

Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan 2027 Guidelines

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LPPRP Overview

Public parks and recreation facilities, and lands preserved for their agricultural and natural resource values, provide Maryland residents and visitors with a wide array of services that benefit their health, the economy, and the environment. These places and amenities are vital pieces of community infrastructure.

County governments and the City of Baltimore use their Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plans (LPPRPs) as an opportunity to collect and evaluate comprehensive data and information to better serve the public by identifying the:

- Locations and size of parks and recreation facilities, as well as the amenities available to the public
- Rates of park use and public participation in various types of recreation
- Need for additional park acreage and recreational amenities
- Proximity of parks and recreation facilities to where people live, and to underserved populations in particular
- Programs and accomplishments of local jurisdictions to preserve agricultural and natural resource land

The LPPRP can and should be a resource that provides county and state leaders and the general public with a “snapshot” of the status of issues outlined in these guidelines, as well as a clear understanding of the jurisdiction’s goals, strategies and priorities for investing to improve parks and recreation facilities and open spaces for the public benefit.

The preparation and/or regular update of an LPPRP is a prerequisite for county participation in Maryland’s Program Open Space (POS) Local [per Section 5-905(b) (2) of the Natural Resources Article – Annotated Code of Maryland],

A local governing body shall prepare a local land preservation and recreation plan with acquisition goals based upon the most current population data available from the Department of Planning and submit it to the Department [of Natural Resources] and to the Department of Planning for joint approval according to the criteria and goals set forth in guidelines prepared by the Department and the Department of Planning. A local governing body shall revise its local land preservation and recreation plan at least every five years and submit the revised local plan to the Department and to the Department of Planning for joint approval one year prior to the revision of the Maryland Land Preservation and Recreation Plan. Prior to approval of a revised local plan, the Department shall provide the legislators from the district within which any part of the local jurisdiction is located the opportunity to review and comment on the revised local plan.

POS provides annual grants for the acquisition of land for recreation and open space purposes as well as for the development of public recreation facilities. Information from the LPPRPs guides land conservation and parks and recreation planning and decision making within each county, City of Baltimore and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and is important to the work of the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP).

LPPRPs are also used as key sources of information in the preparation of Maryland's Land Preservation and Recreation Plan, which serves as the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). Regular updates to the Statewide Land Preservation and Recreation Plan are required to maintain Maryland's eligibility to receive funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a federal program that provides cost-share funding to state agencies for the acquisition, development and planning of public outdoor recreation opportunities.

The preparation of LPPRPs and the submission of data also advance goals set forth in the [Maryland the Beautiful Act](#) of 2023, which established ambitious land conservation goals: conserve 30% of the state by 2030 and conserve 40% of the state by 2040. Through the combined efforts of state agencies, local governments, the federal government, and nonprofit land trusts, the first goal to conserve 30% of Maryland land (1,856,889 of 6,189,629 land acres) was achieved in 2024, well in advance of the 2030 goal year.

Updates to the LPPRP guidelines are completed through a collaborative process among DNR, MDP and the parks and recreation and planning staff from every county government and the City of Baltimore. Draft Guidelines are distributed to all county staff participating in the process and staff from DNR and MDP, as well as the Maryland Association of Counties' Parks and Recreation Administrators.

LPPRP Timeline

It is recommended that counties begin the LPPRP planning process as early as possible. County staff have advised DNR and MDP that a minimum of twelve to eighteen months is necessary to gather information, analyze and synthesize data, craft goals and develop strategies, engage the public in the process, complete the LPPRP and usher it through the review and approval process with county or City leadership, prior to final submission to DNR and MDP.

Draft LPPRPs and a data submission are due to DNR and MDP by December 31, 2026. Revised and county-approved final LPPRPs are due by July 1, 2027. As such, the following timeline for preparing an LPPRP is suggested:

2025	Summer 2025: Kick-off	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend kick-off meeting • Assemble planning team • Review Guidelines • Develop a general outline and timeline
	Fall 2025: Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin inventory and user needs and demand data collection • Prepare and open recreational survey to the public • Hold one or more joint meetings between parks and recreation, planning, and land preservation staff to discuss shared priorities and any conflicting goals.
2026	Spring 2026: Analyze data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue data collection and public engagement • Begin level of service analysis using inventory and user demand data

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and refine overarching goals • Begin assembling portions of the LPPRP
	Summer 2026: Goal development and LPPRP assembly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue data collection, public engagement, and level of service analysis • Refine goals and develop strategies for reaching goals • Continue preparation of text, maps, graphics, etc
	Fall 2026: Finalize draft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete a first draft of the LPPRP • Solicit internal and public input as needed per county requirements and revise the draft accordingly • Provide municipalities adequate opportunity to review and consider municipal comments
	December 31st, 2026: Draft due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit the LPPRP to DNR and MDP for review and feedback. • LPPRP's will be posted on county websites. DNR will provide legislators from applicable districts with a link to county LPPRPs for their review and comment. • DNR and MDP will also review the LPPRPs and provide feedback to the county within 45 days of receipt. • Send data submission, including information about preserved lands
2027	Spring 2027: Edit and finalize	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edit and finish the LPPRP based on MDP/DNR comments • Usher the final LPPRP through all necessary county approval processes
	July 1st 2027: Final Due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalized county approved/adopted LPPRP to be submitted to DNR and MDP • The final submission package must consist of a single electronic copy (PDF format preferred).

Submissions

All materials should be transmitted electronically. Counties are encouraged to submit documents through [Microsoft Teams](#), enabling the transfer of large files. Counties may also propose alternative means for the electronic transfer of draft and finalized LPPRPs, as well as data. Please email Molly Pickel (molly.pickel@maryland.gov) and Deborah Herr Cornwell (deborah.herrcornwell@maryland.gov) with questions or issues. There is more information on submitting GIS datasets in the [GIS Data Submission](#) section.

LPPRP Requirements

These Guidelines outline minimum planning and documentation requirements to be followed in the preparation or update of an LPPRP. A rubric will be provided that lists the required information to include in an LPPRP as a checklist. The 2027 LPPRP Guidelines have been updated for this next planning cycle. The 2027 Guidelines replace the previous guidelines released in May 2021.

Section One: LPPRP Introduction

LPPRPs must include a brief introduction to the LPPRP that provides pertinent baseline information about the county, its system of public parks and recreation facilities, and preserved natural resource and agricultural lands. Include the following:

- General geographic information.
- General population/demographic information.
- Introduction to and map of the entire system of public parks and recreation facilities, preserved natural resource land, and agricultural land.

Section Two: Parks and Recreation

LPPRPs should include a summary of the following information about parks and recreation. Counties should include relevant summary information from existing county plans, reports and other pertinent public information and clearly direct readers to them.

Executive Summary / Overview of the Parks and Recreation System

Include narrative, images, maps and/or other data to provide an overview of public parks and recreation in the county. Highlight any major accomplishments and challenges since the last LPPRP, as well as goals for the parks and recreation system over at least the next five years. Explain the environmental, economic and health benefits of maintaining and enhancing parks and recreational amenities. **Clearly state whether the county has met its acquisition goals or if further acquisitions are needed in order to achieve an adequate level of parks and recreation provision.** Provide a brief explanation of how that determination was made, previewing the analysis to be included in the sections below.*

*Beginning with the 2022 LPPRP, counties have been able to define their own criteria for determining if they have met their acquisition goals, but must be able to show that adequate analysis has been used to make that determination. Given that populations and recreation demands can change, counties must provide this analysis in *each* LPPRP. In order to qualify as having met their acquisition goals (which has implications for Program Open Space funding), counties must document a reasonable methodology for making this determination. Counties may still include additional plans to acquire parkland, even if they have met their acquisition goal. A county may submit a request prior to the end of the five years requesting

that DNR and MDP review the county's acquisition goals if new land is acquired and the county believes it has met its goals.

Overview of Parks and Recreation Facilities

This year, you will not be required to submit a spreadsheet-based inventory of lands, but will need to submit GIS data according to the [Essential Protected Land Data Standards](#). More information on these datasets is in the [GIS Data Submission](#) section.

Within the LPPRP, provide maps and a summary narrative to describe the county parks system and the different types of recreational amenities and opportunities that are available to the public. The summary should make note of any land or facilities that have been added to the inventory since the completion of the 2022 LPPRP inventory. Include the following types of land/facilities:

Public Parks and Recreation Properties

Publicly owned by municipal, county, state and/or federal government

- Examples include publicly owned neighborhood parks, state parks, sports complexes, county recreation centers, greenways, trails etc.
- Counties are encouraged to utilize the most recent [DNR Land Acreage Report](#) to determine the extent of DNR owned parkland in their jurisdictions. A list of available GIS datasets for state parks, other DNR owned lands and associated public recreational amenities is included in [Appendix C](#).

Quasi-public and/or privately owned recreational facilities or park lands that are open or available for regular public use:

Properties open to the public for recreational use via legal agreements, Joint Use Agreements, deed restrictions or other covenant, where regular public access for recreational purposes is guaranteed.

- Examples include land owned by land trusts, school properties, etc. Counties should not include privately owned land, such as land owned by homeowner associations, as part of the inventory, if regular public access for recreational purposes is not guaranteed.

Measuring User Demand

The LPPRP must include public participation and use information collected to measure user demand in the county. Collect public input through a variety of methods and analyze results to understand trends, strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities to inform parks and recreation goals and capital improvement planning.

Methods for Measuring User Demand

- **Public Meetings:** Conduct public meetings as part of the LPPRP planning process, following county laws, policies and protocols for civic engagement. These meetings may be in-person and/or virtual, but should:
 - Be widely advertised and scheduled with the goal of engaging participants that represent the diversity of the county
 - Provide ADA-accommodations (physical access or virtual accommodations if requested)

- Provide opportunities for community members to share information about unmet needs, goals for the future, and other input
- Information from public meetings could be captured in a narrative description, with quotes from participants, in a post-meeting survey, etc.
- **Survey:** Administer a survey to collect public input on the use of county owned parks and recreation facilities and programming. Analyze results and visual aids (charts, graphs, etc.) to explain the findings. Surveys can be conducted using no-cost online sources and do not need to be administered following strict methodology for statistical validation, but should:
 - Collect input from a wide variety of residents (e.g. be widely advertised via multiple methods, be open for submissions for a reasonable amount of time)
 - Seek information on the full array of county parks and recreation offerings
 - Consider incorporating questions to capture information about recreational benefits of non-county resources (e.g. state and municipal parks, board of education properties, homeowner association properties)
 - Consider examples from [State of Maryland - Survey for the LPRP](#) and [City of Eagle - Parks & Recreation Plan Survey](#)
- **Data on Usage, Demand and Participation Rates:** Counties should provide a summary of parks and recreation participation rates, known or estimated facility usage figures and other associated information the county may collect through program registration, field or amenity permitting, ticket sales or other related means that answer the following questions:
 - How many people are known to use the parks and recreation system and/or specific parks or recreational amenities?
 - Can an educated estimate of the potential overall level of casual or non-documented usage of county parks and recreation facilities be deduced?
 - Are there unmet needs and demands for additional programs or facilities that are known but not easily identified or quantified by these figures?
- **Interpretation of Studies from Federal, State, Local, Academic or Industrial Sources:** Many government, university and interest groups provide detailed information on parks and recreation issues and trends. Where applicable, counties are encouraged to consider using these resources to supplement locally sourced data. A list of resources can be found in the Resources folder in Microsoft Teams under the “Files” tab.

Level of Service Analysis

An analysis of the level of service provided by public parks and recreation systems is intended to identify areas in the county where additional investment in land or facilities may be needed to meet the needs and desires of users. Historically, an adequate level of service was defined as 30 acres of parks and recreational land per 1,000 people, but this did not always fit counties’ needs. Beginning with the 2022 LPPRP, counties have been able to define what constitutes an adequate level of service, provided that logical justification is clearly documented in their LPPRP.

Counties must evaluate the level of service based on an analysis of park proximity and park equity and must define and provide a logical justification for what is an adequate level of service. This combination will help counties to understand where there may be gaps in park

and recreation provision relative to community needs. Counties are encouraged to incorporate maps and other visual tools, which can help convey information to decision makers and the general public.

Proximity Analysis

By more accurately pinpointing the places where parks and recreation facilities are most needed, the proximity analysis is valuable for enhancing the quality of life in existing communities. As a result, it helps local jurisdictions to meet both state and local sustainable growth objectives. The Department of Natural Resources completed this type of analysis to help gauge the level of service provided by state and national parks in Maryland in [Chapter 3 of the 2019-2023 Statewide Land Preservation and Recreation Plan](#).

Counties must conduct a geospatial analysis utilizing the county's inventory of parks and recreation facilities and population data to generally determine where the public can readily access these amenities and where they cannot. Provide maps and narratives to identify deficiencies.

The proximity analysis may be designed to suit the individual county's needs, but must:

- Determine where public parks and recreation sites are located in the county in relation to the population and identify areas where the population has greater or lesser access to public parks and recreational sites.
- Define a catchment area (i.e. a set distance from a designated point or points, such as all parks, or individual public aquatic facilities, playgrounds or trailheads) for recreational resources and examine the extent of parks and recreation facilities within the catchment area. Areas found to be outside of catchment areas for a facility should be considered a deficiency, where the population may not have easy access to the type of park or recreational facility being examined. Catchment area size can and should vary depending on the size and population density of areas being examined. The following criteria are suggested for use in defining proximity analysis catchment areas:
 - Large-scale/rural area/county wide area analysis catchment: 5 miles. This distance is suggested because it approximates a 15-minute drive and reflects how far a casual park or recreational facility user may travel by car, public transportation or via bicycle or foot to access a particular park or recreational amenity.
 - Smaller-scale/urban/ highly developed area catchment: 1/2 mile (or some other fraction of a mile) or a set number of city blocks. Within urban or densely developed areas, it is anticipated that a higher number of park or recreational facility users live and/or work within fairly close proximity to public parks and recreation facilities and likely will not rely on an automobile to travel to and from these places.
- The LPPRPs must include a separate proximity analysis for each item examined. Starred items below are required, and counties may analyze additional items depending on their needs:
 - *Entire parks and recreation system - can include anything from the previous inventory (i.e. municipal, county, state, federal, private recreational lands) and

any resources that the county believes are components of parks and recreation access for their residents

- *Water Access – can include beaches, swimming areas, boat ramps and canoe/kayak launches, shoreline or piers open for fishing, etc. DNR’s [water access mapper](#) may be used as a supplement to county data to identify these deficiencies
- *Trails – types of trails to consider should include natural surface hiking or mountain biking trails, bike paths and rail trails, hard-surfaced walking paths, equestrian and off-road vehicle trails and paddling/water trails. It is suggested that the catchment area for these linear amenities be set from managed trail heads or approved points of access where users would most likely gain access to the trail. For hard-surfaced trails, consider the information available within the MDOT [Maryland State Transportation Trails Strategic Plan](#), anticipated to be finalized by the summer of 2025.
- Suggested additional public parks and recreation amenities to review via proximity analysis include picnic areas (benches, grills, and pavilions) nature areas, sports fields or courts, athletic complexes, aquatic facilities, playgrounds, skate parks, hunting or fishing areas, and others if the county chooses

Equity Analysis

For the 2027 LPPRPs, counties are not required to use a specific park equity analysis tool. However, counties must assess vulnerability or underserved areas in a way of their choosing. Provide maps and a brief narrative to discuss deficiencies in access to parks and recreation. Some counties may have their own assessment tools. Below are additional resources that may provide insight on equity considerations.

Greenspace Equity Overburdened/Underserved

[House Bill 503 Chapter 487](#) created the [Greenspace Equity Program](#) and defined overburdened and underserved based on characteristics of census tracts, such as prevalence of asthma and low-income populations. A [map viewer](#) shows where overburdened and underserved census tracts are located. Using this data together with parks data can help to characterize areas of high need and identify projects that could be eligible for a Greenspace Equity Grant.

CDC Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) Index

The [CDC Social Vulnerability Index](#) can be used to show varying levels of vulnerability among communities. The Index pulls data from the US Census to assess how groups—based on factors including socioeconomic status and racial and ethnic minority status—respond to stress and hazards. Overlaying this index with parks data will allow counties to assess varying access to parks and recreation areas based on social vulnerability. Feature classes for Maryland can be found in the Resources section (under Files) on Microsoft Teams, or contact Molly Pickel (molly.pickel@maryland.gov).

MDEnviroScreen EJ Score

The [MDEnviroScreen](#) is a tool used to help identify communities disproportionately burdened by multiple sources of pollution and with population characteristics that make them more sensitive to pollution. To learn more about the MDEnviroScreen, go to the [MDE website](#).

Goals for Parks and Recreation

Based on the above analysis, develop goals for parks and recreation. Goals must clearly be related to deficiencies discussed based on the inventory, proximity, and equity analyses, as well as public input. In addition, the goals should be informed by progress toward meeting goals set in the 2022 LPPRP.

Reporting on Progress from 2022 LPPRP

The LPPRP must include an update of the county's work to reach the goals established in the 2022 LPPRP for parks and recreation. Note where goals have not been met and whether they will be incorporated into 2027 goals. If certain gaps or deficiencies identified by the proximity and/or equity analyses from the 2022 LPPRP do not need to be addressed, the county must include reasons for that. Use the following table format:

LPPRP 2022 Goal	Actions taken to address LPPRP 2022 Goal
Increase public water access	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Boat launch refurbished at Riverside Park- Restrooms completed at Bayside Park- Acquired 5 acres of waterfront property

Reporting on 2022 LPPRP County Acquisition Goals

For counties that had not yet met their acquisition goal by the 2022 LPPRP, the 2027 LPPRP must provide an update on progress that has been made toward the 2022 LPPRP county acquisition goals. An example, using information from the 2022 Anne Arundel County LPPRP, is included.

Gaps identified in 2022 LPPRP: Type and Specific Acreage Needed, Location	For each Gap: Acreage Acquired to Date
"Approximately 180 acres would be for specific recreation projects. The three largest recreation project acquisitions would be 50 acres for a new athletic complex in the western portion of the County, 30 acres for a community park in Glen Burnie, and 30 acres for acquiring land adjacent to Jessup Park. This athletic complex is envisioned as having multi-use athletic facilities suitable for supporting recreational league play and tournaments." (2022 Anne Arundel County LPPRP, p. 6)	X acres have been acquired for the Glen Burnie community park, but X acres still remain to be acquired for the project.
"In addition, the City of Annapolis has identified two areas for possible acquisitions: right-of-way acquisitions to complete the City of Annapolis trail	The X acquisition has been completed.

network, and acquisition of the 5.17-acre site of the former Carr's Beach parcel to create a new park.” (2022 Anne Arundel County LPPRP, p. 6)	
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County Goals

Define and explain county goals for the provision of public parks and recreation facilities. Use the analysis above to support your goals. The LPPRP must tie these explanations of county goals directly to the results of the county's measurements and analyses. You may set main and sub-goals.

For counties that determine that they require additional land acquisition, ensure that the goals include acquisition of additional acreage. The goals should be informed by any remaining acquisitions needed that were identified in the 2022 LPPRP, along with additional acquisitions needed as identified through the 2027 LPPRP.*

Consider presenting goals in a table to clearly demonstrate how they were developed. For example:

Goal	Support from LPPRP Analysis
Develop two additional multi-purpose athletic fields in the northern region of the county.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proximity Analysis showed that there are many residents in the northern region of the county without access to athletic fields within 10 miles The northern part of the county has multiple areas that are underserved or overburdened, increasing the need for recreational amenities Survey results showed that residents like to participate in soccer, football, and lacrosse, all of which are played on multi-purpose athletic fields
Acquire an additional ten acres with water access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LPPRP 2022 identified this need, which has not been met to date Water access is a highly desired amenity, based on the survey and public meetings

The LPPRP must provide supporting evidence from the proximity analysis, equity analysis, and/or other level of service analyses to indicate the gaps or deficiencies found, if any.

Note: Land acquisition goals included in the LPPRP must be informed by gaps or deficiencies identified in both the proximity analysis and the equity analysis. In addition to creating maps based on the proximity and equity analyses, the LPPRP plan must identify and discuss the gaps or deficiencies that those analyses indicate. If certain gaps or deficiencies identified by the proximity and equity analyses do not need to be addressed, the LPPRP plan must include reasons for that.

State Goals

The new state Land Preservation and Recreation Plan is anticipated to be completed in November 2025. The goals of this new LPPRP will be distributed to counties by the end of 2025, allowing counties to reference these updated goals in their LPPRPs.

Include the list of state goals for parks and recreation from [Appendix A](#) in this section of the county's LPPRP. Describe how county goals complement statewide goals and help implement them. If state and local goals differ, please explain how and why that difference may be appropriate.

Implementing Ordinances and Programs

Provide a list and summary description of ordinances and programs/funding sources used by the county to help achieve parks and recreation goals. Briefly explain how these programs are used to benefit the public. Examples include: Program Open Space, Greenspace Equity Program, Land and Water Conservation Fund, Community Parks and Playgrounds (for municipalities), Sustainable Communities designation, county ordinances, local programs, etc. [Appendix B](#) has narrative for the above examples that gives background information about state programs.

Capital Improvement Plan

Based on stated goals and review of the analyses described in these guidelines, counties must provide a 5-year parks and recreation capital improvement plan (FYs 2028 - 2032). This can include land acquisition, facility development and rehabilitation priorities. The capital improvement plan can be developed to suit the county's needs, but counties must at least:

- Present potential acquisitions, including approximate acreage desired and general location within the county
- Present potential development projects, including types of facilities to develop or rehabilitate, location, and estimated costs
- For counties with municipalities: Include municipal development projects and acquisitions if available
- While only 5 fiscal years are required to be presented, it is recommended that mid and long-term planning horizons (e.g. an additional five or ten years) are included

Note: The capital improvement program portion of the LPPRP plan must indicate which projects are associated with which gaps or deficiencies identified in the proximity and/or equity analyses. All gaps or deficiencies identified in the proximity and equity analyses must be addressed in the LPPRP, either through individual projects within the capital improvement program portion of the LPPRP, or through reasons for not needing to address the gaps or deficiencies.

Section Three: Natural Resource Land Conservation

Land conserved for natural resource purposes typically serves multiple functions that benefit people and the communities where they live, work and play. Forests, wetlands, river corridors, open meadows and other landscapes preserved in their natural state provide valuable

ecosystem services such as water filtration, carbon sequestration, soil formation, stormwater management, and extreme weather mitigation. Taking advantage of these services through targeted land conservation allows counties to avoid costs to taxpayers in providing these services through other means.

Update information, analysis, goals and strategies for managing and improving county natural resource conservation land networks. Include summaries of natural resource land conservation information and direct readers to other existing county plans (e.g., green infrastructure plans), program documents, reports or resources that provide more in-depth information on this topic. When appropriate, engage interested members of the community through the public meeting process to discuss deficiencies and identify recommendations for the LPPRP. Ensure county land acquisition efforts for natural resource lands are coordinated with county and municipal land acquisition goals for parks and recreation. To help gather information to sufficiently prepare the LPPRP, counties must hold one or more joint meetings between parks and recreation, planning, and land preservation staff to discuss shared priorities and any conflicting goals.

Executive Summary / Overview of Natural Resource Land Conservation

Provide a general overview of the areas preserved in the county for their natural resource value, supplemented by any supportive images, maps or other data. Highlight any major accomplishments or challenges associated with managing or preserving natural resource lands from the last five years and provide an overview of some goals for at least the next five years. Counties should work collaboratively across departments to prepare this section and identify where natural resource goals can be met on park land, as well as on land conserved for other purposes.

As Maryland communities face increasing risks from climate change, such as sea level rise, inland and coastal flooding, extreme heat, and more frequent severe weather, integrating climate adaptation and resilience strategies into land preservation and recreation planning is important. It is strongly recommended that counties include these considerations in their LPPRPs. The acquisition and protection of lands including wetlands, [wetland migration corridors](#), floodplains, forests, and marsh migration zones can help to mitigate climate hazards. Relevant tools are included in the mapping section below and can inform climate-smart land use decisions that support the other goals set in the LPPRPs.

Acreage Totals of Protected Natural Resource Lands

Mapping

GIS data must be submitted for natural resource lands, along with other [GIS data submissions](#). Counties must create and/or utilize maps that show progress in meeting local natural resource land preservation goals. The maps must clearly convey the following information related to natural resource land conservation and a narrative must show how they inform and intersect with the 2027 LPPRP local natural resource land preservation goals:

- Local and State Targeted Growth and Conservation Areas; Local and state targeted [growth and conservation areas](#) are locations for coordinated planning, management and resource allocation. The purpose of these areas is to identify where and how local and state governments, as well as the private sector, can work together to achieve

common goals. This [mapper](#) overlays important natural resources areas (e.g., watersheds draining to Maryland's healthiest waterbodies, designated as Tier II waterbodies), as well as information related to resilience such as sea level rise, storm surge, etc.

- [GreenPrint](#) areas (Targeted Ecological Areas) and county focus areas for natural resource land conservation; Maryland's updated [Habitat Connectivity Network](#) map layer can be viewed on GreenPrint, while the map layer itself can be downloaded from the [Maryland iMap Data Catalog](#).
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- Public parks and recreation properties (GIS dataset from the Parks and Recreation Inventory Map). Note if and how parks and natural resource conservation land complement one another. Are trails or other outdoor recreation amenities crossing between parks and conservation lands?
- Parcels protected for natural resource conservation purposes through long-term conservation easements, licenses, agreements, etc; that are held by public entities (federal, state or local). Delineate parcels by easement ownership; Publicly owned parcels of land designated for natural resource conservation, greenways, park land or other public open space. Delineate parcels by ownership (federal, state and local);
- Land preserved by deed covenants, such as homeowners association designated open space, land preserved by land trusts through ownership or easement, etc.;
- Optional, but highly recommended: Some information on Climate Change Adaptation priority areas; A variety of tools are available to provide information about areas that are particularly important for climate change adaptation, including the [Parcel Eval tool on Greenprint](#) (including layers for [wetland adaptation to sea level rise](#), [sea level rise vulnerability](#), and [habitat connectivity](#)), [Coastal Atlas](#), [Maryland Coastal Flood Explorer](#), [Restoration and Resilience Mapper](#).

A list of available GIS datasets for state parks, other DNR owned lands and associated public recreational amenities is included in [Appendix C](#).

Goals for Natural Resource Land Conservation

In this section, describe the environmental and social benefits that natural resource conservation land provides for people living in and visiting the county. Examples of environmental/social services provided by natural resource lands include natural filtration of air and water, economic and public health benefits, resilience against storms, wildlife habitat and biodiversity, etc.

County Goals

- List the county/local goals for natural resource land conservation. Explain why the preservation of land for natural resource conservation is important to the county.
- Provide a summary update on the status of the county's work to achieve goals for the preservation of natural resource land since the last LPPRP in 2022.

State Goals

Include the list of state goals for natural resource land conservation in this section of the county's LPPRP. Provide a summary of how county/local goals are complementary or differ from the statewide goals. A list of current state goals is included in [Appendix A](#).*

* (The new state Land Preservation and Recreation Plan is anticipated to be completed in November 2025. The goals of this new plan will be distributed to counties by the end of 2025, allowing them to reference these updated goals in their LPPRPs. This document will be updated when the goals are finalized).

Implementing Ordinances and Programs

Outline the principal implementing ordinances and programs that the county uses to work towards achieving its goals for the conservation of natural resource land. Include a summary list, table or narrative that provides baseline information on these ordinances and programs.

Summary of Deficiencies and Recommendations

Based on an analysis of the county's inventory and mapping of natural resource lands and implementing ordinances and programs against its goals for natural resource conservation, this section must indicate any deficiencies that need to be addressed. For each deficiency identified, the LPPRP must indicate which goal will help address the deficiency. The LPPRP must add new goals if there are not yet any goals that would address the deficiency. If additional specificity is needed, add strategies for how to meet the goals.

Section Four: Agricultural Land Preservation

Working agricultural lands in Maryland help define the character of the state's rural areas, provide a number of environmental services for residences and businesses in rural and urban areas and are vital to rural economies. LPPRPs should document and convey essential data and information on local goals for agricultural land preservation and efforts to achieve those goals. Many counties already collect and disseminate key information on agricultural land preservation via their participation in the Program for the Certification of County Agricultural Land Preservation Programs (CLAPP), administered jointly by MDP and the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF).

There are several reasons for including agricultural land preservation in the LPPRPs:

- Preserved farmland keeps intact landscapes where resource-based recreation takes place
- Land protected for agriculture often preserves natural resource features
- Preserved farmland provides ecological services that benefit recreation and resource land and waterways
- Information on all land preservation programs in one document facilitates decision-making by officials and residents

Overall, counties should ensure that their agricultural land preservation efforts are coordinated with county parks and recreation land preservation efforts. The LPPRP is a good opportunity for supporting that coordination. To help gather information to sufficiently prepare the LPPRP, counties must hold one or more joint meetings between parks and recreation, planning, and agricultural land preservation staff to discuss shared priorities and any conflicting goals.

Counties whose farmland preservation programs have been certified by MDP and the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation can use data and narratives from the certification reports to create this section.

The counties with agricultural land preservation programs certified by MDP and MALPF as of July 2025 are Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Caroline, Carroll, Cecil, Charles, Frederick, Harford, Kent, Montgomery, Prince George's, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's, Talbot, Washington and Worcester.

Counties without agricultural land preservation programs certified by MDP and MALPF as of July 2025 are Allegany, Dorchester, Garrett, Howard, Somerset and Wicomico.

To facilitate completion of this section, parks and recreation staff should coordinate with local planning staff and the local [Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation program administrator](#).

MDP does not recommend using a consultant to develop this section, since information is readily available from local and state sources: farmland preservation program administrators in certified counties have in their certification reports all the information required by the LPPRP, while farmland preservation program administrators in non-certified counties can find the necessary information in comprehensive plans, the zoning code, and local agriculture/farmland preservation plans (if any). MDP's Natural Resource and Working Lands Unit staff also are available to assist counties with completing this section.

Counties should address the items noted below through narrative summaries, tables or maps in their LPPRPs to convey a current snapshot of the status of agricultural land preservation in the county.

When appropriate, engage interested members of the community through the public meeting process to discuss deficiencies and identify recommendations for the Plan.

Determining Agricultural Land Preservation Substantially Equivalent Plan Status

County requirements for the Agricultural Land Preservation Section will be determined based on whether they have a substantially equivalent plan (e.g. updated comprehensive plan, priority preservation area element) containing agricultural preservation goals that has been adopted on or after July 1, 2022. Please contact MDP and DNR early in the process to determine if this applies to your county.

Counties with substantially equivalent plans must only complete the executive summary, goals, and acreage total sections below, and may use text, data, etc. from the existing recent plan. Counties without substantially equivalent plans must additionally complete the "Additional Agricultural Land Preservation Guidelines" and "Summary of Deficiencies and Recommendations" sections. Certified counties can accomplish this in a streamlined manner by including references to their certification plans and reports.

Executive Summary / Overview of Agricultural Land Preservation

Provide a short executive summary, supplemented by supportive images, maps or other data, to provide a general overview of the county's agricultural land preservation efforts and existing areas of preserved agricultural lands. Counties are encouraged to highlight any major accomplishments or challenges associated with preserving working farms and forests since the last LPPRP and provide a brief explanation of goals for at least the next five years. Explain the public benefits of maintaining and enhancing the county's system of agricultural lands.

Goals for Agricultural Land Preservation

County goals

Define and summarize county goals for agricultural land preservation. Provide a general update on the status of the county's work to achieve goals for the preservation of agricultural land since the last LPPRP in 2022.

State goals

Include the list of state goals for agricultural land preservation in this section of the county's LPPRP (see [Appendix A](#)). Provide a summary of how county/local agricultural land preservation goals are complementary or differ from the statewide goals.

Acreage Totals of Preserved Agricultural Land

The LPPRP must provide the total acreage of land preserved by local agricultural preservation programs, including purchase of development rights and transferable development rights (PDR/TDR) programs. The LPPRP must also provide the total acreage of agricultural land protected by private conservation organizations, such as local land trusts.

Mapping

Provide a map of agricultural land preserved in the county and any existing [Priority Preservation Areas](#) (PPA).

- In the map legend, distinguish between properties that are publicly owned and those under easement. Disaggregate easements by program, including MALPF, Rural Legacy, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Maryland Environmental Trust (MET), and local Purchase Development Rights/Transfer Development Rights (PDR/TDR) or private conservation organization (e.g., local land trust). Distinguish properties within the PPA, if the county has adopted a PPA. The most recent GIS data for lands protected through state agricultural land preservation programs can be downloaded through links within the "Data/Contact Us" section of the left-hand square of the [Maryland Protected Lands Dashboard](#).

Additional Agricultural Land Preservation Guidelines

Guidelines for Counties without a substantially equivalent plan

- Indicate whether the county established PPAs in its comprehensive plan. Are these areas mapped and is the map included in the comprehensive plan? If so, note where in the comprehensive plan this is discussed and if not, explain why.
- Explain how the county's agricultural preservation goals are implemented through its zoning and other land use tools
- Explain how the county is monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of its agricultural preservation programs and is coordinating with the county's natural resource preservation, and parks and recreation goals.
- Present conclusions of the most recent evaluation of these programs or ordinances

Summary of Deficiencies and Recommendations

Guidelines for Counties without a substantially equivalent plan

Based on an analysis of the county's inventory and mapping of agricultural lands and implementing ordinances and programs against its goals for agricultural preservation, this section should indicate any deficiencies that need to be addressed. For each deficiency identified, the LPPRP should indicate which LPPRP goal will help address the deficiency. The LPPRP should add new goals if there are not yet any goals that would address the deficiency. If additional specificity is needed, add strategies for how to meet the goals.

Section Five: Optional Review

Consider reviewing relevant topics of significance in the county, including but not limited to an economic analysis of parks, recreation and land conservation in the county, discussion of cultural resource preservation, historic preservation, tourism, education and environmental literacy, etc. Please see [Appendix D](#) for more of these additional considerations.

GIS Data Submission

GIS datasets will be submitted separately from the LPPRP itself. Please submit the GIS datasets through Microsoft Teams.

GIS datasets that counties are required to send to DNR for future statewide analysis:

1. County protected public lands - fee-simple purchases (county- and municipal-owned parks)
2. Other county or municipal preserved lands (county PDR/TDR and other county easement properties)

The GIS data should conform to CBP's "[Essential Protected Lands Data Standards](#)". Please also add a data field to distinguish between acreage with and without public access, a data field to indicate county or municipally owned, and a data field to distinguish between county fee-simple purchases, county PDR/TDR, and other county easement properties

Appendices

Appendix A: State Goals

Maryland's Sustainable Growth Policy and Planning Principles

- **Land.** Optimize productivity of working landscapes, including farms and forests, and fisheries, and prioritize development within population centers that are in proximity to existing infrastructure and facilities.
- **Transportation.** Prioritize transportation networks that create energy efficient, affordable, and reliable access to jobs, housing, and services.
- **Housing.** Enable a mix of quality housing types and affordability options to accommodate all who want to live in the state.
- **Economy.** Allow for adaptive reuse, mixed-use, and context appropriate new development that responds to changing markets and innovations.
- **Equity.** Engage all sectors of the community in LPPRP development to ensure diverse voices are heard and the needs of underserved populations are prioritized.
- **Resilience.** Integrate resiliency measures that will minimize the impacts of rapid and unexpected natural- and human-caused threats on communities.
- **Place.** Provide for public spaces that encourage social interaction and value cultural, historical, and natural resources.
- **Ecology.** Protect and restore sensitive ecological systems and conserve natural resources, including forests, agricultural areas, and waterways.

State Goals for Parks and Recreation and Natural Resource Land Conservation

The new state Land Preservation and Recreation Plan is anticipated to be completed in January 2026. The goals of this new LPPRP will be distributed to counties by the end of 2025, allowing them to reference these updated goals in their LPPRPs.

State Goals for Agricultural Land Preservation

- Permanently preserve agricultural land capable of supporting a reasonable diversity of agricultural production
- Protect natural, forestry and historic resources and the rural character of the landscape associated with Maryland's farmland
- To the greatest degree possible, concentrate preserved land in large, relatively contiguous blocks to effectively support long-term protection of resources and resource-based industries
- Limit the intrusion of development and its impacts on rural resources and resource-based industries
- Ensure good return on public investment by concentrating state agricultural land preservation funds in areas where the investment is reasonably well supported by both local investment and land use management programs

- Work with local governments to achieve the following:
 - Establish preservation areas, goals and strategies through local comprehensive planning processes that address and complement state goals
 - In each area designated for preservation, develop a shared understanding of goals and the strategy to achieve them among rural landowners, the public-at-large and state and local government officials
 - Protect the equity interests of rural landowners in preservation areas by ensuring sufficient public commitment and investment in preservation through easement acquisition and incentive programs
 - Use local land use management authority effectively to protect public investment in preservation by managing development in rural preservation areas
 - Establish effective measures to support profitable agriculture, including assistance in production, marketing and the practice of stewardship, so that farming remains a desirable way of life for both the farmer and public-at-large.

Appendix B: Background Information about State Programs

The following information can be used in the Parks and Recreation [Implementing Programs](#) section of the LPPRP. It lists information about the goals and logistics of State programs, and explains how the programs connect to outdoor recreation and conservation.

Program Open Space

The Program Open Space fund allows most Maryland residents to live within 15 minutes of an open space or recreational area, providing amenities including playgrounds, fields, forests, hiking trails, and water access. When a person buys a house or land, a 0.5% State property transfer tax is collected which funds Program Open Space. This was designed to directly tie development to available funding for open space and recreational facilities for the public good.

Greenspace Equity Program

The Greenspace Equity Program provides and administers grants to enhance the public health and livability of overburdened and underserved communities by implementing projects to preserve, create, and enhance community greenspace. This program makes conservation more equitable and helps meet community needs for greenspace. It allows eligible applicants to acquire land, create easements, or develop property for more equitable public use and conservation.

Land and Water Conservation Fund

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) supports projects to improve outdoor recreation through the acquisition of land and development or renovation of recreation amenities. The Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 established a federally funded program to provide 50/50 matching grants to state and local governments for the purpose of acquiring and/or developing public outdoor recreational areas and facilities.

Sustainable Communities

The program supports community development, revitalization, and sustainability through coordinated strategies. It gives local governments resources to improve older communities and

promote growth that is environmentally, economically and socially responsible. Sustainable Communities are places where public and private investments work together to develop a healthy local economy; protect and appreciate historical and cultural resources; conserve air, water, and energy resources; and create recreational and transportation opportunities.

Community Parks and Playgrounds Program

The Community Parks and Playground Program provides funding to allow the State to focus on restoring existing and creating new park and green space systems in Maryland's cities and towns. The program provides flexible grants to local governments to respond to the unmet need for assistance to rehabilitate, expand or improve existing parks, create new parks, develop environmentally oriented parks and recreation projects, or purchase and install playground equipment in older neighborhoods and intensely developed areas throughout the state.

Rural Legacy Program

Maryland's Rural Legacy Program 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 program creates public-private partnerships and allows those who know the landscape best – land trusts and local governments – to determine the best way to protect the landscapes that are critical to our economy, environment and quality of life.

Appendix C: GIS Data Resources

DNR maintained GIS datasets available for county use:

1. [Protected public lands \(DNR owned lands and conservation easements\)](#)
2. [Maryland Recreation Atlas](#): includes information on biking, fishing, hiking, and sports
3. [Maryland Trails: viewer](#) and [data](#)
4. Maryland Public Water Access Sites: [viewer](#) and [data](#)
5. [Maryland Fishing Report](#)
6. GIS datasets maintained by DNR can be downloaded from the [Maryland GIS Data Catalog](#) (Search = "DNR", check the boxes for "Feature Service")

Appendix D: Additional Considerations

Source water protection areas as priorities for local land preservation

In 1999 MDE began a program to assess the vulnerability to contamination of public drinking water sources in Maryland. The plan uses three main tools for assessing the drinking water sources: source water delineation, contaminant surveys, and susceptibility of a water supply source to contaminants that may affect the safety of drinking water. Counties may wish to analyze source water protection areas using MDE's GIS data, and whether those areas might be a priority for local land preservation.

- [Maryland Source Water Assessment Reports \(SWAP\) by County](#)
- [Maryland's Source Water Assessment Program PDF](#)

Cleaning up brownfield sites for recreational use

[EPA's webpage on brownfield sites](#) has information on opportunities for grants and technical assistance to safely clean up and reuse contaminated properties. There are many examples of brownfield sites that have been successfully converted for recreational use. Presentations on this issue can be found on MDP's [website](#) regarding the 2022 Maryland brownfield conference.

- Information on RCRA (Resource Conservation and Recovery Act) cleanup sites can be accessed through EPA's webpages:
 1. Go to [Cleanups in my Community EPA Webpage](#)
 2. On this EPA page, scroll down until you see the US map and click on Maryland. You will see a map of hazardous waste cleanup sites. Current RCRA Corrective Actions appear as green squares.
 3. Click on the green square. When the name and address of the company appears, click on the blue hyperlinked text "RCRA Corrective Action Profile." This will give site cleanup and background information.
- Additional information on [MDE's Voluntary Cleanup Program](#)

Recreation in State Forests

DNR's [state forest webpage](#) includes links to the webpages of individual state forests. The opening page of each forest's website includes information on the recreational opportunities in each forest and links to more information about the forest. The websites for some state forests include links to annual work plans (AWP) that describe projected recreational activities for that particular state forest or for the region generally. These Guidelines present, as an option, that counties refer to these forest webpages when creating the LPPRPs.

Children in Nature

Governor Wes Moore established the [Maryland Outdoor Learning Partnership \(OLP\)](#) by Executive Order (EO) on April 22, 2024, tasking OLP with empowering all of Maryland's youth to grow as environmental stewards that access, conserve, and restore our natural resources to ensure a climate-ready Maryland.