



Photo by Nicolas Raymond

# Susquehanna State Park



## Strategic Management Plan

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Updates





# Susquehanna State Park



## Strategic Management Plan

2017

### Overview

This document is the result of a statewide initiative by the Maryland Park Service to develop strategic management plans for its properties in order to establish a path toward a sustainable future. The purpose of each Park's strategic management plan is to use a collaborative process to identify and evaluate the following essential elements of each park: 1) natural resources; 2) cultural and historic resources; 3) recreational resources; 4) human resources, and; 5) infrastructure. Using this background data, a "Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)" analysis is performed. The SWOT analysis facilitates the identification of big-picture goals and targeted objectives that are used to develop a work plan for the park.

This plan documents the process and is divided into five parts:

**Part 1: Core Values**

This section includes the Maryland Park Service mission and goals, brand promise, and a summary of the features that make the park a significant component of Maryland's state park system.

**Part 2: Park Resources**

This section identifies and describes park-specific resources including natural resources, cultural and historic resources, recreational resources, human resources, and infrastructure.

**Part 3: Resource Assessment**

This section documents a resource assessment using the SWOT Analysis process and identifies park-specific strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

**Part 4: Big-Picture Goals**

Using the SWOT analysis in Part 3, this section identifies "big-picture" goals that are focused on promoting strengths, overcoming weaknesses, maximizing opportunities, and eliminating threats. The goals are directly connected to reinforcing the significance of the state park and the core values of the Maryland Park Service.

**Part 5: Work Plan**

This section serves as a road map that identifies specific actions and projects to effectively achieve the stated goals. It includes a timeline for completion, so that appropriate resources can be dedicated to accomplishment, and employees are empowered to move forward with tasks that support the park's goals and mission.

## Maryland Park Service Mission & Goals

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The mission of the Maryland Park Service is to manage the natural, cultural, historical, and recreational resources to provide for wise stewardship and enjoyment by people.

The goals of the Maryland Park Service are as follows:

To promote, cultivate, and expand public knowledge, understanding, appreciation, and support for the resources and services managed by the Maryland Park Service.

To operate the Maryland Park Service in a manner that generates the atmosphere of teamwork, shared information, cooperation, and trust at all levels of employment.

To manage the Maryland Park Service in a manner that ensures the maximum benefit from each dollar and hour of labor expended.

To promote the management of natural and cultural resources to ensure the continuing benefits for present and future generations.

To provide diverse recreational services with an emphasis upon public safety and the provision of neat, clean, well-maintained resources.

## Maryland Park Service Brand Promise

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The Maryland Park Service is dedicated to providing an outstanding experience to all park visitors and is committed to the following principles:

1. Providing a place where visitors can bring their children that nourishes their well-being in ways that only nature can provide.
2. Connecting visitors with each other and their surroundings, through the beauty and serenity of nature, in a safe and welcoming place that belongs to them.
3. Preserving and providing opportunities for visitors to discover important historical sites and relics that tell inspiring stories of people and events that give context and meaning to their lives today.
4. Creating an environment for relaxation with the reassuring presence of a friendly and dedicated Park Ranger who inspires and supports the desire to be a good steward of the Earth.
5. Imparting visitors with a sense of well-being and happy memories, so when they leave they are feeling stress-free and revitalized.





Photo Courtesy of Maryland Park Service

## Significance Statement

### **The significance of Susquehanna State Park is...**

To protect and preserve nearly 3,000 acres of diverse and sensitive habitats along the Susquehanna River and Deer Creek, and provide abundant outdoor recreation opportunities for camping, fishing, birding, hiking, hunting, and boating.

To provide access to the unique history of the area through the Park's restored historic structures and programs which highlight the Susquehanna River Valley as a prosperous and important center of commerce and industry in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### PARK STATS (FISCAL YEAR 2017)

TOTAL PARK ACREAGE	2,753
ANNUAL VISITATION 2017	269,093
ANNUAL REVENUE (excluding concession revenue) FY2017	\$171,634
ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET* (excluding classified employee payroll) FY2017	\$262,537
TOTAL CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEES** (including filled and vacant positions)	10
<b>*OPERATING BUDGET ALSO SUPPORTS THE FOLLOWING STATE PARKS:</b>	Palmer State Park, Bush Declaration Area
<b>**EMPLOYEES SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING STATE PARKS:</b>	Rocks State Park, Palmer State Park, Susquehanna State Park and Bush Declaration Area

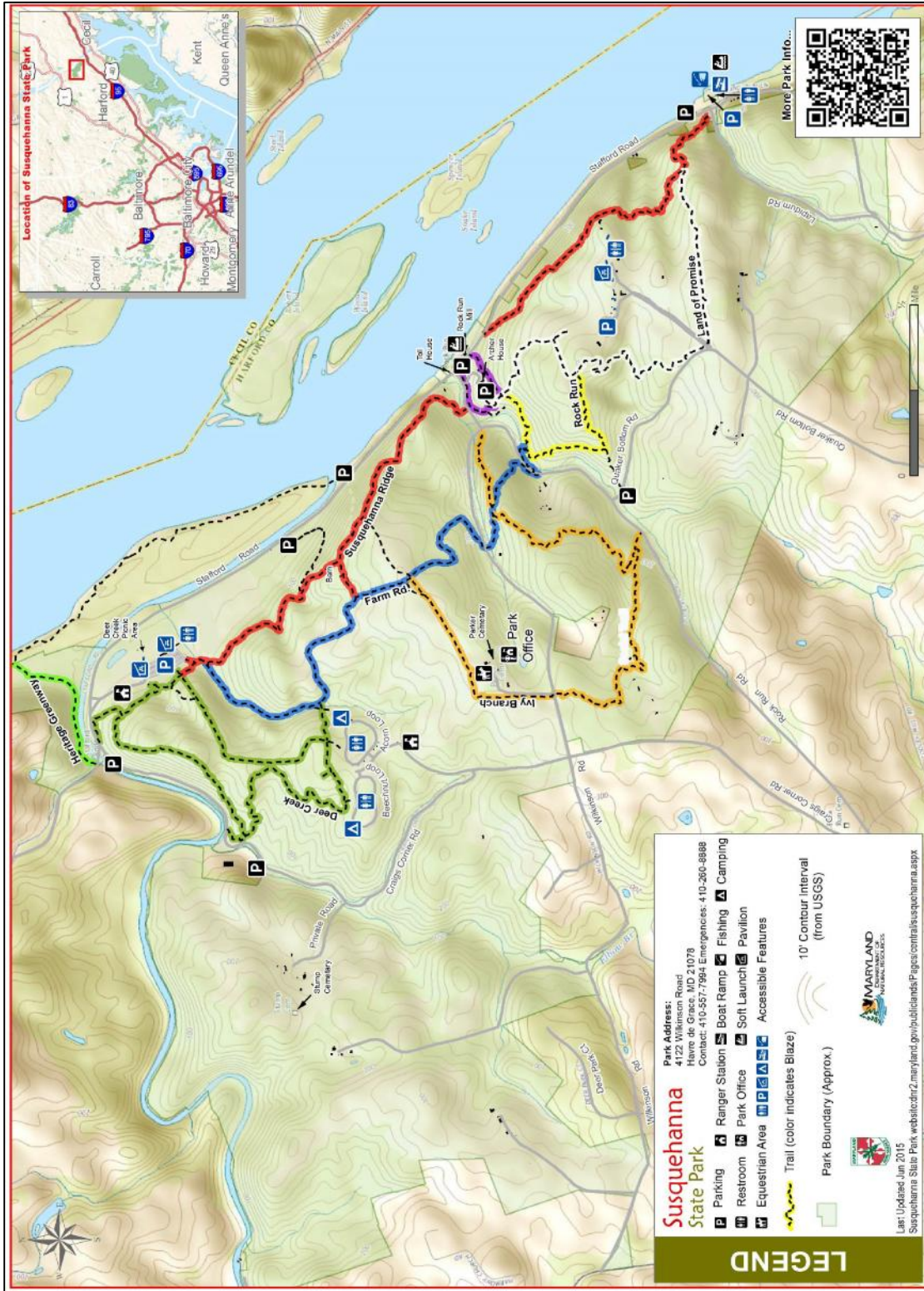
YEAR	SCHEDULED CAPITAL PROJECTS	AMOUNT
FY2016	Dredge Lake behind Rock Run Mill Dam	\$200,000
FY2018	ADA Access Improvements to the Field Office	\$85,000
FY2017	Dredge Lapidum Boat Ramp (Waterway improvement)	\$194,398
FY2019	Renovate Carriage Barn, Rock Run Historic Area (design)	\$200,000
FY2021	Renovate Carriage Barn, Rock Run Historic Area (construction)	\$1,500,000

## Park Resources

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>SCHEDULED CRITICAL MAINTENANCE</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
FY2014	Repair Slate Roof Mansion and Carriage Barn	\$48,000
FY2016	Replace Sewer Line and Septic, Beechnut Shower Building	\$100,000
FY2017	Electrical Re-Wiring of Mansion, Toll House and Rock Run Mill	\$65,000
FY2021	Resurface Campground Access Road	\$54,000
FY2021	Resurface Parking Area – Deer Creek Picnic Area	\$95,000
FY2023	Resurface Driveway and Parking Lot - Mansion and Mill	\$35,000
FY2023	Re-point Foundation Walls, Jersey Toll House	\$31,833
FY2024	Foundation Stabilization – Corn Crib	\$3,000
FY2024	Replace Flooring - Storage Building	\$5,000
FY2024	Wall Stabilization at Historic Lapidum Hotel	\$60,000
FY2024	Renovate Shop Complex	\$20,000
FY2025	Renovate Amphitheater	\$35,000
FY2025	Campground Paving and Improvements	\$270,000
FY2025	Carriage Barn Renovations	\$65,000
FY2025	Gate Installation - Campground	\$20,000
FY2025	Gate Installation - Deer Creek Picnic Area	\$5,000
FY2025	Resurface Concession Driveway	\$5,000
FY2025	Paint Windows, Doors and Gable Ends – Rock Run Gristmill	\$20,000
FY2026	Install Picnic Area Lighting	\$31,000
FY2026	Install Security Systems	\$30,000



AREA MAP



## Natural Resources

## KEY FEATURES

Over five miles of shoreline along the tidal portion of the lower Susquehanna River and several non-tidal tributaries, including Rock Run, Elbow Branch, Deer Creek (a State Scenic River) and Herring Run.

Thriving spawning runs of anadromous herring, hickory shad, American shad, white perch and yellow perch.

Nearly 2,000 acres of deciduous forest, including large stands of yellow poplar.

Over 700 acres of open space, including farmed hay fields and grasslands.

Scattered areas of both tidal and non-tidal wetlands, including remnants of a canal that creates habitat for amphibians, reptiles and birds.

Two islands in the Susquehanna River (Roberts Island and Wood Island) and two islands on the Susquehanna flats (the Sand Islands).

Breeding grounds for map turtles, a species of concern in Maryland.

Extensive acreage of Forest Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS) habitat

## DESCRIPTION

Susquehanna State Park is a true gem with regard to natural resources and biodiversity. The tidal portion of the lower Susquehanna River borders the park, while numerous tributaries flow through it. These waterways host a diverse community of fish. This includes anadromous herring, hickory shad, American shad, white perch and yellow perch. Tributaries support rare, threatened and endangered species, including the Chesapeake log perch, the Maryland darter, and naturally reproducing populations of brown trout.

On land, the park hosts a variety of habitats as well. The forest is dominated by yellow poplar, but upland and wetland areas host a diverse community of flora and fauna. These habitats make Susquehanna State Park a destination of regional significance to birders and wildflower enthusiasts. Popular wildflowers include Trillium, Dutchmen's breeches, Virginia bluebells, bloodroot, harbinger-of-spring, wild geranium, wild ginger and more.



## Cultural/ Historical Resources

## KEY FEATURES

Rock Run Historic Area: the gristmill, tollhouse, mansion, springhouse, mill dam, millrace, carriage barn, miller's house, remnants of the Rock Run bridge, and various ruins.

Remnants of Susquehanna & Tidewater Canal and towpath, and temporary railroad built to facilitate construction of Conowingo Dam.

Steppingstone Farm Museum: presently operated by a private nonprofit foundation. Ruins of the towns of Stafford (including a structurally restored furnace) and Lapidum.

Three occupied curatorships: Gardner Farm, Rock Run Tenant House and Brightwater House.

Two unoccupied historic properties: the former Gatewood and Lyle properties.

Two occupied (by park staff) historic properties: The former Seaman Property and the Miller's House.

## DESCRIPTION

Historic sites are a key feature of Susquehanna State Park. At present, the park's historic sites can be divided into four groups: 1) restored structures open to the public; 2) historic structures that are maintained but not open to the public; 3) stabilized and maintained ruins, and; 4) non-maintained ruins.

The first group is located in the Rock Run Historic Area and at the Steppingstone Farm Museum. Rock Run includes a functional water-powered gristmill that is open to the public in the spring, summer and fall on weekends and holidays. The Steppingstone Museum is operated and maintained as a living farm museum by a private foundation in partnership with DNR. The second group of structures consists of the three properties in the resident curatorship program, and two structures occupied by park staff.

The third group consists of structures that are maintained ruins. These include locks on the Tidewater Canal, foundations in the Lapidum and Rock Run village sites, the remnants of the flint furnace at Stafford, and graveyards located near the park shop and at Gardner farm. There is also an American Indian archaeological site located near the Rock Run Historic Area. The final groups consists of a variety of structural remains including abandoned stone wall fencing, building foundations, and large sections of the Tidewater Canal and temporary railroad. On the Cecil County side, the park owns the remnants of the collapsed Rowlandsville gristmill.

## Recreational Resources

## KEY FEATURES

15 miles of trails. All are multi-use trails except for the ¾-mile historic area trail which is pedestrian only.

Overnight camping, including six mini-cabins and 70 campsites, a playground and an amphitheater.

Picnic area, which includes two pavilions, a playground, trail access and a pond with fishing access.

The Lapidum Landing boat launch on the Susquehanna River provides access for power boats.

Access to the Susquehanna River and Deer Creek for tubing and paddling.

880 acres open for bowhunting for deer, and 12 waterfowl hunting blind sites provide opportunities for hunters.

Archery range maintained by local club provides target practice and tournament opportunities to members and the public.

24-hour fishing opportunities in the Susquehanna River and Deer Creek.

## DESCRIPTION

The largest recreational attraction is the trail system. The scenic trail system is 15 miles long, and it is popular with equestrians, hikers and cyclists due to its varied terrain and beautiful views and vistas. The trails are mostly single track natural surface trails, except for 2.7 miles of the stone-surfaced Greenways Trail.

The campground comprises 70 sites and is surrounded by woods and trails. The size and limited number of electric sites (9) creates a primitive, back-country feel. There are seven “walk-in” sites that offer more privacy and are particularly popular.

Excellent fishing opportunities abound at Susquehanna State Park. In the spring, migrating runs of hickory shad, white perch, walleye and striped bass attract droves of anglers. In the summer months, anglers pursue smallmouth bass, catfish and striped bass. The Lapidum Landing boat ramp provides access for boaters to the Susquehanna River, while paddlers and tubers frequent Deer Creek. Soft launch access for canoes and kayaks is available at Craigs Corner Road, Deer Creek confluence and Rock Run Historic Area.

Two separate deer bowhunting areas are available in the park. They consist of a total of 880 acres (32% of the park). Bowhunting is permitted Wednesday through Saturday, and only for deer. Waterfowl hunting at 12 designated blind sites is accessible only by boat.

## Human Resources

## KEY RESOURCES

- 10 full-time classified employees.
- One long-term contractual employee.
- 10 to 15 seasonal employees (shared with Rocks and Palmer State Parks).
- One Maryland Conservation Corps crew (5 crew members).
- One partner 501(c)3 foundation that administers the Steppingstone Farm Museum.
- One camp host family (during the summer months).
- Volunteers (approximately 75 annually).

## DESCRIPTION

Susquehanna State Park is administered as part of a larger complex that includes Rocks State Park (which includes the Falling Branch and Hidden Valley areas), Palmer State Park and the Bush Declaration Natural Resources Management Area. All staff resources are shared among the four parks.

There are 10 full-time classified employees assigned to the complex, including one Park Manager, one Assistant Park Manager, one Park Lead Ranger, three Park Rangers, one Park Maintenance Program Supervisor, two Park Technicians, and one Administrative Specialist. The seasonal labor force varies based on budget appropriations, but typically includes one to two naturalists, eight to 10 seasonal Park Rangers and three to four maintenance workers.

A Maryland Conservation Corps (MCC) crew, consisting of five crew members and one long-term contractual crew leader, works out of Susquehanna, providing support for conservation-based projects throughout the region.

Volunteers serve in many capacities including maintenance of the campground, providing programs in the historic area and helping on trail maintenance workdays



## Infrastructure

## KEY FEATURES

Campground comprising 60 standard / tent sites, nine electric sites, six mini-cabins, one camp host site, two bathhouses, one “welcome shed,” one pump station, one playground, and an amphitheatre.

Picnic area comprising one comfort station, one contact station, two pavilions, 360 parking spaces, one playground, one fishing pond with two fishing platforms.

Maintenance complex containing one barn, one pole barn, one heated shop, one unheated shop, and two sheds.

Boat ramp facility containing two ramps, one composting toilet, a parking lot with 36 trailer parking spaces and 22 standard parking spaces.

Historic area: Grist Mill, Mansion, storage shed, carriage barn (with public restroom), mill race, mill dam, Toll House, 1 residence, springhouse.

Farm museum (maintained by private foundation)

Four park residences (three occupied), three curatorships and two abandoned residences.

## DESCRIPTION

Much of the park’s infrastructure is developed in accordance with the March 1979 master plan. The plan includes development and maintenance of the park’s two historic areas, the development of the Lapidum Landing Boat Launch and Deer Creek Picnic Area, installation of the multi-use trail system, and creating the campground and limiting it to its present-day modest size. Additional plans to build a visitor center, a park-owned entrance road connecting 161 (Darlington Road) and Craigs Corner Road, and the restoration of a section of the Susquehanna & Tidewater Canal, were never realized. The latter two of these goals are probably no longer feasible.

The park’s current infrastructure consists of two main types: historic structures, which are outlined in the historical resources section, and more modern structures that are intended to support the park’s recreational users. The park owns very few roadways, as most of the park is crossed by county-owned and maintained roads. With the exception of the Lapidum composting toilet, the park’s restrooms and pavilions have been modernized in recent years. Sewage lines in the campground were replaced in the winter of 2015-16. The park water system is well-based, and is maintained by Maryland Environmental Service (MES). Most of the park’s electrical system dates to the 1970s.

# 3 Resource Assessment

## SWOT ANALYSIS

### Strengths

Diversity of ecosystems and numerous native and rare species. This includes aquatic and terrestrial habitats. Naturally reproducing brown trout (non-native) in Elbow Branch.

Freshwater mussels in Deer Creek.

Chesapeake log perch inhabits Deer Creek.

Significant amount of dead snag habitat.

Strong presence of game and non-game species such as wild turkeys, white-tailed deer, waterfowl, song birds, raptors, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians.

Many open areas are maintained with minimal mowing providing pollinator and ground nesting bird habitat.

### Weaknesses

Invasive species are pervasive in the river, as well as on land. Of specific concern in the aquatic ecosystems are rusty crayfish, flathead catfish, blue catfish, and zebra mussels. On land: Asian bittersweet, Japanese stilt grass, muliflora rose, and ailanthus are established in the park.

High deer population in areas that are not open to hunting.

Limited diversity of trees in the forested areas. Forest is predominately yellow poplar.

High mortality of map turtle nests on Wood Island.

Maryland darter may be extinct.

## Natural Resources

### Opportunities

Volunteers and staff can monitor for invasive plants.

Early detection improves management options.

Management opportunities exist to improve map turtle nesting success on Wood Island.

Specimen ash trees in the historic area can be treated for the emerald ash borer.

Wildlife habitat could be enhanced by creating “edge habitat” around hay lease areas.

Opening a large undeveloped area to deer hunting could help maintain plant diversity and forest regeneration.

Beneficial trees could be “released” to encourage seed production and increase tree diversity in the forested areas

Park housing could be made available for researchers (Not as a priority over staff). This would encourage research and enhance knowledge of the resources to make sound management decisions.

### Threats

Wavy-leaf basket grass has been found in the park on two occasions, on the edge of a trail, and was removed.

Asian bittersweet was specifically identified by the Forest Service, as it threatens the forest resources and creates hazardous conditions in the campground for staff and campers.

Japanese knotweed has taken over other stream banks in Harford County.

Emerald ash borer has been found in Harford County, and it is only a matter of time until it attacks the ash trees in Susquehanna State Park.

Disturbance to map turtle nests on Wood Islands caused by illegal camping and predators.

Harford County is purchasing an adjacent property for an equestrian center. This may create unwanted trails and limit deer management options in the future.

Potential impacts from dirt road runoff into Elbow Branch.

Management of Conowingo Dam greatly impacts the resources downstream.

# 3 Resource Assessment

## SWOT ANALYSIS

### Strengths

Several restored and maintained historic structures in the historic area, including a gristmill, mansion, tollhouse and miller’s house.  
 Fully furnished historic mansion.  
 A functioning gristmill, complete with working mill dam, millrace, mill pond, waterwheel and tailrace.  
 Two maintained curatorships, and a new partnership for a third curatorship.  
 A self-sufficient and solvent 501(c)(3) foundation operating and maintaining the Steppingstone Farm Museum, which includes paid staff and passionate volunteers.  
 Two staff-occupied historic houses (miller’s house and Seaman house).  
 Collaboration with the Maryland Historical Trust for the Bald Friar petroglyph exhibits.  
 Two very dedicated volunteer docents in the mansion.

### Weaknesses

Many historic structures are in need of several hundred-thousand dollars of critical maintenance and stabilization.  
 Additional historic interpreters are needed to provide the best visitor experience.  
 The lack of an affiliated foundation makes taking advantage of grant money difficult.  
 One of the historic area’s key features, the miller’s house, is closed to the public, as is much of the carriage barn.  
 There are two unoccupied historic structures and associated outbuildings (Lyle and Gatewood).  
 Rowlandsville mill equipment not stored properly.  
 Employees need additional professional training to appropriately handle historic artifacts.  
 Better facilities to store and display sensitive historic artifacts are needed.  
 Ability to provide interpretation is limited and is available primarily on summer weekends.  
 Lack of a complete and up-to-date inventory of historic artifacts and structures.  
 Collapsed Rowlandsville Mill in Cecil County.

## Cultural/ Historical Resources

### Opportunities

Increased interpretive opportunities, partnerships with curators or other outside groups.  
 Enhanced experiential education programs.  
 Lower Susquehanna Greenway Heritage Area is generally well-funded, and if the park can form an affiliated foundation, grant money for the park’s historic infrastructure could be more easily obtained.  
 Determine Steppingstone Farm Museum’s interest in expanding its interpretive area, which would have the dual benefit of preserving more historical resources while simultaneously making them more accessible to the public.  
 Develop a request for proposal (RFP) for the Lyle property to see if any opportunities exist for a public-private partnership.  
 Explore the possibility of placing the former Gatewood property into the curatorship program.  
 Renovate the Rock Run Carriage Barn as a visitor center to tie historic resources together and display American Indian artifacts.

### Threats

Lack of appropriate storage/display space for, and lack of on-staff expertise in, historic artifact conservation may eventually result in the deterioration or loss of sensitive artifacts.  
 The tidewater canal ruins, gristmill and tollhouse are in the 100-year floodplain.  
 Unoccupied historic structures are subject to decay and/or vandalism.  
 Additional critical maintenance funding is needed to provide for deferred maintenance needs.  
 There may be a loss of historic resources due to failure to stabilize already compromised structures.  
 Mold issues in the former Gatewood property need to be resolved before any stabilization plan is commenced.



# 3 Resource Assessment

## SWOT ANALYSIS

### Strengths

A trail system with a variety of terrain due to the topography.  
 15 miles of trails, most of which are multi-use.  
 Diverse recreational opportunities with very few incidences of user conflict.

- ) Hiking/mountain biking/equestrian
- ) Fishing
- ) Hunting
- ) Boating/Paddling
- ) Sightseeing (historic and nature)
- ) Reservable shelters are available for events.

Campground with 70 campsites is of a reasonable size and does not feel crowded even when full. Many walk-in sites are popular and offer additional privacy.  
 Boat launch was recently renovated with new floating piers.

### Weaknesses

Existing trail network is large and much of it may not be sustainable according to currently understood metrics.  
 Trail blazing is in conflict with long-distance trails (most notably the Mason-Dixon Trail).  
 The campground has limited electric sites.  
 The campground does not have a camp store.  
 Deer hunting areas are a small percentage of the park, and hunting is only permitted on four days of the week.  
 Parking lots are often overcrowded during fishing season and on busy weekends.  
 Only about half the campsites have defined tent/camper pads.  
 Boat ramp can only accommodate smaller boats (22 feet).  
 Most of the Greenways Trail is on property owned by Exelon and the park's lease with them has expired. This is commonly believed to be park property by patrons.  
 The Deer Creek picnic area parking lot needs re-paving.  
 The existing camper-contact station/concession is small and cramped.

## Recreational Resources

### Opportunities

There are opportunities to build additional walk-in campsites.  
 There is a large area without a trail system that could create opportunities if planned correctly.  
 Due to the variety of terrain, there is the opportunity to identify trails to accommodate various users of different skill sets.  
 Create a trail crew with additional funding to provide year-round trail maintenance (in addition to MCC).  
 Eliminating the fee at Deer Creek Picnic Area would compel more people to park there to access the trail system and potentially reduce crowding at other areas.  
 Partnering with Mason-Dixon Trail and other trail groups in the area could facilitate trail projects and provide different perspectives.  
 Extension of Greenways "rail trail" to Lapidum and further south (ultimately connecting to Havre de Grace) would enhance the trail system (was identified in the 1979 master plan).

### Threats

Erosion and wet soils create challenges for trail maintenance and could eventually make some trails unusable.  
 The future of the Exelon lease for the Greenways Trail is still uncertain.  
 There is not a funding source for the pedestrian "trestle bridge" over Deer Creek. This bridge requires maintenance and will eventually become unsafe without it.  
 Harford County is purchasing an adjacent property to be used as an equestrian center. A sustainable trail connecting the center to the park's trail system is needed or users will likely create haphazard and unsustainable trails.

3 Resource Assessment

SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

A dedicated staff with a variety of experience. Proximity to several major metropolitan areas and universities offer a good candidate pool for seasonal and classified employees. Low turnover rates within the park maintenance and administrative job classifications.

Weaknesses

Most classified staff (including management) must divide their attention between Rocks, Susquehanna, Palmer and Bush Declaration Area. Seasonal staff resources are often diverted to Rocks on summer weekends. The limited seasonal workforce during the winter months makes it difficult to accomplish larger maintenance projects. Limited classified staff resources results in nearly all classified staff working as generalists. During the summer, nearly all staff (seasonal and classified) is pressed into daily operations, leaving little time to pursue special projects. Park visitors would benefit if there were regular office hours at the Susquehanna State Park field office.

Human Resources

Opportunities

Foster a Friends group and recruit volunteers. As per the 2013 Funding Study, adding a second Park Services Supervisor position to create an assistant manager dedicated to Susquehanna. Long-term contractual positions could be used to keep the park operating and provide better customer service and volunteer coordination. Building an interdisciplinary team would help provide resources and minimize impacts that result from staff trying to be an expert in all fields.

Threats

Limited operating budget limits seasonal / contractual staff resources. Difficult to find classified staff with specialized experience. High staff turnover / movement within the Park Ranger series makes it difficult to build necessary professional relationships both within DNR and with partnering organizations. The seven-day-a-week, two-shifts-a-day nature of the workplace makes communication and teamwork challenging.

3 Resource Assessment

SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

All restrooms, except the Lapidum composting toilet, are relatively modern. Sewer pipes in the campground were replaced in the winter of 2015-16. Many buildings at the Steppingstone Museum were rehabilitated by the DNR in-house crew in 2015. Most of the roads traversing the park are owned and maintained by Harford County. The park only owns and maintains electrical lines within the campground, shop complex, picnic area and boat launch.

Weaknesses

Park-owned electrical lines date back to the 1970s. Many historic structures still need hundreds of thousands of dollars in critical and routine maintenance work. Road and parking lot in the Deer Creek Picnic Area needs to be resurfaced. Adding defined and stabilized tent/camper pads would make the campground more sustainable. Most of the park's directional signage is over 20 years old and in need of replacement. There is insufficient parking at the field office. Lights from the maintenance shop limit the use of the hay field for stargazing.

Infrastructure

Opportunities

Most critical maintenance needs have been added to the DNR critical maintenance list, so increases in critical maintenance funding could prove very beneficial. Potential partnership with Steppingstone Museum or others to stabilize historic structures. Building a large parking lot and trailhead at the park office could redirect some trail users away from the historic area and fishing access lots. Adding a modern visitor center would increase and enhance park visitation, and the structure could serve multiple functions. Planned restoration of the Carriage Barn will provide some visitor center functions. Install motion activated lights to reduce light pollution affecting campers near the maintenance area.

Threats

Aging and failing infrastructure needs to be evaluated, and additional critical maintenance projects and funding identified so the park can safely accommodate its visitors. Parking areas in the historic area and along the river do not meet demand due to multiple uses.



## Big-Picture Goals

### NATURAL RESOURCE GOALS

- 1 Improve forest health and diversity by working with the Maryland Forest Service and Wildlife & Heritage Service to develop and implement deer and forest stewardship management plans.
- 2 Develop and implement a plan to improve nesting success of map turtles on Wood island and monitor results.
- 3 Develop and implement a plan to improve or maintain pollinator habitat and increase efforts to educate visitors on the importance of pollinators.

### CULTURAL/ HISTORICAL RESOURCE GOALS

- 4 Create an up-to-date inventory of historic artifacts, and develop a plan to catalog, preserve and protect them.
- 5 Upgrade and professionalize interpretation of historic resources (both in terms of signage and staff interpreters).
- 6 Develop a long-term plan for the use and preservation of the Lyle property and the Gatewood property.

### RECREATIONAL RESOURCE GOALS

- 7 Improve existing trail signage and sustainability and park directional signage.
- 8 Revise the existing bowhunting program and boundaries to be more effective in managing the deer population, and more user-friendly for both hunters and non-hunters.
- 9 Improve the campground by adding camping pads and a few walk-in sites. Close or renovate sites that detract from the campground.

### HUMAN RESOURCE GOALS

- 10 Pursue an interdisciplinary team of hands-on DNR staff that will serve as a tool for managerial decision making. Invite the specialists to present at staff meetings.
- 11 Hire specialized and skilled seasonal staff, including historic and nature interpreters.
- 12 Foster the establishment of a "Friends" group to assist in the Park's efforts to protect and enhance its resources.

### INFRASTRUCTURE GOALS

- 13 Explore the possibility of building an expanded parking lot to serve the field office and as a trail head.
- 14 Resolve outstanding issue of the Exelon lease. Explore purchase versus long-term lease options with Land Acquisition and Planning.
- 15 Develop and implement a plan of action to decrease light pollution and preserve the night sky.

**5** **Work Plan**

**GOAL #1** **Improve forest health and diversity by working with the Maryland Forest Service and Wildlife & Heritage Service to develop and implement deer management and forest stewardship plans.**

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Identify an interdisciplinary team of people to participate in the process.	2018
Communicate with stakeholders and MPS leadership to identify management goals.	2018
Set up regular meetings to draft a plan.	2018
When the plan is approved, submit proposed actions for DNR internal review as applicable.	2019
Implement management strategies as identified in the plans.	2019

**COMMENTS/PROGRESS REPORT**

**5** **Work Plan**

**GOAL #2** **Develop and implement a plan to improve nesting success of map turtles on Wood island and monitor results.**

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Organize a meeting between Park staff, experts from Wildlife and Heritage and researchers from Towson University to assess current status of Map Turtles on Wood Island.	2017
Solicit recommendations for management efforts and compile a plan to circulate internal review.	2018
In partnership with others, initiate implementation of the plan and begin monitoring results.	2019

**COMMENTS/PROGRESS REPORT**

**5** **Work Plan**

**GOAL #3** **Develop and implement a plan to improve or maintain pollinator habitat and increase efforts to educate visitors on the importance of pollinators.**

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Inventory park areas that are routinely mowed and assess possibility of conversion to meadows.	2017
Work with the Wildlife and Heritage Service to produce a list of important pollinators for the geographic region.	2017
Assess presence/absence of important pollinators within the park and focus planting on host/nectar producing plants.	2017-2018
Develop or utilize pre-developed educational materials to highlight pollinator habitat and why it's important.	2018-2019
Establish a maintenance protocol for pollinator/meadow areas to ensure long-term viability and improve aesthetics.	2019

**COMMENTS/PROGRESS REPORT**

**5** **Work Plan**

**GOAL #4** **Create an up-to-date inventory of historic artifacts and structures, and develop a plan to catalog, preserve and protect them. Identify needs for each structure.**

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Obtain information on the latest industry standards and best practices for cataloging and storing historic artifacts.	2017
Reach out to various universities or other institutions for resources such as interns and/or subject matter experts.	2018
Conduct inventory and identify challenges of displaying each artifact.	2018
Develop a plan to responsibly display, store or reallocate the artifacts.	2018
Update inventory of structures in consultation with DNR staff and Maryland Historical Trust, and develop an assessment of needs.	2018
Address historic structure needs and add them to the critical maintenance list or Capital Improvements Program as needed.	2017 - 2020

**COMMENTS/PROGRESS REPORT**



**5** **Work Plan**

**GOAL #5** **Enhance and professionalize interpretation of historic resources.**

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Develop a panel of subject matter experts. This should include staff, as well as interested parties outside the park.	2017
Evaluate existing programming and signage.	2018
Seek funding and/or grant opportunities to upgrade interpretive signage throughout the park.	2018
Make improvements where possible and add new programs if there are opportunities.	2018

**COMMENTS/PROGRESS REPORT**

**5** **Work Plan**

**GOAL #6** **Develop a long-term plan for the use and preservation of the Lyle property and the Gatewood property.**

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Meet on-site with preservation experts to evaluate challenges and threats to the properties.	2017
Explore opportunities with Steppingstone Museum to partner on historic property management.	2017
Meet with a mold remediation expert regarding the Gatewood property.	2017
Meet with Land Acquisition and Planning’s Curatorship Manager about the possibility of putting Gatewood into the curatorship program.	2017
Develop a Request For Proposal (RFP) for the Lyle property to gauge interest from private partners.	2018
Submit a management strategy based on the results of the fact-finding efforts and other available resources.	2018

**COMMENTS/PROGRESS REPORT**

**5** **Work Plan**

**GOAL #7** **Improve existing trail system signage and sustainability and park directional signage.**

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Create a map with trails divided in sections.	2017
Identify interested stakeholders, develop survey of needs and concerns.	2017
Create management goals for the re-development of the trail system, with an emphasis on sustainable design. Pursue National Recreation Trail grant funding.	2018
Develop and implement plan to improve trail signage consistent with Trail Signage and Wayfinding Plan. Pursue National Recreational Trail grant funds.	2018
Develop and implement a new directional signage plan for the park overall. Submit for planning and Internal Review.	2018
Look carefully at the Danaker tract for options that will prevent unplanned trails from being created by neighbors.	2018
Develop a plan for re-development one section at a time. Pursue National Recreation Trail grant funding to support projects.	2019
Submit plan for DNR internal review, coordinate with MPS Trail Manager, and make necessary revisions.	2019
Implement trail projects based on available grant funding, volunteer help and staff resources.	2019

**COMMENTS/PROGRESS REPORT**

**5** **Work Plan**

**GOAL #8** **Revise the existing bowhunting program and boundaries to be more effective in managing the deer population, and more user-friendly for both hunters and non-hunters.**

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Visit other State Parks, Wildlife Management Areas and State Forests to see how their hunting areas are managed and signed.	2017
Develop a map with proposed changes and submit for DNR internal review.	2017
Re-sign the boundary and remove the old boundary signs.	2018
Post required / desired safety zones.	2018
Update hunting maps and web content to show revised boundaries.	2018

**COMMENTS/PROGRESS REPORT**

**5** **Work Plan**

**GOAL #9** **Improve the campground by adding camping pads and a few walk-in sites. Close or renovate sites that detract from the campground.**

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Survey existing sites and determine which could benefit most from a camp pad.	2017
Submit plans for camp pad construction for DNR internal review.	2017
Build camp pads with MCC and CJC (two to three per summer).	2017-2018
Identify locations for additional walk-in sites.	2018
Submit plans for walk-in sites for DNR internal review.	2018
Construct walk-in sites as part of a regional workday.	2018
Eliminate two sites that are poorly designed and that currently generate complaints.	2019

**COMMENTS/PROGRESS REPORT**



**5** **Work Plan**

**GOAL #10**

**Pursue an interdisciplinary team of hands-on DNR staff that will serve as a tool for managerial decision-making. Invite the specialists to present at staff meetings.**

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Reach out to regional subject matter experts, both locally and regionally, to include foresters, archaeologists, historians, etc.	2018
Set up a semi-annual meeting with interested parties, determine the best strategies and techniques for regular information sharing, and implement them.	2018
Invite experts to speak at park staff meetings on rotating basis.	2019

**COMMENTS/PROGRESS REPORT**

**5** **Work Plan**

**GOAL #11** Hire specialized and skilled seasonal staff including naturalists and historians with strong interpretive skills and experience.

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Identify needs for specialization.	2017
Solicit additional seasonal positions and identify funding for these positions.	2017
Recruit and hire additional employees.	2018
Solicit volunteers with specialized experience and work to ensure that their volunteer work at the park is enjoyable and meaningful.	2018
Evaluate performance of interpreters on a regular basis.	2018

**COMMENTS/PROGRESS REPORT**

**5** **Work Plan**

**GOAL #12** **Foster the establishment of a “Friends” group to assist in the Park’s efforts to protect and enhance its resources.**

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Solicit interest from known volunteers and potential volunteers.	2018
Set up a meeting with interested parties to go over the steps to create a “Friends” group.	2018
If interested parties are identified, and consensus is reached, provide guidance with regard to official affiliation and non-profit status.	2019
Assign staff to work as a liaison and regularly attend meetings.	2019

**COMMENTS/PROGRESS REPORT**

**5** **Work Plan**

**GOAL #13** **Explore options for expanded parking to serve and disperse trail users.**

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Review past master plans for Susquehanna State Park (1965 and 1979).	2018
Set up a meeting with stakeholders to gather input and identify goals and purpose.	2018
Meet with park planners and engineers from Engineering and Construction to identify challenges and opportunities.	2018
Present findings to MPS senior staff.	2018
If consensus exists, submit a proposal for the project.	2019
Consider proposal to eliminate fee at Deer Creek picnic grove to encourage trail user parking in under-utilized parking area.	2018

**COMMENTS/PROGRESS REPORT**

Building a parking area by the field office would likely alleviate parking issues along the river and in the historic area. The parking area would serve the office, as well as serve as a trailhead. Relocating public parking from the shop complex would facilitate construction of a fence and reduce dependence on lighting for security. Lights could then be shielded and put on motion detectors. This would allow the hayfield behind the shop, next to the campground, to be used for stargazing and nighttime interpretive programs.

**5** **Work Plan**

**GOAL #14** **Resolve outstanding issue of the Exelon lease. Explore purchase versus long-term lease options with Land Acquisition and Planning.**

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Consult Land Acquisition and Planning about ownership, lease, and use.	2017
Identify and resolve short term needs.	2017
Explore long-term option of acquiring the leased property or other more permanent management arrangement.	2017

**COMMENTS/ PROGRESS REPORT**

It was determined after consulting with Land Acquisition and Planning that the existing lease has an automatic year-to-year renewal. It would be beneficial to explore a more permanent management/ownership option.



**5** **Work Plan**

**GOAL #15** **Develop and implement a plan of action to decrease light pollution and preserve the night sky.**

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS	TIMELINE
Review the standards that are necessary for a park to qualify as a certified “Dark Skies” area.	2017
Inspect the park and decide what needs to be accomplished to meet the above standards.	2017
Make needed changes and upgrades to park.	2018
Consult with Regional Manager to determine if national Dark Skies certification is desired and if so, submit application materials.	2018
Market and advertise Dark Skies concept and certification (if obtained) and integrate into park programming.	2018

**COMMENTS/ PROGRESS REPORT**

# Acknowledgements

COLLABORATOR	TITLE	AGENCY/ORGANIZATION
Frank Lopez	Harford/Cecil Project Manager	DNR - Forest Service
Jim Bennett	Central Region Wildlife Manager	DNR - Wildlife and Heritage Service
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Charles Mazurek	Historic Preservation Planner	DNR – Engineering and Construction
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Steve McCoy	Central Region Manager	DNR - Park Service
Peter Morrill	Curatorship Program Manager	DNR – Land Acquisition and Planning
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