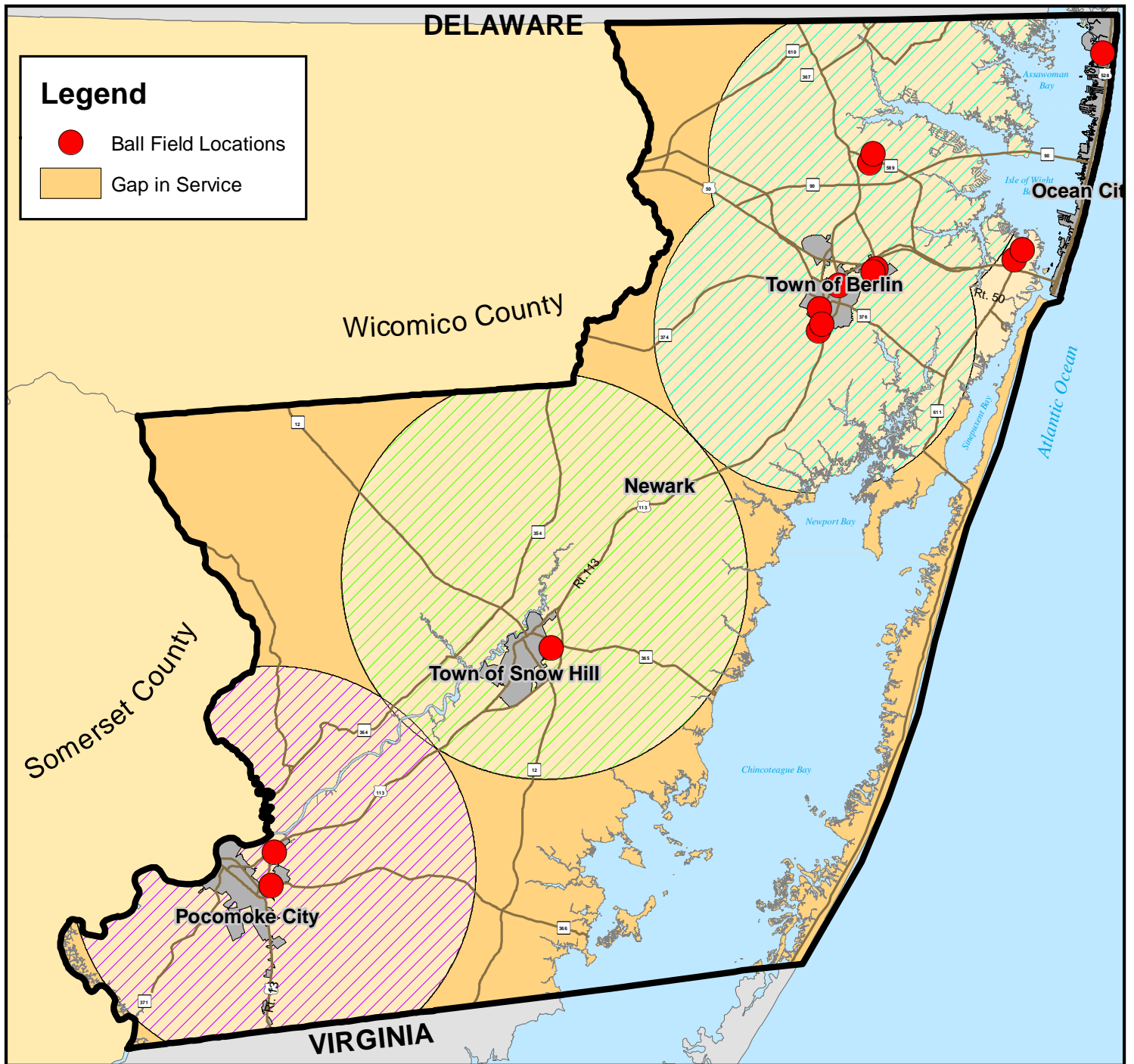





0 2.5 5 10
Miles

December 4, 2017

Source: Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources, Maryland iMAP Mapping & GIS Portal
Worcester County Department of Environmental Programs

Figure 2-9 Playing Field Access - Proximity Analysis



Recreation Region	Baseball Field	Multipurpose Field
 Northern	1 field: 2,175 people	1 acre: 1,600 people
 Central	1 field: 600 people	1 acre: 1,500 people
 Southern	1 field: 1,100 people	1 acre: 1,800 people

* Calculation accounts for approved planned 1.98 acre expansion to John Walter Smith Park.

Worcester County Total Population (2016): 51,444
Estimated Population within Gap: 5,099
Estimated 10% of population within Gap in Service.

Note: A "Gap in Service" is any area within Worcester County up to 8.5 miles away from a Sports Complex.



trails within a 5 mile distance of their residence. This is where the majority of the county's population resides. This deficiency may be reflected in the large number of citizen survey responses noting a need for more walking trails.

Water Access

Figure 2-8 shows all areas of the county within 5 miles of a boat ramp or soft launch. These amenities are spread

across the county and the gaps that exist are in areas with limited population and in most cases more than five miles from any water body. This suggests that there is generally adequate supply and distribution of water access in the county, although there may be increasing demand, as the population continues to grow in the northeastern portion of the county, in particular.

Playing Field Access

Figure 2-9 shows an analysis of the ratio of population to playing field in three service areas: southern, central and northern. This analysis reflects a deficit of playing fields per capita in the northeastern portion of the county compared to the central and southern areas of the county. The 2017 citizen survey seems to reflect this: playing fields (and associated parking) were noted by many responders to be a deficit.

As organized sporting activities have grown in popularity over the last decade, so too have user expectations of what a playing surface should be. At present, the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks recognizes that a degree of variation in multi-purpose playing field dimension and level of development exist and as a result, adjustments have been made to our inventories. The best example is John

Walter Smith Park where the fields identified as multi-purpose in past plans, do not meet the criteria associated with multipurpose use. As a result the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks feels the need to more accurately define "multipurpose field" in terms of both size and playability. Doing so will clarify our offerings with respect to user expectations and to avoid any distortion in the playing field proximity analysis. At John Walter Smith Park, the 2012 LPPRP inventory identified the number of multipurpose fields as seven (7). The area associated with each field is 35,000 square feet, where specifications for regulation setup would call for 86,000 square feet. Of the seven fields only two of these fields are irrigated in order to promote turf quality/playability to the level expected.

Other past distortions include Newtown Parks and Northern Worcester Athletic Complex multipurpose fields. In past plans Newtown Park has been inventoried as two fields, but is actually one field dimensioned to proper regulation specifications. At Northern Worcester Athletic Complex, four fields have been identified in the past, all dimensioned to regulation specifications however, only three are equipped with irrigation.

With respect to multipurpose fields, the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks will use the next 5 years to transition to a more accurate definition, defined as follow:

Dimensioned in a way which accommodates regulation setup for two or more sports, and built in a way that can provide for a high-quality playing surface.

For the purpose of the current analysis, Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks used the above definition in the preparation of inventory provided in Table 2-10A and the Playing Field Access - Proximity Analysis, depicted in Figure 2-9. In order to establish a fair basis for comparison, field access analysis was based on acreage of acceptable playing surface throughout the county, as opposed to a simple field count.

The notable exception is at John Walter Smith Park, where the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks will attempt to work through definitional inconsistency through the modification of an already approved multipurpose field lighting project and the reconfiguration of existing field space in order to accommodate two fields consistent with our definition going forward.

Proximity Analysis – Half Mile Service Area

A second ‘proximity analysis’ series was conducted using a 0.5 mile radius to evaluate pedestrian access to recreational facilities in the county’s population centers (Figures 2-10 through 2-15). Table 2-7A and 2-7B present population and parks data in all municipalities, West Ocean City and Ocean Pines. The *All Agency Median values*, from the National Recreation and Parks Association’s (NRPA) *2018 NRPA Agency Performance Review, Parks and Recreation Agency Performance Benchmarks*, were used to evaluate population and park ratios. The 2018

NRPA median value, nationally, for residents per park is 2,114. The NRPA median acres of park land per 1,000 residents is 10.1. As Tables 2-7A and 2-7B indicate, Worcester County’s population centers offer park access in excess of the NRPA published medians. The only exception is West Ocean City. While West Ocean City exceeds the NRPA median acreage of parks per 1,000 residents, the residents per park value is slightly higher than the NRPA median. It is important to note that West Ocean City land use and land cover limits possible additional park locations. What currently remains in open space is primarily tidal wetland or wooded non-tidal wetland, a limiting factor for recreational development. Table 2-7C provides detailed data regarding ‘gaps’ in pedestrian accessibility within population centers. These are areas of the population center not within a half mile of a park, trail or water access. Table 2-7C uses a color code to categorize the gap percentage (of population) as “high”, “medium” and “low”. Where no constraints in doing so exist, the county will consider, and urge any recipients of POS funding to consider the feasibility of placing amenities to close pedestrian access “gaps”, as a first priority when evaluating potential new amenity locations. The most significant gaps are in water access and trails. Close proximity to water access has a natural constraint that cannot always be overcome. Trails access in West Ocean City is and will likely remain limited because the area is highly developed with limited open space remaining.

Table 2-7 A.

Worcester County vs. NRPA All Agency Median - Residents Per Park

Location	Total Population	Number of Parks	Residents per Park
Town of Berlin	4,608	4	1152
West Ocean City	4,375	2	2188
Town of Ocean City	6,999	12	583
Ocean Pines	11,710	10	1171
Town of Snow Hill	2,071	4	518
City of Pocomoke	4,101	5	820

Exceeds NRPA All Agency Median of 2,114

Fails to Exceed NRPA All Agency Median of 2,114

Table 2-7 B.

Worcester County vs. NRPA All Agency Median -Acres of Parks Per 1,000 Residents

Location	Total Population	Park Acres	Acres per 1000 Residents
Town of Berlin	4,608	89	19.3
West Ocean City	4,375	45.6	10.4
Town of Ocean City	6,999	76.5	10.9
Ocean Pines	11,710	138	11.8
Town of Snow Hill	2,071	64	30.9
City of Pocomoke	4,101	69	16.8

Exceeds NRPA All Agency Median of 10.1

Fails to Exceed NRPA All Agency Median of 10.1

Table 2-7 C. Half Mile Service Area - Summary Chart

Location	Total Population	Parks Serviced (%)	Parks Gap (%)	Trails Serviced (%)	Trails Gap (%)	Water Access Serviced (%)	Water Access Gap (%)
Town of Berlin	4,608	85%	15%	60%	40%	NA	NA
West Ocean City	4,375	39%	61%	15%	85%	14%	86%
Town of Ocean City	6,999	87%	13%	59%	41%	30%	70%
Ocean Pines	11,710	89%	11%	40%	60%	12%	88%
Town of Snow Hill	2,071	91%	9%	40%	60%	43%	57%
City of Pocomoke	4,101	81%	19%	14%	86%	33%	67%

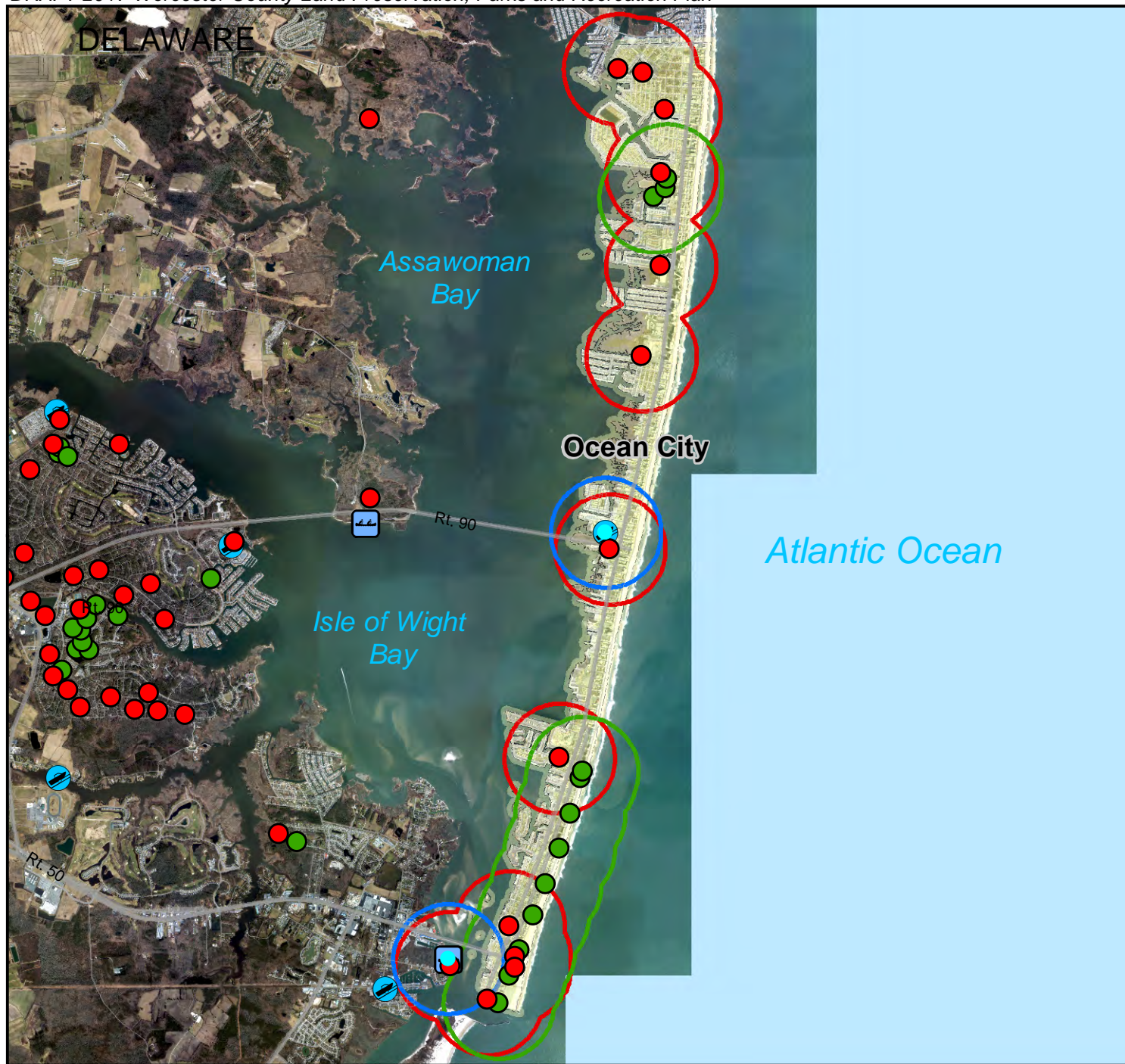
High - 68% or greater within Gap

Medium - 34%-67% within Gap

Low - 33% or less within Gap

Figure 2-10 Ocean City Facilities - Large Scale Proximity Analysis

DRAFT 2017 Worcester County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan

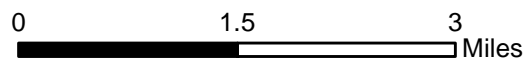


Half Mile Service Areas

- | | | | |
|--|------------------------|---|------------------|
|  | Park |  | Boat Ramp |
|  | Water Access |  | County Trailhead |
|  | Trail |  | Park |
|  | Ocean City Town Limits |  | Soft Launch |



Total Ocean City Population: 6,999

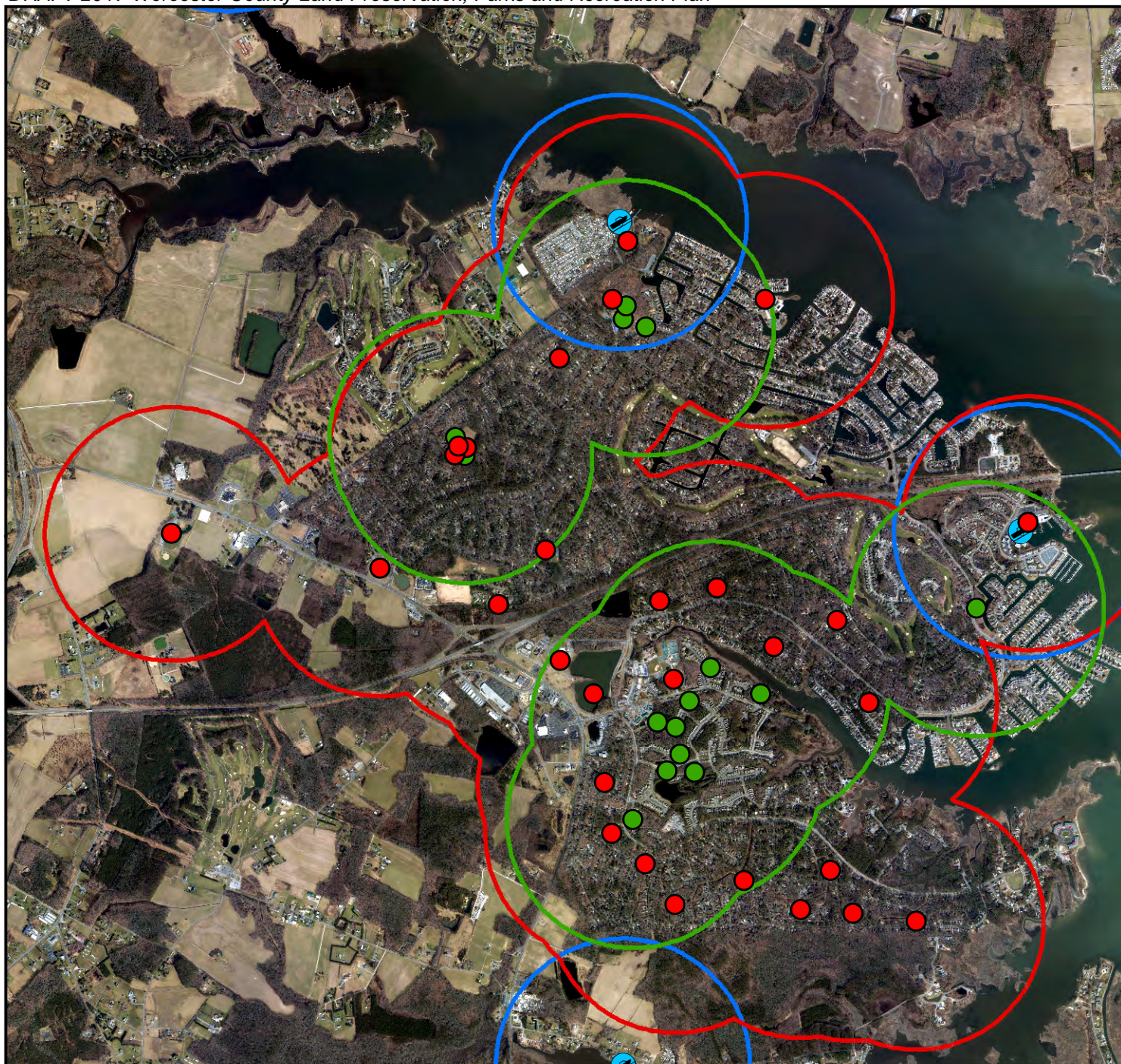


Parks: Estimated 13% of population within Gap in Service.
 Water Access: Estimated 70% of population within Gap in Service.
 Trails: Estimated 41% of population within Gap in Service.

January 24, 2018
 Source: Worcester County Department of Environmental Programs
 Maryland iMAP Mapping & GIS Data Portal

Figure 2-11 Ocean Pines Facilities - Large Scale Proximity Analysis

DRAFT 2017 Worcester County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan



Half Mile Service Areas

- | | | | |
|--|--------------|---|------------------|
|  | Park |  | Boat Ramp |
|  | Water Access |  | County Trailhead |
|  | Trail |  | Park |
| | |  | County Trail |



Total Ocean Pines Population: 11,710

Parks: Estimated 11% of population within Gap in Service.
 Water Access: Estimated 88% of population within Gap in Service.
 Trails: Estimated 60% of population within Gap in Service.

January 24, 2018
 Source: Worcester County Department of Environmental Programs
 Maryland iMAP Mapping & GIS Data Portal

Figure 2-12 West Ocean City Facilities - Large Scale Proximity Analysis



Half Mile Service Areas

- Park
- Water Access
- County Trail
- West Ocean City
- Boat Ramp
- County Trailhead
- Park
- County Trail

Soft Launch



Total West Ocean City Population: 4,375 +/-

Parks: Estimated 61% of population within Gap in Service.
Water Access: Estimated 86% of population within Gap in Service.
Trails: Estimated 85% of population within Gap in Service.

0 0.5 1 Miles

Figure 2-13 Berlin Facilities - Large Scale Proximity Analysis

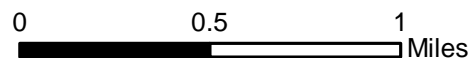


Half Mile Service Areas

- Park
- Trailhead
- Trailhead
- Park
- Berlin Town Limits

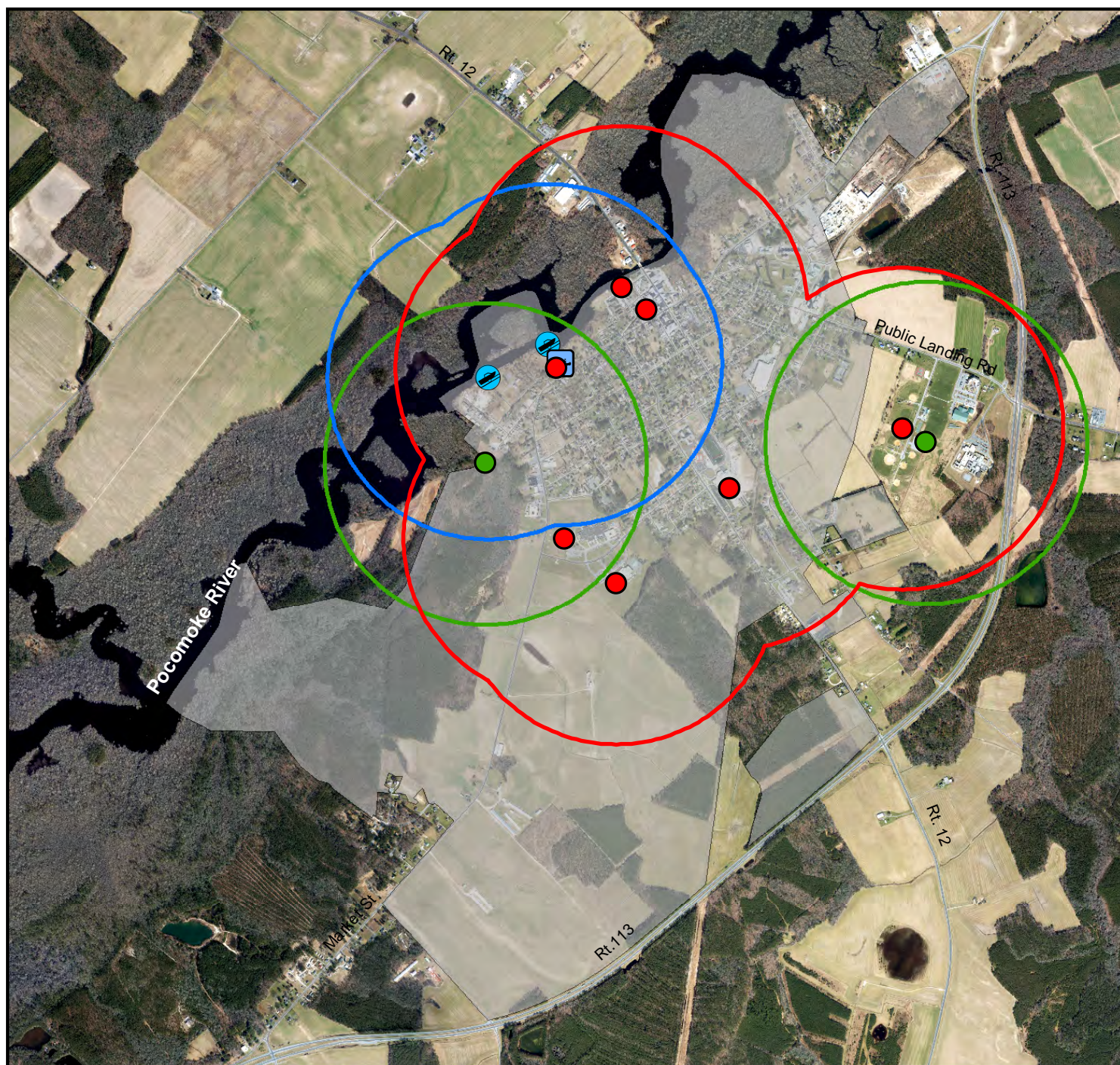


Total Berlin Population: 4,608










Parks: Estimated 15% of population within Gap in Service.
 Trails: Estimated 40% of population within Gap in Service.
 Water Access: There are no water access facilities within Berlin.

Figure 2-14 Snow Hill Facilities - Large Scale Proximity Analysis

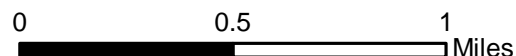


Half Mile Service Areas

- | | |
|---|--|
|  Park |  Boat Ramp |
|  Water Access |  County Trailhead |
|  Trail |  Parks/Recreational Sites |
|  Town Limits |  Soft Launch |



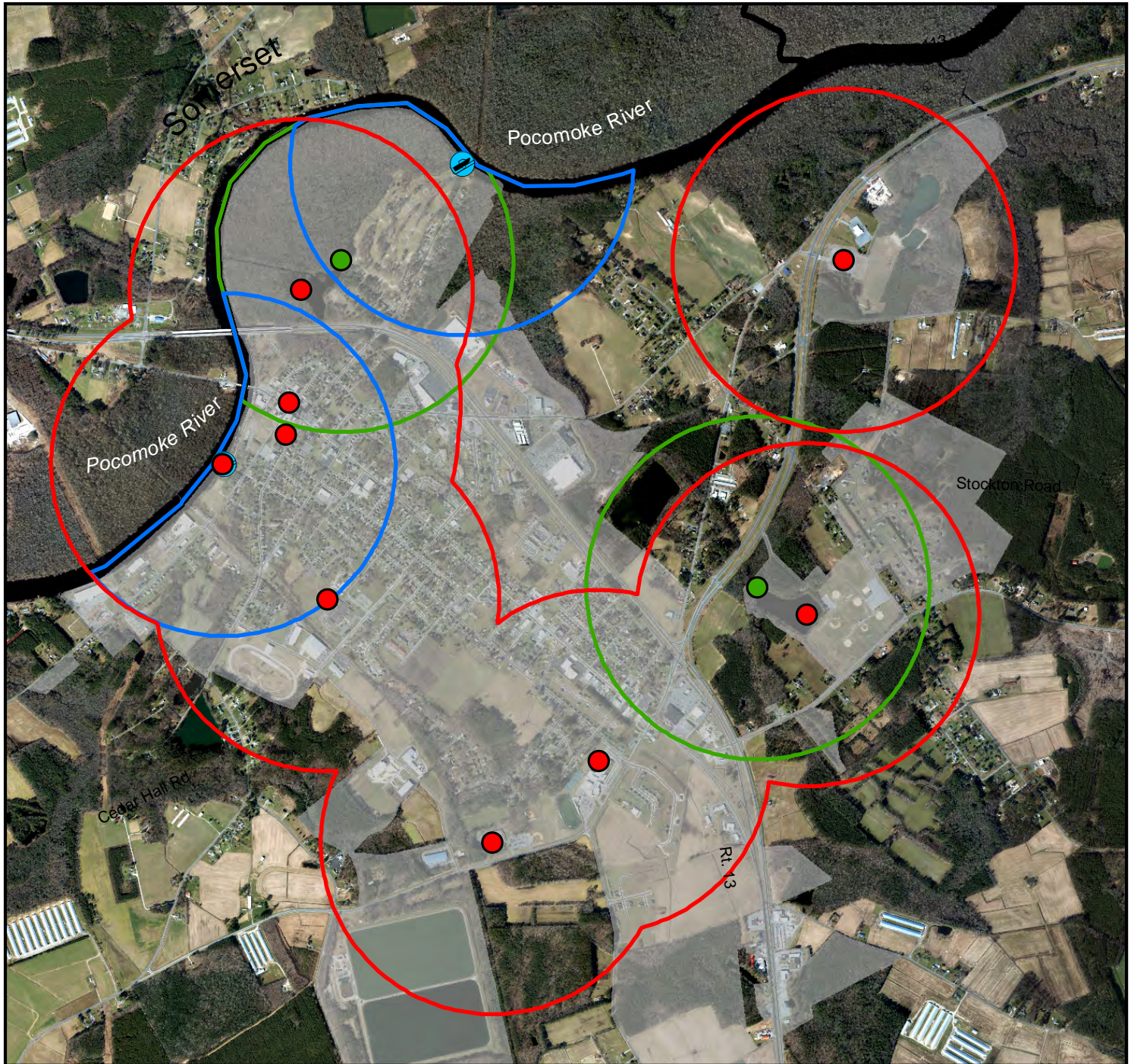
Total Snow Hill Population: 2,071










Parks/Rec Sites: Estimated 9% of population within Gap in Service.
 Water Access: Estimated 57% of population within Gap in Service.
 Trails: Estimated 60% of population within Gap in Service.

January 24, 2018
 Source: Worcester County Department of Environmental Programs
 Maryland IMAP Mapping & GIS Data Portal

Figure 2-15 Pocomoke City Facilities - Large Scale Proximity Analysis



Half Mile Service Areas

- | | | | |
|--|--------------|---|------------------------|
|  | Park |  | Boat Ramp |
|  | Water Access |  | County Trailhead |
|  | Trail |  | Park/Recreational Site |
| | |  | Town Limits |



Total Pocomoke City Population: 4,101

0 0.45 0.9 Miles

Parks/Recreational Sites: Estimated 19% of population within Gap in Service.

Water Access: Estimated 67% of population within Gap in Service.

Trails: Estimated 86% of population within Gap in Service.

September 27, 2018
Source: Worcester County Department of Environmental Programs
Maryland IMAP Mapping & GIS Data Portal

Table 2-8. Priority Projects by Individual Facility

Park Name (Project Description)	Element Cost	Projected Cost	Development Type
Bishopville Waterfront Park - Park Development		\$125,000	New
Site Development- Design, Earthwork, Hardscape, Construction	\$85,000		
Site Amenities -Pavilion, Furnishings, Signage, Soft Launch	\$40,000		
Total Bishopville Waterfront Park Total Projected Cost =		\$125,000	
Greys Creek Nature Park - Park Development		\$500,000	New
Restoration of Existing Structures (Existing Home & Boat House)	\$150,000		
Trail Head and Trail System Creation	\$200,000		
Water Access Creation	\$150,000		
Total Greys Creek Nature Park Total Projected Cost =		\$500,000	
John Walter Smith Park - Sports Field Development		\$25,000	New
Regulation Multipurpose Field Development - Irrigation	\$18,000		
Regulation Multipurpose Field Development - Grassing	\$7,000		
Total John Walter Smith Park Multipurpose Field Development Cost =		\$25,000	
Northern County Field Complex - Sports Field Development		\$1,000,000	New
Multipurpose Field Complex-Land Acquisition	\$1,000,000		
Total Northern County Field Complex Projected Land Acquisition Cost =		\$1,000,000	
Stockton Park - Playground Replacement		\$100,000	Rehabilitation
Site Preparation	\$5,000		
Composite Playground Installation	\$95,000		
Total Stockton Park Projected Composite Playground Installation =		\$100,000	
Total =		\$1,750,000	

County Priorities in Land Acquisition, Facility Development, and Rehabilitation

Supported by citizen feedback combined with spatial and demographic analysis previously described, Worcester County's funding priorities over the next five years will be the acquisition and development of active recreational land in northern Worcester County, the creation of passive recreational amenities and modernizing and updating existing facilities.

The county's five highest priorities for the next five years are:

1. Comprehensive development of

Grey's Creek Nature Park for passive use.

2. Acquisition of land for development of additional field space in northern Worcester County.
3. Additional passive recreational space in Bishopville (Bishopville Waterfront Park).
4. To augment an approved multipurpose field lighting project at John Walter Smith Park to include irrigation and bermuda-grass installation.
5. Playground replacement at Stockton Park.

Table 2-7 presents priority project costs. These are listed in alphabetical order by facility name, not in order of priority.

Figure 2-16 Priority Renovation Projects
DRAFT 2017 Worcester County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan

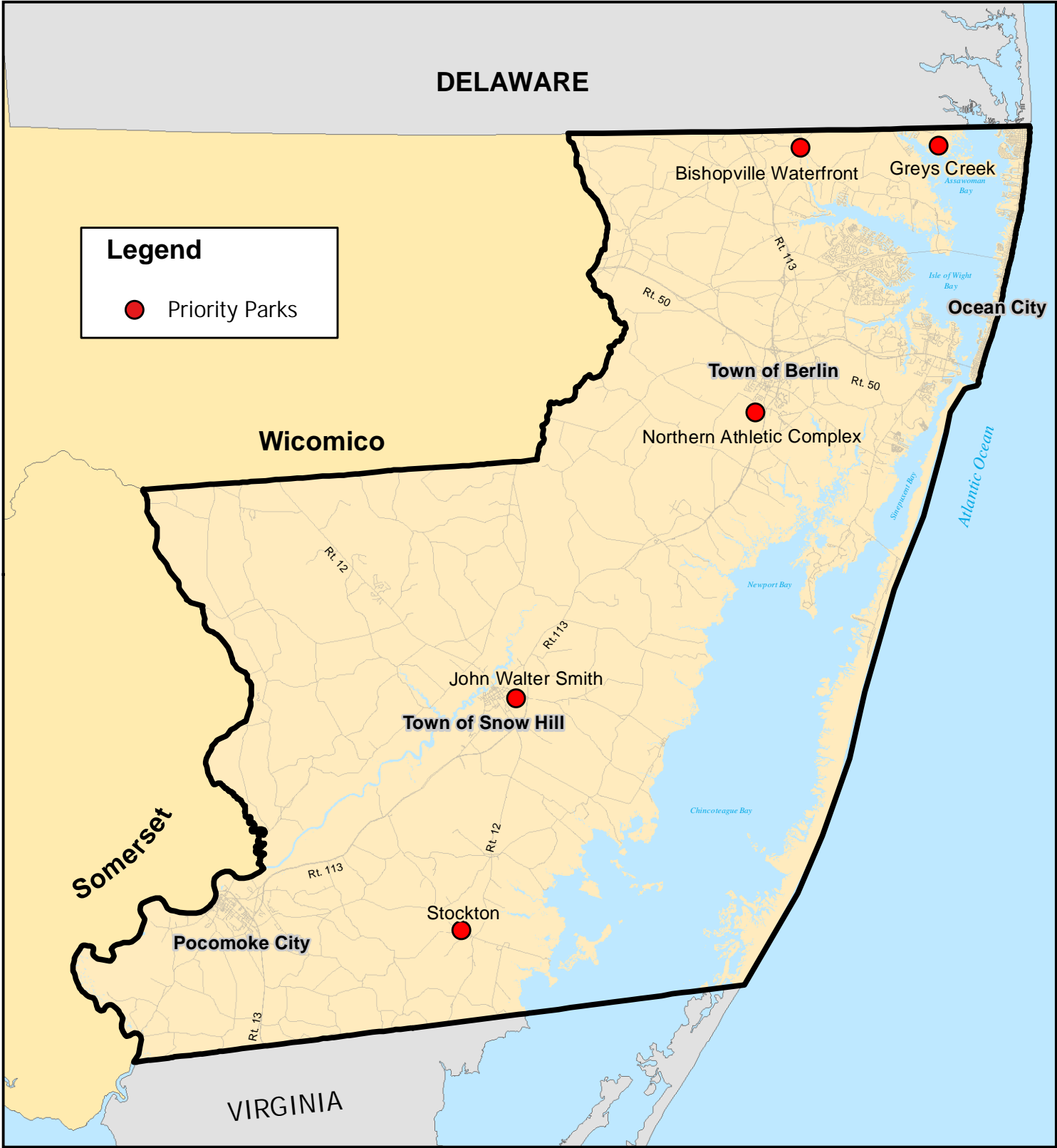


Figure 2-10 shows the locations of each of these projects in the county.

A 15-year capital improvement program for park land acquisition and recreational facility development are illustrated in Tables 2 – 9a, 2-9b, 2-9c.

Funds Needed to Sustain Recreational Lands and Facilities

The Worcester County Commissioners have a strong commitment to Worcester County parks and facilities. In 2012, the County allocated approximately \$375,000 for the daily maintenance of its park system. As of the 2017 fiscal year budget, the commitment was \$461,000, an \$86,000 increase. These increases are required due to rising cost associated with materials and personnel, and partly due to the County's recognition that over time sufficient resources are necessary to maintain/sustain the County's existing park facilities and infrastructure.

Program Open Space funds are critical and without this important source of funding, addressing larger acquisition, capital development, and rehabilitation needs are just not possible. Within this plan \$4,640,000 has been identified as the funding amount associated with short and mid-range objectives through 2027. As of July 1, 2017, the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks has \$992,572 in POS funding available. In order to meet our stated objectives over the next 10 years, our POS allocations will need to average \$364,742 annually.

Land Acquisition

As the proximity analysis and survey results indicate, there would be a benefit in planning for additional, active, public

recreational land in the northern part of the county; this is where population is concentrated, growth is expected to continue, and the population swells seasonally.

To further improve local access in the northern county the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks will explore additional land acquisition in this area. It is estimated that a minimum of 20 acres will be necessary for the development of additional field space and corresponding infrastructure. Any newly acquired land would serve to accommodate four additional multipurpose fields and if feasible, a perimeter walking trail. Existing space at Northern Worcester Athletic Complex will be evaluated for the creation of additional field space as well.

Interim steps the Department has taken or will take immediately towards improving field access for local citizens will involve the development of new playing fields within county facilities and the adoption of field 'joint use agreements' with external entities. Specifically::

- In addition to developing two (2) additional 360'x200' multipurpose fields at our NWAC location, the usage of the facility's football complex will be expanded to multi-purpose field use. Doing so will provide an additional 5.2 acres of fields for local year round play.
- The Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks has entered into a field use agreement with Worcester County Board of Education. The agreement bolsters the county's recreational multipurpose field count by 19.8 acres and adds an additional 8 baseball fields.
- Worcester County Department of

Recreation & Parks entered into an agreement with Worcester Preparatory High School, located adjacent to Northern Worcester Athletic Complex for the use of two (2) multi-purpose fields adding an additional 3.3 acres of field capacity in the northern section of the county.

- Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks entered into an agreement with Ocean City Baptist Church for the use of their existing 7 v.7 multi-purpose fields adding an additional 0.75 acres of field capacity in the northern section of the county.

Copies of all 'joint use agreements' have been included as part of the amended 'Plan'.

The above actions will greatly improve local recreational field access throughout all sections of the county, with the largest benefit to the northern end, as reflected in the per capita ratios contained in the amended Figure 2-9 Playing Field Access –Proximity Analysis.

The table entitled "Summary: Fields and Locations" on this page provides a list of facilities' and field counts resulting from the aforementioned steps. These fields are shown and tabulated in Figure 2-9 Playing Field Access –Proximity Analysis. Finally, amended versions of Table 2-10A, County owned Recreation Sites, Worcester County, Table 2-10B, Municipality-owned Recreation Sites, Worcester County and Table 2-10D, Privately Owned Recreation Sites, Worcester County, have been updated to reflect all fields. Red text indicates added fields listed above.

Summary: Fields and Locations

Facility	Baseball	Multi-Purpose	Multi-Purpose Acres
Pocomoke High	2	2	3.05
Pocomoke Middle		1	1.85
Cypress		1	0.75
YMCA		1	1.85
Newtown	6	1	1.85
South Total=	8	6	9.35

*JWS Park	7	5	5.25
Snow Middle		1	1.4
Snow Hill Elementary		1	1.4
Snow Hill High	2	1	1.65
Central Total=	9	8	9.7

*NWAC	9	7	11.9
Decatur High	2	1	1.65
Decatur Middle	2	2	3
Berlin Intermediate		2	2.8
Buckingham Elementary		1	1.4
Bishopville Park	1		
Showell Park	3		
Showell Elementary		1	1.4
Ocean City Elementary		1	0.2
Worcester Prep		2	3.3
O.C Northside Park	3	2	2.7
Ocean City Baptist		1	0.75
North Totals =	20	20	29.1

* Locations where fields are planned for development
(new/planned fields are included in totals)

Capital Development

Since the 2012 *Worcester County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan* was approved, two large parcels of land, which are located in the northern end of the county have undergone continued planning which both having tremendous capacity to provide passive recreational options.

Greys Creek Nature Park, described in detail earlier in the chapter, will serve to promote environmental education and

offer passive recreational opportunities. At present a Forest Stewardship Plan (FSP) is being developed and the feasibility of water access and water trails, considered. Potential parking access and upland trails have been identified. The county and MCBP are in the process of developing a proposal for land usage, including cost and the best application for a house located on the

property. The proposal will embody a solution consistent with both the concerns of the local community and the requirement that the property provide public, passive access. The proposal should go before the Worcester County Commissioners in the first half of 2018.

Ilia Fehrer Nature Preserve is a 400+-acre coastal plain forest in proximity to Berlin and West Ocean City. The planning thus far, has focused on the creation of access points and trails developed in a way which promote public education including exposure to the significant protection and restoration efforts associated with the property.

Showell Park, located near Ocean Pines with convenient access from Ocean City is a very busy park. The two highly maintained softball fields are equipped with state of the art lighting. The site hosts a Cal Ripken baseball camp, recreational programming, multiple local tournaments, and is a satellite site for the USSSA Softball World Series. At the time of the parks development, no potential for water or sewer existed. Since 2012, the capacity for these has been created. Concessions and restrooms will better service the needs of those who use the facility.

Northern Worcester Athletic Complex (NWAC) is the county's most highly utilized facility. In the spring, when baseball and lacrosse seasons occur, it accommodates over 1,000 visitors per day on the weekends. During the summer months, NWAC is a host site to a number of large sports events. There currently exist 85,000 square feet of parking, offering 130 parking spaces. Since 2012, a relatively flat, 53,000 square foot grassed area, designated for overflow parking, has been defined which accommodates 81 additional spaces, however it cannot be used during or immediately after rain events. Stabilizing the overflow area with a plastic mesh designed for the specific use would expand all weather parking capacity by 62 % at the site.

Worcester County recently acquired a small parcel of land bordering the Bishopville Prong. A concept and cost estimate to develop the parcel, which overlooks the 'Old Mill Pond' has been generated and recently approved. The waterway is a beautiful, recently restored area spearheaded by Maryland Coastal Bays Program. The acquisition provides opportunities as a passive space, to provide interpretation of the rich history of the prongs' past usage and as a point where a soft kayak/canoe launch can be developed. This new public space will serve the immediate citizens of Bishopville and county residents and visitors too.

It's important to note there are several trail initiatives at various stages of planning or completion throughout the county:

- Assateague Water Trails Project is a cooperative project with Worcester County Tourism

- Department, Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the National Park Service. This would map canoe/kayak trails that connect Assateague to various destinations in the Coastal Bays watershed
- The Snow Hill to Shad Landing trail is a collaborative effort between Worcester County Tourism Department and Maryland Department of Natural Resources. The aim of the proposed trail, presently in the planning stages, is to connect the town to the State Park which is situated along the banks of the Pocomoke River.
 - Berlin to Assateague bike and walking trail has been proposed by the Lower Shore Land Trust in cooperation with the Town of Berlin and other partners.
 - The 'Berlin Rubble Field', a landfill which has approached the end of its usefulness, is also being considered for passive recreational use. The Lower Shore Land Trust in cooperation with the Town of Berlin and other partners will consider the site as a possible 'greenbelt' feature when the property becomes available.

Rehabilitation

There is a significant need to provide higher quality playing fields throughout our major park complexes. Since 2012, a major initiative in improving baseball fields has occurred and will be completed in 2017. Improvements to multi-purpose field quality are planned. Approved in 2016 was a field lighting project for a multipurpose field at our centrally located John Walter Smith

Park. The cost of the field lighting project has been estimated to be \$200,000. A change of scope to include field irrigation and the installation of bermuda grass is currently being considered. Finally, in an effort to promote the highest quality playing fields, an attempt to transition all existing, irrigated multi-purpose fields throughout the park system to a warm season grass option will be initiated.

Attention towards aging composite playground systems is another primary focus. At present the county provides ten such play systems throughout its parks. Three are relatively new, the remaining are mid-life, with Stockton Parks' at the end of its useful life cycle. The Stockton Park equipment is planned for replacement in FY2019. The county will continue to inspect and replace failing playground components as long as the general overall condition of each warrants.

Finally, the county has a large and growing population over the age of 50, and their recreational needs are different from the needs of younger citizens, specifically, less physically strenuous options need to be offered across the park system. Since 2008, the parks division has added trails at various existing parks to accommodate the needs of more users. In addition, disc golf and water access points have been added. These enhancements, which serve all age groups as well, will continue to be a focus in the coming years, specifically with the addition of amenities, including walking trails, at Grey's Creek Nature Park, Ilia Fehrer Nature Preserve.

Table 2-9a.

Short-Range

					Estimated Short-Range (2017) Cost		
Project	Location	Description of Land Preservation and Recreation Recommendation	Estimated Total Cost	Acres to be Acquired	Acquisition	Capital Development	Rehabilitation
Bishopville Waterfront Park	Bishopville, MD	Passive Park with Soft Launch	\$125,000			\$125,000	
Greys Creek Nature Park	Bishopville, MD	Educational Center and Passive Park with Trail Head, Trail System, and Water Access	\$500,000			\$250,000	
John Walter Smith Park	Snow Hill, MD	Regulation Multipurpose Field Development	\$200,000			\$200,000	
Northern County Field Complex	Berlin, MD	Land Acquisition for Field Development.	\$3,300,000	20	\$1,000,000		
Stockton Park	Stockton, MD	Composite Playground Replacement	\$100,000				\$100,000
					\$1,000,000	\$575,000	\$100,000
Short- Range Total =							\$1,675,000

Table 2-9b.

Mid-Range

					Estimated Mid-Range (2022) Cost		
Project	Location	Description of Land Preservation and Recreation Recommendation	Estimated Total Cost	Acres to be Acquired	Acquisition	Capital Development	Rehabilitation
Greys Creek Nature Park	Bishopville, MD	Educational Center and Passive Park with Trail Head, Trail System, and Water Access	\$500,000			\$250,000	
Ilia Fehrer Nature Preserve	Berlin, MD	Trail System Development	\$50,000			\$50,000	
Northern County Field Complex	Berlin, MD	Sports Field Development Perimeter Walking Trail Component.	\$3,300,000			\$2,300,000	
Northern Worcester Athletic Complex	Berlin, MD	Parking	\$75,000			\$75,000	
Berlin Rubble Field	Berlin, MD	Passive Recreation, Nature Trail System	\$100,000			\$100,000	
Showell Park	Showell, MD	Concession/Bathroom Construction	\$140,000			\$140,000	
Neighborhood Parks	Worcester	Composite Playground Replacement	\$200,000				\$200,000
						\$2,915,000	\$200,000
Mid- Range Total =							\$3,115,000

Table 2-9c.

Long -Range

					Estimated Long-Range (2027) Cost		
Project	Location	Description of Land Preservation and Recreation Recommendation	Estimated Total Cost	Acres to be Acquired	Acquisition	Capital Development	Rehabilitation
Large Parks	Worcester	Composite Playground Replacement	\$300,000				\$300,000
Long- Range Total =							\$300,000

Public Participation

There were several opportunities for public participation in the *Worcester County 2017 Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan*. Opportunities for the public to review and respond to the draft were provided by:

Public Meetings

- The draft was provided to the Worcester County Recreation & Parks Advisory Board for review, response and recommendations. The advisory board members represent the constituents from the seven districts in Worcester County.
- The Worcester County Planning Commission conducted a public hearing in which the *2017 Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan* was reviewed. The Commission took feedback from the public and provided feedback to the Worcester County Commissioners.
- The draft plan was reviewed by the Worcester County Commissioners.

Public Access to the Draft

- The plan was provided on the county website for public review. Citizens were provided the opportunity to electronically respond with feedback concerning the plan.

Meetings with Municipalities

- A draft was sent to all county municipalities for review and feedback. These municipalities have benefitted from Program Open Space allocations that have been awarded to them from

Worcester County in the past.

Recreation Program Surveys

Since the *2012 Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan* was completed, the recreation and parks staff have solicited input through the use of program surveys. This public feedback has guided program direction.

The staff of the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks conducts programmatic surveys at the conclusion of each recreation program. The survey includes demographic information, marketing, registration, program organization and administration, facilities based on playing space, cleanliness, spectator comfort, staff member preparation and professional behavior, and overall evaluation for participant satisfaction/reception. There is also a survey section included for additional comments and suggestions.

A citizen survey was conducted—available via website, as well as on paper in various locations, from April to November 2017.

Since the opening of the Worcester County Recreation Center on July 11, 2005, the staff has used a sign-in procedure for all visitors to the recreation center. This procedure affords every visitor the opportunity to provide comments and suggestions regarding the recreation center, programs, and parks. It provides a count of participants for each activity.

The information solicited from the citizens and collected from these surveys is used as a tool to provide direction for future recreational programs, facilities, and parks.

Table 2-10A. County-owned Recreation Sites, Worcester County

Id #	Site Name	City/Town	Site Class	Boat Ramps	Boat Slips	Group Campsites	Tent/RV Campsites	Canoeing/kayaking	Basketball Courts	Skateboard Courts	Tennis Courts	Volleyball Courts	Ball Fields, Diamond	Lighted Ball Fields, Diamond	Multipurpose Fields	Lighted Multipurpose Fields	Picnic Pavilion	Picnic Tables	Indoor Recreational Areas	Swimming Pools	Tot Lots	Trails, Mileage
1	Bering Road Boat Ramp	Ocean City	Boat Ramp	1																		
2	Berlin Intermediate School	Berlin	School								2				2				1		1	
3	Bird Hill Road Site	Girdletree	Special Use Area																			0.1
4	Bishopville Park	Bishopville	Community Park									1	1				1	8			1	0.25
5	Buckingham Elementary School	Berlin	School												1		1	4	1		2	
6	Cedar Chapel Special School	Snow Hill	School						1											1	1	
7	Cedar Hall Wharf	Pocomoke City	Boat Ramp	2																		
8	Downtown Recreation Complex	Ocean City	Neighborhood Park						2	1			1	1							1	
9	George Island Landing	Stockton	Boat Ramp	1													1					
10	Girdletree Park	Girdletree	Community Park															4			1	
11	Greys Creek Nature Park	Bishopville	Community Park																			TBD
12	Gum Point Landing	Berlin	Boat Ramp	1				1														
13	Herring Creek Nature Park	Ocean City	Community Park														1	2				0.75
14	Homer Gudelsky Park	Ocean City	Community Park																			
15	Ilia Fehrer Nature Preserve	Berlin	Community Park																			TBD
16	Isle of Wight Park	Bishopville	Other Public Land					1										5				
17	John Walter Smith Park	Snow Hill	Sports Complex						2		2	1	7		3	2	1	11	1		1	1.2
18	Mason Landing	Newark	Boat Ramp	1																		
19	Newark Park	Newark	Community Park									1	1				1	4			1	
20	Newtown Park	Pocomoke City	Sports Complex									1	6	2	1	1	1	10			1	1.5
21	Northern Worcester Athletic Complex	Berlin	Sports Complex										6	1	7	2	1	11			1	0.5
22	Ocean City Elementary School	Ocean City	School												1				1		2	
23	Pocomoke Elementary School	Pocomoke City	School						1			1							1		1	
24	Pocomoke High School	Pocomoke City	School						1		4		1	1	2	1			1		1	
25	Pocomoke Middle School	Pocomoke City	School								2				1				1		2	
26	Public Landing	Snow Hill	Boat Ramp	1				1														
27	Shell Mill Landing	Bishopville	Boat Ramp	2																		
28	Showell Elementary School	Showell	School						2						1		1		1		1	
29	Showell Park	Showell	Sports Complex								2	1	3	2			1	11			2	
30	Snow Hill Elementary School	Snow Hill	School												1				1		2	
31	Snow Hill High School	Snow Hill	School								4		2	1	1				1			
32	Snow Hill Middle School	Snow Hill	School						1						1				1		1	
33	South Point Landing	Berlin	Boat Ramp	1																		
34	Stephen Decatur Middle School	Berlin	School										2		2				1			
35	Stephen Decatur High School	Berlin	School								2	1	1	1	1				1			
36	Stockton Neighborhood Park	Stockton	Community Park										1				1	4			1	
37	Taylor Landing	Girdletree	Boat Ramp	1																		
38	Whaleyville Park	Whaleyville	Mini-Park															2			1	
Total				11	0	0	0	3	10	1	18	7	32	9	25	6	11	76	13	1	25	4.3

Table 2-10B. Municipality-owned Recreation Sites, Worcester County

Id #	Site Name	City/Town	Site Class	Boat Ramps	Boat Slips	Group Campsites	Tent/RV Campsites	Canoeing/Kayaking	Basketball Courts	Skateboard Courts	Tennis Courts	Volleyball Courts	Ball Fields, Diamond	Lighted Ball Field, Diamond	Multipurpose Field	Lighted Multipurpose Field	Picnic Pavilion	Picnic Tables	Indoor Recreational Areas	Swimming Pools	Tot Lots	Trails, Mileage
39	Berlin Falls Park	Berlin	Community Park																			0.8
40	Byrd Park	Snow Hill	Community Park	3	8				1								2	20			1	
41	Cypress Park	Pocomoke City	Community Park	1	25					1	3				1		2	15			1	1.5
42	Dorchester Beach Volleyball Park	Ocean City	Mini Park									8										
43	Downtown Mini-Park	Pocomoke City	Mini Park																			
44	Dr. William E. Henry Park	Berlin	Community Park						3								1	5			1	
45	Eagle's Landing Golf Course	Ocean City	Golf Course only																			
46	Fiesta Park	Ocean City	Neighborhood Park														1	8				
47	Fisher Park	Snow Hill	Mini Park															2				
48	Gorman Ave Park	Ocean City	Neighborhood Park								1						1	1			1	
49	James T. Sturgis Memorial Park	Snow Hill	Mini Park		10												1	10				
50	Jamestown Park	Ocean City	Mini Park																			
51	John Howard Burbage Park	Berlin	Mini Park																			
52	Laurel Street Park	Pocomoke City	Community Park	1	25													3				
53	Little Salisbury Park	Ocean City	Neighborhood Park						1		2										1	
54	Market Street Dock - Discovery Center	Pocomoke City	Special Use Area		12													1				
55	North Surf Park	Ocean City	Mini Park															1			1	
56	Northside Park	Ocean City	Sports Complex											3	1	1	1	185	1		1	1
57	Ocean City Beach	Ocean City	Special Use Area																			
58	Ocean City Boardwalk	Ocean City	Special Use Area																			3.0
59	Ocean City Convention Center	Ocean City	Special Use Area																1			
60	Ocean City Entry Park	Ocean City	Mini Park																			
61	Ocean City Inlet Park	Ocean City	Mini Park																			
62	Ocean City Tennis Center	Ocean City	Community Park								9							1				
63	Robin Park	Ocean City	Mini Park																			
64	Stephen Decatur Memorial Park	Berlin	Community Park								4	1					1	20			1	0.6
65	Sunset Park	Ocean City	Community Park																			
66	Winter Quarters Golf Club	Pocomoke City	Special Use Area	1														1			1	
Total				5	80	0	0	0	5	1	19	9	0	3	2	1	10	272	2	0	8	6.9

Table2-10C. Federal and State-owned Recreation Sites, Worcester County

Id	Site Name	Acres	Site Class	Facilities																		
				Boat Ramps	Boat Slips	Group Campsites	RV/Tent Campsites	Canoeing/Kayaking	Basketball Courts	Skateboard Courts	Tennis Courts	Volleyball Courts	Ball Fields, Diamond	Lighted Ball Fields, Diamond	Multi-Purpose Fields	Lighted Multi-Purpose Fields	Picnic Pavilions	Picnic Tables	Indoor Recreational Areas	Swimming Pools	Tot Lots	Trails, mileage
79	Assateague Island National Seashore	8,000	National Seashore			1	354	22									6				5	
80	Assateague Island State Park	859	State Park																			
81	E.A. Vaughn Wildlife Management Area	1,751	State Wildlife Management Area																			
82	Isle of Wight Wildlife Management Area	217	State Wildlife Management Area																			
83	Lanford's Discovery Natural Heritage Area	283	State Natural Resource Management Area																			
84	Milburn Landing	370	State Park	1		2	32					1				2				1	13	
85	Pocomoke River State Forest	13,639	State Natural Resource Management Area																			
86	Pocomoke River Wildlife Management Area	1,008	State Natural Resource Management Area																			
87	Shad Landing State Park	544	State Park	2	25	2	175					2		1		2			1			
88	Sinepuxent Bay Wildlife Management Area	25	State Natural Resource Management Area																			
	Total	26,696		3	25	5	561	22	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	4	6	0	1	1	18

Table 2-10D. Private Recreation Sites, Worcester County

Id #	Site Name	City/Town/Comm	Site Class	Boat Ramps	Boat Slips	Group Campsites	Tent/RV Campsites	Canoeing/kayaking	Basketball Courts	Skateboard Courts	Tennis Courts	Volleyball Courts	Ball Fields, Diamond	Lighted Ball Fields, Diamond	Multipurpose Fields	Lighted Multipurpose Fields	Picnic Pavilion	Picnic Tables	Indoor Recreational Areas	Swimming Pools	Tot Lots	Bike Trails, Mileage
67	Bainbridge Park	Ocean Pines	Community Park												1						1	
68	Huntington Park	Ocean Pines	Community Park										1					1				
69	Manklin Meadows Tennis Complex	Berlin	Neighborhood Park						1		12			1				4				
70	Nassawango Creek Preserve	Snow Hill	Other Public Land					3														
71	Ocean Pines Swim and Racquet Club	Ocean Pines	Special Use Area		22				1		4						1	12		1		
72	Ocean Pines--"Pocket" Parks (18 total)	Ocean Pines	Mini-Park																			
73	Robin Hood Park	Ocean Pines	Mini-Park															3			1	
74	South Gate Pond	Ocean Pines	Community Park																			
75	Sports Core Pool	Ocean Pines	Special Use Area																	1		
76	Somerset Park	Ocean Pines	Special Use Area												1			1			1	
77	White Horse Park	Ocean Pines	Neighborhood Park	1					1			2					1				1	
78	Worcester Preparatory School	Berlin	School								4				2						1	
79	YMCA	Pocomoke													1							
80	Ocean City Baptist Church	WOC	Worship												1							
Total				1	22	0	929	3	3	0	20	2	1	1	6	0	2	21	0	2	5	0

Chapter III: Natural Resource Land Conservation

Overview

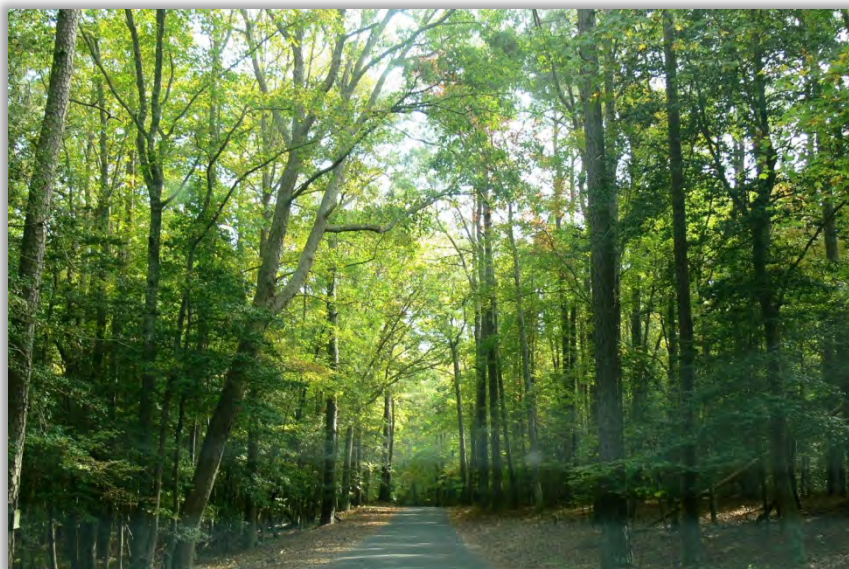
This chapter documents the county's goals for preserving natural resource lands and resources and the extent to which progress has been made toward achievement of the program development strategy identified in the County's 2012 *Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan*.

Natural Resource and Outdoor Recreational Land in Worcester County

Worcester County government and citizens are in a unique position of being stewards to a breathtaking array of unique natural resources, from the beaches and marshland of the coast to inland non-tidal river, creeks and wetlands. These resources enrich the county economically, by providing a basis for the tourism and natural resource based industries, which is a bedrock of the county's economy. The

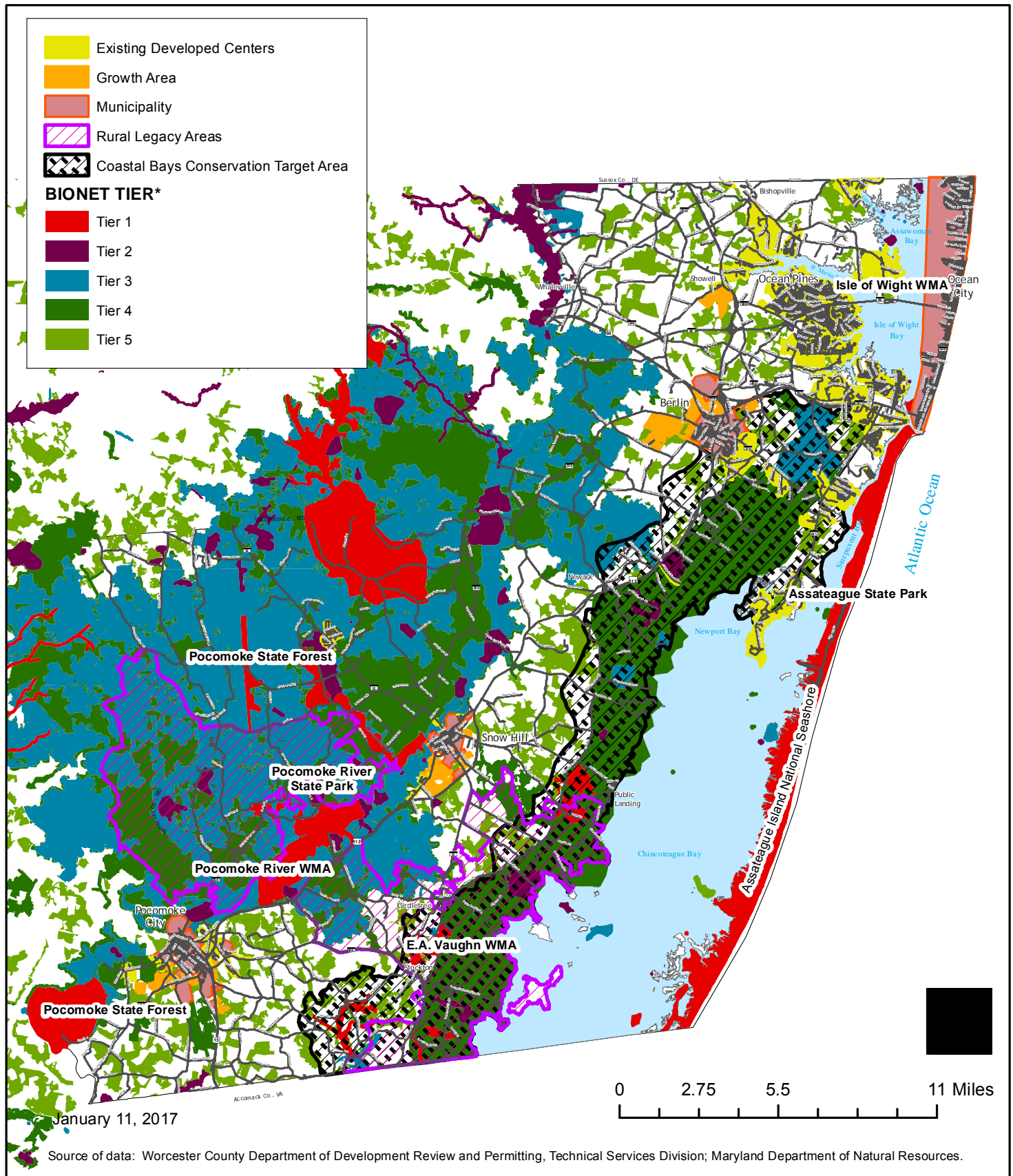
county's natural resources also provide ecosystem services, such as storm protection, flood control, clean air and water, open space and other benefits that make the county a unique, attractive and pleasant place to live and do business. Finally these resources, if well-protected, are an irreplaceable legacy to pass to the next generations. Unlike many coastal communities on the east coast, Worcester County is in the enviable position of having many natural resources still intact, and faces the challenge not of costly restoration but of protection of what remains.

Figure 3-1 indicates the general areas of the county targeted for natural resources conservation and for growth. In general the areas targeted for conservation are the shorelines and headwaters of both the Pocomoke and the Coastal Bays watersheds, and areas that still contain contiguous natural lands, such as the lower Chincoteague Bay watershed and the Dividing Creek watershed (where the county's Rural Legacy Areas are located). Figure 3-1 also shows BioNet, Biodiversity Conservation Network data. BioNet is a digital map (GIS shapefile) that prioritizes areas for terrestrial and freshwater biodiversity conservation. It was developed as a tool for proactive land conservation activities. These areas are prioritized into a five-tiered system:



Truitt's Landing Road

Map III-i. Local and State Targeted Conservation Areas /Growth Areas, Worcester County, Maryland



*The Biodiversity Conservation Network (or BioNet) of Maryland layer systematically identifies and prioritizes ecologically important lands to conserve Maryland's biodiversity (i.e., plants, animals, habitats, and landscapes). This dataset aggregates numerous separate data layers hierarchically according to the BioNet Criteria Matrix. These data were needed to maximize the influence and effectiveness of public and private conservation investments; promote shared responsibilities for land conservation between public and private sectors; and guide and encourage compatible land uses and land management practices.

Tier 1 – Critically Significant for Biodiversity Conservation

Tier 2 – Extremely Significant for Biodiversity Conservation

Tier 3 – Highly Significant for Biodiversity Conservation

Tier 4 – Moderately Significant for Biodiversity Conservation

Tier 5 – Significant for Biodiversity Conservation

Growth areas as determined by the 2006 Worcester County Comprehensive Plan (2006 Land Use Plan map), and municipality boundaries are also shown on Figure 3-1 as well.

Figure 3-2 depicts natural resource land conservation in Worcester County. Protected land includes federal, state and local parks, Wildlife Management Areas, State Forest, land protected by The Nature Conservancy, and other land protected with conservation easements primarily for protection of natural resources. Table 3-1 provides acreage data⁶.

Assateague Island National Seashore, managed by the National Park Service, is 8,200+ acres of a 37-mile long barrier island that stretches into Virginia. The barrier island not only provides protection to the mainland from storms and flooding, it provides a outdoor recreation destination available not just to county citizens but that provides economic benefits to Worcester County. A 2015 National Park Service report showed that over 2 million visitors in

2014 spent over \$90 million in communities near Assateague Island National Seashore, supporting over 1,000 jobs, and providing a cumulative benefit of over \$100 million⁷.

State Parks in Worcester County include Assateague Island State Park (519 acres) and Pocomoke River State Park (located within the Pocomoke State Forest), which are also important visitor destinations for camping and day use, as well as provide environmental services to the county. E.A. Vaughn, Isle of Wight, Pocomoke River, Sinepuxent Bay Wildlife Management Areas preserve important wildlife habitat while also offering some access for day use and/or hunting.

The State of Maryland owns 43,000 acres of land in Worcester County, much of it forested. The Pocomoke State Forest consists of 17,676 acres of land, mostly in Worcester County (a few small parcels in Somerset and Wicomico Counties are included)⁸. Chesapeake Forest Lands are spread across eight (8) counties, including Worcester County (17,674 acres⁹). Both forests are managed now for sustainable forestry. Passive access and hunting use is allowed on certain tracts.

The Nassawango Creek Preserve, 10,200 acres and The Nature Conservancy's largest preserve in Maryland, is located mainly in Worcester County and is one of the last pieces of true wilderness on Delmarva.

⁶ Data for state land acreage was obtained from "Maryland DNR Fiscal Year 2016 DNR Owned Lands Acreage", July 29, 2016.

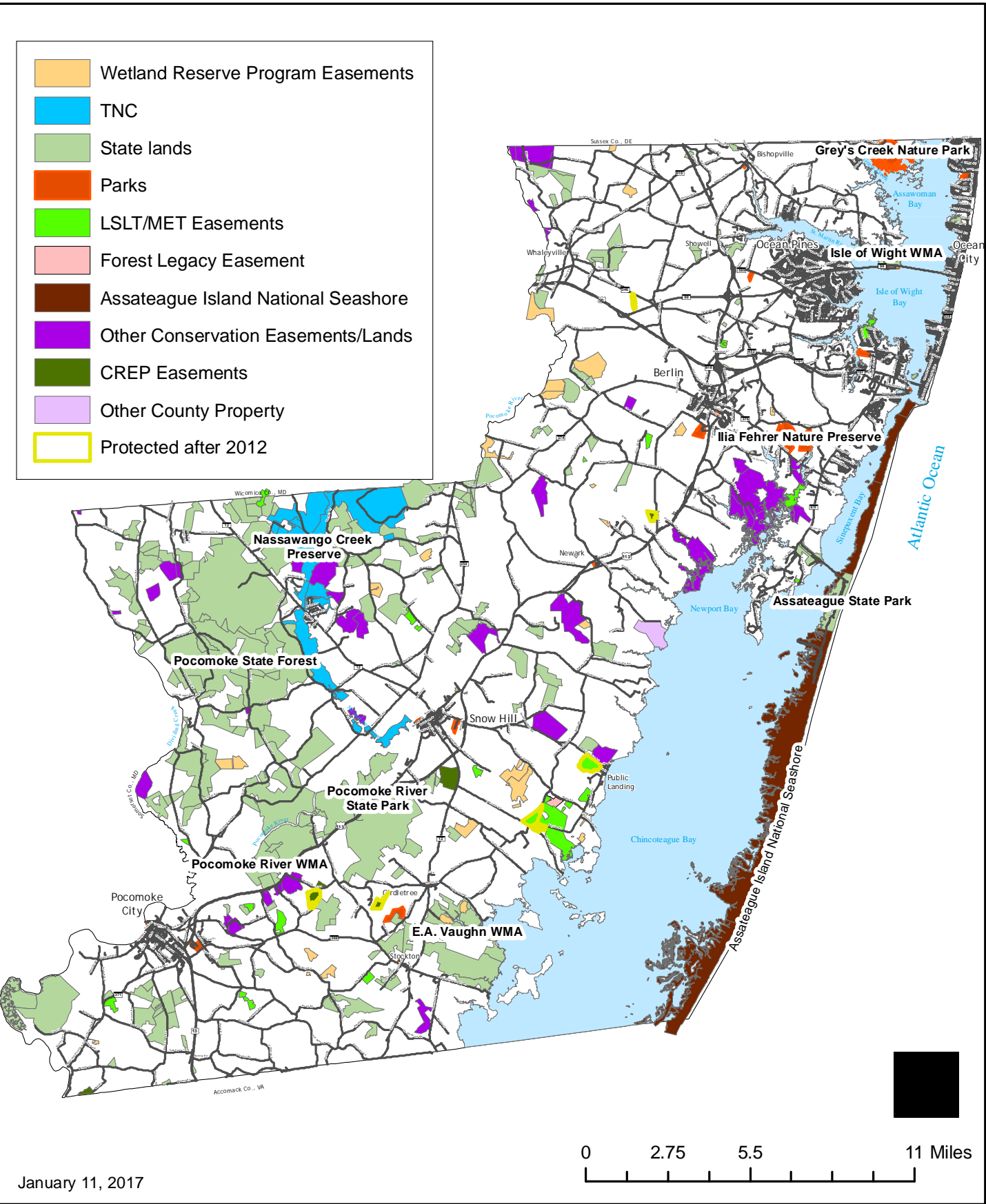
⁷

<http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/economics.cfm>

⁸ Maryland Department of Natural Resources, website.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Map III-ii. Public Parks/Recreation and Parcels Protected for Natural Resource Conservation



Source of data: Worcester County Department of Development Review and Permitting, Technical Services Division; Maryland Department of Natural Resources; USDA

It is also one of the northernmost remaining examples of bald cypress swamp. 90 rare plants and animals including dozens of orchids and warblers are found in the preserve. Thousands of visitors annually use the preserve to bird watch and to enjoy the unique beauty of this gem of Maryland.

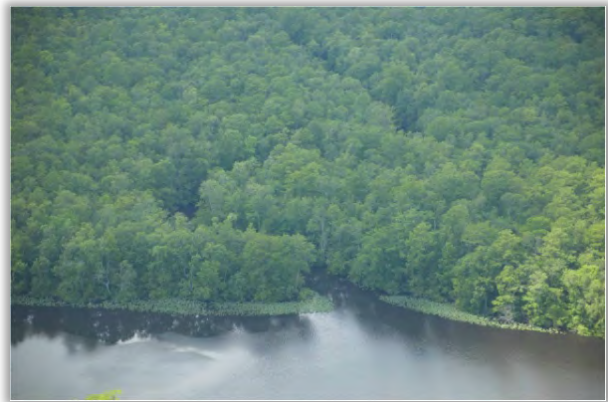
Various local, state and federal programs protect and restore land using conservation easements. Details of the county-based programs are described in the “Implementing Programs” section later in this chapter. Program Open Space purchases conservation easements on land with natural resource value, sometimes with matching federal funds (see Table 3-1 for a list of land preserved for protection of natural resources). An important federal program for natural resource protection and enhancement is the Wetland Reserve Enhancement Program (formerly the Wetland Reserve Program), which restores wetlands and protects the land with a permanent conservation easement (see Table 3-1). These programs generally do not include public access as the properties remain in private ownership and management, however the public reaps the benefits that come from open space, clear air and water.

Outdoor Recreation: County Amenities

The county maintains natural areas at nearly every county park to encourage citizen connections with nature.

In 2004 Worcester County acquired the Grey’s Creek Nature Park, a nearly 600-acre site containing woodland and extensive marsh, to preserve natural habitat and protect the water quality of

Assawoman Bay. The 430-acre wooded Ilia Fehrer Nature Preserve was acquired in 2012 as an on-going effort to preserve and enhance the Holly Grove Swamp Area, key to the water quality of Newport Bay. With leadership from the Maryland Coastal Bays Program, wetlands and woodland are being restored on the site. Eventually these parks will be open for public passive use (walking and riding trails) in cooperation with the Maryland Coastal Bays Program.



Dividing Creek (photo by the Nature Conservancy)

The county also manages several smaller parks that have a natural resource emphasis. Herring Creek Nature Park, in West Ocean City, offers an oasis for picnicking and walking/jogging. Homer Gudelsky Park is directly across from the Ocean City inlet and offers waterfront access for passive enjoyment and fishing. Isle of Wight Park (formerly part of the Isle of Wight Wildlife Management Area) is a passive nature park offering a canoe/kayak launch site, piers and picnic tables. The county continues to seek ways to offer additional opportunities at existing county parks for people to connect with nature, including a new 1.2 mile nature trail loop at John Walter Smith Park in Snow Hill. Trails have also been added or are being added at Northern

Worcester Athletic Complex and Newtown Park. Finally, the county is working with the town of Snow Hill and the State on Maryland on a new trail linking the town to Pocomoke River State Park. The county includes both the Maryland Coastal Bays and watershed as well as the Pocomoke River and creeks and other tributaries (Chesapeake Bay). Water access and recreation are especially key amenities in the county. Currently there is an established water trail on the Pocomoke River/Nassawango Creek as well as in Sinepuxent Bay (Assateague). A more extensive water trail plan is being developed by Worcester County Tourism, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and the National Park Service, that would connect Assateague to the mainland tributaries.

Natural Resource Lands Conservation Goals

General Context

Natural resource conservation land provides environmental and social benefits for Worcester County citizens and also for people visiting the county. These include:

- Natural filtration of air and water
- Supporting a better quality of life
- Maintaining low costs of community services (undeveloped land does not demand government services)
- Resiliency (protection from flooding and wind damage)
- Outdoor recreational opportunities
- Economic benefits from tourism and increased property values for adjacent residential lots and communities
- Protection or restoration of wildlife habitat and biodiversity
- Protection of Worcester County's unique cultural and historical landscape

County Goals

Situated on the lower eastern shore of Maryland, Worcester County is the only seaside county, with 40 miles of ocean beach. One third of the county is within the Maryland Coastal Bays watershed, a unique estuarine ecosystem. In addition, unlike many Maryland counties, Worcester County includes intensely developed areas and areas that are mainly characterized by forested land, wetland and agricultural land. The ocean beaches and the balance between development and conservation is what creates a high quality of life in the county, what draws businesses to locate in the county, and what is able to support a viable tourism industry and agricultural/natural resources industry, both bedrocks of the County's economy.

Worcester County's natural resource protection objectives, identified in the 2006 comprehensive plan, are to:

1. Use a systems approach to environmental planning addressing pollution at or close to its source and use sustainable development techniques
2. Instill environmental stewardship as an universal ethic
3. Identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas

4. Restore and/or enhance natural resource functions where possible
5. Reduce imperviousness of existing and new development
6. Improve water bodies on the “Impaired Water Bodies (303d) List” to the point of their removal from this list
7. Meet the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) standards
8. Conserve resources by reducing unnecessary consumption
9. Channel development within a particular site to any existing disturbed areas if possible
10. Establish sufficient buffers for sensitive areas

The 2006 comprehensive plan also identifies specific actions for protection/preservation of groundwater, forests, threatened and endangered species, floodplains, mineral resources. Environmentally sensitive design, green building and green infrastructure are also addressed.

The county’s goals and objectives, stated in the comprehensive plan, encompass or accommodate all of the state’s goals for conservation of natural resource lands, which are:

- Identify, protect, and restore lands and waterways in Maryland that support important aquatic and terrestrial natural resources and ecological functions, through combined use of the following techniques:
 - Public land acquisition and stewardship;
 - Private land conservation easements and stewardship practices through purchased or donated easement programs;
- Local land use management plans and procedures that conserve natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas and minimize impacts to resource lands when development occurs;
- Support and incentives for resource-based economies that increase retention of forests, wetlands, or agricultural lands;
- Avoid and minimize impacts of publicly funded infrastructure development projects on natural resources; and
- Appropriate mitigation response, commensurate with the value of resource impacted.
- Focus conservation and restoration activities on priority areas, according to a strategic framework such as Targeted Ecological Areas (TEAs) in GreenPrint.
- Conserve and restore species of concern and important habitat types that fall outside of designated green infrastructure
- Develop a more comprehensive inventory of natural resource lands and environmentally sensitive areas to assist State and local implementation programs.
- Establish measurable objectives for natural resource conservation and an integrated State/local strategy to achieve them through State and local implementation programs.

- Assess the combined ability of State and local programs to:
 - Expand and connect forests, farmlands, and other natural lands as a network of contiguous green infrastructure.
 - Protect critical terrestrial and aquatic habitats, biological communities, and populations;
 - Manage watersheds in ways that protect, conserve, and restore stream corridors, riparian forest buffers, wetlands, floodplains, and aquifer recharge areas and their associated hydrologic and water quality functions;
 - Adopt coordinated land and watershed management strategies that recognize the critical links between growth management and aquatic biodiversity and fisheries production; and
 - Support a productive forestland base and forest-resource industry, emphasizing the economic viability of privately owned forestland.



CREP Permanent Easement

that abut the tributaries to the Coastal Bays. The latter two areas, although protected to some degree by restrictive zoning and the Critical Area regulations, have been subject to greatest development pressure or other alteration, and their preservation is key to preserving the water quality of the Coastal Bays. The county also recognizes the importance of headwaters in the protection of waterway/watershed health. Forested lands in headwater areas are considered important for long-term protection. An example of this kind of area is Holly Grove Swamp in the Ayres Creek watershed, which has been targeted for conservation in cooperation with the Maryland Coastal Bays Program and the Trust for Public Land. In 2009 Worcester County and the Maryland Coastal Bays Program identified a Coastal Bays Target Area for resource land protection and set a goal of protection of 500 acres annually in this area¹⁰.

A map showing the areas targeted for land protection is provided as Figure 3-1. Land protected for natural resource

Update on Status since 2012 LPPRP

The areas of highest priority for natural resource land conservation in Worcester County has been the Coastal Bays and Dividing Creek Rural Legacy Areas, the entire Coastal Bays shoreline, and lands

¹⁰ Maryland Coastal Bays Program, Comprehensive Conservation and Management

Plan, Ocean City, Maryland (revised 2015), first published in 1999.

conservation with conservation easements after 2012 are highlighted in Figure 3-2.

The Coastal Bays and Dividing Creek Rural Legacy Area (RLA) programs not only protect key agricultural lands, but along with it, buffers, wetlands, forestlands and other sensitive natural resources. The county goal is to protect 3,000 to 5,000 acres in these areas, by 2022, creating a permanent “greenway” connecting E.A.Vaughn Wildlife Management Area to Pocomoke State Forest. Since 2012, 943 acres have been protected in the Coastal Bays RLA and 373 acres in the Worcester County portion of the Dividing Creek RLA. For the mapping and inventory purposes of this plan these properties are shown in maps and tables in the following chapter. However, the natural resource benefits of many of these properties should still be noted here.

The permanent Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Easement program which purchases permanent easements on property partly or completely in a CREP contract, became available in 2010 and again in 2014 and 2017 (in Maryland, to selected counties/areas). 600 acres have been protected with this program, 252 acres since 2012 (see Figure 3-2). The federal Conservation Reserve Program removes environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and plants vegetation (usually trees) to improve water quality and reduce loss of wildlife habitat. The landowner enters a contract during which time this practice must stay in place. The CREP easement program places property that includes land in this program into permanent easement, including a requirement that the CREP

conservation practices remain in effect in perpetuity.

Since 2012, Worcester County continued to work with the Maryland Coastal Bays Program to protect and restore the headwaters of Ayres Creek (Holly Grove Swamp). It is the largest contiguous forest remaining in the northern coastal bays watershed and is a key stop-over in the migratory bird “Atlantic Flyway”. Specifically, since the Adkins property on Ayres Creek was purchased in 2011 (now Ilia Fehrer Nature Reserve), MCBP and Worcester County are working together to restore the property and offer passive public access. Since 2012, Worcester County and MCBP signed an agreement to allow MCBP to oversee management and restoration of Grey’s Creek Nature Park.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Chesapeake Bay Field Office initiated the Pocomoke River Conservation



Tizzard Island

Partnership in 2006, which includes the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the Nature Conservancy, and Worcester County as a non-matching partner. This project is a long-term

effort to protect and restore migratory bird habitat in the Pocomoke River watershed. Since 2011, 6,500 acres in the mainstem of the Pocomoke River including properties in both Wicomico and Worcester counties along the county line, north of Snow Hill have been protected with conservation easements held by the State of Maryland (Department of Natural Resources).

Coastal Resiliency

Worcester County has approximately 361 miles of bay shoreline¹¹; 41,059 acres in Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area and 10,030 acres in Chesapeake Bay Critical Area (land within 1,000 feet of tidal waters). The Scientific and Technical Working Group of the Maryland Climate Change Commission concluded that by 2050 sea level is projected to rise between 0.9 and 2.1 feet¹². Figure 3-3 shows areas expected to experience inundation should there be a 2 foot sea level rise.

As sea level rises, salt marsh and other important low lying habitats will be at risk for change or disappearing altogether. Currently the county's mainland is protected by barrier island as well as smaller islands found throughout the coastal bays. These islands are experiencing accelerated erosion, and significant loss of island could result in impacts to the mainland. Between 1989 and 2007 islands in the Maryland Coastal Bays (not including the barrier islands) lost 295 acres, a 26% loss of acreage and 30% reduction in the

number of islands¹³. This loss is expected to continue. As well, Assateague Island continues to migrate westward and to experience erosion. A plan that identifies wetlands and islands at risk and strategies for reducing instability would be important to ensure key habitats are not diminished and also that the water quality and storm protection capacity of tidal wetlands are preserved.

It's also important that the county consider preservation of upland areas adjacent to salt marsh and other low lying habitats, so that marsh "migration" is possible as sea level rises. The focus of conservation on Coastal Bays shoreline properties, and minimization of further shoreline development, is compatible with this. Finally it is also important that the county consider the potential impact of inundation on public access points and any infrastructure placed there, as repeated loss and replacement can be an economic cost to the county. A plan that includes evaluating existing parks and identifying new inland properties for public access to replace lands that may be inundated in the future may need to be considered in the future.

Implementing Programs

Worcester County employs the following principal programs and ordinances to work towards achieving its goals for natural resource conservation:

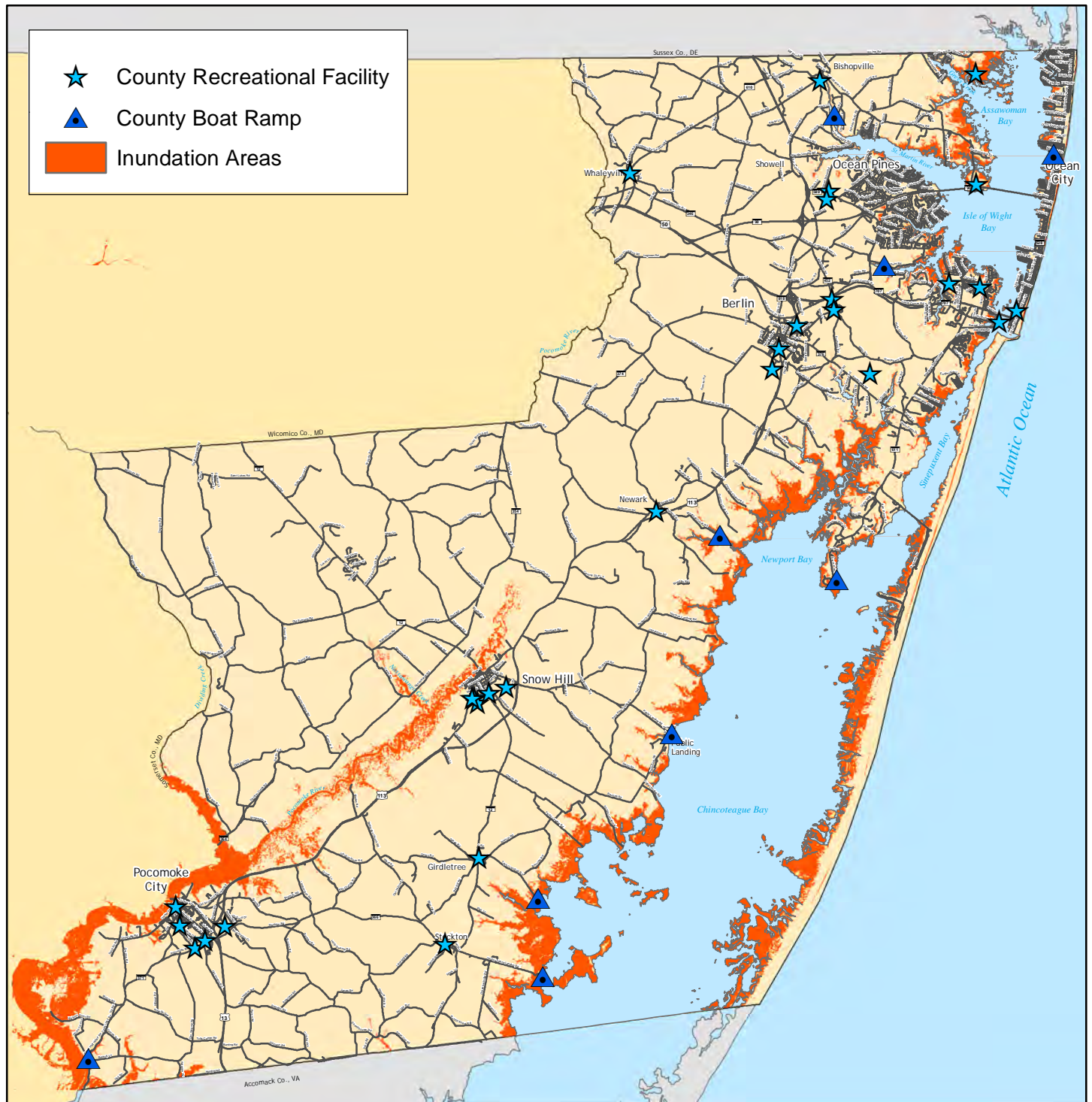
¹¹ Maryland Geological Survey, 2000. Digital wetlands delineation based on 1989 and 1998 imagery.

¹² Boesch, D.F., et al. 2013. *Updating Maryland's Sea-level Rise Projections. Special Report of the Scientific and Technical Working*

Group to the Maryland Climate Change Commission. University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, Cambridge, MD.

¹³ Roman Jesien, Maryland Coastal Bays Program. Personal Communication via e-mail, December 29, 2016.

Figure 3-3. Areas of Inundation with Two Feet of Sea Level Rise, Worcester County, Maryland



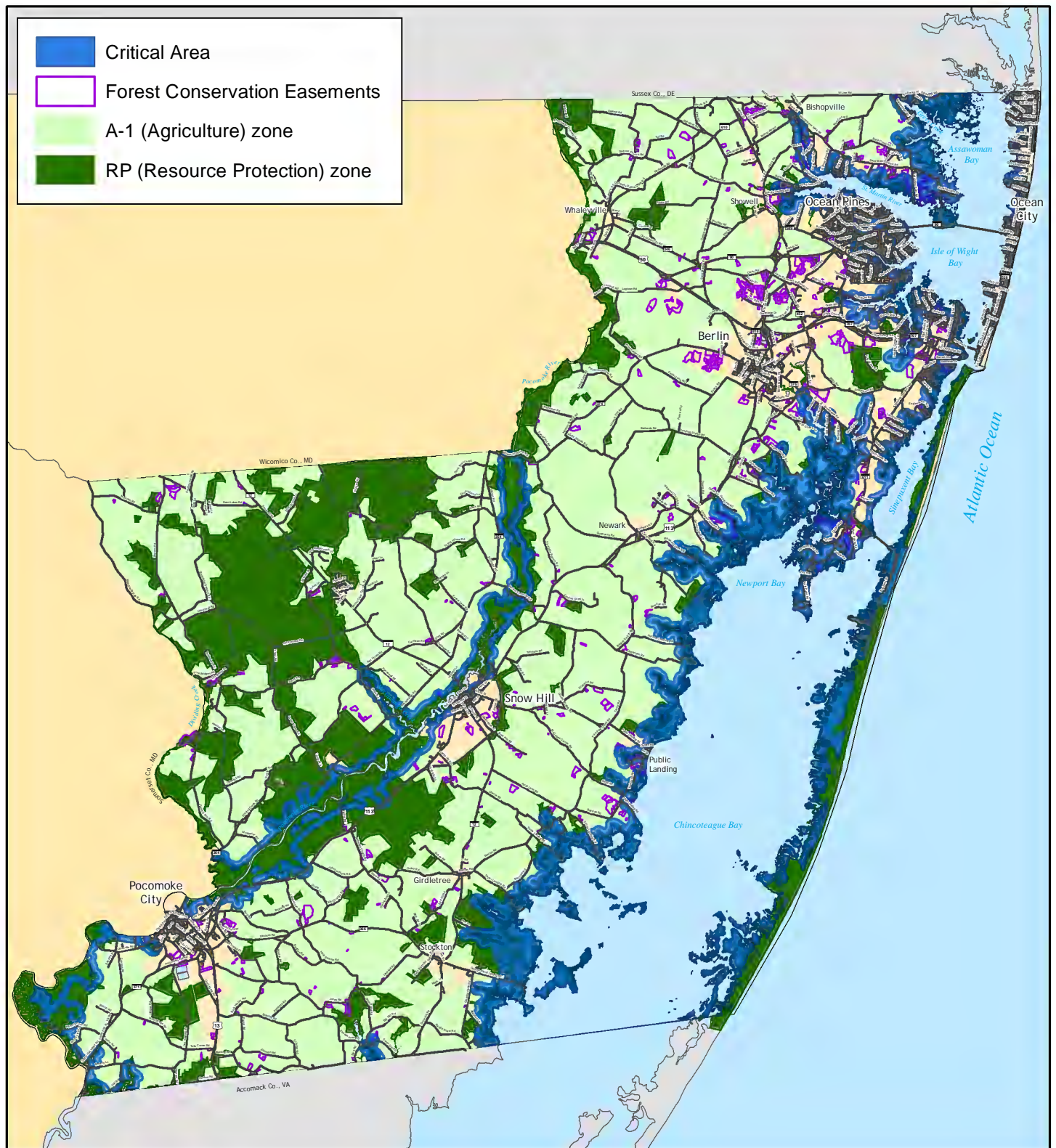
*The 2 Foot Sea Level Rise Inundation dataset is a derivative of high-resolution topographic data (LiDAR) that the State of Maryland in cooperation with local and federal agencies has acquired to identify areas vulnerable to inundation and flooding. The dataset represents inundation areas of Maryland coastal counties in the event of a two foot sea level rise.

Voluntary or Non-Regulatory Programs

- **Rural Legacy Program.** The Rural Legacy Program, enacted by the General Assembly in 1997, provides funding to preserve large, contiguous tracts of land and to enhance natural resource, agricultural, forestry and environmental protection while supporting a sustainable land base for natural resource based industries. The Coastal Bays Rural Legacy Area was established in 1998. The long term goal is protection of contiguous shoreline and a greenway connecting the E.A. Vaughn Wildlife Management Area and the Pocomoke State Forest. The Dividing Creek Rural Legacy Area includes land in Worcester and Somerset Counties that is within the lower Dividing Creek watershed, an area with important, contiguous farmland, and rich biodiversity. The 23,000-acre Area connects to The Nature Conservancy's Nassawango Creek and includes and links with large blocks of woodland within the Pocomoke State Forest system. More details are provided in the Agricultural Land Preservation chapter, which follows.
- **Donated Conservation Easements.** Worcester County is served by the Lower Shore Land Trust, a non-profit organization that works in cooperation with the Maryland Environmental Trust to obtain donated permanent conservation easements in rural areas. Over 1,900 acres in Worcester County are protected by a donated conservation easement, held by the Lower Shore Land Trust and Maryland Environmental Trust. Landowners who donate have access to certain tax benefits (see Figure 3-2).
- **Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF).** More detail on this program is provided in the Agricultural Land Preservation (Chapter Four), however, the MALPF program protects natural resources as well as active farmland. Over 6,000 acres of farmland and forest are permanently protected with this program.
- **CREP Permanent Easement Program.** This state-funded program protects forest resources (land in CREP contracts) with permanent easements. Nearly 600 acres have been protected with this program.
- **CELCP and Coastal Wetlands Programs.** Worcester County has partnered with, and plans to continue to work with, the state and the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) (NOAA) and the Coastal Wetlands Program (USFWS), two federal programs that protect coastal resources through purchase of conservation easements or fee simple purchase for passive parks. The Greys Creek Nature Park and Ilia Fehrer Nature Preserve were both purchased with CELCP funding.
- **Maryland Coastal Bays Program.** Part of the National Estuary Program, the Maryland

- Coastal Bays Program cooperates with the towns of Ocean City and Berlin, National Park Service, Worcester County, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Maryland Departments of Natural Resources, Agriculture, Environment, and Planning, which came together to produce the first ever comprehensive management plan for the coastal bays, completed in 1999. The plan was updated in 2015 following three years of development through a similar process. 222 actions items for government and non-government entities are identified in the 2015 plan to address water quality, habitat and living resource challenges in the watershed. Established in 1987 under the Clean Water Act, the National Estuary Program was developed to protect economically and environmentally sensitive estuaries across the United States by engaging all user groups. Implementation of many of these actions are underway. An Implementation Committee made up of partner staff meets regularly to review progress. A policy committee meets annually as well.
- **TMDL Implementation.** Worcester County is developing a coastal bays watershed plan that meets Section 319 requirements and addresses reduction of nutrient loads in the watershed. The county anticipates pursuing projects and funding for these projects that will result in nutrient load reductions.
- Regulatory Programs**
- **Atlantic Coastal Bays and Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Programs.** The Critical Area programs provide land use and environmental regulations in the 1,000 feet landward of tidal waters and marsh. See Figure 3-4.
 - **Forest Conservation Program.** The law applies to many projects outside of the Critical Areas that remove 40,000 square feet of forest. The law sets standards for preservation or replacement of forest during the development process. See Figure 3-4
 - **Sediment and Erosion Control and Stormwater Management** The county administers state sediment and erosion control and stormwater management regulations. Sediment and erosion control regulations require an approved plan for earth disturbance of 5,000 square feet or more and/or 100 cubic yards or more. The state's recently updated stormwater management regulation program is also administered by Worcester County. This program regulates development to hold post-construction stormwater runoff to a prescribed pre-construction level. The latest program manual emphasizes stormwater source reduction and on-site treatment methods.
 - **Groundwater Protection.** The Groundwater Protection Report, an appendix of the county's

Figure 3-4. Critical Area, Forest Conservation and Zoning in Worcester County, Maryland



Source of data: Worcester County Department of Development Review and Permitting, Technical Services Division



0 2.5 5 10 Miles

December 19, 2017

- Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan*, identifies management areas, within which certain strategies (septic system design and well construction standards) must be followed to protect groundwater from pollution. In 2000, Worcester County requested that the State of Maryland declare the entire Coastal Bays watershed an Area of Special State Concern (ASSC). This designation is designed to address groundwater nutrient inputs from septic systems in this area. An Area of Special State Concern Plan was prepared in 2002. Worcester County maintains a digital inventory of all county septic systems to track potential problems and target outreach.
- **Comprehensive Plan and Zoning.** Worcester County adopted a new comprehensive plan in 2006 and zoning map in 2009. The 2006 Land Use Map identifies the majority of the county as Agriculture and Green Infrastructure. Under the 2009 re-zoning, 170,000 acres are zoned A-1 (Agriculture) and 87,000 acres zoned RP (Resource Protection). Worcester County has among the most strict zoning in the state of Maryland—only 5-6 lots may be created from what was a single parcel of land in 1967. This has been in place now for decades and has successfully preserved the county's rural areas from sprawl development. Development has been focused in the four towns and in the Ocean Pines and West

Ocean City areas. See Figure 3-4.

Conclusion

Worcester County continues to build upon past land preservation successes. As of the end of 2017, approximately 29% of the county's approximately 304,000-acre land base is protected either with a fee simple ownership by government or non-profit conservation organization, or with a conservation (or agricultural) easement owned and managed privately and held by a government or non-profit entity. As development pressure continues, so should conservation efforts. The natural resource amenities that make the county a beautiful, healthy and less expensive place to live should continue to be protected, using the land preservation programs and planning policies described in this and the next chapter.

Chapter IV: Agricultural Land Preservation

Overview

This chapter provides a general overview of the public benefits of protecting agricultural lands and describes the county's agricultural land preservation efforts, including accomplishments since the 2012 Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan was adopted.

According to the 2010 Land Use/Land Cover data produced by the Maryland Department of Planning, Worcester County contains 89,000 acres of cropland and 145,000 acres of forested land¹⁴; 30% and 49% of the county, respectively. The 2012 Census of Agriculture, which collects data in a different way, notes that the county's 374 "farms" covered 99,304 acres or 34 percent of Worcester County (a -10% change from the 2007 census).¹⁵ Average farm size was 266 acres (down 8% compared to 2007), and median size was 53 acres.¹⁶ Worcester County ranks second in the state in broiler inventory, fifth in corn production, and sixth in soybean production.¹⁷ Worcester County ranks twelfth among *all counties nationwide* in broiler production¹⁸. The total value of all agricultural products sold in Worcester County in 2012 was nearly \$200 million (ranking fourth in the state and a +7% change from 2007).¹⁹

The poultry industry continues to be a staple element of the economy on the Delmarva Peninsula including in Worcester County. Not only chicken

production itself, but also locally produced corn and soybean meal are essential for the continued success of the chicken industry; the large base of local farmers is an important part of the "three legged stool" (poultry growers, poultry companies, and grain farmers) needed to sustain the industry. Contiguous farmland that is minimally disrupted by other types of development is also



Protected Farm, Coastal Bays Rural Legacy Area important for the continued success, and flexibility of the farming industries. When residential and other development occurs in agricultural areas, it creates traffic, adjacent landowner complaints and other conflicts with agricultural industries which at some point becomes detrimental economically to farming.

The forest products industry is also important in Worcester County. Like

¹⁴

<http://www.mdp.state.md.us/OurWork/landuse.shtml>

¹⁵ Census of Agriculture, USDA. 2012.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

farmland, all forestland is not equally productive. Forested riparian areas, critical area buffers, wetlands and certain hydric soils are important to protect for habitat and water quality, but not critical to the forestry industry. Despite what may appear to be a large resource, there is actually a shortage of forestland available for forest products in the lower shore region. This has contributed to a large reduction in the capacity of the forest products industry on the lower shore.²⁰ Demand is expected to grow in the long run especially for wood for fuel (cellulosic ethanol or wood fired power plants).²¹ The more acres of forestland available in the future, the more likely Worcester's forests can be managed sustainably.²²

It is important to note that farmland, and forested land, does much more for a community than simply provide for a specific industry. Cost of Community Service Studies carried out across the nation consistently find that farmland, forested land and other agricultural land use generates a fiscal surplus for a community, even when the land is assessed at its current agricultural use. In this way, farmland is similar to other commercial and industrial uses. In contrast, residential land use does not cover its costs to local government, it must be subsidized by the aforementioned land uses. Conversion of agricultural land to residential land, therefore, should not be seen as a way to balance local budgets.²³

As described in the 2006 comprehensive plan, it is the county's intent to protect and promote private farming and

forestry by accommodating inevitable population growth through appropriate planning and zoning, and by taking advantage of every program available to landowners to voluntarily protect open space. Specifically, the county is committed to continuing to seek and/or provide additional funds for the purchase of both Rural Legacy and Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Fund (MALPF) easements, to pursue other agricultural land conservation programs, and to obtain State certification for the county's agricultural land preservation program.

There is significantly more landowner interest in land protection than there is funding available, particularly for the MALPF program. For FY15 and FY17, 26 landowners applied to sell an easement to MALPF. Of these landowners, four were made a purchase offer in the FY15 cycle, in FY17, 5 received offers. Lack of sufficient funding has been the most significant challenge associated with preserving working farms and forests. Fortunately, development pressure on these areas has been minimal, generally, due to strong A-1 (agricultural) zoning and lack of strong demand for new housing since the real estate decline that began with the nationwide market collapse in 2008. Continued funding however is essential to ensure continued progress in protecting agricultural land in Worcester County as development pressure eventually rebounds.

Agricultural Land Preservation Goals

²⁰ Larry Walton, Vision Forestry, personal communication. February 18, 2009.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ American Farmland Trust. Fact Sheet: Cost of Community Services Studies. August 2004.

Worcester County recognizes the important economic role and other long-term benefits of agriculture, and shares the State of Maryland's goals for farmland protection. The County's 2006 Plan identified the following goals:

- Permanently preserve agricultural land capable of supporting agricultural production;
- Protect natural, forestry and historic resources and the rural character of the landscape associated with farmland;
- To the greatest degree possible, concentrate preserved land in large, contiguous blocks to effectively support long-term protection of resources and resource-based industries.

Worcester County's 2006 comprehensive plan which was revised with adoption of the Priority Preservation Element in 2010, recommended the goal of 1,000 acres of agricultural land protection per year. The Priority Preservation Element identifies a Priority Preservation Area (PPA) of 195,000 acres, 64% of the county's land area. The long-term goal is to protect 100,000 acres within this area for agricultural and forestry, by protecting 800 acres *within* the PPA annually.

These goals are re-articulated in the county's Agricultural Land Preservation Re-certification report, which was last produced in 2015.

Progress Since 2012

Worcester County has protected, on average, approximately 450 acres of farmland/productive forestland annually from 2012 to 2016. This falls short of goals stated in 2006 (800 acres within the PPA/1,000 acres countywide). The reason for this is the economic downturn that caused a significant drop in state (and local) funding for farmland preservation.

A map showing protected land discussed below is provided at the end of this chapter (Figure 4-1). Table 4-1 lists the inventory of protected agricultural lands (under the MALPF and Rural Legacy Programs) as of December 2017.

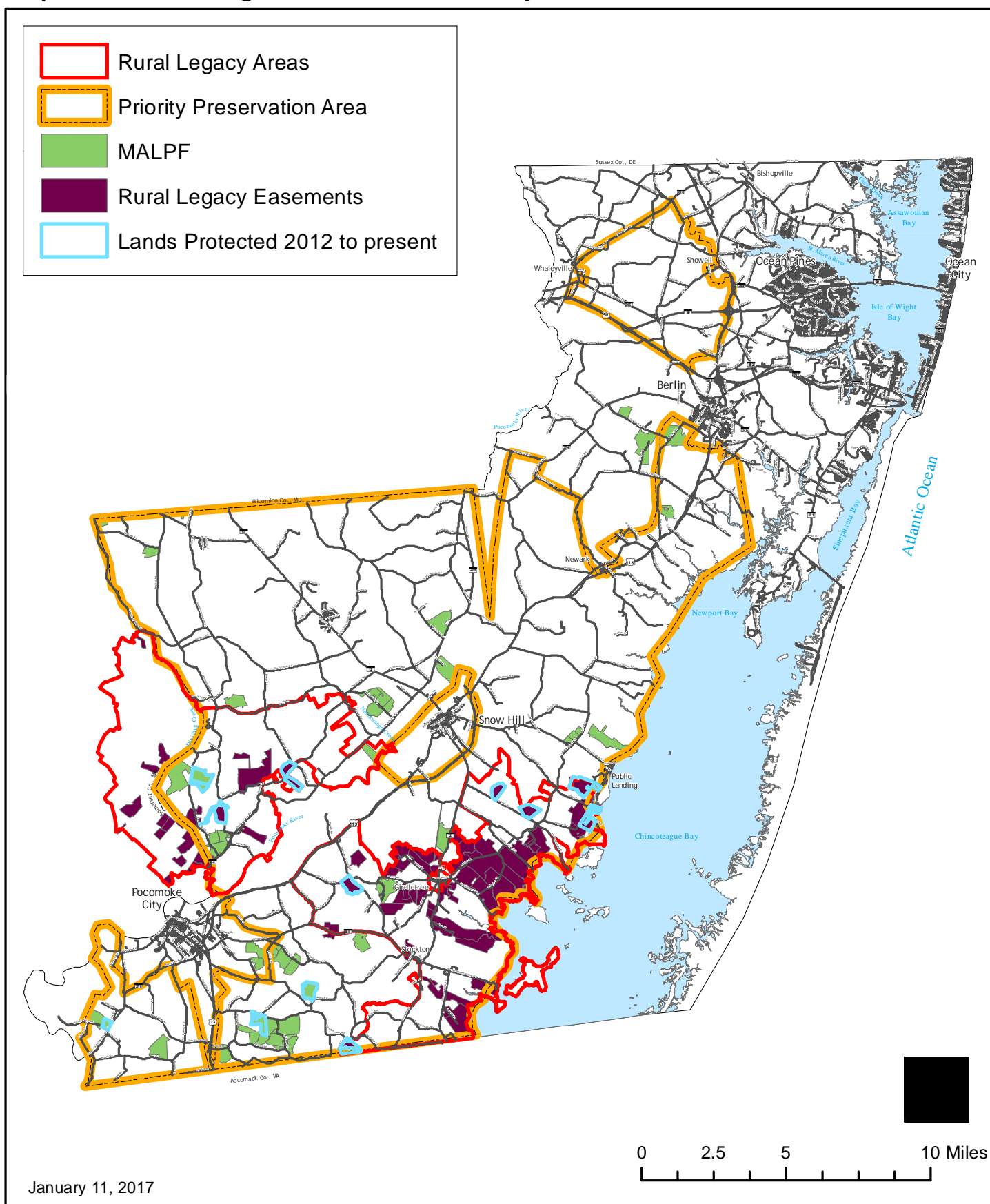


MALPF Easement

MALPF

Created by the General Assembly in 1977, Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) purchases agricultural preservation easements that forever restrict development on prime farmland and woodland. Worcester County continues to have a "certified" agricultural land preservation program (as of July 1, 2004). This allows the county to retain additional transfer tax and access

Map IV-i. Preserved Agricultural Land and Priority Preservation Areas



Note: Properties outlined in blue were protected from 2012-present

Source of data: Worcester County Department of Development Review and Permitting, Technical Services Division

additional state funding match for purchase of agricultural easements through the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation.

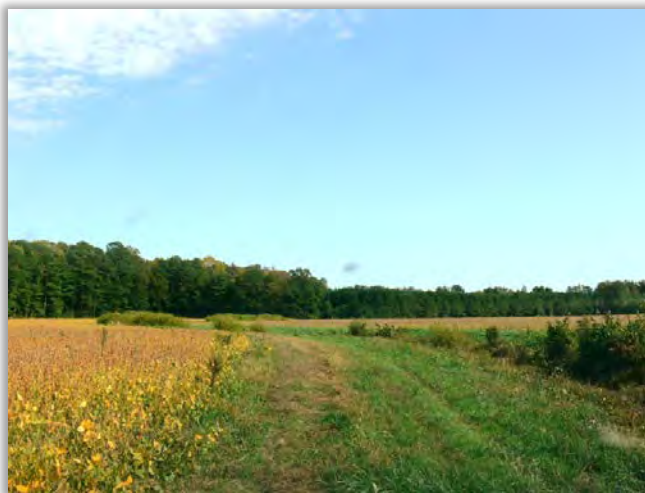
From 2012 to 2016, 519.3 +/- acres (5 properties) were protected with MALPF easements, or about 104 acres protected annually. Again, this fell short compared to past progress—from 2007 to 2011, 391 acres were protected annually. Annual acreage protection is anticipated to increase in 2018 and after because the transfer tax funds (revenue dedicated for land protection) will be drawn on less and eventually withdrawals for other purposes will end under new authorizing legislation.

Rural Legacy

The Rural Legacy Program was created to discourage sprawl development and protect areas, designated by local government, for future generations to enjoy. The Program provides farmers and landowners an alternative to developing (or subdividing) their land or selling their property to developers. Under the Program they can sell or donate their development rights and still retain ownership to continue growing crops or raising livestock (similar to the MALPF program). Worcester County's Coastal Bays Rural Legacy Area, which includes Chincoteague Bay shoreline and watershed, lower Pocomoke River watershed, and connects the Chincoteague Bay to the Pocomoke State Forest with a permanent "greenway", is approximately 29,285 acres in size. 14,200 acres+ are permanently protected, either by state

ownership or privately owned land under conservation easement. The 2012 County Land Preservation and Recreation Plan noted that the county goal was to protect 3,000 to 4,000 acres in the Rural Legacy Area by 2016 (this is 300 to 400 acres protected in this Area per year). From 2012 to 2016, 1,200 acres were protected (240 acres annually). Approximately 8,820 acres are protected with a Coastal Bays Rural Legacy easement as of end of 2016.

Dividing Creek Rural Legacy Area was created in 2008. It is located in the southern portion of the Dividing Creek watershed, an area of Maryland recognized by The Nature Conservancy as high in biodiversity, and also an area with productive and contiguous farmland. The Area is 27,650 acres in size, and includes both Worcester and



Coastal Bays Rural Legacy Easement

Somerset counties. Protection of the first Dividing Creek Rural Legacy Area easement in Worcester County occurred in 2009. Five properties have been protected in Worcester County to date (3 since 2012), totaling approximately 1,104 acres.

Table 4-1. Inventory of Protected Agricultural Lands in Worcester County

Site Name:	Acres Preserved	Protection Type (ownership or easement type)
Bounds, Todd	214.7	Rural Legacy
Breeding	143.6	Rural Legacy
Chapman	359.5	Rural Legacy
Cropper	391.4	Rural Legacy
DeMarco et al	100.2	Rural Legacy
Harvey	346.0	Rural Legacy
Ingersol	267.0	Rural Legacy
Jones Girdletree	203.2	Rural Legacy
Joyner	553.5	Rural Legacy
Parsons (Bird Hill RD)	177.3	Rural Legacy
Parsons (Ward RD)	168.1	Rural Legacy
Rantz (Onley RD)	136.4	Rural Legacy
Rantz (Snow Hill RD)	170.0	Rural Legacy
Redden, P 264	81.0	Rural Legacy
Redden, P 284	53.9	Rural Legacy
Richardson West	104.6	Rural Legacy
Roger Richardson	363.7	Rural Legacy
Rowland	634.5	Rural Legacy
Rural Integrity	201.5	Rural Legacy
Ryton enterprises	648.0	Rural Legacy
Scrimgeour	440.4	Rural Legacy
Scrimgeour Trust	126.4	Rural Legacy
Timmons	347.6	Rural Legacy
Truitt	162.2	Rural Legacy
Breeding/Hall	272.2	Rural Legacy
Rural Integrity, II	108.9	Rural Legacy
Robinson, John and Ann	85.5	Rural Legacy
Payne/Daugherty	40.4	Rural Legacy
Phillips Family LLC	227.9	Rural Legacy
Rural Integrity	19.6	Rural Legacy
McCabe's Corner LLC	149.4	Rural Legacy
Bill Blank	129.0	Rural Legacy
Glad Mar Dairy Land	134.4	Rural Legacy
ES Adkins Co	591.9	Rural Legacy
Tidewater Farms	246.7	Rural Legacy
Bayside Farms (A)	253.7	Rural Legacy
Bayside Farms (B)	165.1	Rural Legacy
Glad Mar Land Co, Inc	209.1	Rural Legacy
Greenwood	121.6	Rural Legacy
Aydelotte	153.9	Rural Legacy
Danzi	92.72	Rural Legacy
Brummitt	164.8	Rural Legacy
Stevens	156.5	Rural Legacy
Cropper/Strayer	106.3	Rural Legacy

Table 4-1. Inventory of Protected Agricultural Lands in Worcester County

Wise	168.8	Rural Legacy
Gerald Redden	236.53	MALPF
Thomas & Kelly Gravenor	31.314	MALPF
Bruce Nichols	67.57	MALPF
Milton Alfred Pennewell Family Irrev	126.63	MALPF
Milton Alfred Pennewell Family Irrev	78.75	MALPF
Stanley & Shirley Brown	100	MALPF
James Gregory	3.76	MALPF
Richard Jones	133.22	MALPF
Richard Jones	287.58	MALPF
Richard Jones	169.28	MALPF
Richard Jones	120.24	MALPF
Richard Jones	177.68	MALPF
Norman & Donna Tarr	123.3552	MALPF
Norman & Donna Tarr	303.2	MALPF
Gary Breeding/GRB Family Limited P	301.58	MALPF
Ruth R. Taylor	214.66	MALPF
Richard F. Evans	322.849	MALPF
Sue Ellen Bounds	111.38	MALPF
W. Dan Redden et. al.	140	MALPF
John C.& Lynda B. Moore	185.179	MALPF
Worcester Family Farms/Gary Breed	403.37	MALPF
M.Wayne Lambertson	87.4	MALPF
M. Wayne and Diane Lambertson	29.002	MALPF
Millenium Farms Partnership	48.58	MALPF
AMEN Corner, LLC	33.39	MALPF
Eileen and Ned Dykes	76.903	MALPF
Stacey and Stephen Payne	66.19	MALPF
William Davis, Sr.	271.906	MALPF
Gladys Holland	139.765	MALPF
L. Dean and Deborah Guy	194.55	MALPF
Joseph Holland	234.43	MALPF
Ken Holland/Glad-Mar Dairy	92.942	MALPF
Ken Holland/Glad-Mar Dairy	91.344	MALPF
Willis and Kathryn Redden	163.542	MALPF
Irma Henshall Trust	123.69	MALPF
Stephen and Kristie St. Pierre	166.234	MALPF
Dorothy Combs	317.689	MALPF
Outten, Willard and Louise	136.43	MALPF
Joseph Holland	98.91	MALPF
Larry Sterling	177.9	MALPF
Aydelotte Poultry	33.78	MALPF
Walter Widgeon	81.5813	MALPF
John Justice	47.821	MALPF
Aydelotte Farms	138.01	MALPF
Glad Mar Land Co.	234.6	MALPF
Total Acres	16,717.63	

Land Use Management

Worcester County's zoning code continues to protect rural areas from irreversible, sprawl development that would negatively impact farming and forestry. In the "A-1" (Agricultural) zone only five (5) lots may be created from what was an entire parcel of land in 1967; six (6) lots only where rural clustering is accomplished. The estimated build-out density in the "A-1" zone is 1:20²⁴. Between 2006 and 2014, 1,623 acres of land zoned for farming uses county-wide was subdivided for residential purposes.²⁵ This represents less than 0.1% of the A-1 zone (169,158 acres).

Lands zoned "RP" (Resource Protection) are particularly in proximity to the coast, rivers and streams and generally constrain development due to their environmental sensitivity or the fact that they are already protected by state ownership or permanent conservation easement. Land zoned RP may contain soils that support farming or forestry. Approximately 87,463 acres are zoned RP (29% of the county). The allowed uses in the RP zone are similar to allowed uses in the A-1 zone; a significant difference is that any subdivision in the RP zone must be approved by the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Other Strategies

The 2012 Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan identified "increasing on-farm income in a variety of ways including developing opportunities for

value added processing, agro-tourism, continuing education for farmers, and educating county citizens on the value of supporting local farms" as supportive actions that can be taken to keep farming viable. Value-added retail and agro-tourism are permitted by special exception in the A-1 zone, there are many roadside farm stands permitted throughout the county in several zoning districts, although exact numbers are not available. Since 2012 the county has added text amendments to the A-1 zoning code to allow farm owners to hold special events in their principally agricultural structures, thus allowing temporary/short-term uses that do not impact farming, but provide income, and may also help connect the public to the agricultural landscape and products. The county Economic Development Department and Tourism Department are currently involved in a new initiative to promote "farm breweries". With the growth of craft breweries in the county, brewers are looking to local farmers to provide grain, and there is at least one partnership between a craft brewer and a farmer that has been on-going for several years.

Conclusion

Worcester County's primary land use is agricultural. Agricultural industries are a bedrock of the county's economy, and such land use ensures fiscal health of the local government, as it keeps cost of community services low. The county's agricultural/rural landscape also supports the tourism industry. It is the county's desire to protect its agricultural land base, while also accommodating new

²⁴ Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Certification Program Application, Worcester County, Maryland; July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2010.

²⁵ Worcester County. Not all of this land was converted to non-agricultural use, subdivided parcels ranged in size from 2 acres to 96 acres.

development in appropriate, planned locations, and otherwise in ways that do not compromise agricultural activities. In recent years, the combination of local and state programs have ensured a pattern of land development and protection that concentrates residential and commercial development in planned

areas, and protects contiguous farmland. It is critical for economic health that the state and county continue to work closely to ensure that agricultural land protection programs are available and well-funded, and policies to protect farming practices continue to be implemented.

Appendix 1: Citizen Survey, Written Comments Received

The Worcester County Recreation & Parks Department conducted an on-line survey from April to November 2017 to help gauge citizen demand for recreational amenities. This appendix contains all written responses received to the question: “Please describe any ideas for additions to or new Worcester County Park features or facilities. For example, multiple-purpose fields; indoor facilities, new trails, etc”

10 Please describe any ideas for additions to or new Worcester County Park features or facilities. For example: multi-purpose fields; indoor facilities, new trails, etc.

Answered: 139 Skipped: 49

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	fields indoor facility Additional parking is desperately needed at the northern fields in Berlin. An indoor facility would also be nice in Berlin or an indoor track at northside park in OC.	11/8/2017 9:56 PM
2	maintenance of facilities trails Beach at Gudelsky park gets very trashy. Mostly washed up trash, but could use receptacles on beach and hold more cleanups. Would love more walking, jogging and biking trails.	11/8/2017 7:51 PM
3	passive water access trails Trails (walk, bike), fresh water ponds & lakes for fishing canoe and kayak launch area in smaller creeks and bays	11/6/2017 7:45 AM
4	bike paths trail new trail bike paths	11/5/2017 1:06 PM
5	fields Clean Water. Better Fields. More Fields.	11/5/2017 12:20 PM
6	drinking water access Need to have better access to clean water for drinking.	11/5/2017 9:34 AM
7	passive parks trails Nature tourism is the most rapidly growing area of travel. We have lots of natural beauty in the county. People don't come here on vacation to play basketball.	11/5/2017 7:37 AM
8	trails increasing the # of walking and bike trails would be wonderful	11/5/2017 6:38 AM
9	parking More parking	11/4/2017 6:44 PM
10	bike paths Better to have some longer bike trail	11/4/2017 1:33 PM
11	fields multi purpose fields	11/4/2017 11:05 AM
12	passive parks Where is a county park where people can camp and swim?	11/4/2017 10:39 AM
13	passive parks trails More nature parks and trail	11/4/2017 10:16 AM
14	parking Needs, more parking!!!!	11/4/2017 9:35 AM
15	bike paths trail need new trails and bike paths	11/4/2017 8:17 AM
16	dog friendly trails New trails, dog walking access	11/4/2017 7:30 AM
17	nature center trails New trails and education centers to teach K12 about importance of preserving nature!	11/3/2017 3:27 PM
18	fields Turf fields, get more playing time. I.e. No rain out.	11/3/2017 3:00 PM
19	nature center passive park trails It would be great to see areas with longer trails!! And more access to untouched nature. Maybe some pavilion with information about the science of the area.	11/3/2017 2:41 PM
20	trails New Trails	11/3/2017 2:39 PM
21	dog friendly trails Trails, Trees, Dog access	11/3/2017 2:38 PM
22	bike paths trails There is a need for more walking and biking trails	11/3/2017 2:33 PM
23	fields Turf fields. This would reduce injuries from bad weather on the fields	11/3/2017 2:28 PM
24	bathrooms drinking water access fields parking Additional fields with all of the support facilities, i.e. bathrooms fresh water and ample parking.	11/3/2017 1:40 PM
25	trails Additional walking trails are needed. Particularly those in remote or protected areas.	11/3/2017 9:42 AM
26	trails A system of interconnected trails with trail maps.	11/3/2017 9:36 AM
27	trails more trails esp. in forested/woodlands area	11/3/2017 8:42 AM

8	passive parks trails	walking trails through meadows and wooded areas. More passive use areas for birding and wildlife observation.	11/3/2017 8:39 AM
29	trails	Connecting parks through trail access	11/3/2017 8:21 AM
30	trails	Would love to see more walking and biking trails, particularly of longer distances. Rail trails or connected trails would be great.	11/3/2017 7:51 AM
31	trails	new nature trails would be great!	11/3/2017 5:20 AM
32	trails	More walking and hiking trails in natural settings would be great	11/3/2017 5:11 AM
33	trails	More trails. Worcester County has very little options for hiking.	11/2/2017 9:21 PM
34	natural play space trails	New natural trails and nature play areas	11/2/2017 8:36 PM
35	fields	Turf or better drainage. It's frustrating to pay money for your child to play in a sport and have the county constantly close fields cancelling practices due to water.	11/2/2017 5:02 PM
36	indoor facility	I'd like an indoor swimming pool in the northern part of the county.	11/2/2017 4:23 PM
37	passive parks	The parks should give public access to nature.	11/2/2017 4:19 PM
38	swimming pool	Swimming pool for Berlin area.	11/2/2017 3:55 PM
39	indoor facility re-purposed golf courses	An indoor facility equipped with an indoor track and indoor pool for the northern part of Worcester County would be utilized greatly by residents, especially aging residents needing a safe alternative to daily exercise. Many of the golf courses are underutilized and losing money in the county. These golf courses would be great to reuse for a public park since golf cart trails already exist. The holes themselves could be converted to disc golf courses which are popular among young adults. The existing golf club house could be renovated and expanded for indoor activities.	11/2/2017 3:51 PM
40	indoor facility passive parks	Need indoor facility in northern Worcester, esp. for racquetball. This survey needs a choice for bird/wildlife watching which is what most people I know use the parks for. There is too much mowing. Let more areas go fallow for water quality and wildlife.	11/2/2017 3:51 PM
41	fields	turf fields, more parking	11/2/2017 12:19 PM
42	fields	I would like to see better field conditions. Drainage is an issue and results in the cancellation of practices and games for my daughter's rec. lacrosse team.	11/2/2017 9:36 AM
43	bathrooms fields parking	fields greatly need improvement, better draining, better grass, too many practices/games cancelled due to poor drainage. Needs more parking and bathrooms should be updated	11/2/2017 9:25 AM
44	fields indoor facility trails	Better drainage of fields; indoor facilities; long wooded running trails	11/2/2017 7:16 AM
45	bathrooms fields	The fields and bathroom for football/ Lacrosse and Soccer	11/2/2017 5:56 AM
46	fields parking	Need additional parking and better field conditions	11/1/2017 10:48 PM
47	fields parking	better drainage and parking	11/1/2017 9:49 PM
48	fields parking	Fix poor drainage/turf conditions, additional parking needed, very hard to find parking	11/1/2017 9:25 PM
49	fields parking	Northern Worcester County Park in Berlin is in desperate need of additional parking. Between baseball and lacrosse on a Saturday or Sunday morning, it is IMPOSSIBLE to find a safe parking place. I am afraid a child is going to be injured because of some of the places people choose to park their vehicles. I am afraid a child is going to be hit by a car while walking to the fields. In addition, the lacrosse fields do not have proper drainage. The fields are extremely wet and practice and games have to be rescheduled and/or cancelled because of their conditions after rain.	11/1/2017 8:55 PM
50	fields	Artificial turf/all weather fields for football and lacrosse	11/1/2017 8:51 PM
51	fields parking	Northern Worcester Athletic Complex need better field conditions. Currently there is extremely poor drainage and a major lack of parking at that facility. Especially if there are two sports scheduled at the same time!	11/1/2017 8:33 PM
52	fields	Fix drainage issues to minimize cancellations	11/1/2017 7:24 PM

3	fields kids use WAC fields for multiple sports and I rent them occasionally for adult sports. The quality of the fields is far behind what is offered at the River Soccer facility in Roxana DE and the new MAYS complex in Pittsville. Poor drainage, poor footing (holes, bumps etc) lead to limited use and/or increased knee and ankle injuries, particularly for older youth and adults who move at higher speeds. Lighted turf fields would be the best and would get the most use however it is the most expensive. I know the football field was planted with Bermuda but if going with natural surface, they should be done right - a well stainable sand base topped with sod or topsoil then seed with grading to encourage drainage to small rain gardens between fields. It's expensive yes but the county is losing money due to field conditions - see the amount of private companies paying top dollar to use the new DETURF facility in Milford and the new tournaments at the new MAYS facility.	11/1/2017 7:0 PM
54	parking More park	11/1/2017 6:37 PM
55	fields parking Better water drainage and more parking	11/1/2017 6:31 PM
56	parking Parking is a huge problem. Completely insufficient amount of parking spaces.	11/1/2017 5:17 PM
57	fields parking Please improve field conditions and parking at Northern Complex.	11/1/2017 4:04 PM
58	parking Need additional parking spaces	11/1/2017 3:58 PM
59	fields Add turf fields	11/1/2017 3:56 PM
60	fields Something must be done with the Northern County fields. They are in decent shape but do drain poorly. The real issue is they are treated like greens on Pebble Beach. We play lacrosse there in the Spring and every time it rains, has rained or might rain the flags go up and the fields are closed. This has a huge impact on the kids practicing lacrosse. Losing even a couple practices is big. I understand the county is trying to protect the fields but they are there to be used and enjoyed. If the kids can't use it to play their all-weather sports then the kids miss out. Either allow more use, allow half the fields to be used when wet and alternate each time, rebuild the fields with drainage or put in a turf field. Anything will be better than what happens especially early in the season. I do NOT mean to be snarky because the county facilities are great overall. But my comments reflect the frustration players and parents feel when we face multiple field closers when they are wet or it is raining. Some how we need to provide all-weather fields for our kids that practice and play in all conditions.	11/1/2017 3:50 PM
61	parking Parking, parking, parking	11/1/2017 2:53 PM
62	fields parking Better drainage systems for the fields. Better grass, turf conditions and more parking.	11/1/2017 2:51 PM
63	fields trails Turf fields, nature trails 3+ miles	11/1/2017 2:51 PM
64	fields parking additional parking, better drainage so we dont have to cancel practice so often after it rains	11/1/2017 2:44 PM
65	fields parking Northern Worcester County Fields - the fields are closed way too often - this is a drainage problem that CAN be fixed. Cancelled practices negatively impact the children/parents and cause scheduling conflicts. There is not sufficient parking available at this facility causing people to park anywhere possible only to have Berlin P.D. show up and write tickets - to parents at a youth sporting event - Outrageous!!	11/1/2017 2:35 PM
66	fields parking the fields have very poor drainage, turf or better grass, more parking	11/1/2017 2:13 PM
67	fields parking Northern Worcester County Fields need to have the drainage fixed- all to often they are closed during Beach Lacrosse times. Also the grass does not get cut enough during Beach Lacrosse season. Parking is also an issue.	11/1/2017 2:08 PM
68	fields indoor facility parking Indoor facilities, better parking, better drainage on Northern Fields for ability to play more often	11/1/2017 2:08 PM
69	fields parking Parking is a major issue. When Beach Lacrosse has games there isn't enough parking. If Berlin Little League is having games the same day as Beach Lacrosse, people end up parking across the street at WPS or on the road going through Northern Worcester Park complex. This is dangerous. During the spring Beach Lacrosse uses the fields everyday; however, spring weather and poor drainage causes a lot of cancellations. Any thought into converting fields to turf or Bermuda grass?	11/1/2017 2:07 PM

0	bathroom parking Improve the fields pecifically dra nage o in the pring we have les cancelled practices and games due to poor field conditions! Also there is a lack of parking on saturdays with baseball and lacrosse going on!	11/1/2017 2:0 M
71	fields parking There needs to be more parking, during baseball and lacrosse season there never enough parking for all of the players and their families. Additionally the fields need to drain better as we miss a lot of time due to wet fields	11/1/2017 1:56 PM
72	fields parking Better drainage on the fields and better parking	11/1/2017 1:45 PM
73	fields The fields at the Northern WORCESTER County complex are a mess. The drainage is horrible which results in many practices and game cancellations on beautiful weather days because of rain or snow sometimes 3 Days prior. A total resurface should be done for all fields	11/1/2017 1:39 PM
74	fields parking Better drainage so the fields aren't closed as much in the spring for lacrosse practice and more parking	11/1/2017 1:36 PM
75	fields Better drainage/playing fields, new turf facilities, expanded parking at Northern Worcester Fields, more multi purposes fields with better field conditions	11/1/2017 1:35 PM
76	fields We need turf or better grass for the kids to play on .	11/1/2017 1:34 PM
77	parking additional parking	11/1/2017 1:34 PM
78	parking There is not spot on this survey for general input??? Poor survey planning. Water drainage is a major issue as well as parking. Total crap that local police ticket cars for events were there is not enough parking.	11/1/2017 1:29 PM
79	fields Better grass fields/drainage and more parking please!	11/1/2017 1:27 PM
80	fields Fields don't drain very well, an indoor facility would be a plus for Northern Worcester County as well as a trail system	11/1/2017 1:24 PM
81	fields The fields do not drain and are uneven causing injuries and cancellations that are both hazardous and unnecessary. The parking is a joke. Children are there and run in between cars parked on the sides because here are not enough safe parking soaces	11/1/2017 1:22 PM
82	fields Better field conditions	11/1/2017 1:18 PM
83	fields Better availability of field for club teams . Last fall field were closed more than opened. We moved our practices to another location. Better conditions available lacrosse goals and easier to work with.	10/23/2017 9:52 AM
84	fields The Northern Worcester County Complex fields need help in regard to Drainage/Turf or Grass for the lacrosse season and we also need Safety nettingh	10/18/2017 4:20 PM
85	fields Turf fields. Seating for large events.	10/17/2017 2:52 PM
86	fields turf fields, indoor facilities	10/17/2017 8:17 AM
87	fields Totally resurface fields, tuff fields, drainage is poor and the bathrooms stink	10/16/2017 7:54 PM
88	fields turf fields/ more fields	10/16/2017 12:55 PM
89	fields Safety netting on fields that border walkway/road. Lighting on other fields other than football field. Better drainage to fields.	10/16/2017 11:13 AM
90	fields Additional Fields at the North complex would be great! If you could add in a mutli-purpose field and some field turf fields you could make the money back in rentals. I feel that the County also needs a large Pole Building that could house 2-3 indoor turf fields. It would be great for the HS to use them in case of inclement weather instead of canceling practice. You can also run indoor soccer, lacrosse, field hockey year round.	10/16/2017 9:07 AM
91	fields Multi-purpose fields, indoor turf fields	10/16/2017 8:49 AM
92	fields the field condition at the Northern Worcester County fields need immediate improvement should be a top priority for the county. the complex has great features however the fields are closed regularly during seasons they are needed because they don't drain at all. the county should consider a total reconstruct of all fields inclusive of back stops to stop balls from flying into walking paths and parking lots. If the county is interested in continuing to attract tournaments they should consider turf otherwise tournament organizer will continue to host their events elsewhere.	10/16/2017 8:34 AM

3	fields fields at N AC re in dire need of improvement / reconstruction. Drainage is horrible. The fields (outside of the Football Field) is primarily used for youth lacrosse. Youth lacrosse starts in early March and ends end of May. The fields are closed at least a day out of most weeks due to the poor drainage. If the county wants to continue to support these group as well as promote the facility to attract tournaments the construction/drainage need to be a top priority.	10/16/2017 8:28 AM
94	fields More multi-purpose fields with a few turf fields	10/16/2017 7:57 AM
95	fields multi purpose fields are limited with regard to the number of youth organizations in the area	10/16/2017 7:23 AM
96	bathrooms bathrooms instead of portable toilets	10/13/2017 2:58 PM
97	none	8/30/2017 8:55 AM
98	all is good	8/30/2017 8:50 AM
99	interpretive signage maintenance of facilities the Nature Park in west OC needs new signs showing what visitors are looking at. It also is seriously over grown with weed in the creeks and the edges of the trails. There are some kind of burroughing bees over taking the picnic area	8/8/2017 5:42 AM
100	unsure	7/24/2017 1:40 PM
101	trails more trails	7/24/2017 9:39 AM
102	trails Walking paths.	7/21/2017 4:57 PM
103	pickle ball courts permanent pickle ball courts in showell park	7/21/2017 10:02 AM
104	trails more trails	7/19/2017 12:50 PM
105	trails more trails	7/19/2017 12:40 PM
106	indoor facility Indoor facility in north county	7/14/2017 3:51 PM
107	fields I would like to see our soccer fields make available to the international teams that in the past were playing in Salisbury. Apparently they got shut out of their old facilities; they are being used for a girls' softball tournament....	7/14/2017 1:35 PM
108	trails Walking and riding trails in Iliah Feher Park.	7/14/2017 8:14 AM
109	trails We have plenty of ball fields and we need more access to nature walks and non-structured play!	7/13/2017 3:20 PM
110	dog friendly trails Bike paths, Dog friendly trails and poop recepticals	7/13/2017 2:10 PM
111	bathrooms updated play equipment Equipment for early childhood at showell park need to be updated. Also, some sort of cover, trees or some other type of covering over equipment. The slides can't be used until sundown, because the equipment is too hot. Bathrooms, not port - o - potties!	7/13/2017 8:43 AM
112	trails New well lit and safe trails.	7/8/2017 9:36 AM
113	concession stand Concession stand upgrades	7/7/2017 7:44 AM
114	lighting Lights on ball fields	7/7/2017 7:39 AM
115	natural play space I would love to see one of the parks with a natural playground, herring creek would be perfect . A water trail up or down one of the bay/rivers would be cool with stopping points marked along the way.	7/6/2017 7:40 AM
116	indoor--fans Fans in the fitness room at the rec center	7/5/2017 11:37 AM
117	indoor facility indoor facilities in Berlin	7/5/2017 8:05 AM
118	more programs--Pocomoke More programs offered in Pocomoke area	7/3/2017 6:04 PM
119	shooting range shooting ranges	7/3/2017 7:05 AM
120	trails New trails are always welcome! Frisbee golf around the Rec. Center would be AWESOME	7/2/2017 2:25 PM
121	indoor--more hours Sunday hours for those of us who have off o. week3nd.	7/1/2017 7:04 PM
122	more programs--Pocomoke Focus on the south end county park rather than spending millions on the north end that already has two largely sufficient parks	7/1/2017 8:25 AM
123	indoor--more hours No breaks in evening fitness class sessions	6/30/2017 8:36 PM

24	more programs--Pocomoke lease run programs using schools in pocomoke and Berlin. The poor children cannot get to Snow Hill. There use to be soccer and basketball at pocomoke schools. Mostly the children with money go to Snow Hill.	/30/20 7 5:40 PM
125	trails biking/hiking trails	6/30/2017 3:28 PM
126	trails More trails--links between destinations--eg Berlin to Assateague; also trails in WOC to ensure safety of cyclists and pedestrians and encourage walking/cycling	6/30/2017 11:46 AM
127	trails Outdoor walking/biking trails with a level surface	6/30/2017 11:35 AM
128	fields The more multi purpose fields the better. Between soccer, football, and lacrosse, if sometimes seems that there isn't room for other sports or casual pick up games.	6/30/2017 11:07 AM
129	Have not visited any to rate or on which to make recommendations.	5/6/2017 9:13 PM
130	parking more parking	5/3/2017 2:09 PM
131	maintenance of facilities Power wash and paint surface/lines	5/3/2017 10:54 AM
132	bathrooms Showell needs an actual bathroom and not portable toilets. Our family reunion party took the children to Walgreens for popsicles and, primarily, to use the restrooms.	5/2/2017 7:30 PM
133	indoor facility Indoor sports facilities	5/2/2017 12:56 PM
134	Worcester County does a good job with the Berlin LL Fields as well as at Showell Park	5/2/2017 12:17 PM
135	dog control Need stronger control of unleashed dogs.	5/2/2017 8:09 AM
136	i think there all great	5/1/2017 7:48 PM
137	fields More Athletic Fields, Adult Fitness Equipment, Expanded playgrounds	5/1/2017 4:11 PM
138	Bishopville Park is a nice place to be , alone or with others ...	5/1/2017 3:36 PM
139	lighting Lights on the ball fields so games are not cut short due to the limited light	4/26/2017 1:27 PM

Appendix 2: Joint Use Agreements

The following are copies of joint use agreements between Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks and public and private schools for shared use of their recreational facilities.

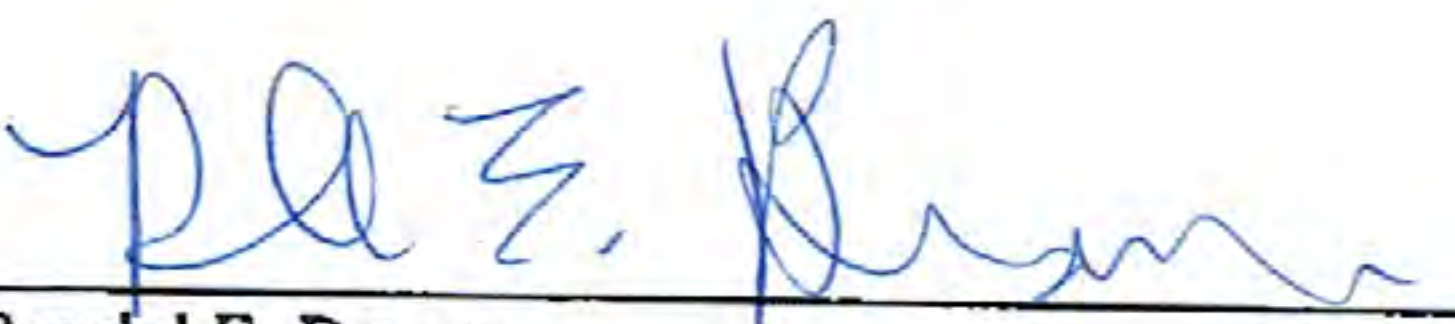


MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT
BETWEEN
WORCESTER COUNTY RECREATION & PARKS (MD)
AND
WORCESTER PREPARATORY SCHOOL

SUBJECT: This letter signed by both parties represents an agreement whereby the Northern Worcester Athletic Complex (NWAC) and Worcester Preparatory School (WPS) engage in a joint use agreement for their respective facilities, where such use is acceptable to both parties.

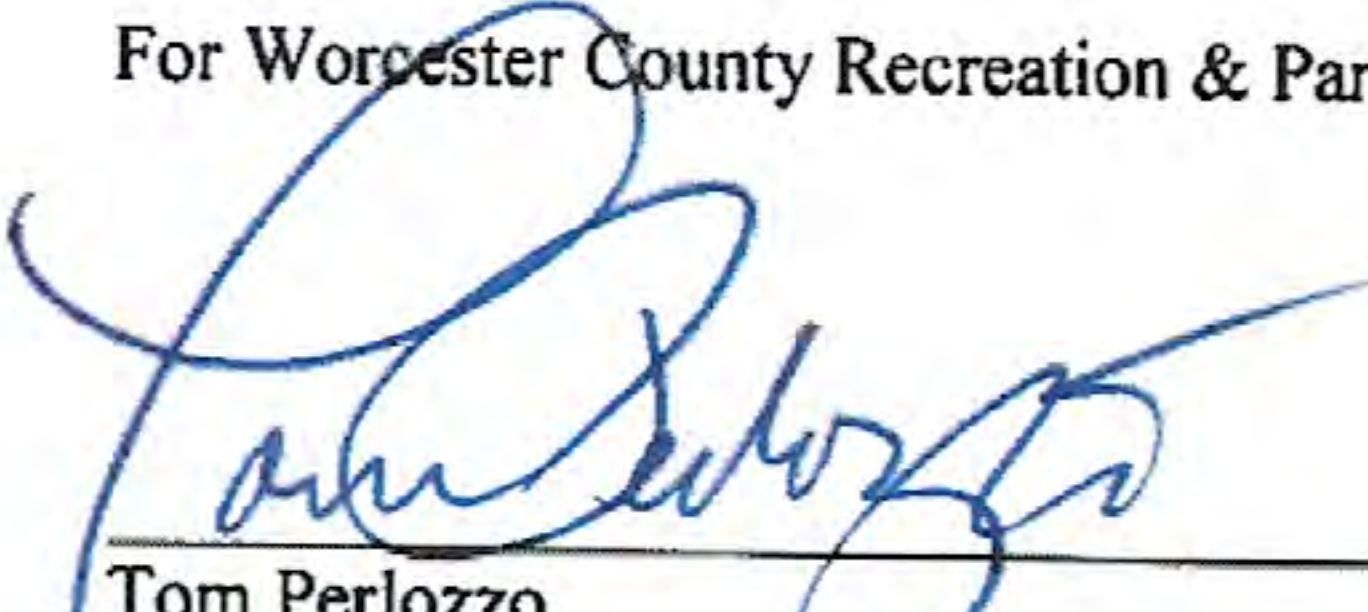
1. Background: The NWAC and WPS are adjacent properties and have worked cooperatively in the past. This cooperation has taken the form of using each other's parking facilities with prior approval when events warranted it as well as WPS use of certain NWAC athletic fields for its sports programs with prior approval from NWAC.
2. Both parties seek to formalize this arrangement in the future through formal memorandum updated annually.
3. On a case by case basis, both parties agree to continue this cooperation. Each party is free to reach out to the other in advance to request use of the other's facilities. The requestee is free to grant or deny use of facilities based on the needs of its own organization but should try to extend cooperation wherever possible.
4. Where joint use of facilities has been approved, both parties agree not to charge the other use fees whenever possible.
5. This agreement is in effect on 1 January 2019 and continues until expiration on 31 December 2019 unless extended or modified by mutual consent of both parties. Either side may rescind this agreement or withdraw an approved use of facilities by the other with 30 days' notice.
6. Point of contact at WPS for this agreement is Matt McGinnis, Athletic Director, 410-641-3575; email: mmcginnis@worcesterprep.org. POC for NWAC is Tom Perlozzo, Director of Recreation & Parks, 410-632-2144 ext. 2505 email: tperlozzo@co.worcester.md.us .

For Worcester Preparatory School


Randal E. Brown
Head of School

12/18/18
Date

For Worcester County Recreation & Parks

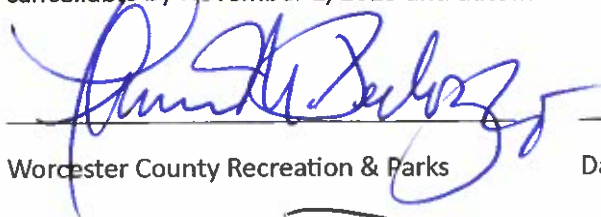

Tom Perlozzo
Director of Recreation & Parks

12/18/18
Date


December 3, 2018

The County Commissioners of Worcester County, Maryland and the Ocean City Baptist Church will work cooperatively over the coming years to continue to provide functions and activities on Worcester County Recreation and Parks Property and Ocean City Baptist Church properties. .

It's understood that this relationship will continue on a case by case basis to best serve both the needs of the county and the Church. This agreement is valid December 3, 2018 through December 2, 2019 and is cancellable by November 1, 2019 and automatically renewed yearly hereafter.

 12/5/18

Worcester County Recreation & Parks Date

 12/5/18

Ocean City Baptist Church Date

Joint Use Agreement

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF WORCESTER COUNTY, MARYLAND ("COUNTY") AND THE WORCESTER COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION ("BOARD") FOR USE OF RECREATION FACILITIES

Recitals

WHEREAS, the County and the Board desire to organize, promote, and conduct community recreation programs and activities to promote the health and general welfare of the community; and

WHEREAS, the Board is the owner of real property in the County, including facilities and active use areas that are capable of being used by the County for community recreational purposes; and

WHEREAS, the County is the owner of real property in the County, including facilities and active use areas that are capable of being used by the Board for school recreational purposes; and

WHEREAS, under appropriate circumstances, these publicly held lands and facilities should be used most efficiently to maximize use and increase recreational opportunities for the community; and

WHEREAS, both bodies are authorized to enter into agreements with each other to promote the health and general welfare of the community and contribute to enhance the recreational opportunities afforded to the community; and

NOW, THEREFORE, the Board and the County agree to cooperate with each other as follows:

1. Term

This Agreement will begin November 15, 2018, and end on November 14, 2019. The Agreement however shall automatically be renewed each year unless terminated as provided for hereinafter in Section 16 or by one party providing the other party written notice of its intention not to have the Agreement renewed on or before September 15th of each year.

2. Effective Date

This Agreement shall be effective upon the arrival of November 15, 2018.

3. Cooperative Agreement

As provided herein, the Board and the County hereby agree to cooperate in coordinating programs and activities conducted on all their respective recreational fields and facilities. As used in this Agreement, "Owner" shall mean the party to this Agreement that owns or controls a particular property and/or facility covered by this Agreement, and "User" shall mean the other party (but only the County and/or the Board and any third-party permitted by the County. Any such third party shall be the County's sole responsibility as if it was the County itself) using the Owner's property and/or facility under the terms of this Agreement.

4. Permitted Uses

a. Board Property

i Board Use

The Board shall be entitled to priority use of Board Property for public school and school-related educational and recreational activities, including summer school, and at such other times as Board Property is being used by the Board or its agents.

ii County Use

Subject to the schedule developed by the County and the Board or its agents, the County and third parties authorized by the County shall be entitled to use Board Property without charge for community recreational and educational purposes for the benefit of Board students, the Board and the County at large. The County's obligations under this Agreement shall apply to third parties using Board Property. The County shall be responsible for ensuring that third parties comply with all obligations under this Agreement when using Board Property. The County shall be solely responsible for any third-party user and all obligations of the County herein for its use shall apply to both the County and the County's third-party users. The County shall enforce all Board rules, regulations, and policies provided by the Board while supervising community recreational activities on Board Property. In planning programs and scheduling activities on school grounds, the security, academic, athletic, and recreational needs and opportunities of school-aged children will be the highest priority and be adequately protected.

b. County Property

- i** The County shall be entitled to priority use of County Property for the regular conduction of park, recreation, and community service activities and/or programs sponsored by the County.
- ii** Subject to the schedule developed by the County and Board, the Board shall be entitled to use County Property, without charge, for Board educational and recreational activities and/or programs.

5. Compliance with Law

All use of Board and County Property shall be in accordance with State and local law. In the case of a conflict between the terms of this Agreement and the requirements of State or local law, the State or local law shall govern. Any actions taken by the Board or the County that are required by State or local law, but are inconsistent with the terms of this Agreement, shall not be construed to be a breach or default of this Agreement.

6. Communication

a. Designation of Employees

The Board and the County shall respectively designate an employee with whom the other party, or any authorized agent of the party, may confer regarding the terms of

this Agreement. For purposes of this Agreement, County and Board's agent/designee shall be as follows:

- (1) **Tom Perlozzo**
Director of Recreation and Parks
6030 Public Landing Rd.
Snow Hill, MD 21863
Office - 410.632.2144 x 2505
- (2) **Lou Taylor**
Superintendent, Worcester County
6270 Worcester Highway
Newark, Maryland 21841

The agents shall meet as needed to effectuate this Agreement.

7. Scheduling Use of Property

a. Master Schedule

If so requested by either party, the Board and County shall develop a master schedule for joint use of Board and County Property to allocate property use to the Board, County and third parties.

b. Scheduling of County Property

The County shall have the responsibility for scheduling the use of County Property when the County is not using the Property.

c. Scheduling of Board Property

The County shall be responsible for scheduling its and any third-party use of Board Property and shall do so through the designated agent of the Board.

d. Tracking Use of Facilities

The Board and the County shall each track use of their respective properties under this Agreement.

e. Documentation of Costs

The Board and the County shall maintain records of costs associated with the Agreement.

8. Fees and Charges

The County shall timely reimburse the Board for expenses which are incurred by the Board outside normal working hours in providing staff or other personnel as the Board deems necessary to monitor and/or be present during the County's (or any third-party) use of the Board property. The Board shall timely reimburse the County for expenses which are incurred by the County outside normal working hours in providing staff or other personnel as the County deems necessary to monitor and/or be present during the Board's use of County property.

9. Improvements

- a. The Board shall obtain prior written consent of the County to make any alterations, additions, or improvements to County Property; the County shall obtain prior written consent of the Board to make any alterations, additions, or improvements to Board Property.
- b. Any such alterations, additions, or improvements shall be at the expense of the requesting party, unless otherwise agreed upon.
- c. Each party may, for good cause, require the demolition or removal of any alterations, additions, or improvements made by the other party at the expiration or termination of this Agreement. "Good cause" includes reasons of health, safety, or the Board's need to use the Board Property for educational purposes or the County's need to use County Property for governmental purposes.

10. Supervision , Security, and Inspections

a. Supervision and Enforcement

Each User shall train and provide an adequate number of competent personnel to supervise all activities on the Owner's Property. The User shall enforce all of the Owner's rules, regulations, and policies while supervising activities or programs on the Owner's Property.

b. Security

The Owner shall provide the User with access to the Owner's Property. The Owner shall provide keys, security cards, and training as needed to the User's employee(s) responsible for opening and locking the Owner's Property while supervising activities or programs.

c. Inspection and Notification

The User shall inspect the Owner's Property after use to ensure these sites are returned in the condition they were received. The User shall ensure the Owner is notified in the event that Owner's Property suffers damage during User's use. Such notification shall consist of sending written notification by letter, and email to the Owner's designated agent identifying the damaged property, date of detection, name of inspector, description of damage, and estimated or fixed costs of repair or property replacement.

d. Supplies

The User shall furnish and supply all expendable materials necessary to carry out its programs while using the Owner's Property.

e. Maintenance, Custodial Services, and Toilet Facilities

Maintenance

The User agrees to exercise due care in the use of the Owner's Property. The User shall during the time of its use keep the Owner's Property in neat order.

The Board shall be responsible for maintenance, repair and upkeep of Board property. The County shall be responsible for maintenance, repair and upkeep of County Property

Custodial

The Owner shall make its trash receptacles available during the User's use of Owner's Property. The User shall encourage community users to dispose of trash in the trash receptacles.

Parking

Parking shall be in designated areas.

11. Restitution and Repair

The User shall be wholly responsible to repair, remediate, or fund the replacement or remediation of any and all damage or vandalism to the Owner's Property during the User's use of that Property. This shall be coordinated by the designated agents and approved by the County and /or Board as required.

12. Liability and Indemnification

- a. The County shall defend, indemnify, and hold the Board, its officers, employees and agents, harmless from and against any and all liability, loss, or claims for injury or damages, arising out of the performance of this Agreement, but only in proportion to and to the extent such liability, loss, or claims for injury are caused by or result from the negligent or intentional acts or omissions of the County, its officers, agents, or employees.
- b. The Board shall defend, indemnify, and hold the County, its officers, employees and agents, harmless from and against any and all liability, loss, or claims for injury or damages, arising out of the performance of this Agreement, but only in proportion to and to the extent such liability, loss, or claims for injury are caused by or result from the negligent or intentional acts or omissions of the Board, its officers, agents, or employees.
- c. Nothing herein or any related agreement or any amendment hereto shall under any circumstances constitute or be construed as a waiver of immunities or limitations of liability that the County Commissioners and/or members of the Board of Education and or Superintendent, their officers, employees, agents, or servants, may have in by virtue of and in accordance with any law, including sovereign, statutory, qualified, official, common law, public general law or public local law immunity. No action may be brought with respect hereto other than in the appropriate State Court in Worcester County, Maryland. County Commissioners, as a body politic, has become a party hereto only in the capacity stated herein. No individual elected County Commissioner, member of Board of Education, contractor, employee, agent, or servant of County shall have any personal liability hereunder. Any indemnity herein or arising out of this Agreement, on the part of the County Commissioners or Board of Education, shall be only to the extent permitted by law and shall be subject to the non-waiver of immunity, limitations of liability and all other provisions of this Agreement.

13. Insurance

The Board and the County shall provide the following insurance in connection with this Agreement.

- a. Commercial General Liability for bodily injury and property damage, including Personal Injury and Blanket Contractual, with limits of \$1,000,000 per occurrence, \$2,000,000 aggregate.
- b. Workers' Compensation. Workers' compensation coverage as required by Maryland law.
- c. Documentation of Insurance. The Board and the County shall provide to each other a certificate of insurance each year this Agreement is in effect showing proof of the above coverage upon request.

14. Termination

This Agreement may be terminated at any time prior to its expiration, upon 45 days written notice.

15. Entire Agreement

This Agreement constitutes the entire understanding between the parties with respect to the subject matter and supersedes any prior negotiations, representations, agreements, and understandings.

16. Amendments

This Agreement may not be modified, nor may compliance with any of its terms be waived, except by written instrument executed and approved in the same manner as this Agreement.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have executed this Agreement all as of the day and year first herein written.

ATTEST:



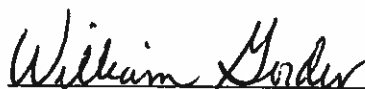
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF
WORCESTER COUNTY, MARYLAND


Diana Purnell, President

ATTEST:



WORCESTER COUNTY BOARD
OF EDUCATION


William Gordy, President