



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FAYETTE RECEIVES GRANT FOR PARK IMPROVEMENTS

Uniontown, PA – Fayette County officials have much to celebrate this holiday season, thanks to a \$30,000 grant from the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

Community Development Specialist Sue Martin said the Community Conservation Partnerships Program grant will be used to create master site development plans for the German-Masontown and Dunlap Creek parks, which comprise 134.5 acres in Masontown and 166.8 acres in Menallen Township, respectively.

As project coordinator, Martin will work hand-in-hand with state Recreation and Conservation Advisor Ashley Shultz of Harrisburg to bring the project to fruition.

“Fayette County believes that a reinvestment in our parks will result in a community investment in their use,” Martin said. “The plans will address legacy infrastructure issues and invest in growth of new attractions.”

With a total project cost for both plans of \$77,375, Martin said the DCNR grant will help the county rehabilitate and develop the parks to their full potential.

County commissioners started the process this past January, hiring an engineering firm and taking other necessary steps to gather community input and ensure the project complies with DCNR regulations.

For many years, German-Masontown Park has been co-managed by the Masontown Park and Recreation Board, who will partner with the Office of Planning, Zoning and Community Development to develop their site plan. Additionally, borough officials and residents will serve on the study and executive committees.

“The German Township Supervisors will also have an active role as a partner,” Martin said. “Menallen Township Supervisors and the Dunlap Lake Task Force have been involved in the Fayette County Parks Restoration Committee since inception and with the Dunlap Creek Park for many years before.

“They are very willing to devote the time it takes to develop a master site development plan and will raise funds to fulfill the projects. They want the park to be safe for families in their area to enjoy.”

Martin said the county wants to work with township supervisors, the task force and the Fish and Boat Commission to improve and secure the park.

“Fayette County Conservation District is developing projects for school students and scouts, creating outdoor classrooms,” she said. “They are also a partner in developing our plan and their input is vital in its success.”

The county's main priority is to reconnect people to the outdoors and provide recreational opportunities which will produce healthier communities, Martin added.

"All Fayette County residents and visitors will benefit by making the parks a great place to spend time outdoors," she said. "In recent years, children's unstructured, frequent nature-based play has been shown to have a powerful influence on the development of lifelong conservation values.

"Natural play areas of our plan will help children experience what senior Americans remember as being a wonderful part of their childhood. Those same seniors will have beautiful parks to visit, reconnecting with nature."

Additionally, Martin added, pollinator and rain gardens will educate the public about conservation issues and enhance the enjoyment and beauty of Fayette County's parks.

Through the master site development plans, county officials will be able to implement a recommended approach developed by Penn State University to assess the economic impact of local parks and recreation.

Martin said having wonderful parks will attract families and jobs to Fayette County, as well as showcase the benefits of local recreation.

"(Those benefits) include attracting a highly-qualified workforce because the parks will make Fayette County a place people want to live due to access to nearby recreation," she said. "This, in turn, will bring industry to the area. Stores and other businesses will benefit by purchases made by the families who fish, boat and picnic in Dunlap Creek Park and attend the festivities at German-Masontown Park."

Thanks to the grant, Martin said she's most looking forward to working with the many groups and municipalities who will play a key role in the planning process and work together to make the parks "a place all residents of Fayette County can enjoy."

Fayette County Commissioner Chairman Vince Vicites said the DCNR grant is an "outstanding opportunity" for the county to strategically plan and "set the stage" for the parks' futures.

"Recreation is a vital part of improving the quality of life in Fayette County," Vicites said. "It's the goal of this board of county commissioners to improve our recreational opportunities in our county parks, which can attract new people to consider living in Fayette County. We want to make the county a better place to live, work and play."

"The county parks are owned by the residents of Fayette County and we are required to maintain and upgrade (them) just as we are required to do with public buildings," Commissioner Angela Zimmerlink said. "But that is not always the sentiment of others, so any time there is a consensus to utilize grants and county-funded matches, we must and should do so."

Commissioner Dave Lohr said it's great to receive grants which can help with upgrades, as parks are a "vital part of our County." He said commissioners plan to hire a coordinator to continue their investment in county recreation.

"They give our residents a great place to relax and help them to stay healthier," Lohr said. "On the economic development side, the more we have to offer businesses, the more the business world will consider coming to Fayette County."

For more information, contact Martin at smartin@fayettepa.org.

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