

Children in Nature & Community Planning

The MD Partnership for Children in Nature was created in 2008 to ensure that all Maryland young people have the opportunity to learn about their environment, connect with their natural world and grow to become responsible stewards. Through the work of this Partnership, a plan was developed to connect families and communities to nature, and to reach out to underserved communities with the least access nature, and to increase student connections to nature during the school day. The major recommendations of the plan are:

1. Incorporate nature play spaces into community health planning, land use planning and community development design.
2. Establish a Maryland Trail Development Office to: provide leadership and establish a vision for Maryland's trail system, including the coordination of multi-agency trail planning and funding, orchestration of trail advocacy, creation of a one-stop trail GIS database and website and the development of a new Maryland Trail Town Program
3. Develop a strategic state park and public lands and waterways Interpretive and Outdoor Classroom Plan, which includes the identification of funding needs to support a greater presence of park rangers and seasonal naturalist staff.
4. Develop and implement a comprehensive program to increase access and utilization of public lands and waterways for underserved communities.
5. Expand and improve the existing Civic Justice Corps (CJC) model to serve 1,000 at-risk youth statewide by 2015 with summer conservation jobs and outdoor enrichment activities.
6. Provide an annual meaningful outdoor environmental education experience for every student every year, pre-K through grade 12.
7. Require for graduation that every high school student take and pass a designated course of study on environmental literacy as defined in this document.
8. Establish a comprehensive initiative to green all schools and school grounds, and embed schoolyard habitat programs as integrated indoor and outdoor instructional components of the curriculum, to create opportunities for outdoor learning experiences for students and members of the community.
9. Provide professional development for teachers, state park rangers and naturalists, and other service providers.
10. Adopt the Maryland State Environmental Literacy Standards. Local planning efforts provide a wonderful opportunity to incorporate these Children in Nature goals and to develop policy that will support increased access to natural spaces for children and their families. Some specific examples are listed below.



Visit the Maryland Partnership for Children in Nature at dnr.maryland.gov/cin/nps/



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NATURAL RESOURCES



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Smart, Green & Growing



Community Planning

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Incorporate nature play spaces into community health planning, land use planning and community design.

- Consider access to green space when planning capital projects- paths near roads, connecting homes to green space

- Connect schools and public buildings to parks and paths
- Reclaim underused sites for green pocket parks- even a small space can make a difference
- Plan for nature play areas instead of expensive structured playgrounds
- Establish expectations that access to nature is a necessary element to community design as much as transportation, schools and other amenities.
- Identify greenways, corridors and trails that may provide access to green space and could also serve as alternative transportation routes (bike and walking paths) as well as support community health goals (active living through community design)

Develop and implement a comprehensive program to increase access and utilization of public lands and waterways for underserved communities.

- Identify areas and communities that are in need of green space or waterway access (DNR is developing a GIS based tool to assist state and local programs with these efforts)
- Incorporate green space and water access into redevelopment planning and new development regulations.

For more information on MD Partnership for Children in Nature visit dnr.maryland.gov/cin/nps/