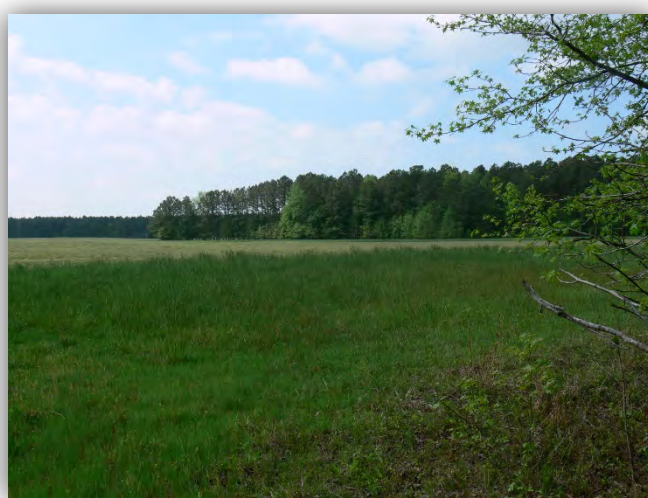
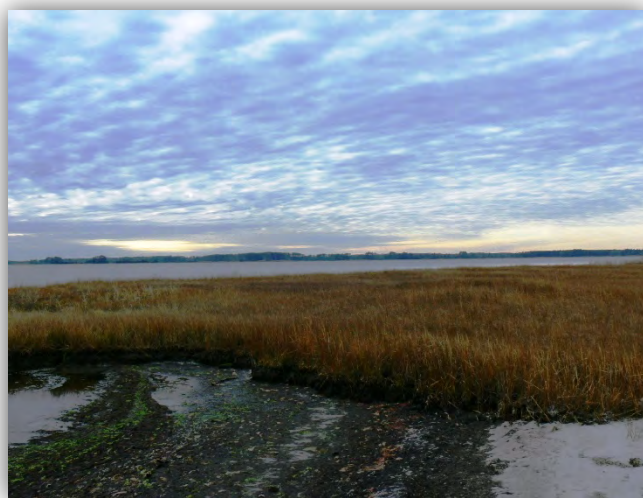


# 2017 Worcester County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan

February 20, 2018



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





**RESOLUTION NO. 18 - 6**

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

WHEREAS, the County Commissioners of Worcester County, Maryland most recently adopted a Worcester County Parks, Recreation and Land Preservation Plan on May 1, 2012 by Resolution No. 12-07 (the 2012 Plan) which identifies specific actions for improving parks, recreation and open space preservation in Worcester County; and

WHEREAS, Sections 5-9B-04 and 5-905 of the Natural Resources Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland (Program Open Space Law) requires each county and Baltimore City to prepare a land preservation, parks and recreation plan every six years with the over-arching purpose of developing a strategy that will best ensure good return on public investment in the various state and local land preservation and recreation programs in order to remain eligible to receive Maryland Program Open Space (POS) funds, the State's primary grant program for parks, recreation and open space preservation; and

WHEREAS, the County Commissioners authorized the County Planning Commission to prepare a new Parks, Recreation and Land Preservation Plan to replace the 2012 Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission, with the assistance of staff from the Worcester County Department of Environmental Programs and the Worcester County Department of Recreation and Parks, prepared and presented to the Commissioners such a Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Environmental Programs and the Department of Recreation and Parks administered a survey outreach through paper and online questionnaires from April to November of 2017 as a means of collecting additional public feedback about what is important to residents regarding public parks, recreation and open spaces in the County; and

WHEREAS, the Worcester County Recreation Advisory Board has reviewed and approved the proposed Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on February 1, 2018, and considered public comment on the proposed Worcester County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan and have complied with all other requirements of law.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the County Commissioners of Worcester County, Maryland hereby adopt the *2017 Worcester County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan* as revised February 9, 2018 and incorporated herein by reference which shall replace the 2012 Plan.

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

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 20<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2018.

ATTEST:

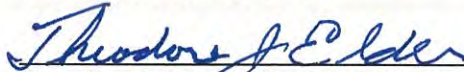


Harold L. Higgins  
Chief Administrative Officer

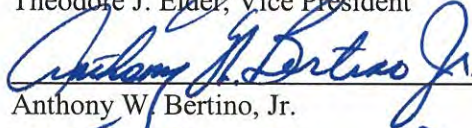
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF  
WORCESTER COUNTY, MARYLAND



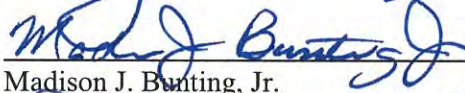
Diana Purnell, President



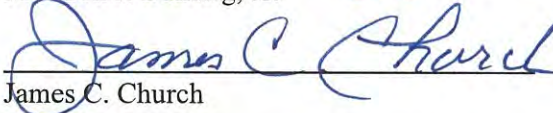
Theodore J. Elder, Vice President



Anthony W. Bertino, Jr.



Madison J. Bunting, Jr.



James C. Church

**Absent**

Merrill W. Lockfaw, Jr.



Joseph M. Mitrecic



### **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**

William Rodriguez, Parks Superintendent  
Lisa J. Gebhardt, Recreation Superintendent

#### **Worcester County Department of Environmental Programs**

Robert Mitchell, Director  
Katherine Munson, Planner V



# **2017 Worcester County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan**

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## Executive Summary

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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 1% 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

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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)<sup>1</sup>; 20% under age 19; 83% Caucasian, 14% African American, and 4% identifying as another race group<sup>2</sup>.

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 weekends<sup>3</sup>. 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Worcester County, Demographic and Socio-Economic Outlook. Maryland Department of Planning.

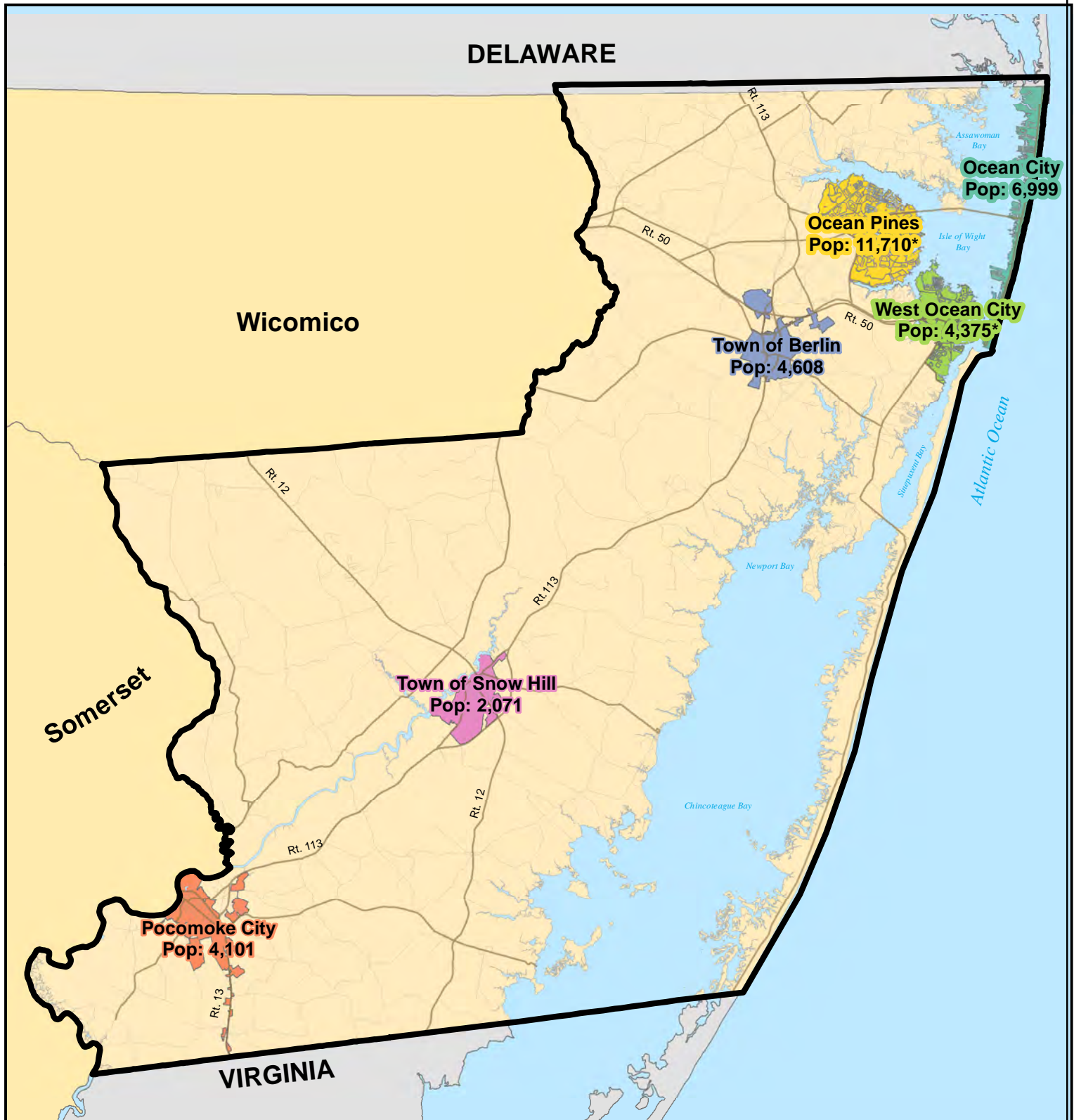
Worcester County, the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest county in the state of Maryland, is 303,900 acres, with over 100,000 acres in farming and over 150,000 acres in forest cover. The county continues to build on an existing system of preserved land through use of voluntary conservation easements. The county's 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.

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

<sup>3</sup> "Demoflush" data, 2006-2001. Worcester Co, Dept of Tourism

## Figure 1-1. Population Distribution Worcester County



**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

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### 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**

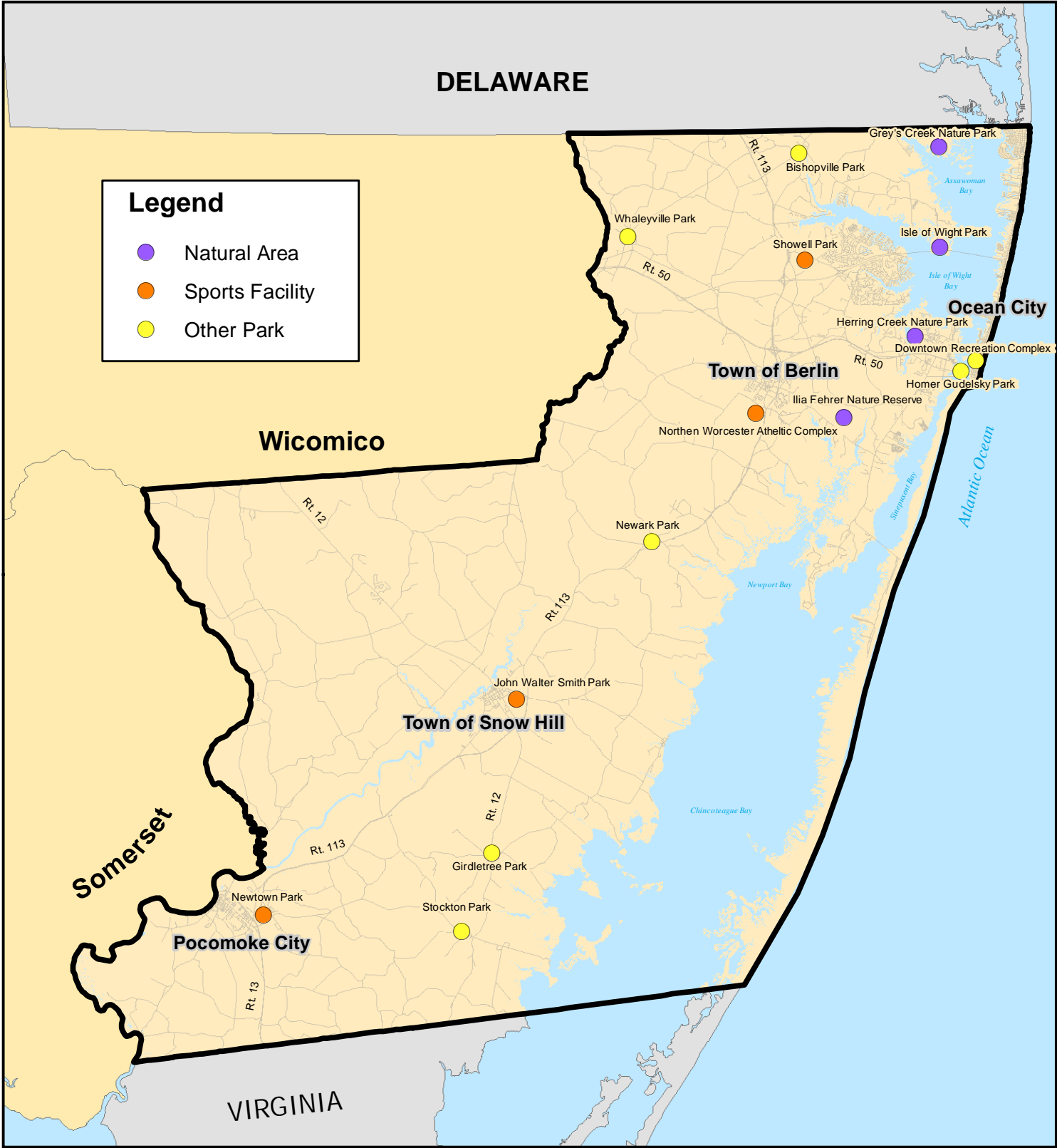
Worcester County’s parks and recreational programming goals are guided by the state’s goals and the goals and objectives of the county’s 2006 comprehensive plan.

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. Worcester County Parks



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

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

### **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 15,300<sup>4</sup>. 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

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

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
<b>ADULT RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS</b>							
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
<b>FITNESS</b>							
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
<b>AQUATICS</b>							
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
<b>SUMMER CAMPS</b>							
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
<b>SPECIAL EVENTS</b>							
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.

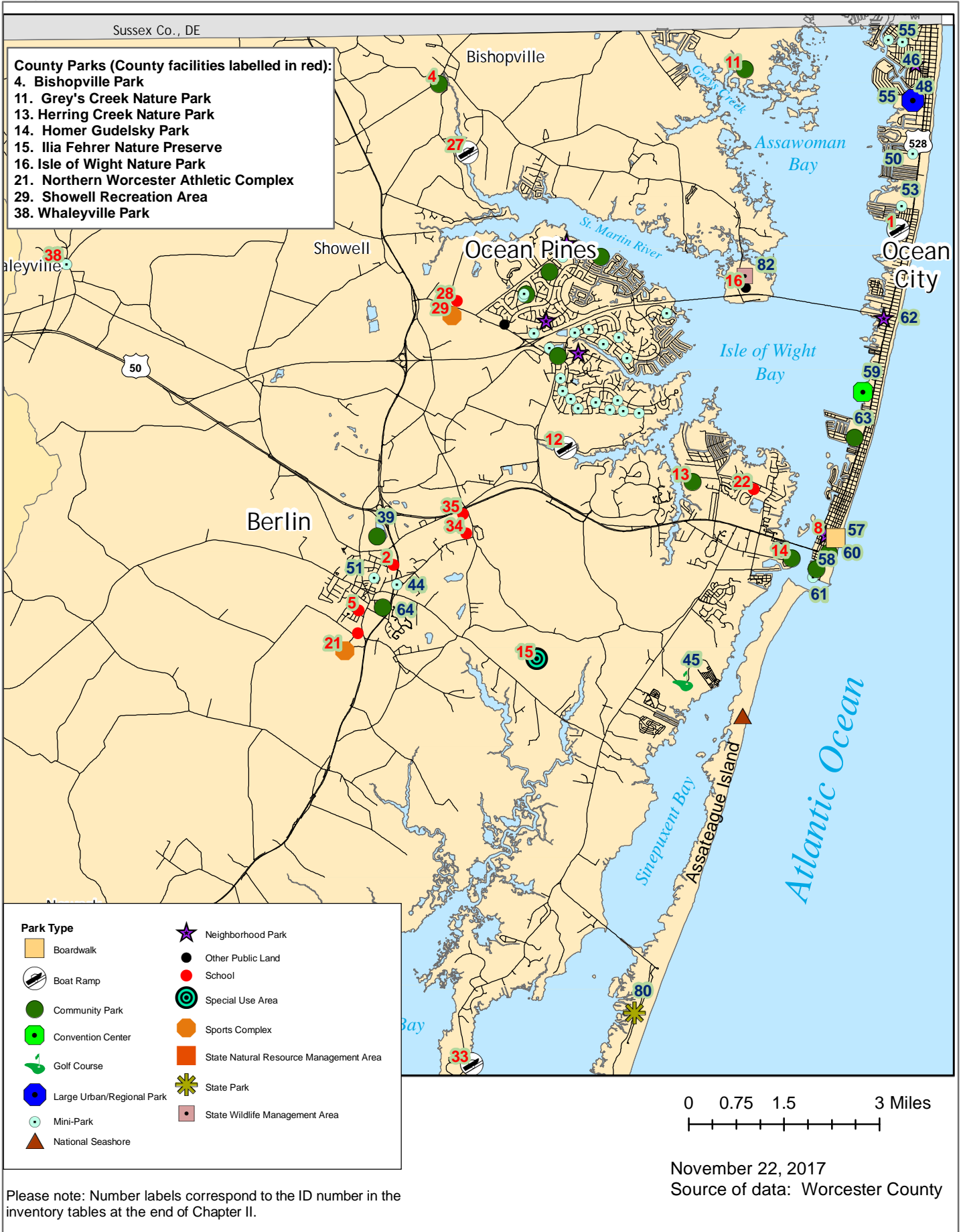
Two neighborhood parks, in Bishopville and Whaleyville, unincorporated villages, provide nearby recreation opportunity to these communities.

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 special 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.

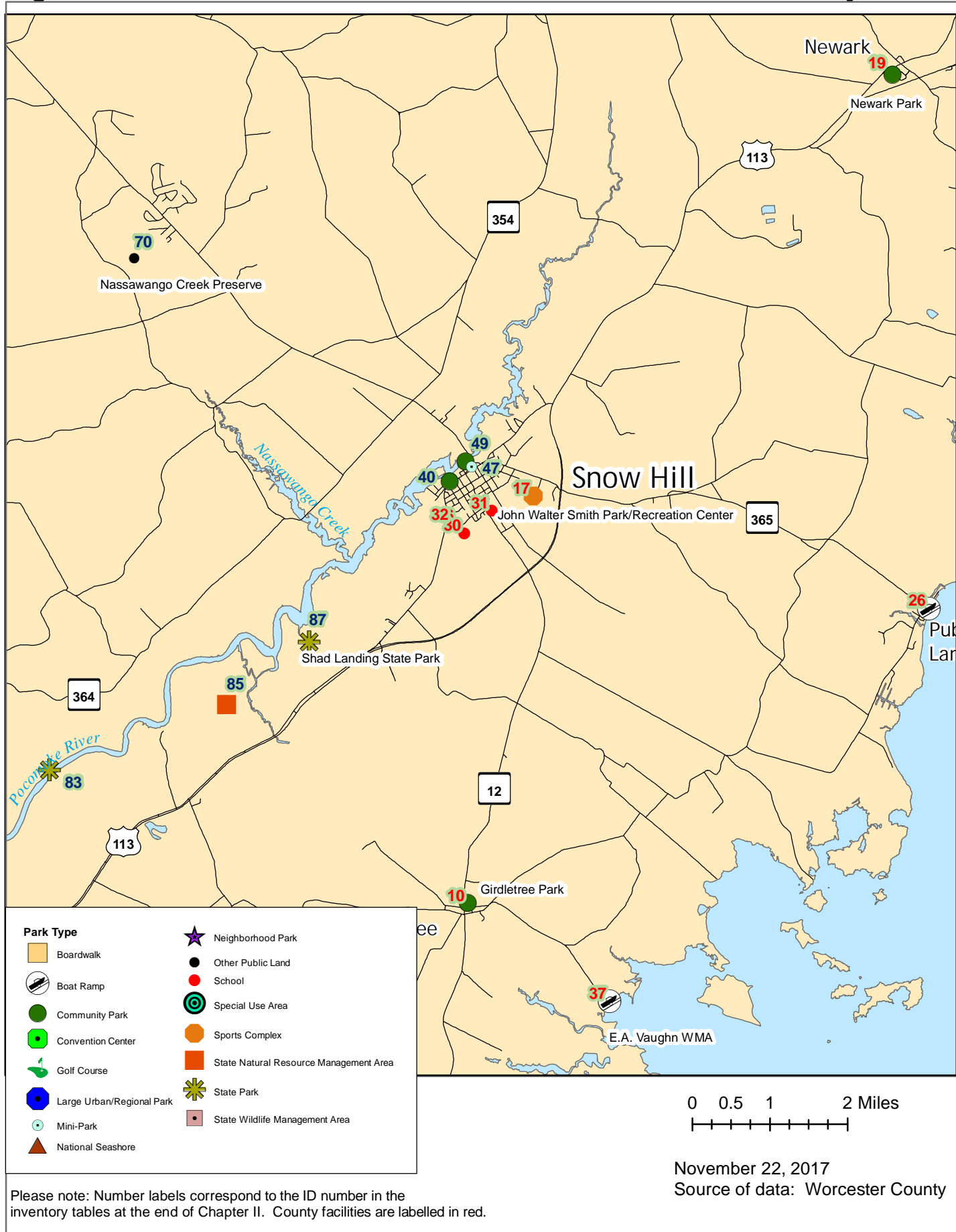
Located within the 15,000 wooded acres of Pocomoke State Forest in the Southwestern section of Worcester County the park provides a base for a vast array of outdoor and tourist activities. The forest is famous for its stands of loblolly pine and for its cypress swamps which border the wild and scenic 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.

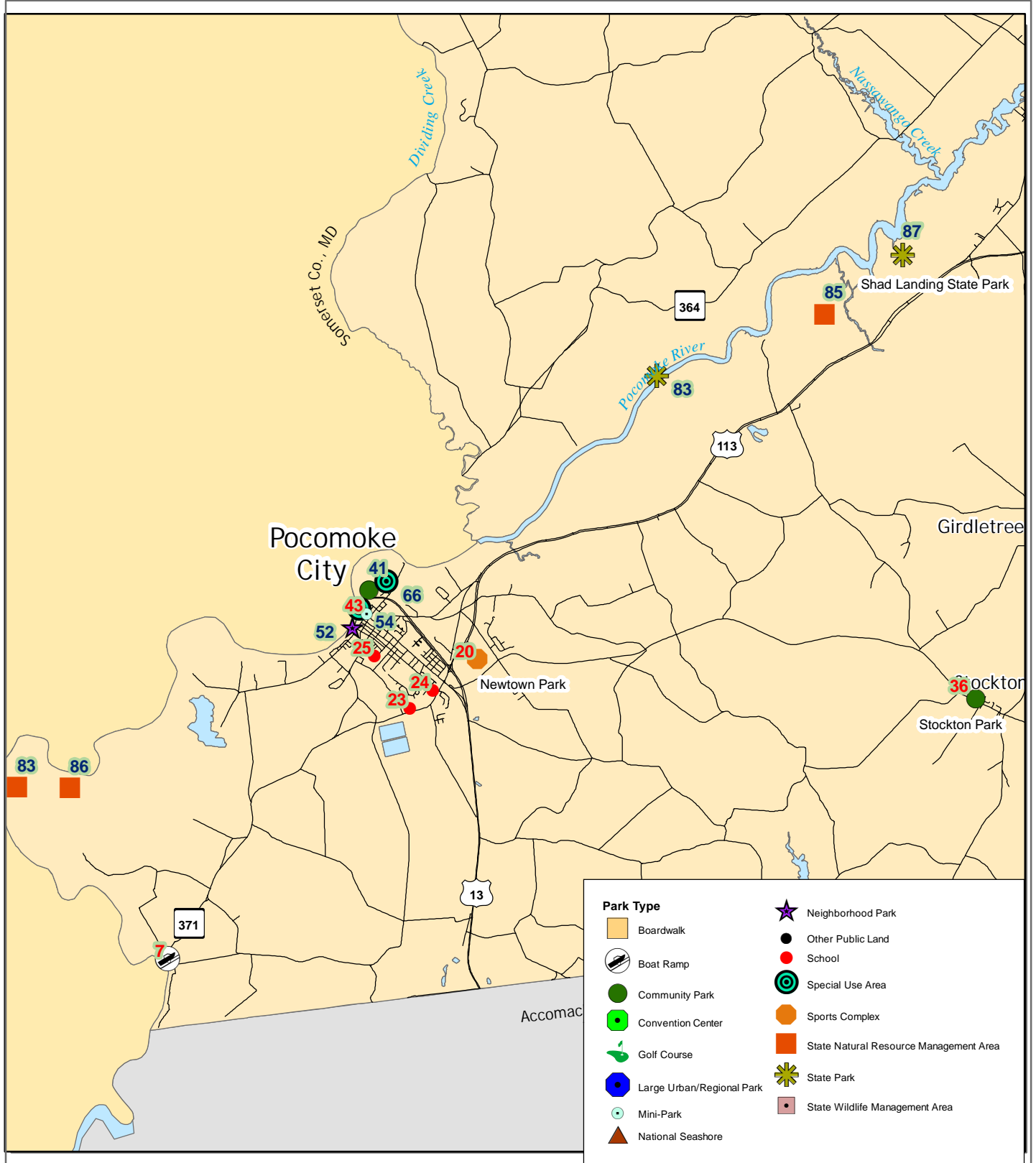
Cypress Park, the municipal park in Pocomoke City, offers a playground, tennis courts and a beautiful 1.5 mile nature trail which begins on the city dock and winds around Stevenson's Pond to Winter Quarters Landing. The trail is enhanced by several sections of floating boardwalk, exercise stations, a 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

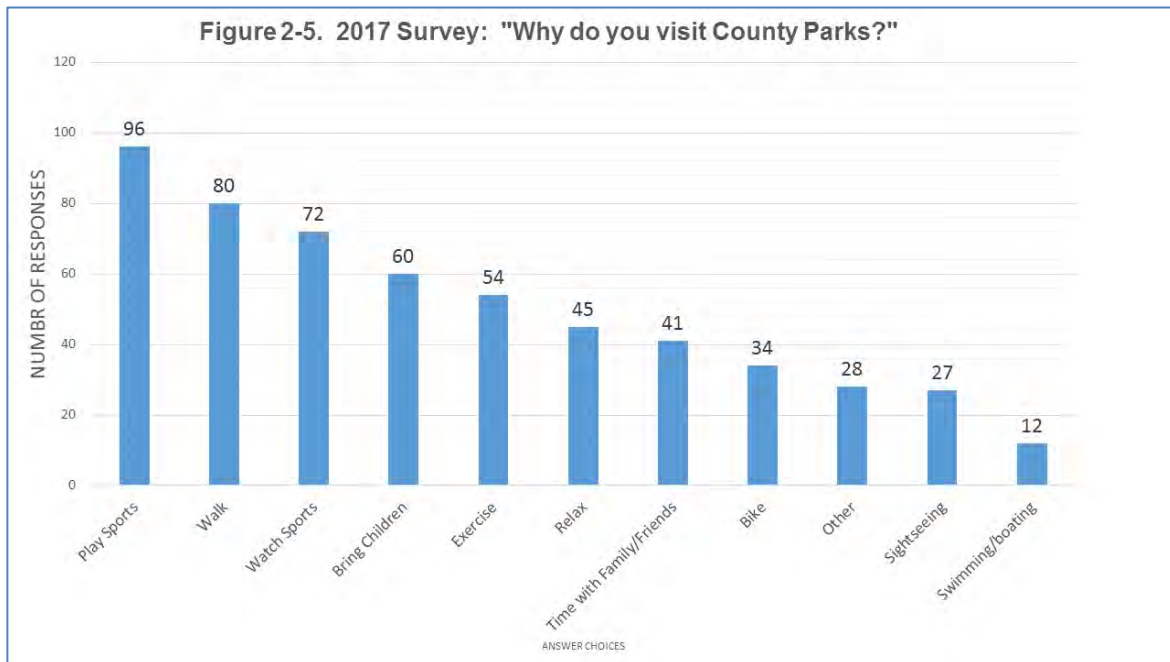
navigates the small park taking the user through a newly planted wildflower area and tree plantings with educational signage. In addition to Bishopville, since 2012, passive walking trails have been created at John Walter Smith Park in Snow Hill (1.2 miles), Newtown Park in Pocomoke (0.5 miles) and Northern 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**

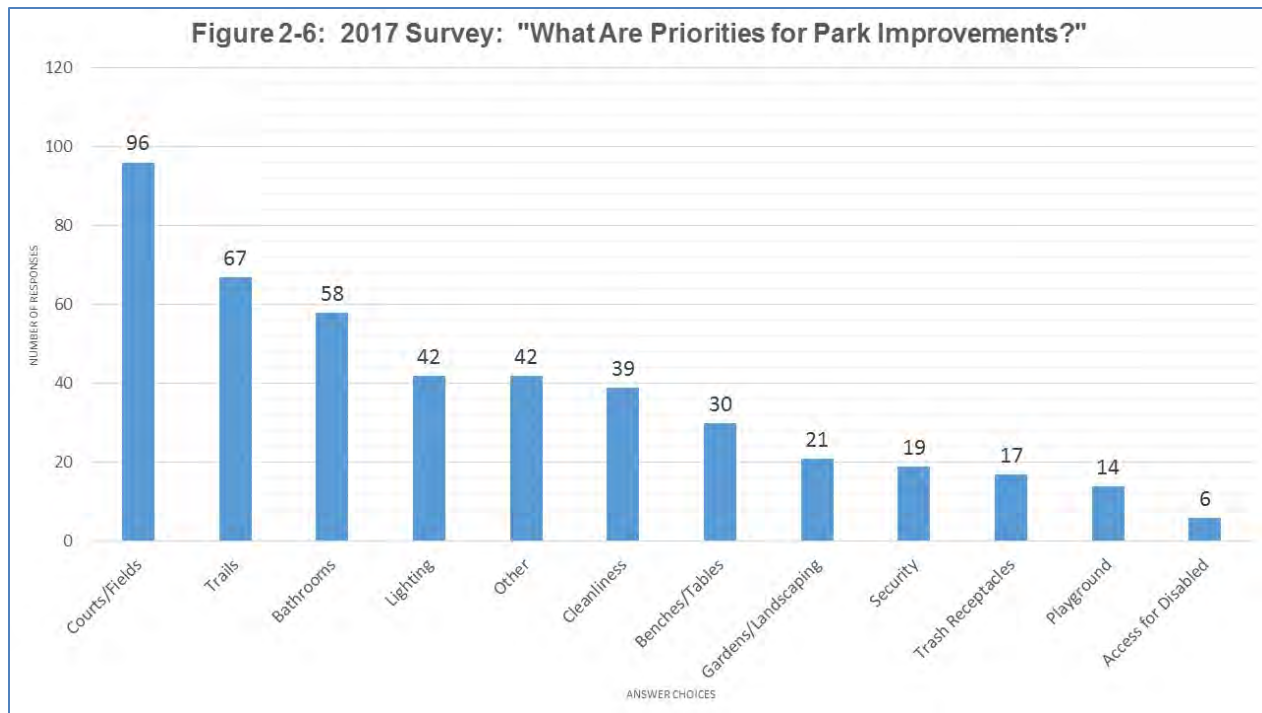
The growing number of citizens 50 plus years of age will place new demands on recreation and parks programming and facilities in coming years: 25% of the population is 65 years old, or older; this is projected to rise to 27% by 2020 and 29% by 2025<sup>5</sup>. This growing segment of the population 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

<sup>5</sup> 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%
<b>Field Improvement/More Fields</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>31%</b>
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%
<b>Parking Improvement/More Parking</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>15%</b>
Passive Parks	7	4%
Passive Water Access	1	1%
Pickle Ball Courts	1	1%
Shooting Range	1	1%
Swimming Pool	1	1%
<b>Trails</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>20%</b>
Playground--updated	1	1%
Unsure/No Needed Improvements	7	4%
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>188</b>	

### Proximity Analysis

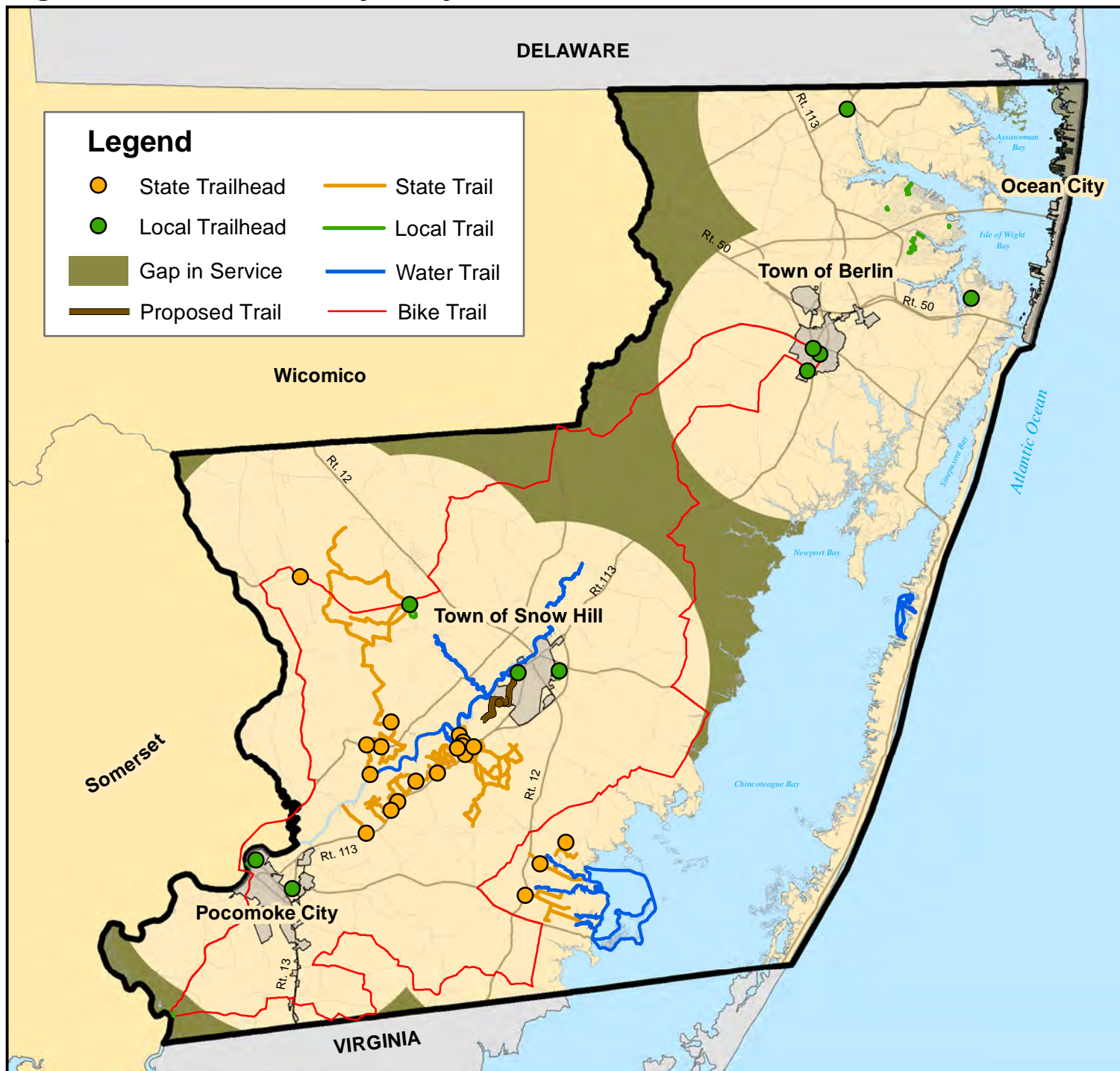
In seeking to improve understanding of the level of service provided by recreational facilities in Worcester County, a “proximity analysis” was conducted to evaluate accessibility of trails, water access and multi-purpose fields. A proximity analysis uses facility

### 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 - rails - Proximity Analysis



Worcester County Total Population (2016) : 51,444

Estimated Population within Gap: 6,472

Estimated 13% of population within Gap in Service.



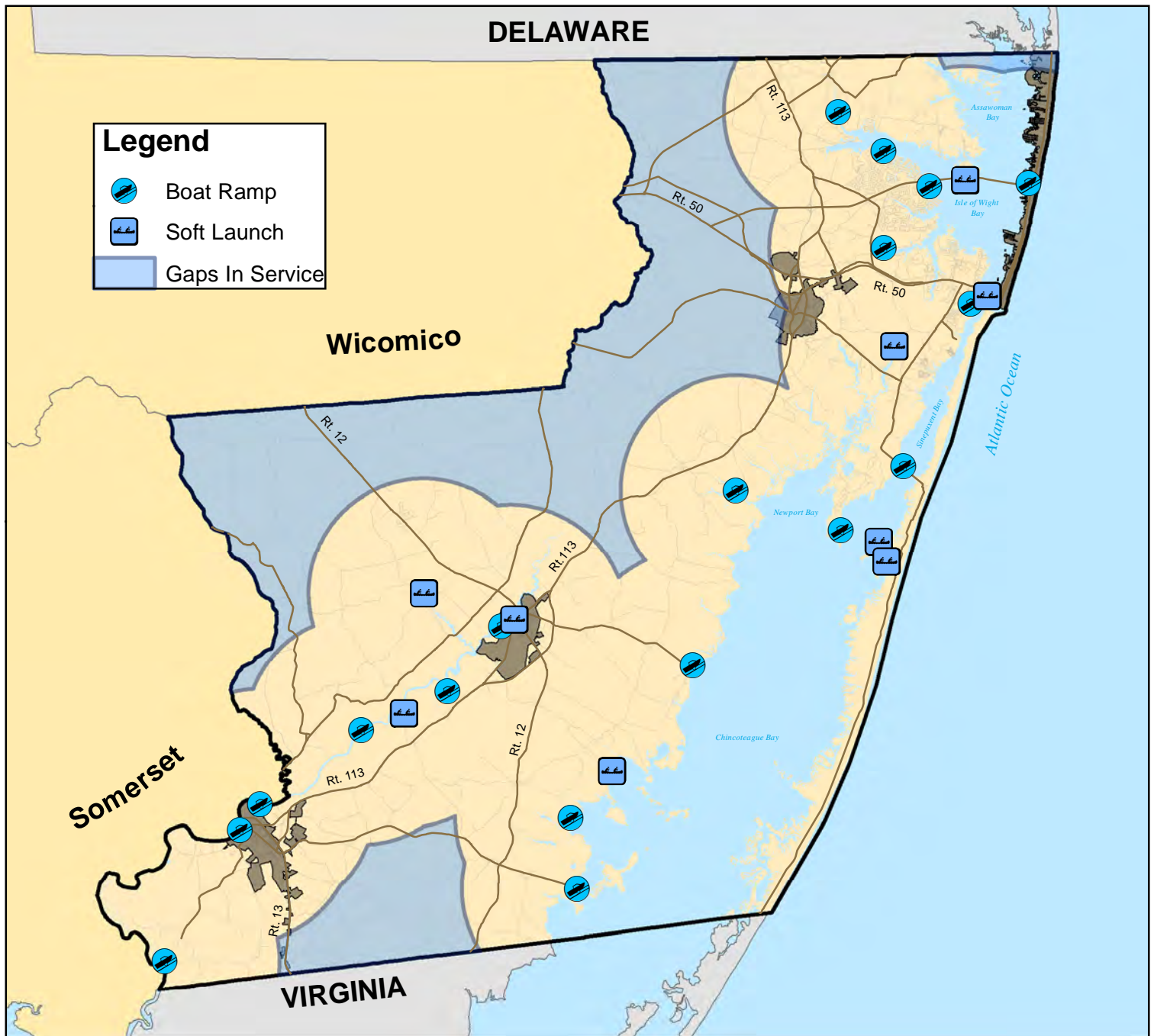
0 2.5 5 10  
Miles

**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. of Environmental Programs  
Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources

## Figure 2-8. Water Access - Proximity Analysis



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.



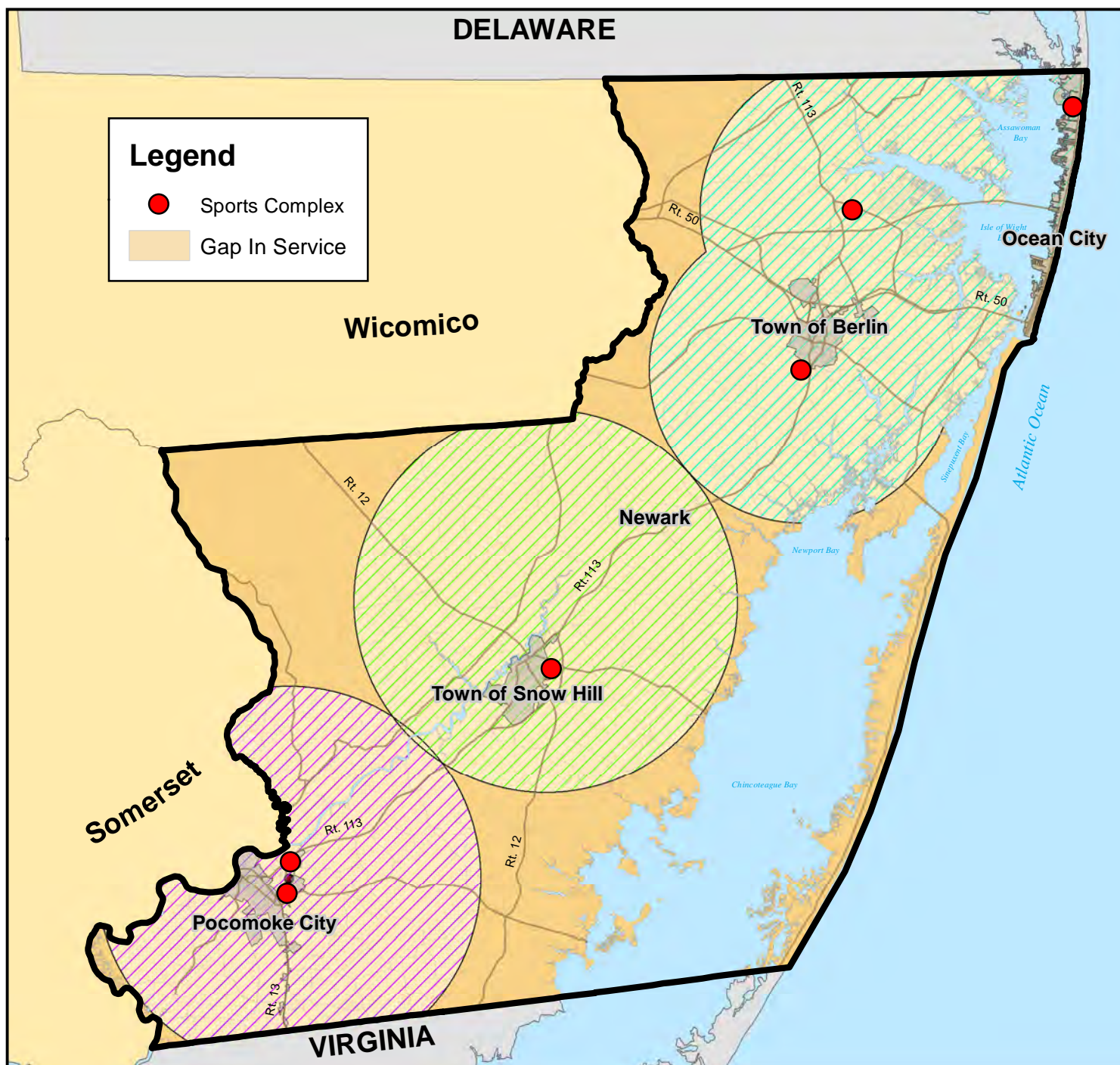
0 2.5 5 10  
Miles

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 : 2,900 people	1 acre : 4,800 people
Central	1 field : 800 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.



0 2.5 5 10 Miles

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.*



**Table 2-7. 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	70%	30%	60%	40%	NA	NA
West Ocean City	4,375	20%	80%	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	80%	20%	40%	60%	43%	57%
City of Pocomoke	4,101	60%	40%	14%	86%	33%	67%

High, Greater Than 68% in Gap

Medium, 34%-67% in Gap

Low, less than 33% in Gap

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’ was conducted using a 0.5 mile radius to evaluate pedestrian access to recreational facilities in population centers (Figures 2-10 through 2-15).

The purpose of this ‘closer look’ is to identify ‘Gaps’ in pedestrian accessibility in population centers, which could be used to evaluate locations for future parks, trails and water access. Table 2-7 summarizes the analysis and uses a color code to categorize the gap percentage as high, medium and low. 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.

**Figure 2-1 Ocean City Facilities - Large Scale Proximity Analysis**

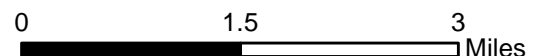


**Half Mile Service Areas**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <span style="border: 2px solid red; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Park                       | <span style="color: blue;">●</span> Boat Ramp   |
| <span style="border: 2px solid blue; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Water Access              | <span style="color: green;">●</span> County Trailhead   |
| <span style="border: 2px solid green; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Trail                    | <span style="color: red;">●</span> Park   |
| <span style="border: 2px dashed yellow; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Ocean City Town Limits | <span style="background-color: lightblue; border: 1px solid blue; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Soft Launch |



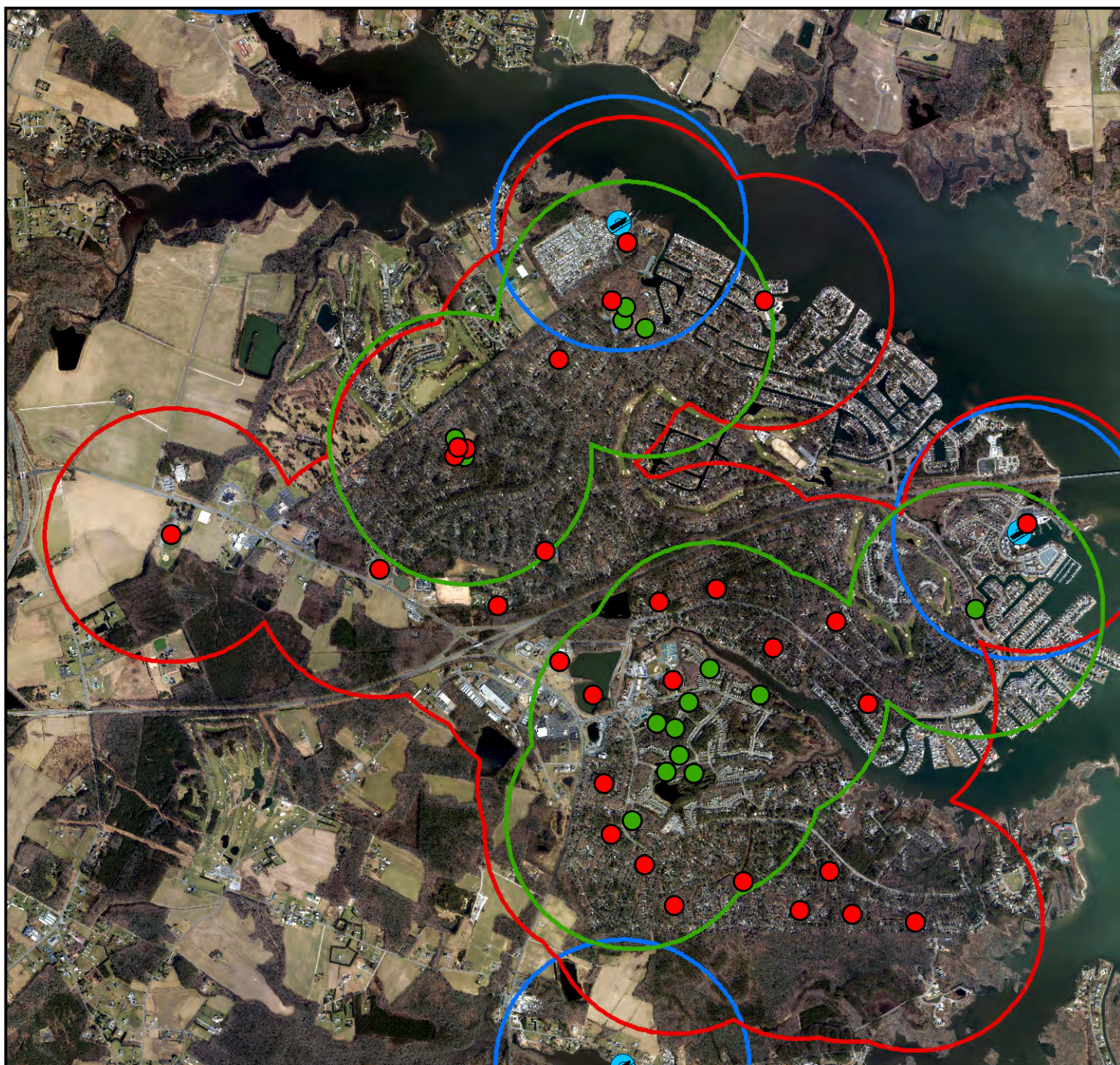
**Total Ocean City Population: 6,999**



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.



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



**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**

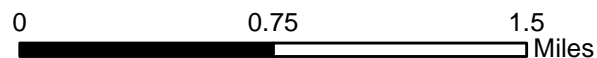


**Half Mile Service Areas**

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



**Total West Ocean City Population: 4,375**



Parks: Estimated 80% 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.

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



Figure 2-13 Berlin Facilities - Large Scale Proximity Analysis



**Half Mile Service Areas**

Park

Trailhead

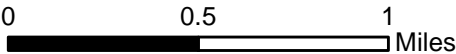
Trailhead

Park

Berlin Town Limits



Total Berlin Population: 4,608



Parks: Estimated 30% 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**

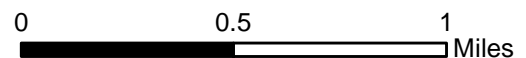


**Half Mile Service Areas**

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



**Total Snow Hill Population: 2,071**



Parks: Estimated 20% 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 Ocean City Facilities - Large Scale Proximity Analysis**

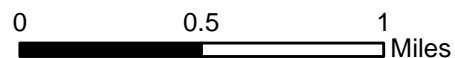


**Half Mile Service Areas**

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



**Total Pocomoke City Population: 4,101**



Parks: Estimated 40% 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.

January 24, 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
<b>Bishopville Waterfront Park - Park Development</b>		\$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	
<b>Greys Creek Nature Park - Park Development</b>		\$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	
<b>John Walter Smith Park - Sports Field Development</b>		\$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	
<b>Northern County Field Complex - Sports Field Development</b>		\$1,000,000	New
Multipurpose Field Complex-Land Acquisition	\$1,000,000		
Total Northern County Field Complex Projected Land Acquisition Cost =		\$1,000,000	
<b>Stockton Park - Playground Replacement</b>		\$100,000	Rehabilitation
Site Preparation	\$5,000		
Composite Playground Installation	\$95,000		
Total Stockton Park Projected Composite Playground Installation =		\$100,000	
<b>Total =</b>		<b>\$1,750,000</b>	

### 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**

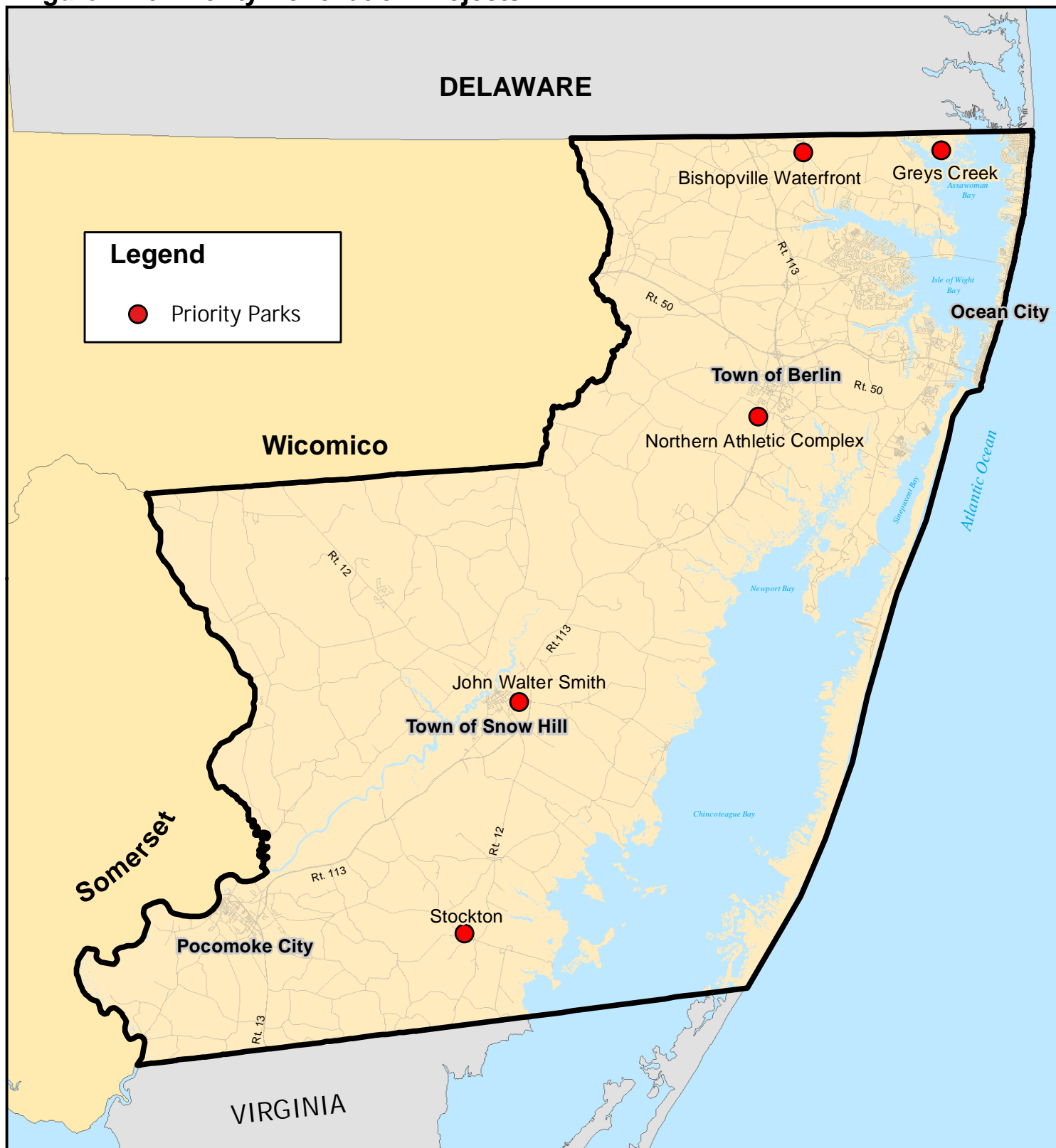


Figure 2-10 shows the locations of each of these projects in the county.

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 is a need for additional, active, public recreational

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

To address the northern county's deficit of playing fields, the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks will explore additional land acquisition in the northern end of the county. It is estimated that up to 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 will be installed. Existing space at Northern Worcester Athletic Complex will be evaluated for the creation of two additional baseball fields. Doing so would increase the present playing field access in the northern region to 1 acre per 2,500 people for multipurpose fields, and 1 field per 2,500 people for baseball. The additional field space would provide Worcester County's northern residents more recreational programming opportunities.

### **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**

Project	Location	Description of Land Preservation and Recreation Recommendation	Estimated Total Cost	Acres to be Acquired	Estimated Short-Range (2017) Cost		
					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	\$25,000			\$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
					<b>\$1,000,000</b>	<b>\$575,000</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>
					<b>Short- Range Total =</b>		
					<b>\$1,675,000</b>		

**Table 2-9b.****Mid-Range**

Project	Location	Description of Land Preservation and Recreation Recommendation	Estimated Total Cost	Acres to be Acquired	Estimated Mid-Range (2022) Cost		
					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
						<b>\$2,915,000</b>	<b>\$200,000</b>
					<b>Mid- Range Total =</b>		
					<b>\$3,115,000</b>		

**Table 2-9c.****Long -Range**

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

## 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		2	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	3	1	1	11			1	0.5
22	Ocean City Elementary School	Ocean City	School																		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	2					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																	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	
<b>Total</b>				<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>4.3</b>

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 Volley ball 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	
<b>Total</b>				<b>5</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6.9</b>



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

Id	Site Name	Acres	Site Class	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	8,200	National Seashore			1	354	22									6					5
80	Assateague Island State Park	855	State Park																			
81	E.A. Vaughn Wildlife Management Area	2,769	State Wildlife Management Area																			
82	Isle of Wight Wildlife Management Area	224	State Wildlife Management Area																			
83	Lankford'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	Pocomoke River State Park	915	State Park	2	25	2	175					2			1		2			1		
88	Sinepuxent Bay Wildlife Management Area	93	State Natural Resource Management Area																			
<b>Total</b>				<b>3</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>561</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>18</b>

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				3						1	
<b>Total</b>				<b>1</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>929</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>

## Chapter III: Natural Resource Land Conservation

### Overview

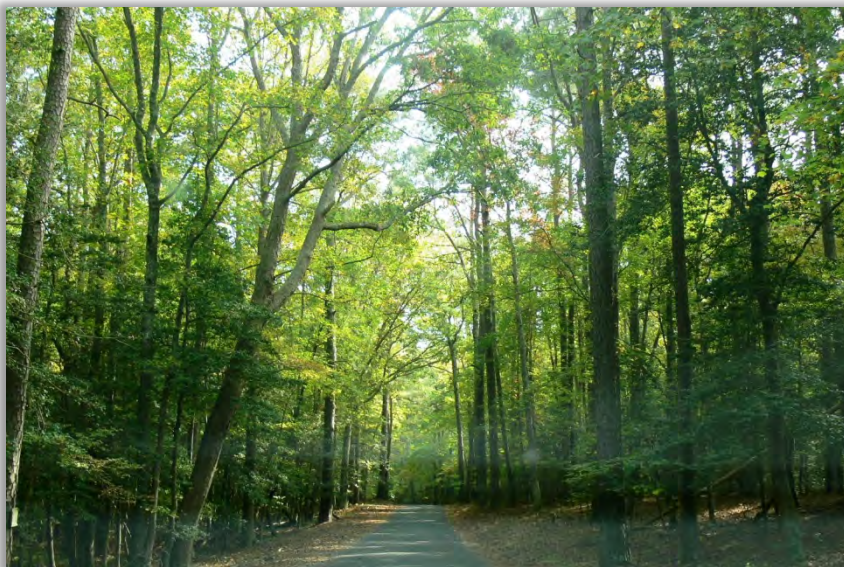
This chapter documents the county's goals for preserving natural resource lands and resources and the extent to which progress has been made toward achievement of the program development strategy identified in the County's 2012 *Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan*.

### ***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.

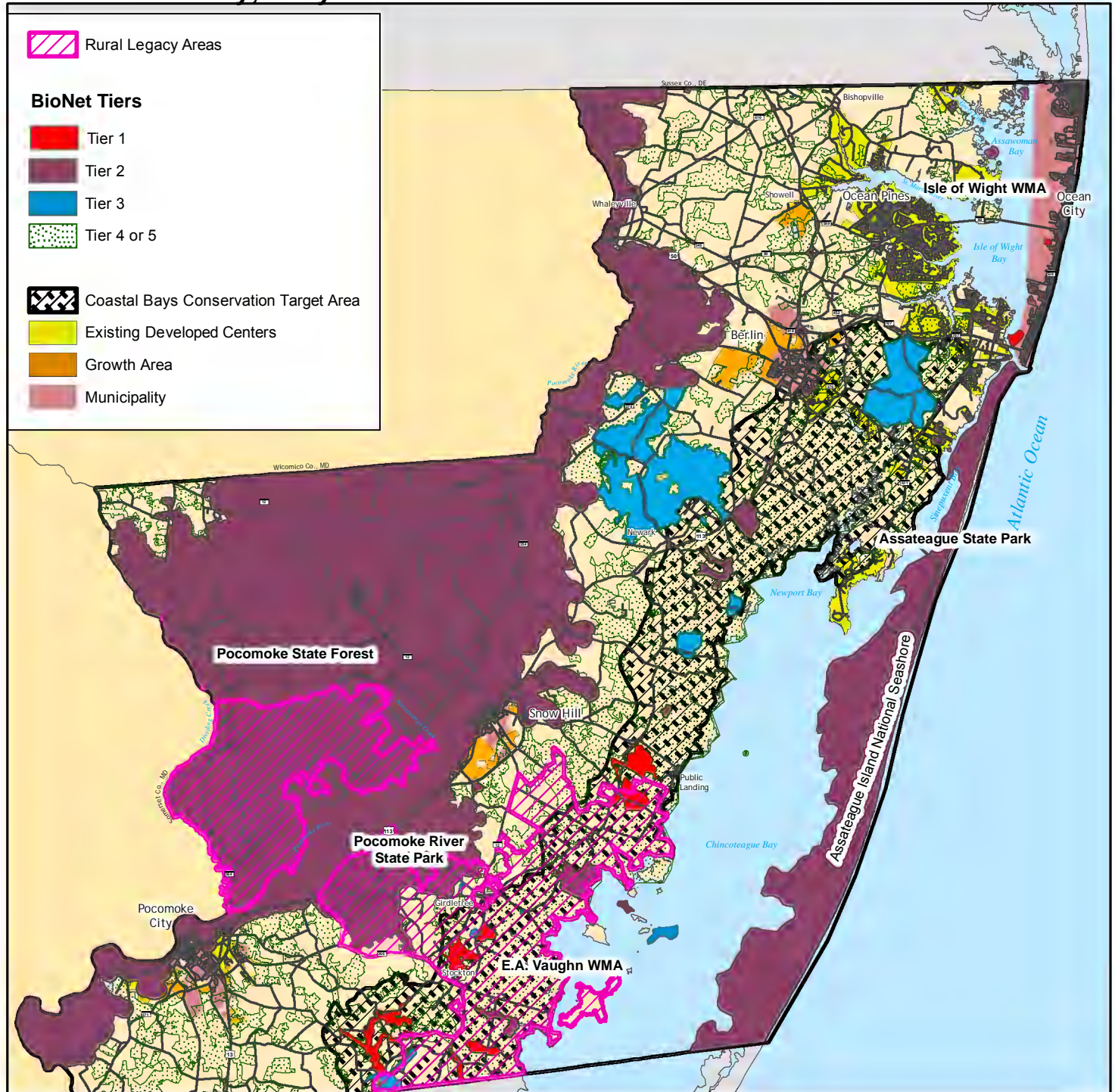
Figure 3-1 indicates the general areas of the county targeted for natural resources conservation and for growth. In general the areas targeted for conservation are the shorelines and headwaters of both the Pocomoke and the Coastal Bays watersheds, and areas that still contain contiguous natural lands, 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



**Figure 3-1. Local and State Targeted Conservation Areas /Growth Areas, Worcester County, Maryland**



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



0 2 4 8 Miles

January 11, 2017

\*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

**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 data<sup>6</sup>.

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 million<sup>7</sup>.

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)<sup>8</sup>. Chesapeake Forest Lands are spread across eight (8) counties, including Worcester County (17,674 acres<sup>9</sup>). 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.

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

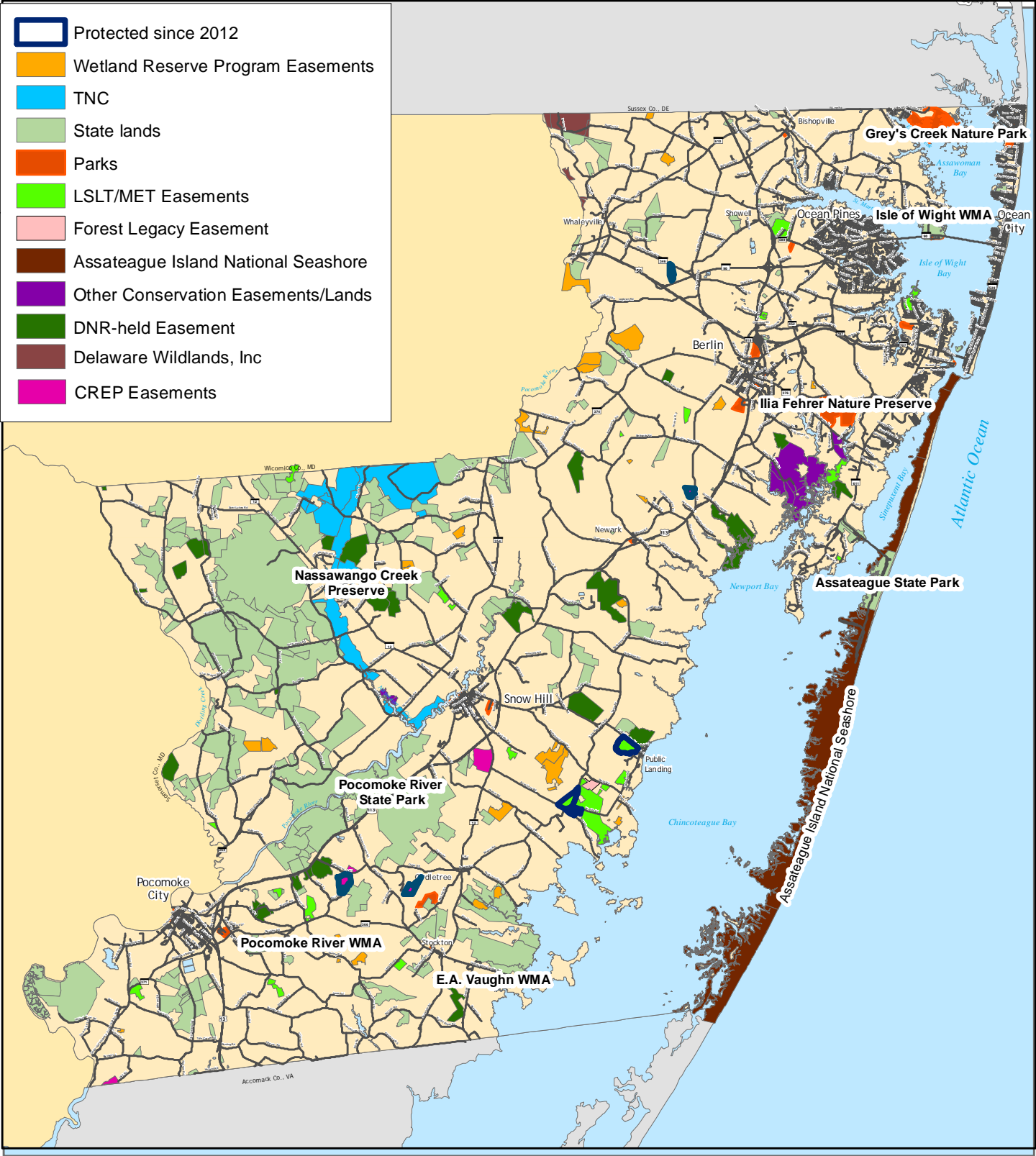
<sup>7</sup>

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

<sup>8</sup> Maryland Department of Natural Resources, website.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

Figure 3-2. 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

Table 3-1. Natural Resource Lands Inventory, Worcester County, Maryland

Site Name:	Property Size (Acres)	Outdoor Recreation Amenities (if any):	Trails/Interpretive Trails	Water Access	Fishing	Hunting		Other
Grey's Creek Nature Park (Worcester Co.)	575		yes	yes	n/a	n/a		not currently open to public
Ilia Fehrer Preserve (Worcester Co.)	442		yes	no	n/a	n/a		not currently open to public
Herring Creek Nature Park (Worcester Co.)	44	gazebo	yes	no	no	no		
Homer Gudelsky Park (Worcester Co.)	2	beach		yes	yes	no		
Isle of Wight Park (Worcester Co.)	12	pier, kayak/canoe launch	yes	yes	yes	no		
Assateague Island National Seashore	8,200	beach, camping, canoe/kayak rentals	yes	yes	yes	yes		
Assateague Island State Park (State)	855	beach, camping, nature center		yes	yes	no		
E.A. Vaughn Wildlife Management Area (State)	2,769		yes	no	no	yes		
Isle of Wight Wildlife Management Area (State)	224			yes	yes	yes		
Sinepuxent Bay Wildlife Management Area (State)	93		no	yes	yes	no		accessible only by boat, most islands are closed during nesting season
Pocomoke River Wildlife Management Area (State)	1,008		yes	yes	yes	yes		
Pocomoke State Forest (State)	17,547		yes	no	no	yes		
Pocomoke River State Park (State)	916	boat slips, pier, canoe/kayak rental, camping, picnicking, pool, nature center, marina	yes	yes	yes	no		
Nassawango (FurnaceTown) (State)	2							museum
Chesapeake Forest Lands (State)	19,391		yes	no				some tracts allow public access
Nassawango Creek Preserve (TNC)	10,200		yes	no	no	no		
Lands under conservation easement held by DNR	5,790	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		no public access
Wetland Reserve Program easement (USDA)	2,620	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		no public access
Delaware Wildlands (non-profit)	623	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		no public access
Lower Shore Land Trust/MD Environmental Trust conservation easement (non-profit)	2,074	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		no public access
CREP permanent conservation easements (Worcester County)	600	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		no public access
Other protected lands (County/State/Non-profit)	1,696	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		no public access
Totals*:	75,683							

\*Please note, this does not include land protected with MALPF or Rural Legacy easements. Although some of the land in these programs has natural resource values, these programs are addressed in Chapter 4.



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.

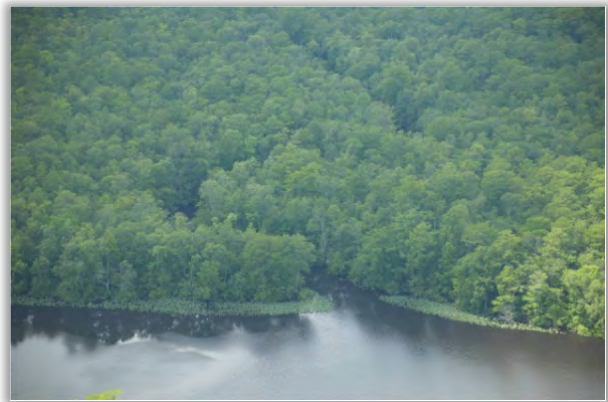
Various local, state and federal programs protect and restore land using conservation easements. Details of the county-based programs are described in the “Implementing Programs” section later in this chapter. Program Open Space purchases conservation easements on land with natural resource value, sometimes 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 area<sup>10</sup>.

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

<sup>10</sup> 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 shoreline<sup>11</sup>; 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 feet<sup>12</sup>. 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 islands<sup>13</sup>. 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:

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

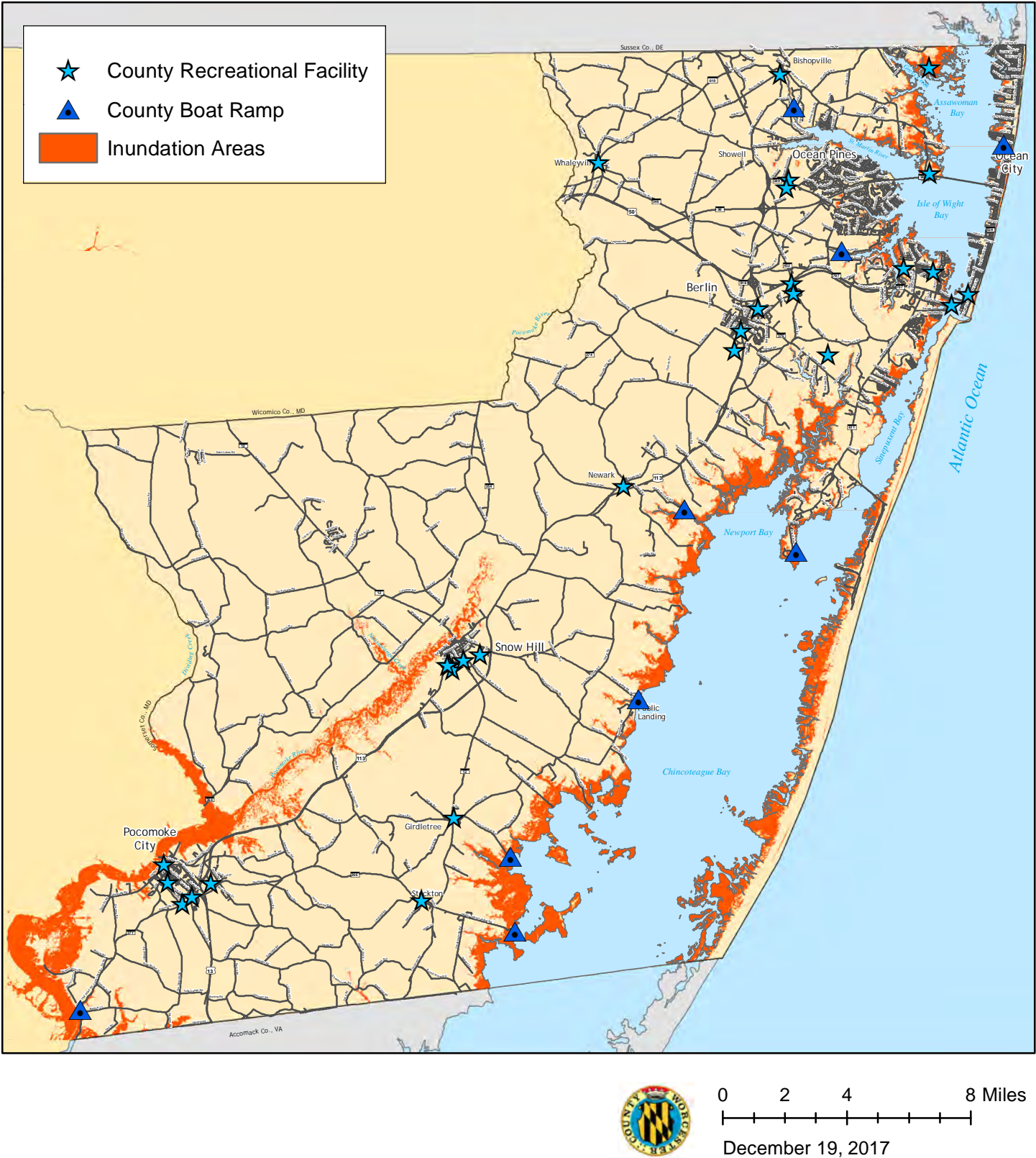
<sup>12</sup> Boesch, D.F., et al. 2013. *Updating Maryland's Sea-level Rise Projections. Special Report of the Scientific and Technical Working*

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

<sup>13</sup> 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.
- Approximately 1,000 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.

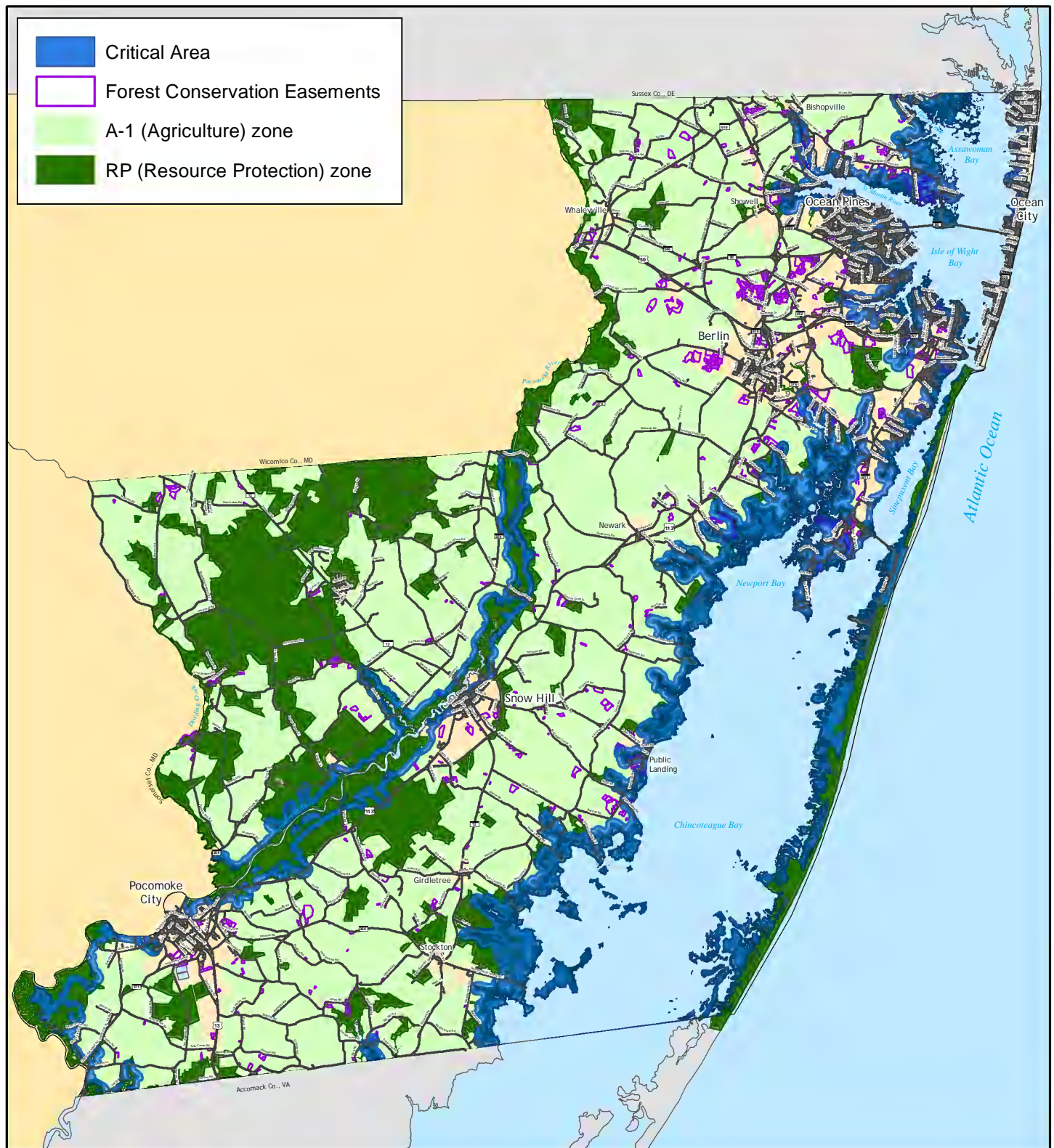
- **TMDL Implementation.** Worcester County is developing a coastal bays watershed plan that meets Section 319 requirements and addresses reduction of nutrient loads in the watershed. The county anticipates pursuing projects and funding for these projects that

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

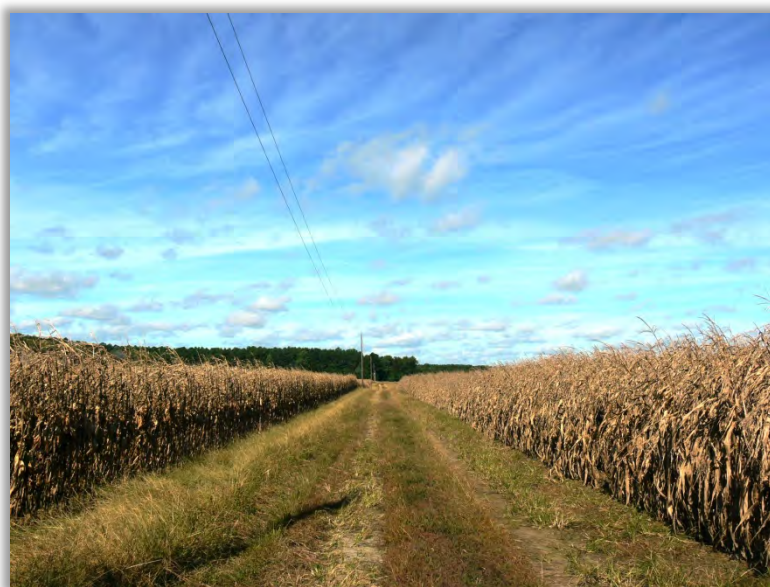
### Overview

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 land<sup>14</sup>; 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).<sup>15</sup> Average farm size was 266 acres (down 8% compared to 2007), and median size was 53 acres.<sup>16</sup> Worcester County ranks second in the state in broiler inventory, fifth in corn production, and sixth in soybean production.<sup>17</sup> Worcester County ranks twelfth among *all counties nationwide* in broiler production<sup>18</sup>. 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).<sup>19</sup>

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

<sup>14</sup>

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

<sup>15</sup> Census of Agriculture, USDA. 2012.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *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.<sup>20</sup> Demand is expected to grow in the long run especially for wood for fuel (cellulosic ethanol or wood fired power plants).<sup>21</sup> The more acres of forestland available in the future, the more likely Worcester's forests can be managed sustainably.<sup>22</sup>

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.<sup>23</sup>

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**

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<sup>20</sup> Larry Walton, Vision Forestry, personal communication. February 18, 2009.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> 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.

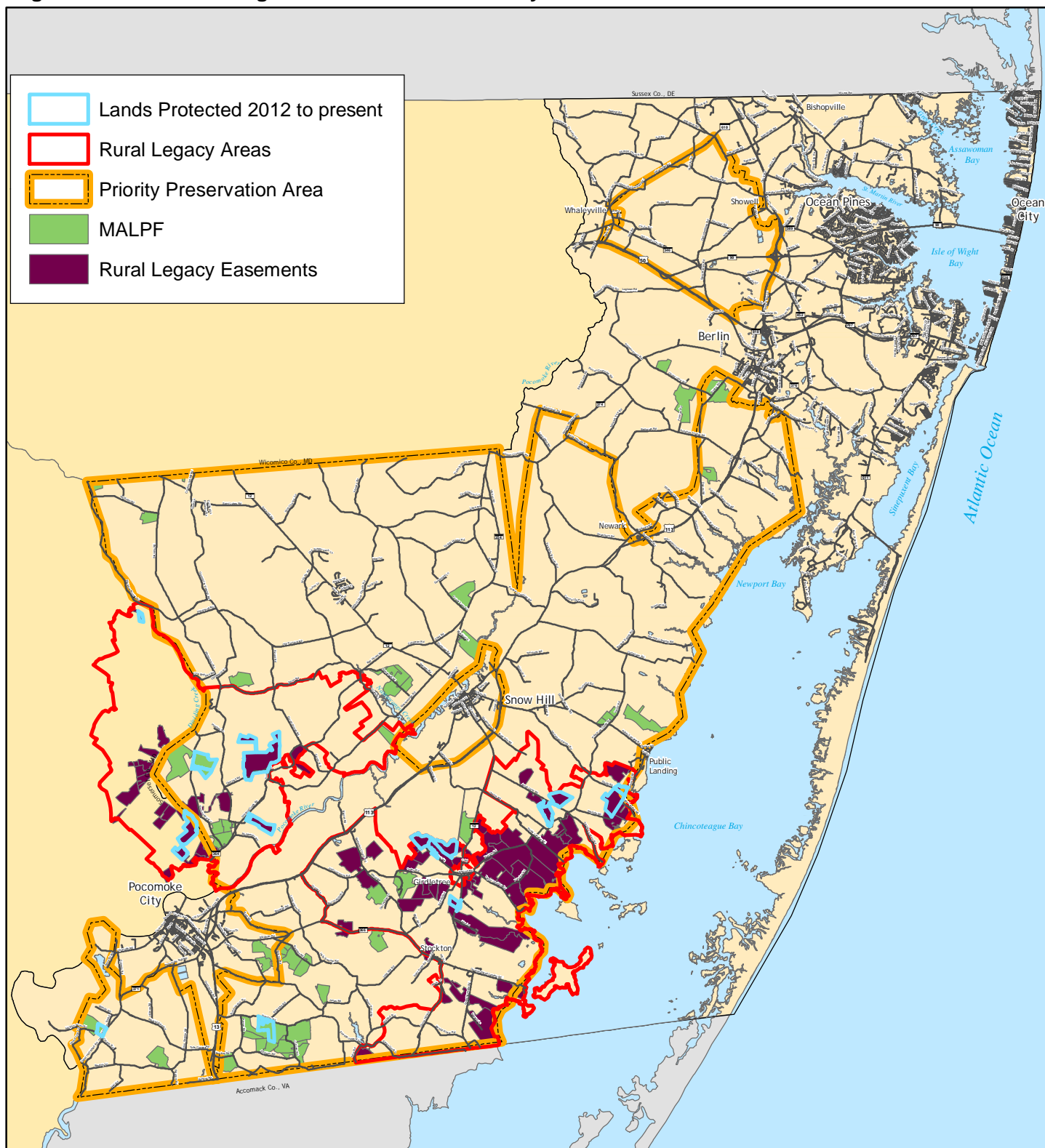


**MALPF Easement**

## 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

**Figure 4-1. Preserved Agricultural Land and Priority Preservation Areas for Farmland Preservation**



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



0 2 4 8 Miles  
January 11, 2017



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

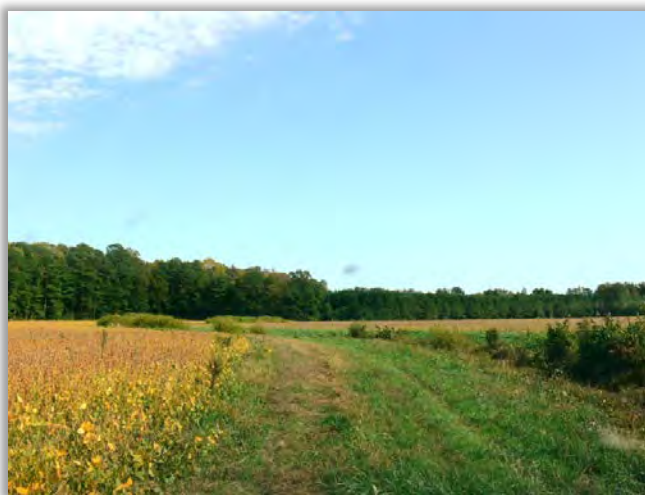
From 2012 to 2016, 519.3 +/- acres (5 properties) were protected with MALPF easements, or about 104 acres protected annually. Again, this fell short compared to past progress—from 2007 to 2011, 391 acres were protected annually. Annual acreage protection is anticipated to increase in 2018 and after because 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

<b>Site Name:</b>	<b>Acres Preserved</b>	<b>Protection Type (ownership or easement type)</b>
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
<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>16,717.63</b>	

## 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 1:20<sup>24</sup>. Between 2006 and 2014, 1,623 acres of land zoned for farming uses county-wide was subdivided for residential purposes.<sup>25</sup> This represents less than 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

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

<sup>25</sup> 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: 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.”

## Q10 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	<b>fields</b> <b>indoor facility</b> 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	<b>maintenance of facilities</b> <b>trails</b> 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	<b>passive water access</b> <b>trails</b> 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	<b>bike paths</b> <b>trails</b> new trails, bike paths	11/5/2017 1:06 PM
5	<b>fields</b> Clean Water. Better Fields. More Fields.	11/5/2017 12:20 PM
6	<b>drinking water access</b> Need to have better access to clean water for drinking.	11/5/2017 9:34 AM
7	<b>passive parks</b> <b>trails</b> 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	<b>trails</b> increasing the # of walking and bike trails would be wonderful	11/5/2017 6:38 AM
9	<b>parking</b> More parking	11/4/2017 6:44 PM
10	<b>bike paths</b> Be nice to have some longer bike trails	11/4/2017 1:33 PM
11	<b>fields</b> multi purpose fields	11/4/2017 11:05 AM
12	<b>passive parks</b> Where is a county park where people can camp and swim?	11/4/2017 10:39 AM
13	<b>passive parks</b> <b>trails</b> More nature parks and trails	11/4/2017 10:16 AM
14	<b>parking</b> Needs, more parking!!!!	11/4/2017 9:35 AM
15	<b>bike paths</b> <b>trails</b> need new trails and bike paths	11/4/2017 8:17 AM
16	<b>dog friendly</b> <b>trails</b> New trails, dog walking access	11/4/2017 7:30 AM
17	<b>nature center</b> <b>trails</b> New trails and education centers to teach K12 about importance of preserving nature!	11/3/2017 3:27 PM
18	<b>fields</b> Turf fields, get more playing time. I.e. No rain outs.	11/3/2017 3:00 PM
19	<b>nature center</b> <b>passive parks</b> <b>trails</b> It would be great to see areas with longer trails!! And more access to untouched nature. Maybe some pavilions with information about the science of the area.	11/3/2017 2:41 PM
20	<b>trails</b> New Trails	11/3/2017 2:39 PM
21	<b>dog friendly</b> <b>trails</b> Trails, Trees, Dog access	11/3/2017 2:38 PM
22	<b>bike paths</b> <b>trails</b> There is a need for more walking and biking trails	11/3/2017 2:33 PM
23	<b>fields</b> Turf fields. This would reduce injuries from bad weather on the fields	11/3/2017 2:28 PM
24	<b>bathrooms</b> <b>drinking water access</b> <b>fields</b> <b>parking</b> Additional fields with all of the support facilities, i.e. bathrooms, fresh water and ample parking.	11/3/2017 1:40 PM
25	<b>trails</b> Additional walking trails are needed. Particularly those in remote or protected areas.	11/3/2017 9:42 AM
26	<b>trails</b> A system of interconnected trails with trail maps.	11/3/2017 9:36 AM
27	<b>trails</b> more trails esp. in forested/woodlands areas	11/3/2017 8:42 AM

28	<b>passive parks</b> <b>trails</b>	Walking trails through meadows and wooded areas. More passive use areas for birding and wildlife observation.	11/3/2017 8:39 AM
29	<b>trails</b>	Connecting parks through trail access	11/3/2017 8:21 AM
30	<b>trails</b>	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	<b>trails</b>	new nature trails would be great!	11/3/2017 5:20 AM
32	<b>trails</b>	More walking and hiking trails in natural settings would be great	11/3/2017 5:11 AM
33	<b>trails</b>	More trails. Worcester County has very little options for hiking.	11/2/2017 9:21 PM
34	<b>natural play space</b> <b>trails</b>	New natural trails and nature play areas	11/2/2017 8:36 PM
35	<b>fields</b>	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	<b>indoor facility</b>	I'd like an indoor swimming pool in the northern part of the county.	11/2/2017 4:23 PM
37	<b>passive parks</b>	The parks should give public access to nature.	11/2/2017 4:19 PM
38	<b>swimming pool</b>	Swimming pool for Berlin area.	11/2/2017 3:55 PM
39	<b>indoor facility</b> <b>re-purposed golf courses</b>	An indoor facility equipped with in 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 popular among young adults. The existing golf club house could be renovated and expanded for indoor activities.	11/2/2017 3:51 PM
40	<b>indoor facility</b> <b>passive parks</b>	Need indoor facility in northern Worcester, esp. for raquetball. 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	<b>fields</b>	turf fields, more parking	11/2/2017 12:19 PM
42	<b>fields</b>	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	<b>bathrooms</b> <b>fields</b> <b>parking</b>	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	<b>fields</b> <b>indoor facility</b> <b>trails</b>	Better drainage of fields; indoor facilities; long wooded running trails	11/2/2017 7:16 AM
45	<b>bathrooms</b> <b>fields</b>	The fields and bathroom for football/ Lacrosse and Soccer	11/2/2017 5:56 AM
46	<b>fields</b> <b>parking</b>	Need additional parking and better field conditions	11/1/2017 10:48 PM
47	<b>fields</b> <b>parking</b>	better drainage and parking	11/1/2017 9:49 PM
48	<b>fields</b> <b>parking</b>	Fix poor drainage/turf conditions, additional parking needed, very hard to find parking	11/1/2017 9:25 PM
49	<b>fields</b> <b>parking</b>	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	<b>fields</b>	Artificial turf/all weather fields for football and lacrosse	11/1/2017 8:51 PM
51	<b>fields</b> <b>parking</b>	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	<b>fields</b>	Fix drainage issues to minimize cancellations	11/1/2017 7:24 PM



53	<b>fields</b> My kids use NWAC 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 7:05 PM
54	<b>parking</b> More park	11/1/2017 6:37 PM
55	<b>fields</b> <b>parking</b> Better water drainage and more parking	11/1/2017 6:31 PM
56	<b>parking</b> Parking is a huge problem. Completely insufficient amount of parking spaces.	11/1/2017 5:17 PM
57	<b>fields</b> <b>parking</b> Please improve field conditions and parking at Northern Complex.	11/1/2017 4:04 PM
58	<b>parking</b> Need additional parking spaces	11/1/2017 3:58 PM
59	<b>fields</b> Add turf fields	11/1/2017 3:56 PM
60	<b>fields</b> 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	<b>parking</b> Parking, parking, parking	11/1/2017 2:53 PM
62	<b>fields</b> <b>parking</b> Better drainage systems for the fields. Better grass, turf conditions and more parking.	11/1/2017 2:51 PM
63	<b>fields</b> <b>trails</b> Turf fields, nature trails 3+ miles	11/1/2017 2:51 PM
64	<b>fields</b> <b>parking</b> additional parking, better drainage so we dont have to cancel practice so often after it rains	11/1/2017 2:44 PM
65	<b>fields</b> <b>parking</b> 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	<b>fields</b> <b>parking</b> the fields have very poor drainage, turf or better grass, more parking	11/1/2017 2:13 PM
67	<b>fields</b> <b>parking</b> 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	<b>fields</b> <b>indoor facility</b> <b>parking</b> Indoor facilities, better parking, better drainage on Northern Fields for ability to play more often	11/1/2017 2:08 PM
69	<b>fields</b> <b>parking</b> 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

70	<b>bathrooms</b> <b>parking</b> Improve the fields specifically drainage so in the spring we have less 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 2:07 PM
71	<b>fields</b> <b>parking</b> There needs to be more parking, during baseball and lacrosse season there is 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	<b>fields</b> <b>parking</b> Better drainage on the fields and better parking	11/1/2017 1:45 PM
73	<b>fields</b> 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	<b>fields</b> <b>parking</b> 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	<b>fields</b> 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	<b>fields</b> We need turf or better grass for the kids to play on .	11/1/2017 1:34 PM
77	<b>parking</b> additional parking	11/1/2017 1:34 PM
78	<b>parking</b> 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	<b>fields</b> Better grass fields/drainage and more parking please!	11/1/2017 1:27 PM
80	<b>fields</b> 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	<b>fields</b> 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 spaces	11/1/2017 1:22 PM
82	<b>fields</b> Better field conditions	11/1/2017 1:18 PM
83	<b>fields</b> 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	<b>fields</b> The Northern Worcester County Complex fields need help in regard to Drainage/Turf or Grass for the lacrosse season and we also need Safety netting	10/18/2017 4:20 PM
85	<b>fields</b> Turf fields. Seating for large events.	10/17/2017 2:52 PM
86	<b>fields</b> turf fields, indoor facilities	10/17/2017 8:17 AM
87	<b>fields</b> Totally resurface fields, turf fields, drainage is poor and the bathrooms stink	10/16/2017 7:54 PM
88	<b>fields</b> turf fields/ more fields	10/16/2017 12:55 PM
89	<b>fields</b> 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	<b>fields</b> Additional Fields at the North complex would be great! If you could add in a multi-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	<b>fields</b> Multi-purpose fields, indoor turf fields	10/16/2017 8:49 AM
92	<b>fields</b> 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

93	<b>fields</b> Fields at NWAC are 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	<b>fields</b> More multi-purpose fields with a few turf fields	10/16/2017 7:57 AM
95	<b>fields</b> multi purpose fields are limited with regard to the number of youth organizations in the area	10/16/2017 7:23 AM
96	<b>bathrooms</b> 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	<b>interpretive signage</b> <b>maintenance of facilities</b> 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	<b>trails</b> more trails	7/24/2017 9:39 AM
102	<b>trails</b> Walking paths.	7/21/2017 4:57 PM
103	<b>pickle ball courts</b> permanent pickle ball courts in showell park	7/21/2017 10:02 AM
104	<b>trails</b> more trails	7/19/2017 12:50 PM
105	<b>trails</b> more trails	7/19/2017 12:40 PM
106	<b>indoor facility</b> Indoor facility in north county	7/14/2017 3:51 PM
107	<b>fields</b> 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	<b>trails</b> Walking and riding trails in Iliah Feher Park.	7/14/2017 8:14 AM
109	<b>trails</b> 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	<b>dog friendly</b> <b>trails</b> Bike paths, Dog friendly trails and poop receptacles	7/13/2017 2:10 PM
111	<b>bathrooms</b> <b>updated play equipment</b> 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	<b>trails</b> New well lit and safe trails.	7/8/2017 9:36 AM
113	<b>concession stand</b> Concession stand upgrades	7/7/2017 7:44 AM
114	<b>lighting</b> Lights on ball fields	7/7/2017 7:39 AM
115	<b>natural play space</b> 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	<b>indoor--fans</b> Fans in the fitness room at the rec center	7/5/2017 11:37 AM
117	<b>indoor facility</b> indoor facilities in Berlin	7/5/2017 8:05 AM
118	<b>more programs--Pocomoke</b> More programs offered in Pocomoke area	7/3/2017 6:04 PM
119	<b>shooting range</b> shooting ranges	7/3/2017 7:05 AM
120	<b>trails</b> New trails are always welcome! Frisbee golf around the Rec. Center would be AWESOME	7/2/2017 2:25 PM
121	<b>indoor--more hours</b> Sunday hours for those of us who have off o. week3nd.	7/1/2017 7:04 PM
122	<b>more programs--Pocomoke</b> 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	<b>indoor--more hours</b> No breaks in evening fitness class sessions	6/30/2017 8:36 PM

124	<b>more programs--Pocomoke</b> Please 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.	6/30/2017 5:40 PM
125	<b>trails</b> biking/hiking trails	6/30/2017 3:28 PM
126	<b>trails</b> 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	<b>trails</b> Outdoor walking/biking trails with a level surface	6/30/2017 11:35 AM
128	<b>fields</b> 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	<b>parking</b> more parking	5/3/2017 2:09 PM
131	<b>maintenance of facilities</b> Power wash and paint surface/lines	5/3/2017 10:54 AM
132	<b>bathrooms</b> 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	<b>indoor facility</b> 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	<b>dog control</b> 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	<b>fields</b> 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	<b>lighting</b> Lights on the ball fields so games are not cut short due to the limited light	4/26/2017 1:27 PM