

# IV. PRIORITIES AND GOALS FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

Based on the sum of all findings of the planning process to update the Land Preservation and Recreation Plan for 2019, five key areas arose for the Department of Natural Resources and its partners to focus efforts to improve public outdoor recreation opportunities across Maryland through 2023. The five goals are noted below and included in an action plan with specific items recommended for implementation to help achieve these goals. The Land Preservation and Recreation Plan Technical Advisory Committee will convene annually to monitor and help guide the implementation of recommendations of the plan over the next five years.

The Action Plan contains two sets of action items for each goal. The first includes action items recommended for implementation over the next five years. The second includes long term actions that the Department and partners have been, and shall continue to implement over time. These are not “new” actions but representative of Maryland’s ongoing, long-term commitment to providing high quality outdoor recreation opportunities.



## **Goal 1: Coordination and Collaboration**

Strengthen coordination and collaboration between federal, state, and local government agencies and other key stakeholders in planning for the provision of outdoor recreation opportunities and land conservation initiatives.



## **Goal 2: Promote the Benefits of Outdoor Recreation and Conservation of Natural Lands**

Promote the economic, cultural, health, and environmental benefits of outdoor recreation and conservation of natural lands. Seek to increase the public's understanding of these benefits to enhance interest and participation in recreating outdoors in Maryland.



## **Goal 3: Increase Access to Open Spaces and Waterfronts**

Increase and improve opportunities for all segments of the population to access land and water-based outdoor recreation opportunities.



## **Goal 4: Improve What's Already Available**

Improve the overall quality of outdoor recreation infrastructure at public parks and outdoor areas across the state.



## **Goal 5: Develop an Informed Stewardship Culture**

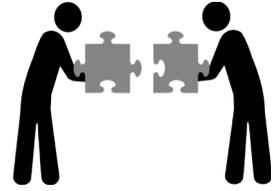
Promote environmental education and use of parks and outdoor areas as teaching tools to foster a positive stewardship ethos among children, youth, and their families.

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### **Goal One**

***Strengthen coordination and collaboration between federal, state, and local government agencies and other key stakeholders in planning for the provision of outdoor recreation opportunities and land conservation initiatives.***



### **Strategy One**

Work with counties, municipalities, and the City of Baltimore through the Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan process to regularly update the statewide inventory of public outdoor recreation facilities and amenities, assess local needs, update priorities, and identify opportunities for state and county collaboration.

#### ***Strategy One Action Item***

- A. Develop updated guidelines for county and City of Baltimore for use in the development of their next Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plans (due in 2022). Consult with counties, the City of Baltimore, and relevant stakeholder organizations. The counties should be encouraged to work with municipalities to update the inventory of recreational facilities.

### **Strategy Two**

Coordinate with state and county agencies to improve the accuracy and completeness of the 2018 statewide outdoor recreation GIS database.

#### ***Strategy Two Action Items***

- A. Work with county and state agencies to define consistent key technical criteria and formatting needs for future outdoor recreation GIS data submission (shapefile needs, data formatting, etc.), including trail related data. All future outdoor recreation GIS related information should be submitted in accordance with the defined criteria. The 2018 statewide GIS outdoor recreation database should be further vetted by all parties based on defined technical criteria.
- B. The Department of Natural Resources should continue to develop and provide GPS enabled trail maps for free public use. Seek to complete PDF trail maps for all priority land units.

### **Strategy Three**

Continue to create and enhance a statewide trail system on land and water that connects communities, parks, cultural resources, waterways, and schools.

#### ***Strategy Three Action Item***

- A. Work with partners to implement projects that seek to fill priority gaps in public trail systems that were identified through the 2016 and 2017 Statewide Regional Trails Workshops. Utilize the Montgomery County/Exelon trail partnership project to demonstrate the potential for developing trails and trail connections through linear utility corridors. Seek to complete at least one priority project per Department of Natural Resources service region.

### **Strategy Four**

Use the Land Preservation and Recreation Plan Technical Advisory Committee (or create a similar inter-agency body) to monitor and help guide the implementation of recommendations of this plan over the next five years.

#### ***Strategy Four Action Item***

- A. Convene meetings of the Technical Advisory Committee (annually at a minimum) to review progress toward implementing the action items of this Plan. Utilize these meetings to update baseline data on progress, resources, challenges, and new opportunities to help achieve goals of the Land Preservation and Recreation Plan.

### **Ongoing Action Items**

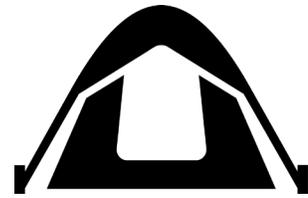
1. State agencies and local governments should continue to coordinate review and planning activities related to transportation projects adjacent to waterways in accord with the State's Transportation and Waterway Access statute.
2. Continue the practice of coordination between State agencies, local governments, non-profit organizations and citizens to identify potential access sites and rest areas along waterways, improve existing access sites, and develop new public water access projects statewide.

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### **Goal Two**

***Promote the benefits of outdoor recreation and conservation of natural lands. Seek to increase the public's understanding of these benefits to enhance interest and participation in recreating outdoors in Maryland.***



### **Strategy One**

Assess, utilize, and share information regarding the economic value of outdoor recreation, land preservation, and natural resource conservation in Maryland.

#### ***Strategy One Action Items***

- A. Work with academic partners in Maryland to complete a Forest Economic Impact Study to show the importance of our state forests, concurrently with carrying capacity studies on overused lands as identified by Department of Natural Resources.
- B. Consider the outcomes and recommendations of the work of the Maryland Outdoor Recreation Economic (MORE) Commission. Their feedback is scheduled for release in late 2019 and is likely to include complimentary information and recommendations regarding outdoor recreation.

### **Strategy Two**

Develop a campaign to highlight the use of Department of Natural Resources lands for recreation use and align with a health promotion message. Initiate new and improve existing coordination and planning efforts with health initiatives to market outdoor recreation as integral to public health and personal well-being.

#### ***Strategy Two Action Items***

- A. Leverage the new (as of September 2018) Memorandum of Understanding between Maryland State Park Service and Park Rx America to help implement the health promotion message of outdoor recreation at state parks. Target areas with populations that have both low parks use and elevated levels of chronic disease to track the effectiveness of health promotion initiatives.
- B. Work with public health and healthcare experts to launch a campaign to encourage residents to request prescriptions from their doctors to visit parks as a tool to reinforce the link between nature and human health. Create a program for visitors and park staff to walk in parks with doctors and nurses.

### **Strategy Three**

Showcase Maryland's Native American and African American cultural heritage on public lands.

#### ***Strategy Three Action Item***

- A. Develop an Indian Heritage Tourism concept and highlight significant Native American sites and stories in public parks, trails, and recreation areas, in consultation with indigenous people, experts, and agencies.
- B. Improve an African American tourism concept and highlight significant African American sites and stories in public parks, trails, and recreation areas in consultation with African American communities, experts, and agencies.

## Ongoing Action Items

1. Promote the health benefits of being outdoors in parks at elementary schools as a tool to get the message to students with their parents at an early age.
2. Train park staff, especially rangers, programmers, and those at nature centers, on the health benefits of being outdoors in a natural setting.
3. Sponsor forest bathing, Park Rx America, and related nature-immersion programs that encourage visits to parks to receive the therapeutic health benefits.
4. Continue to develop additional opportunities to highlight African American history and the experience of enslaved people, as well as work to protect the landscapes and open spaces around important African American sites.
5. Incorporate a landscape view to protect and enhance species diversity, density, and richness through an ecosystem-based approach to land management decisions and individual land unit plans.

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### **Goal Three**

***Increase and improve opportunities for all segments of the population to access close-to-home land and water-based outdoor recreation opportunities.***



### **Strategy One**

Improve means for planning and investing in outdoor recreation opportunities that are accessible and enriching for residents and visitors of different ages, abilities, interests, and cultural backgrounds.

#### **Strategy One Action Items**

- A. Update park equity analysis GIS data layer with state and county data. Leverage updated park equity analysis findings to inform decision making. Work with local governments to evaluate park equity tools. Seek to increase participation in outdoor recreation and engagement in nature throughout Maryland's diverse social and cultural populations.
- B. Support additional recruitment of Spanish speaking staff for the Maryland Park Service.
- C. Investigate opportunities and/or consider creating new cross-cultural programming, cultural festivals, and events at state parks.
- D. Incorporate multiple languages when providing public information on signage, social media, technology, and print publications throughout the Department of Natural Resources system.

### **Strategy Two**

Build, maintain, and renovate trails to create an interconnected, sustainable statewide trail system. Improve trail-based recreation opportunities for all users.

#### **Strategy Two Action Item**

- A. The Department of Natural Resources should inventory its existing trail system to identify Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible trails and determine trails that could be made accessible with the resources available and without significant modification or disturbance to valuable natural and cultural resources.

### **Strategy Three**

Enhance opportunities for the public to access and participate in water-dependent outdoor recreation activities.

#### **Strategy Three Action Items**

- A. Encourage local, regional, and state entities to think creatively to fund and develop water access and water trail projects and consider pursuing funding sources that pair access with efforts that might not have been considered previously, such as environmental preservation projects, living shorelines and storm water abatement.
- B. Think creatively about developing projects at Maryland State Parks that encourage more water recreation opportunities for users that don't have the capacity to bring their own boats such as outdoor concessioners or canoe/kayak shares.

### **Strategy Four**

Evaluate and prioritize the creation of new outdoor recreation opportunities on public lands.

#### **Strategy Four Action Items**

- A. Review Department of Natural Resources lands for opportunities to provide nature based recreational development such as low-amenity camping, fishing/canoeing access, birding, walking, biking, and equestrian trails, which are compatible with management purposes. Explore the potential for further expansion of resource-based recreation at Department of Natural Resources land units.

### **Strategy Five**

Develop a Department-wide, consistent trail and wayfinding signage plan to create consistency and effectiveness of signage on trails and trailheads.

### **Strategy Six**

The Maryland Park Service and Wildlife and Heritage Service should implement individual strategic management plans that guide maintenance, operations, and changes in user needs at state parks and wildlife management areas.

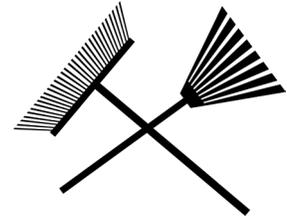
## **Ongoing Action Items**

1. Continue to employ Spanish speaking staff in state parks and nature centers.
2. Continue to address accessibility in all outdoor recreation planning and development. This includes coordination with local committees and organizations for people with disabilities, improving and updating information such as maps that show ADA accessible trails and outdoor recreation opportunities, and physically improving and increasing the number of user amenities for people with disabilities for land and water outdoor recreation.
3. Implement opportunities to connect existing trail systems on Department of Natural Resources lands with other nearby communities and destinations of recreation, historic, or cultural significance or interest.
4. Continue to participate and assist in the efforts to create and develop the National Historic Trails (Star-Spangled Banner and Captain John Smith), and the Harriet Tubman Byway.
5. Continue coordination regarding future development and enhancing connections between on and off-road trail issues and opportunities between Department of Natural Resources, Department of Transportation, Tourism, county agencies, and partner groups.
6. Continue using best practices for sustainable trail design and maintenance. Consider guidelines developed by agencies and organizations such as the U.S. Forest Service, Student Conservation Association, and the International Mountain Bicycling Association.
7. Continue to explore opportunities to improve equestrian campsite locations at parks and forests with existing equestrian trails.

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8. Strive to identify and create new public water access sites in Maryland to advance the Chesapeake Bay Agreement's Public Access Goal of 300 new water access sites in the watershed by 2025.
9. Increase efforts to promote safe boating practices, boater courtesy, and stewardship ethic among boaters and paddlers.
10. Encourage local, regional, and state entities to think creatively to fund and develop water access and water trail projects and consider pursuing funding sources that pair access with efforts that might not have been considered previously, such as environmental preservation projects, living shorelines and storm water abatement.
11. Continue program development of the Conservation Job Corps, in partnership with local agency partners, to provide underserved youth with natural resource employment and outdoor recreation experiences on Department of Natural Resources lands.
12. Promote hunting and fishing recreation opportunities on all Department of Natural Resources lands where appropriate.
13. The State should continue to acquire land adjacent to existing parks and natural area boundaries to include additional natural and cultural resources and to address management issues.
14. Continue to monitor target shooting operations at existing shooting ranges to allow for the continued support of this activity in the local community and to provide adequate opportunity for target shooting in support of hunter safety programs and hunting generally.
15. Work with the Forest Service, Wildlife and Heritage Service, Maryland Park Service, Maryland Geological Survey, and other appropriate units to develop, enhance, or complete, and publish educational materials describing each land unit's important natural and cultural features (geology, landscape types, flora and fauna both rare and common, historical structures, or archaeological sites), why they are important, and how they can be viewed by visitors.
16. Improve the sharing of information about existing parks and outdoor recreation opportunities with the public.
17. Market technology to provide website links to county parks; trail systems; water- based recreation opportunities; natural, cultural, and historical resources; and camping for a seamless user information search experience.

**Goal Four**  
**Improve the overall quality of outdoor recreation infrastructure at public parks and outdoor areas across the state.**



**Strategy One**

Account for and plan for climate change and sea level rise when planning the construction of new outdoor recreation facilities, especially those in vulnerable areas.

**Strategy One Action Items**

- A. Conduct a State Lands Climate Assessment. This vulnerability assessment of state recreational lands will utilize climate change related GIS data, infrastructure data, and ecological data to identify and understand vulnerabilities and impacts, including long-term impacts to recreational use, water access, infrastructure, and ecosystem management.

**Strategy Two**

Support preventative and critical maintenance for state parks and other recreation sites on Department of Natural Resources lands.

**Strategy Two Action Items**

- A. Develop a database that evaluates priorities for rehabilitation, stabilization, and interpretation of historic and cultural resources on state land. Consider prioritizing the maintenance of those resources most threatened by planned development actions, climate change, or other man-made or natural forces.

**Ongoing Action Items**

1. Determine how and where volunteer efforts could be better leveraged at state parks and other Department land units to assist with projects. Continue to support and maximize volunteer labor and expertise as a means of supplementing the work of professional staff.
2. Target ecological restoration and enhancement projects on state lands to promote climate resilience and adaptation to climate change.
3. Incorporate environmentally sustainable building, site design, and operational features into outdoor recreation projects.
4. Define and implement clear standards and measurable metrics for regular, recurring maintenance work for Department of Natural Resources facilities and amenities. Gauge performance overtime and leverage this information to improve maintenance practices.

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### **Goal Five**

***Promote environmental education and use of parks and outdoor areas as teaching tools to foster a positive stewardship ethos among children, youth, and their families.***



### **Strategy One**

Support the Maryland Project Green Classroom initiative and other state, local, and nonprofit outdoor environmental education programs that promote an understanding and appreciation for our natural world.

Strategy One Action Items are all ongoing.

## **Ongoing Action Items**

1. Plan for greenways, corridors, and trails that connect schools, residential areas, and public buildings to green space, provide alternative transportation routes, and support a healthy, active lifestyle through thoughtful community design.
2. Use parks (state, local, and privately held) as outdoor environmental education sites to support environmental literacy in the classroom. Coordinate with local school districts and other parks and recreation agencies to address barriers and identify opportunities to schools using parks as outdoor environmental education sites, including location, transportation, and fees.
3. Support the use of public lands and parks for outdoor environmental education.
4. Establish equitable access to parks and green space for children from all types of communities, with special emphasis on communities that have historically had obstacles connecting to open nature spaces.
5. Initiate new, and improve existing, coordination and planning efforts with health initiatives, such as Park Rx America, to market outdoor recreation as integral to health and wellbeing.
6. Explore working with county governments to engage youth in bicycle and pedestrian planning efforts using Safe Routes to Play and Safe Routes to School strategies.
7. Identify and promote opportunities to co-locate natural areas near active recreation and multi-use sites. Balance active and passive recreational uses to meet user needs while fostering a sense of conservation practices with natural resource-based recreation.
8. Support programs such as Project WILD, Project WET, educational trunks, and other resources for schools and communities that connect people to the outdoors and promote environmental awareness.