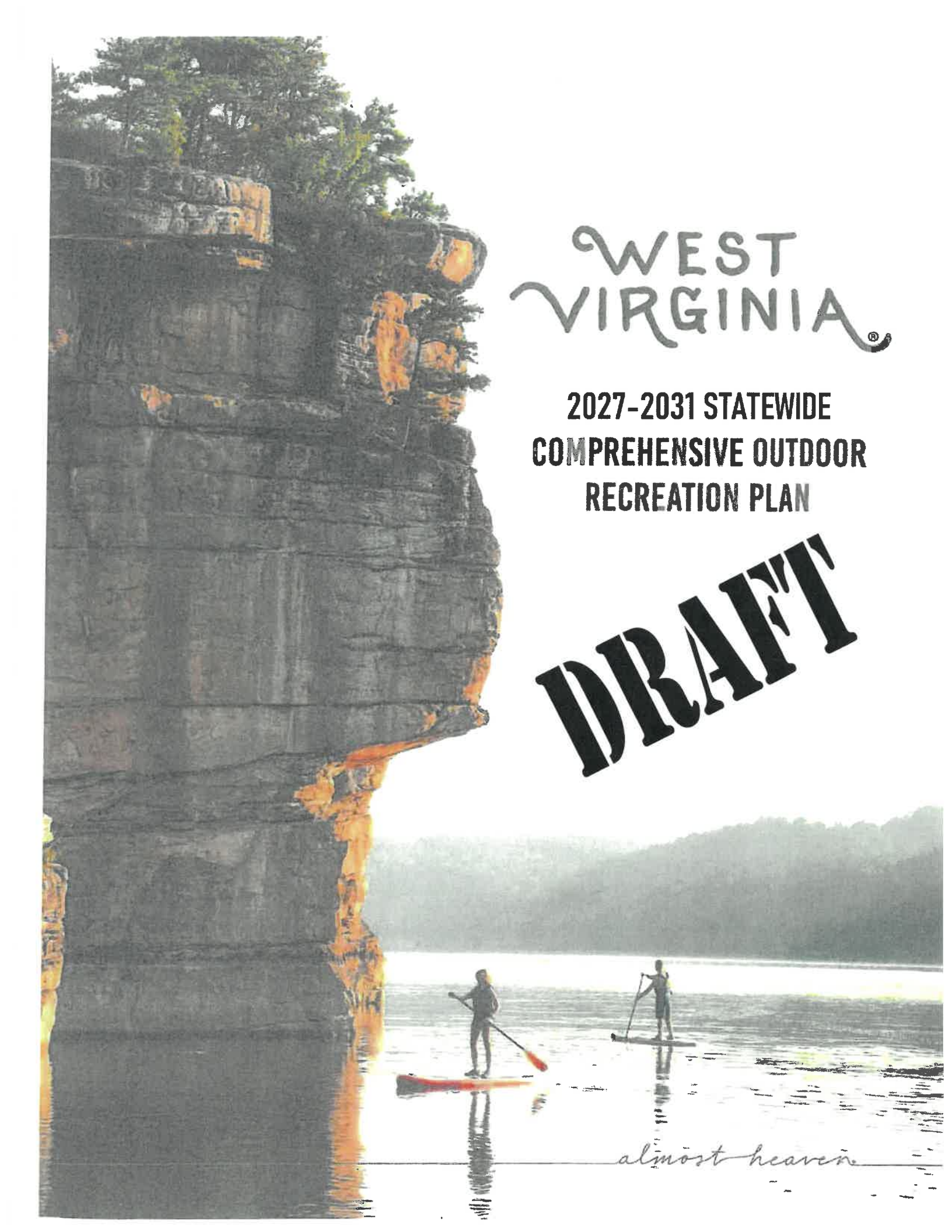




WEST
VIRGINIA®

2027-2031 STATEWIDE
COMPREHENSIVE OUTDOOR
RECREATION PLAN

DRAFT

almost heaven

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Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)
2027-2031
West Virginia Division of Economic Development
Charleston

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Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)
2027-2031
West Virginia Division of Economic Development
Charleston

SCORP PHOTO CREDITS

WV Tourism	SCORP Cover - TOC - Executive Summary - WV Welcome - Recreation Economy - Survey & Methodology - National Parks & Public Lands - Recommendations - Spruce Knob-Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area - Harpers Ferry Historic Park - New River National Park and Preserve
WV Commerce: CAD	Greenbrier River Trail - Babcock State Park - Blackwater River - Cass - Ritter Park - New River
WV Magazine	Environmental Assets
WV Commerce: DNR	Audra State Park - Hawks Nest State Park - Stonewall Jackson State Park - Watoga State Park - West Virginia Wildlife Center - Summersville Lake State Park
City of Beckley Parks	New River Park
Charleston CVB	Sternwheel Regatta
Hatfield-McCoys Trail Auth.	ATV
Boone County Parks	Waterways
City of Parkersburg	Parkersburg City Park
Parkersburg CVB	Fort Boreman Historic Park
Mountaineer Country CVB	Milan Puskar Stadium
City of Clarksburg Parks	Veterans Memorial Park
Martinsburg-Berkeley Co. Parks	War Memorial Park
Wheeling Park Commission	Waddington Gardens, Oglebay Park
Upper Ohio Valley Italian Festival	Wheeling Italian Festival

SCORP MAP CREDITS

WV Tourism	West Virginia Travel Regions
WV Rivers Coalition	Major State Rivers
WV Commerce: CAD	LWCF-Assisted Parks by County
WV Geological Survey	West Virginia Slope Map - Chesapeake Bay Watershed Map
Appalachian Regional Commission	County Economic Status in West Virginia
U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis	State Outdoor Recreation Value Added
Wikipedia	State Population Density Map



STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
CHARLESTON 25305

Governor's transmittal letter 'TBA'

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background and Purpose. The West Virginia State-wide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan or SCORP is the state's policy plan to qualify the state for federal funding through the National Park Service's (NPS) statewide Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program. Since 1965 LWCF funds have provided the state over \$50 million for more than 600 public outdoor recreation projects benefitting nearly 200 units of state and local government. Goals of the LWCF program as stated by the NPS are as follows:

Meet State and locally identified public outdoor recreation resource needs to strengthen the health and vitality of the American People.

Increase the number of protected State and local outdoor recreation resources and to ensure their availability for public use in perpetuity.

Encourage sound planning and long-term partnerships to expand the quantity and to ensure the quality of needed State and local outdoor recreation resources.

Program Administration. The West Virginia Division of Economic Development's Community Assistance Division is the state's administering agency for LWCF outdoor recreation grants. 50/50 reimbursable matching grants are made available to state and local units of government based on a competitive application review process. All LWCF grant applications must support one or more goals and objectives of the WV-SCORP.



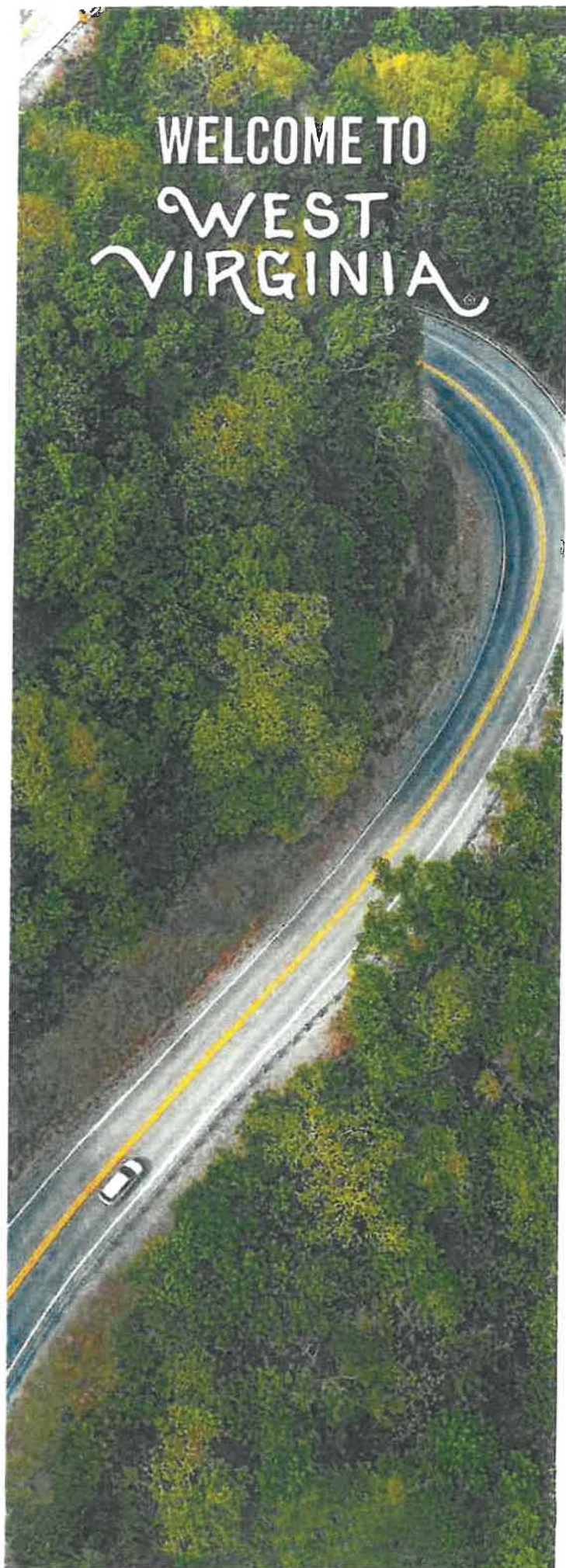
almost heaven



SCORP Development. Development of the 2026-2031 WV-SCORP began with assistance to the state’s CAD staff from the NPS Recreational Trails Program at WVU. In 2025 over 2,000 resident surveys were compiled to identify areawide public outdoor recreational interests and needs. In 2026, assistance from the West Virginia Recreational Park Association (WVRPA), West Virginia Convention and Visitor’s Bureau (WVACAB), and West Virginia Division of State Parks (WVDNR) helped the CAD staff administer a providers survey to more than 50 agencies and organizations that mirrored and broaden findings from the 2025 residents survey. Consolidated findings of park uses and areas for improvement were then stratified by each of the state’s nine Travel Regions.

State Objectives. State or local units of government with state or locally owned park property are eligible applicants for LWCF assistance. Each LWCF application must satisfy one or more state LWCF funding objectives, developed by the CAD staff with inputs from the state’s public outdoor recreation stakeholders. Acquisition or development of basic park and playground facilities in unassisted areas or funding assistance for capital repairs or additions to local or state parks, forests, or wildlife management areas are the state’s principal objectives. Statewide LWCF facility needs based on surveys of residents and providers from 2025 and 2026 are shown below.

State Facility Priorities			State Improvement Priorities		
primary	secondary	tertiary	primary	secondary	tertiary
daily leisure parks	swimming	dog parks	trail improvements	water access	playground upgrades
event-oriented parks	boating (all types)	mountain biking	restroom upgrades	improved seating	shelter upgrades
non-motorized trails	motorized trails	camping	general maintenance	ADA improvements	security lighting
picnicking	fishing	field games			
court games	playgrounds	hunting			



Almost Heaven, West Virginia — an unforgettable place, memorialized by an incomparable song. And, as the late John Denver well knew, a state rich with inspirational mountains and river valleys, charming small towns and communities, filled with generous residents, historic gems, and yes, even a country road or two (thousand) to take you home. According to his official website, when Mr. Denver visited China in 1992, he was astonished to find that “Country Roads,” as he was told, “is the most famous song written in the West.” It’s a song that expresses the heart of West Virginia — a longing to return to “the place I belong,” — a sentiment felt by residents and visitors alike, who experience the unique outdoor treasure known as Almost Heaven, West Virginia.

Although much of West Virginia’s industrial heritage is based on extraction industries, our mountains have always, and continue, to echo an abundance of outdoor tradition, from the heights of Spruce Knob, to the lowest point carved by the Potomac River near Harpers Ferry National Historic Park.

West Virginia’s reputation for having an abundance of outdoor recreation areas and opportunities has played a key role in visitation within and to the state during the recent pandemic, so much so that, as trends toward outdoor activities and away from crowded metropolitan areas continue to grow, regional visitors are finding West Virginia to be the perfect location to not only recreate, but to live.

Even before COVID-19, and particularly over the last two years, visitation in West Virginia has been on the rise, with state leadership and strategic efforts focused on promoting our state’s array of outdoor recreational assets and charming small towns. West

has always been a premier destination in outdoor recreation both for residents and visitors alike. All levels of government within the state see the importance of investing in outdoor assets. The state's recovery from the recent pandemic only amplifies the need to continue to invest in outdoor recreation in the state.

The designation of the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve has been a boom for the state's tourism industry with a record two million visitors' increase in visitation based on records since 2024. For so many travelers, a national park designation is stamp of approval, confirmation that destination is one of the nation's greatest places and a location you need to see.

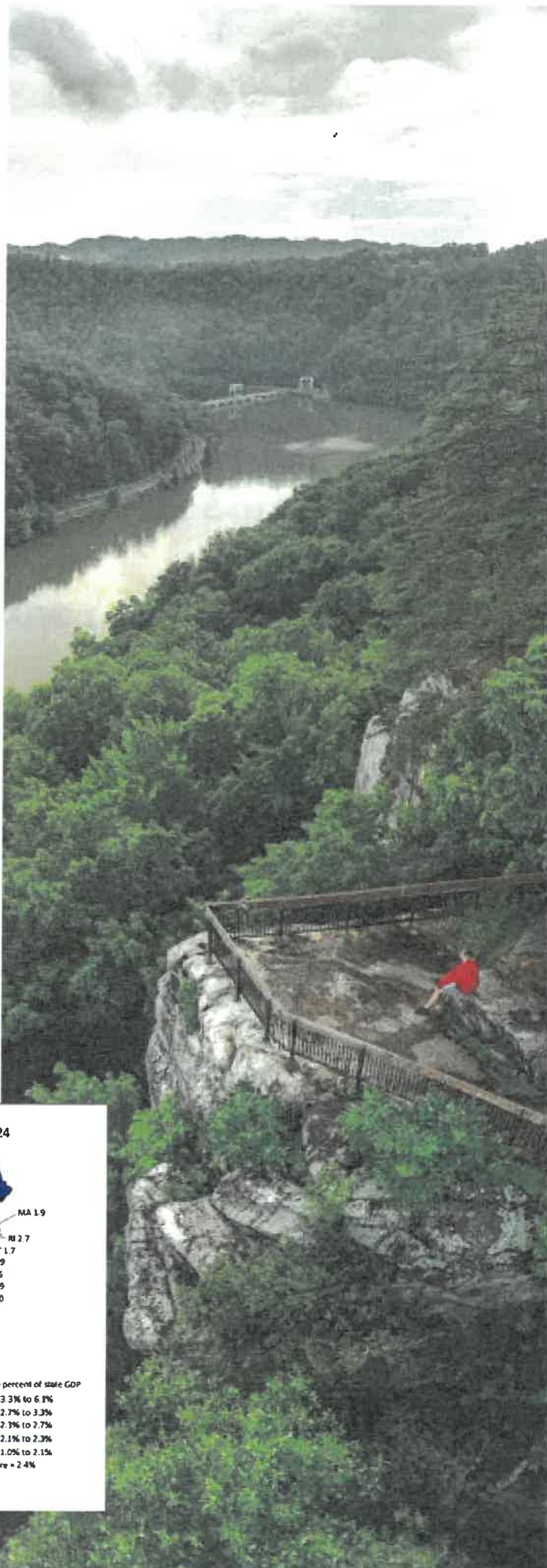
The 7,021-acre park focuses on the New River Gorge, with its visitor center and trailheads, while the remaining 65,165 acres will be part of the national preserve to allow hunting and fishing. The New River Gorge has been a prime outdoor location, known for rock-climbing, hiking and whitewater rafting in Almost Heaven, West Virginia. This new designation serves to emphasize the quality of outdoor recreation that the whole state of West Virginia has to offer.



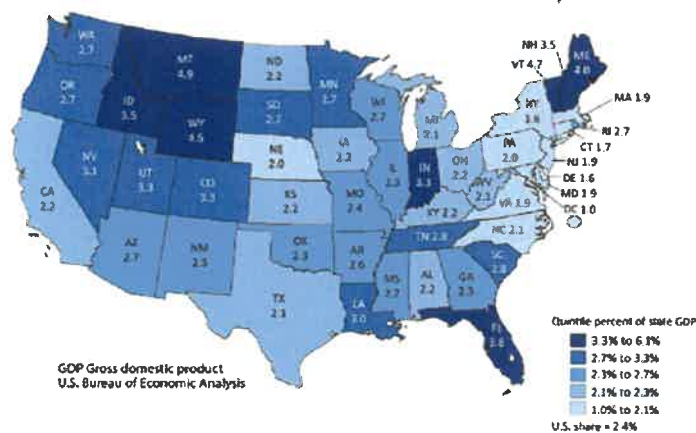
Recreation Economy

West Virginia's economic base has been diversifying for a number of years from traditional mining and manufacturing to the promotion of the digital economy and tourism/leisure development. While the state's extraction industries remain an important part of the economy, state tourism, based on outdoor recreation, has the potential to broaden and deepen for the future.

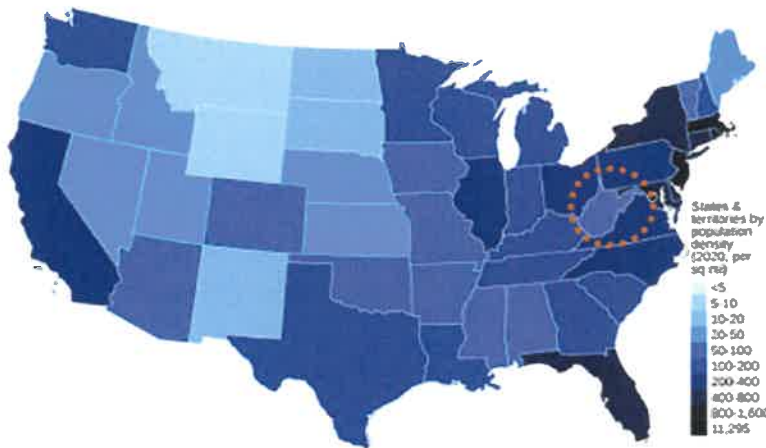
In West Virginia outdoor recreation has and continues to be a vital pillar to the state's tourism industry. According to the 2024 Tourism Economics Report for West Virginia, outdoor recreation generates \$6.6 billion in consumer spending annually, resulting in \$1.1 billion in state and local tax revenue. In addition, the industry supports more than 60,800 jobs which earn an estimated \$2.2 billion in wages each year. The state's percentage of its GDP devoted to tourism is consistent with that of other border states.



State Outdoor Recreation Value Added as a Percent of State GDP, 2024



West Virginia's borders are within 600 miles of 60 percent of the United States population; the state's population density is the least of any state for hundreds of miles. This allows the state to be a sought-out travel destination for near urban East Coast and Great Lake city markets. The vast mountain landscapes draw tourism for both first time visitors and returners. Not only are travelers interested in West Virginia's outdoor recreation, but the residents are also heavily attracted to the outdoors. Research suggests nearly three quarters of West Virginia residents' participants in outdoor recreation each year. The same report also noted more than twice the percentage of outdoor industry jobs in West Virginia compared to other Southeastern states.



The state is well known for its national scenic trails, national forests, national historic parks, national rivers, national heritage sites, and now for the nation's newest national park. The state also boasts 35 state parks, nine state forests, three state rail trails, and more than 70 wildlife management areas. Winter attractions found throughout the state offer a variety of skiing and snowboarding venues that complement

a wide variety of other entertainment, hospitality and cultural attractions, drawing more than ten times the state's 1.7 million population to the state every year.

The state of West Virginia understands the importance of the LWCF. The ability to preserve, conserve, and develop state and local parklands will strengthen the health and vitality of the American people. The SCORP is now more than ever important for the state to be able to qualify for federal funding for these needed and worthwhile public outdoor recreation projects.

Uniquely-WV Recreational Facts:

- Nearly 1.7 million federal public land
- Over 1,500 miles of hiking trails
- 560 miles of rail trails
- Over 1,000 miles of ATV trails with the Hatfield-McCoy Trail System
- 14 flatwater river trails
- Highest density of whitewater runs in the U.S. with more than 2,000 miles
- International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) Silver-Level Ride Center
- Over 4,000 climbing routes

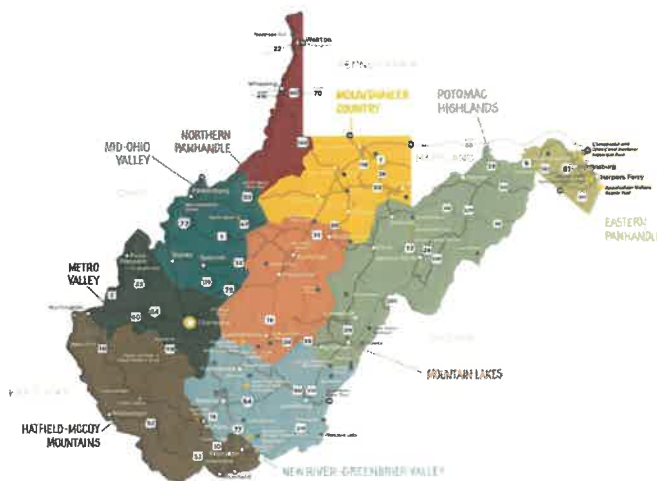
**Robert Burns,
Past Director,
Tucker Community
Foundation**



PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The demand for public outdoor recreation needs and interests was addressed in two surveys conducted in 2025 and 2026. A team effort was involved in this process including the National Park Service's Recreational Trails Program at West Virginia University (NPS-RTCA) and staff of the West Virginia Division of Economic Development. Between March and October 2025 an on-line resident survey was administered, supplemented by flyers and other materials used for outreach to stakeholder groups and their networks in addition to paper surveys distributed to localities where they may be needed with instructions on their completion.

In February 2026 a provider's survey administered to full-time park directors, state park superintendents, convention and visitors bureau directors and other county economic development representatives was prepared and distributed with the help of the West Virginia Recreation and Parks Association, West Virginia Division of Tourism, and West Virginia Convention and Visitors Bureaus Association. Like the residents' survey, the state's providers survey stratified supply and demand issues by each of the state's nine travel regions, comprising metro and non-metropolitan areas of the state, each having particular needs.



almost heaven

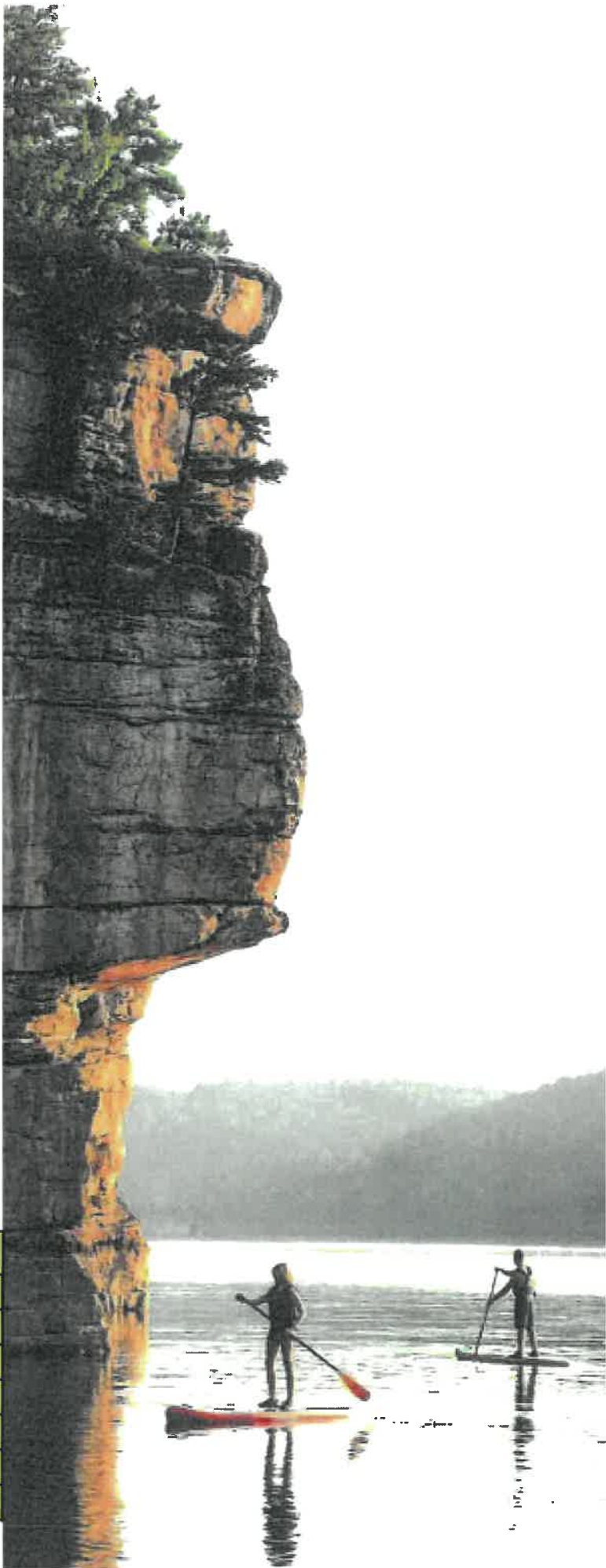
Survey Responses

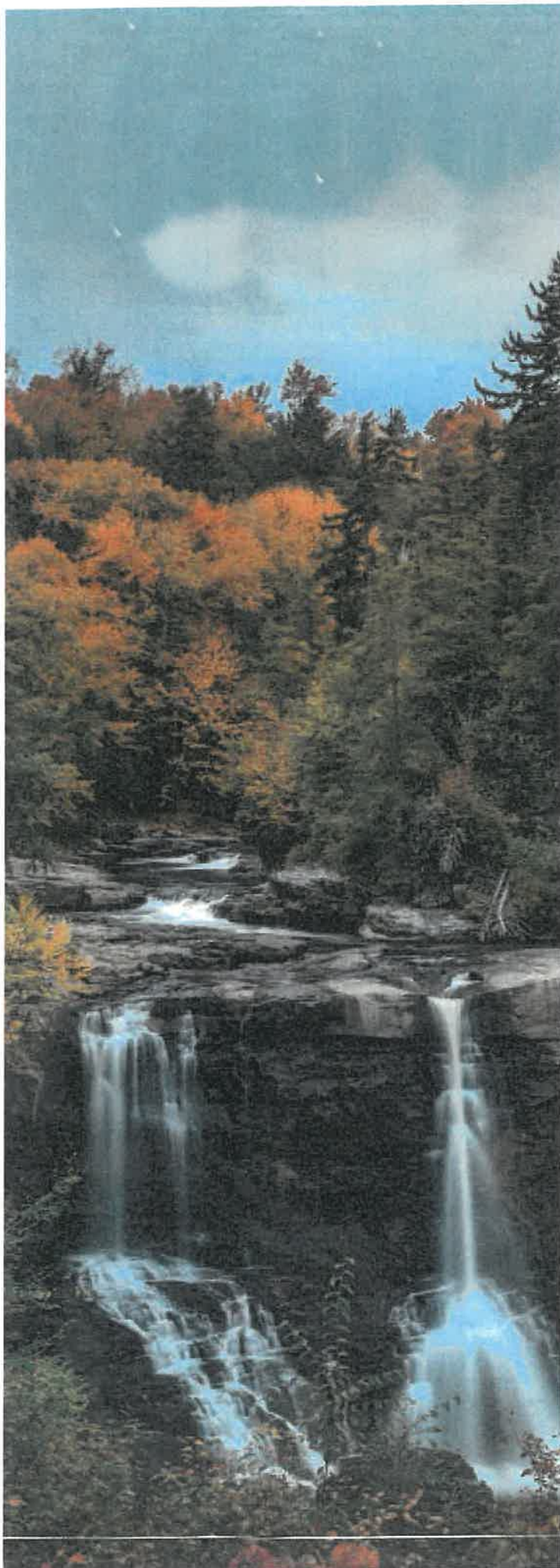
A total of 2,092 residents and 263 visitor surveys were compiled online between February and October 2025. Although not intended as a part of the target population, visitors input was noted briefly in the survey results. These numbers were supplemented by an additional 469 paper surveys distributed to residents in under-represented, non-metro areas if the state to help sustain an overall 95% confidence level result within a 2% margin of error. A second, providers survey was administered between February and March 2026 to full-time local park directors, state park suerintendents, area convention and visitor’s bureau directors, and other areawide economic development managers that provided an additional 68 survey responses. Resident survey results were networked at the state’s first Ooutdoor Economy Summit in Charleston held February 16-18, 2026.

Motivations

Outdoor recreational priorities were generally consistent between residents and practitioners with ‘discovering nature’ the overwhelming first priority, the largest differences being between ‘improving health’ which residents rated second in importance to practitioners sixth place finish. Sports competition was rated last with residents rating it 16% to practitioners 37% in importance.

Park Visit Motivations			
	Residents	Providers	
Discover Nature	93%	74%	
Health	86%	28%	
Respite	79%	56%	
Visit Family	68%	50%	
Learning	45%	40%	
Sports	16%	37%	





Highest Interest Activities

West Virginia residents expressed the most interest in the following outdoor recreational activities. Statewide interests are noted below with metro and non-metropolitan differences represented in the graph insets.

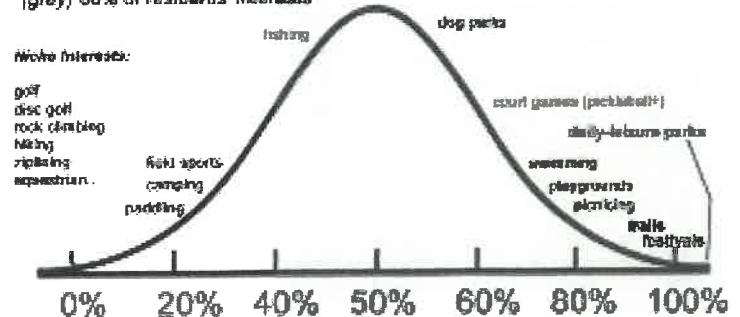
- Daily-leisure park use - 94%
- Event-oriented park use - 89%
- Non-motorized trails - 83%
- Picnicking - 82%
- Swimming - 71%
- Boating (all types) - 68%
- Motorized trail use - 57%
- Fishing - 54%
- Playgrounds - 53%
- Dog parks - 51%

Overall, these results are consistent with the previous WV-SCORP's 2019 recreational survey.

Metro Area Interests

 Metro areas ID'd by their nearest interstate, I-64, I-70, I-79, I-81.

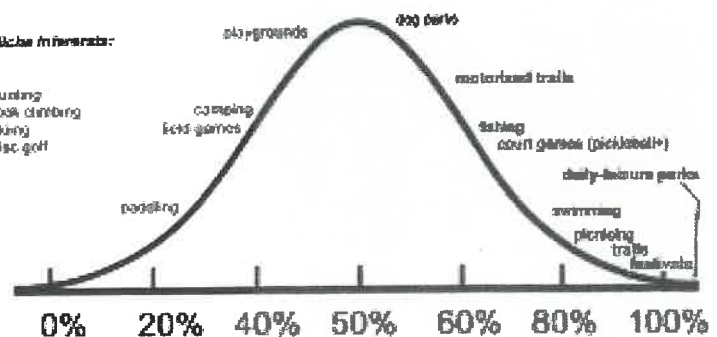
(gray) 50% of residents' interests



Non-Metro Area Interests

Niche Interests:

- hunting
- rock climbing
- skiing
- disc golf

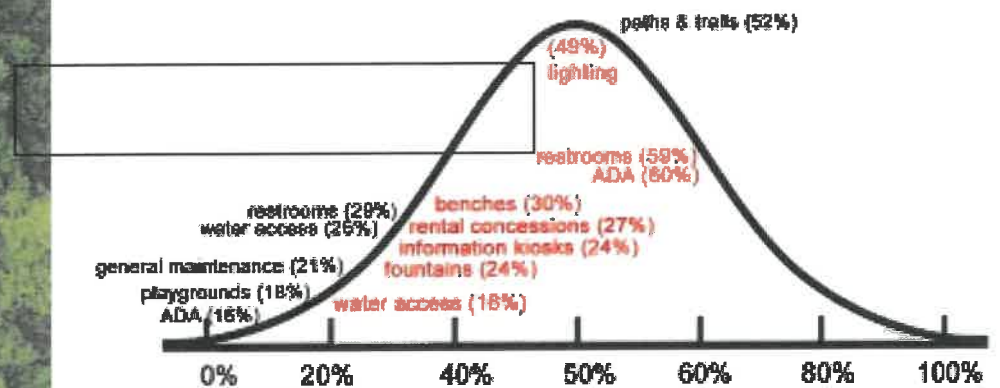


Highest Improvement Areas

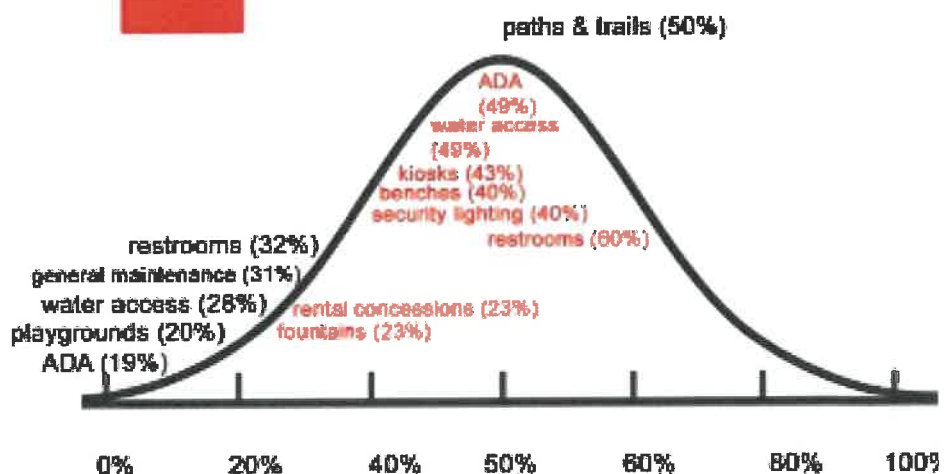
Amenities and improvements most desired for their state and local parks by West Virginians were consistent with upgrades most sought and noted from the state's 2021-2025 SCORP. Top improvements statewide were the following, with slight differences between metro and non-metropolitan areas noted below.

- Cleaner/additional restrooms - 59%
- More wade-in & boat water access - 53%
- More trails and trail upgrades - 53%
- More general park maintenance - 51%
- More mountain bike trails - 45%

Metro Area Improvements



Provider's improvements in red



Non-Metro Area Improvements

Differences	Residents	Providers
Restroom Improvements	29-32%	59-60%
ADA Improvements	16-19%	49-60%
Water Access (Metro Areas)	26%	16%
Water Access (Non-Metro Areas)	28%	49%

Escalating costs were the overwhelming concern mentioned by park and tourism providers in the state's 2026 survey. Operation costs in the past five years rose typically by estimates of 50 percent, with them and capital costs estimating to increase by 50 percent or more in the coming five years. Capital costs for infrastructure repairs or replacement was most often cited, given public demands for seeing modern facilities when they visit state and local parks and attractions. These opinions are reinforced by historic facts of prior LWCF investments in West Virginia, a majority of which occurred more than 40 years ago, which now are facing physical and functional obsolescence. This is more so true for state park investments, a majority of which were constructed during the onset of the LWCF program from 1965 to 1985. This is a problem not only facing state parks but also

West Virginia's recreation visitation has experienced a steady increase since the pandemic, with total out-of-state visitation exceeding the state's 1.7 million population by at least a factor of ten. This increased visitation has been particularly noticable in the state's Eastern Panhandle, but also its Eastern Mountains to New River Valley regions, but generally showing an increase through the counties bordering the state's five interstates. Draws shown below are from neighboring states to the state's regions

-

**LWCF-assisted WV Parks
by County, 1965-2025**

Provider's comments on consumer support for the state's outdoor recreation economy was mostly positive for lodging, gas and food offerings with 'room to grow' comments but decidedly mixed for information and outdoor gear offerings. Within these two categories, State Tourism promotions were consistently praised, but local, on-site information for maps and adjoining attractions were felt to either be missing or in need of updating. New kiosk installations were recommended as worthwhile park or attraction additions.

Outdoor gear and equipment retailers were consistently under-rated except in the state's metro regions, which criticism is consistent with recent Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) findings that recent consumer spending has been modest at best

for all gear-related expenditures except for footwear. Footwear was noted as a necessary cost for everyday use, which the public has been increasingly using to channel towards casual interest in hiking, that require nothing more than athletic shoes to get started. Recent broad demands for new hiking trails and trail improvements supports this interest and growth in casual, low-cost recreation. The OIA noted that with this growth comes an opportunity for trail improvements as well as camping to serve everyone as a gateway to broader and deeper outdoor experiences. For this reason our state providers prioritized a need for equipment rental concessions to enable offerings of a higher outdoor experience at a modest cost to consumers to support and expand other outdoor interests while enhancing the state's mountain foundations for those interests.



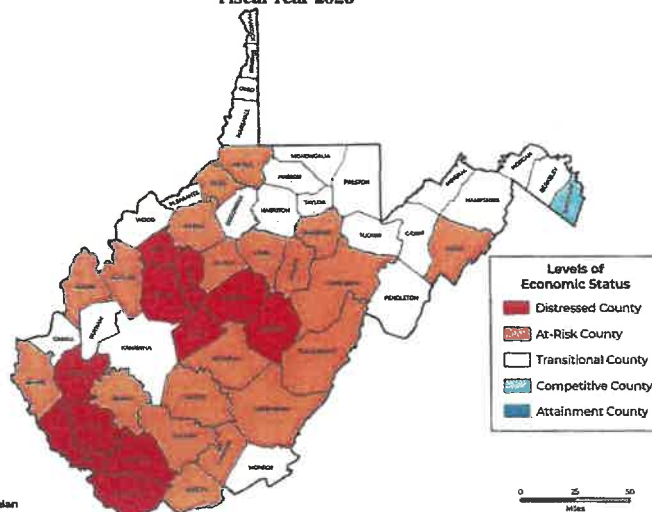
Greenbrier River Trail near Stony Bottom WV

Nonfinancial Concerns

Funding these needs can be a challenge in terms of demographics. 49 of the state's 55 counties have poverty rates above the U.S. poverty rate of 12.5%. Economic distress as defined by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) is a composite rating for counties having poverty rates 150% or more than the U.S. average, median family income 67% or less than the U.S. median, and three year unemployment rates in excess of national rates for the same period. West Virginia has eleven counties meeting these three criteria, concentrated in the Hatfield-McCoys Mountains and Mountain Lakes Travel Regions. 20 other counties at risk for economic distress have one or two of the three distressed criteria. All but one of the remaining counties are considered to be in transition and may only have pockets of distressed areas. 35% of the state's 95 LWCF projects funded in the last 20 years have been awarded to distressed



County Economic Status in West Virginia,
Fiscal Year 2026



areas with another 55% of projects going to counties in transition. Most of these projects are in non-metropolitan areas. A stated goal of our current SCORP is to furnish or upgrade basic park amenities in non-metropolitan areas. Aside from financial challenges facing distressed areas is a characteristic lack of institutional capacity and infrastructure. West Virginia is a state of small towns and rural areas, with no places exceeding 50,000 population. Over 60% of the state's 222 incorporated areas have 1,500 or fewer residents and limited staffing.

LWCF program requirements present a struggle for small, non-metro areas to balance infrastructure needs with citizen demands. A new playground installation can be as costly as a house, and the LWCF program's 50% matching requirement represents a high bar to clear. By contrast, other federal programs for distressed areas have as little as 20% to zero for their required match. Additionally, communities that received LWCF funding originally with an eight page application now must compile 30 pages or more of information, regardless

of how simple or involved the project. ARC funds in years past have supplemented LWCF matching requirements, however LWCF projects must now compete with utility infrastructure applications using this fund source. Despite this, the ARC has supported local capacity building in support of tourism development, that still aids and abets more support for local park improvements.



Interest Categories and Interpretations

Practical limits bound the selection of outdoor activities to the state's survey, which in our SCORP included several subcategories of more specific interests. In our 2025 SCORP survey, 17 primary categories of public outdoor recreation were specified, with nine additional subcategories. Interest responses to each category were scaled into divisions of primary, secondary, and tertiary recreational interest. In addition, ten areas of park improvements were specified to help denote priorities for areas of concern for particular park work items.

Since recreational interests were generalized into only three divisions, interpreting findings for particular interests means following the trends (upwards or downwards) between categories. Small differences between interests are less important than their relative position on a scale of interests taken altogether. For potential LWCF grant applications, this means projects based on primary interests in a given area might have a greater return on investment than a project based on secondary interest. Tertiary interests noted are more often based on outdoor recreational activities pursued elsewhere, but not likely found or pursued in a given area. Nonetheless, for most grant applicants the selection of a particular project proposal will have more to do with their community's ability to pay--short term for matching share requirements and long term for post-completion operation and maintenance costs--than its relative priority on a state survey. The survey results thus serve more as a screening guide to project selection based on the best impact or rate of return of a particular improvement within a community's ability to pay. For the state's purposes, interest and improvement priorities are a screening guide for interpreting the relative merits of one project over another in a competitive application process.

Definitions

Outdoor interest surveyed between residents and providers are based upon definitions or characterizations of the following kinds of outdoor recreation:

- Historic or natural area visitation. This is essentially the use or enjoyment of passive park space for daily leisure use, characterized by shaded seating, fountains, attractive views, well-kept landscaping, with any interpretations of nearby historic or natural features of merit. Overall interest, 94%.
- Fairs and festivals. These are event-oriented parks. Includes support facilities for staging fairs and festivals, including amphitheaters, stages, parking areas, park roads, and paths. Overall interest, 89%.
- Non-motorized trails. Includes paths for walking or hiking, bicycle paths (hard surfaced), bicycle pump tracks, and off-road mountain bike trails. Overall interest, 83%.
- Picnicking. Includes tables, shelters, fountains, and restrooms. Overall interest, 82%.
- Court games: includes basketball, pickleball, and tennis. Overall interest, 72%.
- Swimming. Includes pools, bathhouses, sprayspads, and concessions. Overall interest, 71%.
- Boating. Includes power and non-power flatwater boating and whitewater paddling and water access for all of the above. Overall interest, 68%.
- Motorized trails. Includes off-road trails for ATV's, UTV's, 4WD's, E-bikes, and motorcycles. Overall interest, 57%.
- Fishing. Includes bank fishing, in-water fly fishing, boat fishing, and water access for all of the above. Overall interest, 54%.
- Playgrounds. Includes traditional playgrounds and open space playfields. Overall interest, 53%.
- Dog parks. Includes walking paths, water fountains, and off-leash areas. Overall interest, 51%.
- Mountain biking (off-road trails). Overall interest, 45%.
- Camping. Includes RV and primitive camping, utilities, showers, restrooms, in-ground trash receptacles, park roads, fire rings and tables. Overall interest, 38%.

- Field games: including baseball, football, and soccer. Overall interest, 36%.
- Community gardens: public and private plots. Overall interest, 36%.
- Hunting: including deer, small game, and trapping. Overall interest, 32%.
- Winter sports: including downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, snowboarding, snowmobiling. Interest, 26%.
- Golf: including executive and par three courses, clubhouses, golf paths, parking. Overall interest, 18%.
- Equestrian: includes horseback riding, bridle paths, stables. Overall interest, 15%.
- Niche interests: includes rock climbing and geocaching. Interests here scattered to particular regions, but not sufficient to categorize generally.

Improvement Demands

Ten different areas of improvements for public outdoor recreational improvements were noted in the state's survey. These include: trail upgrades, restroom improvements, general maintenance, more water access, more casual seating, ADA improvements, playground upgrades, shelter improvements, and security lighting. Specifics of particular demands (larger shelters or more shelters?) need to be established or refined at the local level based on the experiences relayed by residents and visitors as direct users.

Interpretations

As noted, interest interpretations of recreational activities between and within particular travel regions are relative to overall interest rates. Edges of primary, secondary, and tertiary activity classifications are arbitrary for this reason. In general, primary and secondary classified activities are likely to have better returns on investment consistent with residents and providers demands in a particular region.

<i>State Interest Priorities</i>			<i>State Improvement Priorities</i>		
primary	secondary	tertiary	primary	secondary	tertiary
daily leisure parks	swimming	dog parks	trail improvements	water access	playground upgrades
event-oriented parks	boating (all types)	mountain biking	restroom upgrades	improved seating	shelter upgrades
non-motorized trails	motorized trails	camping	general maintenance	ADA improvements	security lighting
picnicking	fishing	field games			
court games	playgrounds	hunting			

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSETS



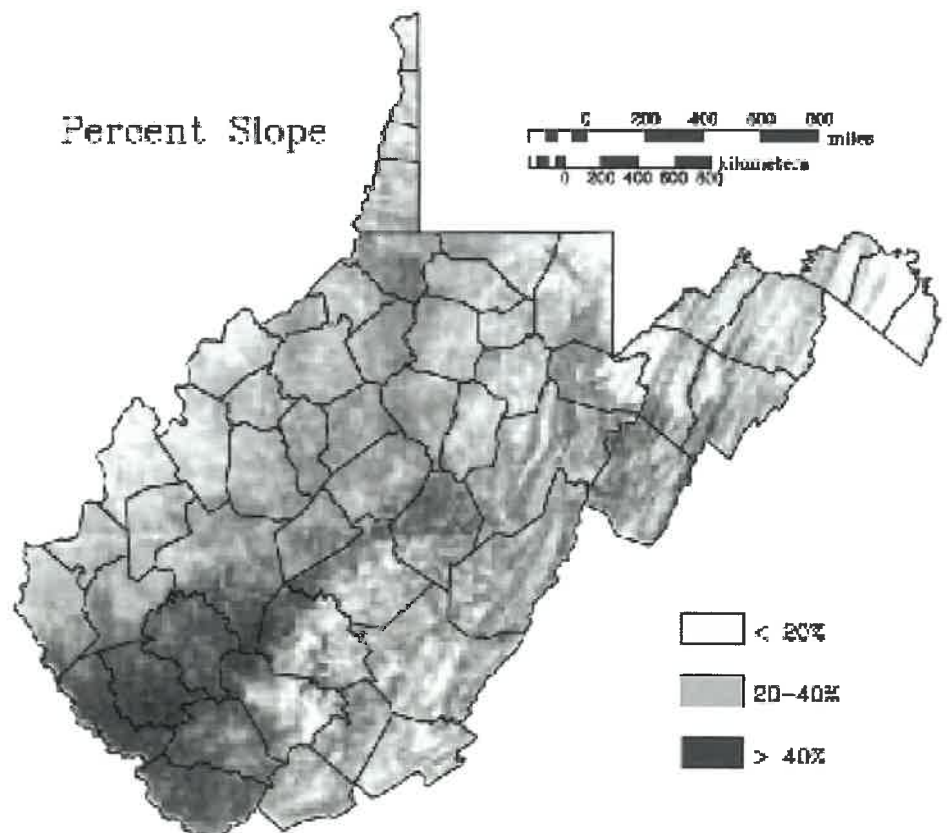
West Virginia is defined by its rugged terrain, which varies dramatically from its western plateau region to its central mountains to its eastern ridge and valley region bordering the state of Virginia. Forest blocks between regions are uneven, creating unconnected habitats for the state's 600 animal species, 400 plant species, and nearly 200 aquatic species. Water supply, water quality, and flooding issues underscore the sensitivity of acquisition and conservation opportunities to protect these different regions.

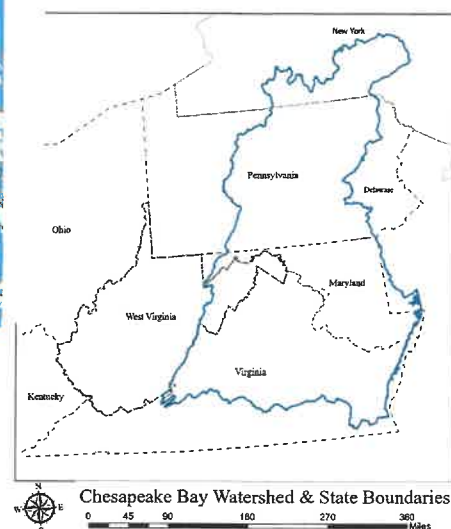
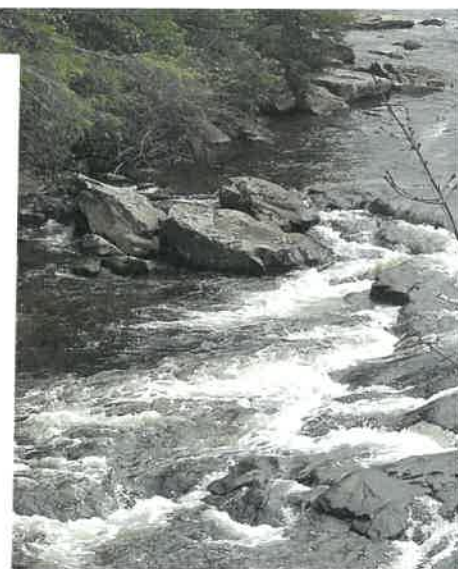
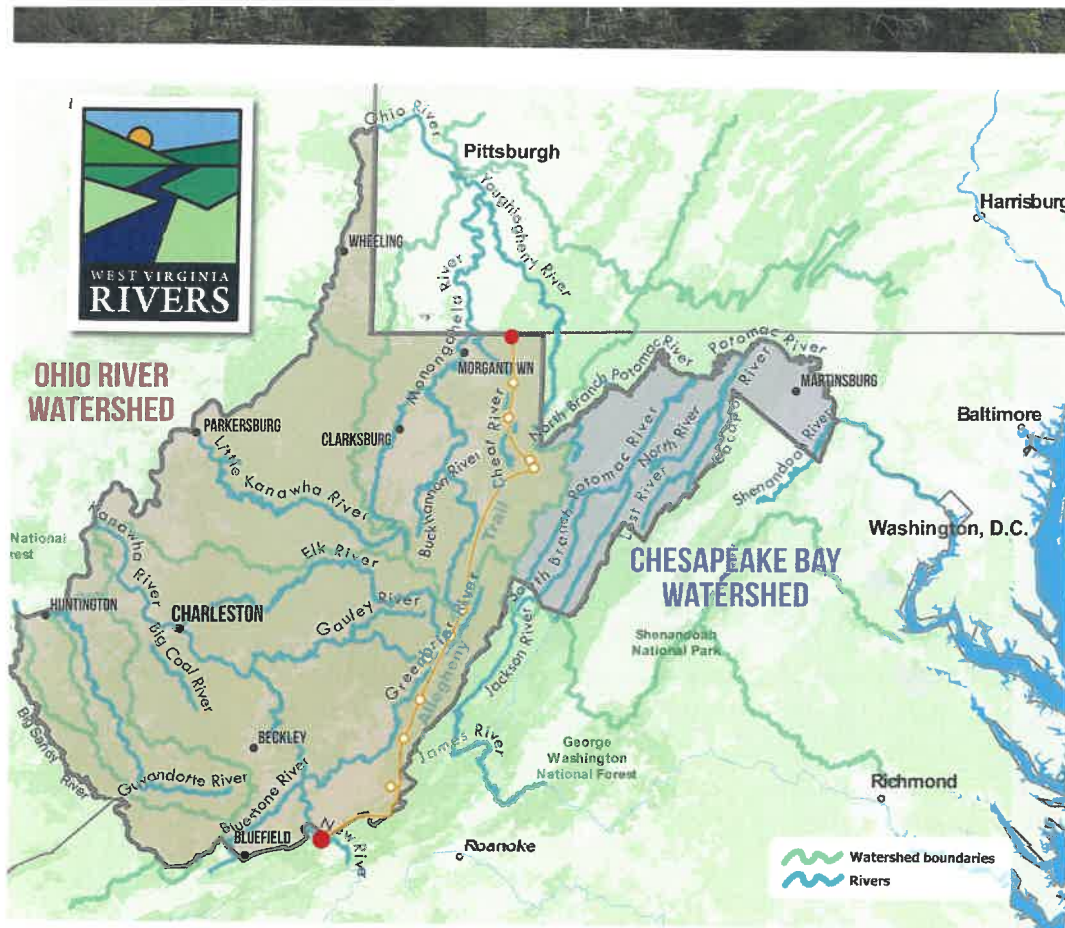
State Wetlands Plan

Across West Virginia, wetlands can be found in every county. Disproportionate as an asset, wetlands account for less than one percent of the total land area although they provide a home to 23% of native plant species and 44% of its rare plants. The highest concentration of wetlands, and most environmentally sensitive areas, are to be found in the state's Potomac Highlands travel region bordering Virginia. This region, wholly contained within the state's portion of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, includes the Monongahela National Forest as the state's largest block of federal public lands that contains more than one million acres of forestlands as well as the

headwaters for eight major rivers flowing to Chesapeake Bay. Water quality is a genuine area of environmental concern here, in support of both habitat protection and public outdoor recreation, particularly hunting and fishing.

Special environmental areas, including state wetlands and Conservation Focus Areas, are jointly monitored and updated between the state's Department of Environmental Protection and Division of Natural Resources. Ongoing updates to the West Virginia Wetlands





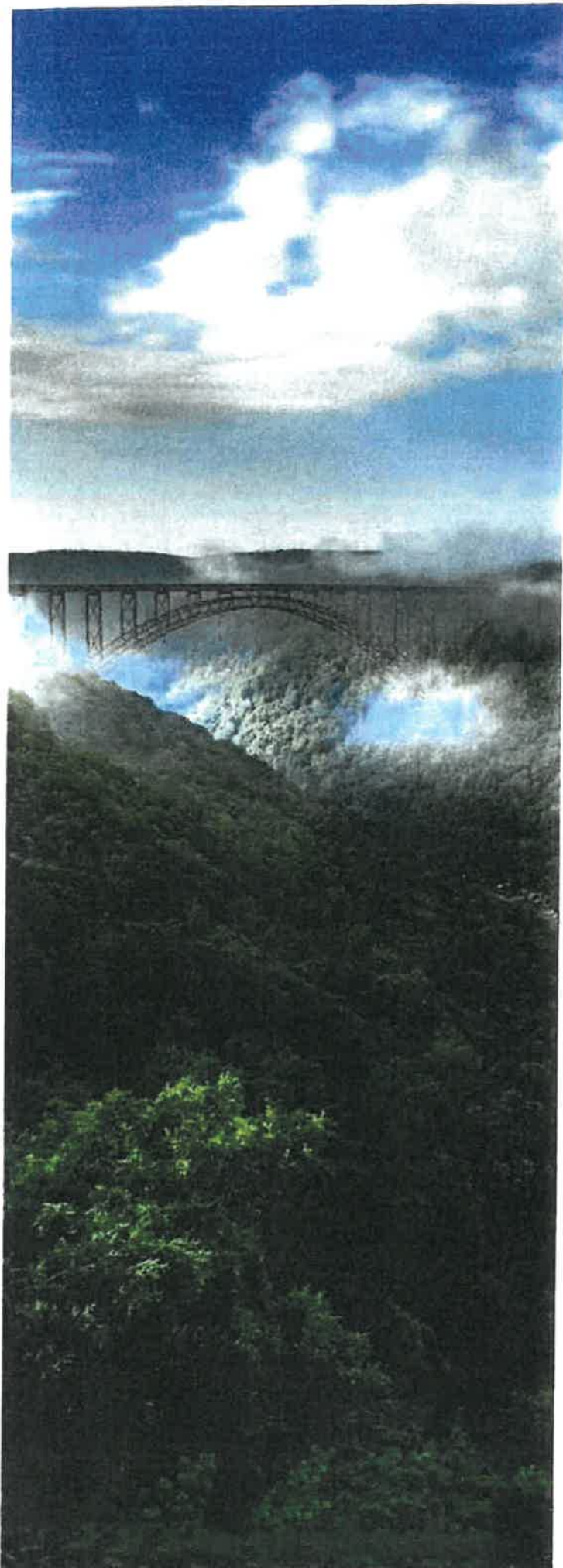
Plan have been scored statewide for their functions and values. More than half of the top-scoring five percent of wetlands are already protected on public lands or by conservation easements. Currently there are more than 1,600 remaining wetlands that score in the top five percent statewide but are not yet protected. Priority wetlands for conservation have been identified in 53 of West Virginia's 55 counties.

In a similar fashion, the state's DNR, working with the Nature Conservancy and partners across the state, continues to monitor and assess habitats, stressors, and conservation actions for priority species within each of the state's Conservation Focus Areas (CFA). CFA action plans also identify public agency, non-profit and community partners in each CFA who can assist landowners with conservation improvements. These areas and their endangered habitats are further tied to the importance of water resources because of their drought sensitivity in which greater rain evaporation contributes to warmer than dryer conditions. Unevenness and disconnection of environmental asset distributions continues to create additional opportunities for further conservation

and acquisition opportunities where and when they occur to offset disparities between regions between updates.

SCORP Relationship

Unanimous interest and demands for trails and trail improvements among state residents is easily understood as an accessible, affordable, and least impactful choice upon public lands for public recreation. Resident data shows the greatest demands for more trails and water access improvements in the state's southern and eastern mountains. Market conditions and particular habitat impacts in these areas point to current and expected barriers in these regards. Robust NPO and volunteer efforts sustain existing trail improvements like the state's Allegheny thru trail completion among many others besides support for legislation to integrate water access into state bridge projects. The state's LWCF program continues to be a worthwhile source for financing these developments.



National Parks and Public Lands

Rolling hills. Ancient rivers. Deep forests. When you look at West Virginia, it's no wonder "Almost Heaven" comes to mind. The State of West Virginia and the National Park Service have a deep history of preserving the natural and cultural resources for current residents and future generations to enjoy. Our state encompasses over 1 million acres of national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, scenic rivers, trails and other public lands — all national treasures that speak to the heritage and quality of life for each and every West Virginian. The National Park System offer incredible opportunities to experience history, explore the state's natural beauty and venture to amazing places. West Virginia sees over 1 million visitors to our federally managed land.

For residents and visitors alike, a visit to any of these national parks and recreation areas leaves lasting memories and a longing to return:

- Appalachian National Scenic Trail
- Bluestone National Scenic River
- Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park
- Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge
- Gauley River National Recreation Area
- George Washington and Jefferson National Forests
- Harpers Ferry National Historical Park
- Monongahela National Forest
- National Coal Heritage Area
- New River Gorge National Park and Preserve
- Ohio River Islands Refuge
- Wheeling National Heritage Area
- Spruce Knob-Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area



State Parks and Forests

The state parks and forests of West Virginia represent the very backbone of conservation and tourism. The overall system is composed of 36 state parks, nine state forests and three state rail trails, visited by an average of ten million guests annually. Park natural and historic areas must be protected and preserved, and their facilities maintained, renovated, and modernized in order to keep up with resident and visitor demands. Funding such as that created by LWCF matching grants are greatly important to carrying out these responsibilities. LWCF funding has been, in fact, a major contributor to the growth, development and expansion of the West Virginia State Parks system.

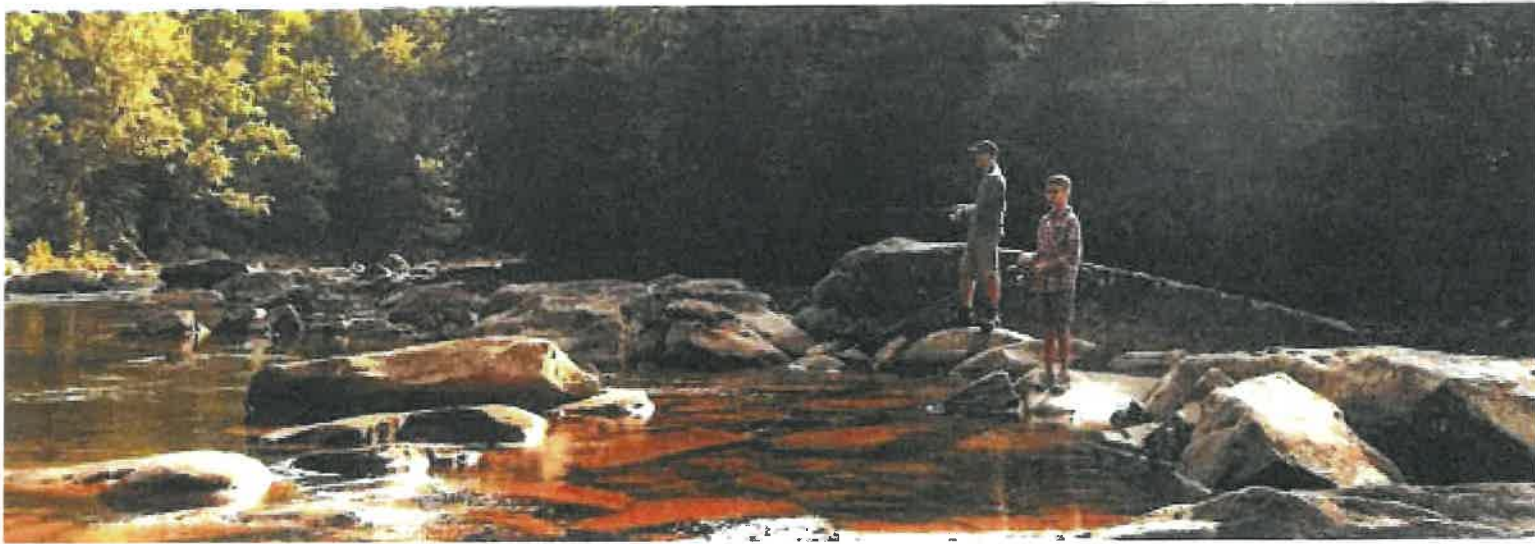
THE MISSION OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION SECTION, AS
DETAILED IN THE WEST VIRGINIA CODE CHAPTER §20 5-3, IS
TO:

"Promote conservation by preserving and protecting natural areas of unique or exceptional scenic, scientific, cultural, archaeological, or historical significance and to provide outdoor recreational opportunities for the citizens of this State and its visitors"

The Parks and Recreation Section has very successfully met the mandates of this legislated mission throughout its 98-year history. With its protection and preservation of over 161,000 acres of easily accessible public land, the Parks and Recreation Section (Park System) promotes conservation with its mere existence. Approximately 150,000 acres of 92% of the land within the state park system remains undeveloped.

The protection of these undeveloped green spaces, and largely undisturbed ecosystems, is vitally important to the state and nation. State parklands are set aside in their most natural condition for the benefit of the public now and for generations to come. This preservation has enormous ecological, scientific, and cultural benefits. Equally as important is the noteworthy contribution to the quality of life for the citizens of the state. State parks, forests, and rail trails contribute significantly to the physical and mental health of their users.

Additionally, the watersheds within West Virginia's rivers and streams are the responsibility of the Park System providing recreational opportunities for our citizens within and outside the state's borders. Hiking trails as well as park and forest roads meander quietly through natural areas, providing tranquil settings for mental and physical health and enrichment of visitors. Moreover, this prime real estate adds significantly to the land values of surrounding privately owned lands, which contribute to the tax base of county governments.



In terms of the legislated mission to provide recreation, agency management efforts afford nearly 11,000 acres of developed lands which are enjoyed by residents and visitors. In terms of inventory, the West Virginia State Park system maintains ten lodges with 837 total rooms, 358 cabins, 1,546 campsites, 152 picnic shelters and 559 playground units. The parks system also manages more than 700 miles of hiking trails and nearly 1,500 buildings with more than 2.5 million square feet of space.

While city and county park activities have been trending from active towards passive outdoor recreational interests, within state parks, forests, and other public lands, the state is experiencing demands for more innovative and challenging activities. Recreational activities include not only traditional camping, picnicking, and hiking, but also range from intense pursuits such as downhill skiing and rock climbing, to more relaxed activities like fishing and golf. The West Virginia Park System has incredibly diverse, revenue-producing features in comparison to other state park systems. This diversity includes, the management of trolley and train operations at Cass Scenic Railroad State Park, an island with a historic mansion and a sternwheel boat operation at Blennerhassett Island Historical State Park, a ski area at Canaan Valley Resort State Park, and sledding operations at Blackwater Falls State Park, which serve as a partial

list of features which separate West Virginia's state parks from national norms. Every West Virginia state park and forest area contributes to the value of the state and the excellence and complexity of the system. Unique West Virginia treasures such as Blackwater Falls, Babcock Glade Creek Grist Mill, Twin Falls Resort's Pioneer Farm and the Droop Mountain Battlefield Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) era lookout tower are iconic representations of West Virginia. Exceptional scenic overlooks are to be seen at areas such as Hawks Nest State Park, Cacapon Resort State Park, Pipestem Resort State Park, Babcock State Park, Lost River State Park, Coopers Rock State Forest, and Carnifex Ferry Battlefield State Park. The preservation of the impressive virgin forest at Cathedral State Park and the representation of 18th century life at Prickett's Fort State Park, while at the same time parks operation of Stonewall Resort State Park, Canaan Valley Resort State Park, and Pipestem Resort State Park further represents the diversity of the entire system.

A Lasting Impression

It is the diversity of this system that leaves a lasting impression on both West Virginians and visitors alike. According to the West Virginia State Parks Marketing Research Study, conducted by the Institute for Service Research, 73.4 percent of visitors to West Virginia State Parks have a strong desire to return. Data shows that

'positive word of mouth' and 'memories of past trips' are the two leading information sources that influence visitors' decisions to visit our state parks. This speaks highly to the efforts of the Parks and Recreation Section to live up to their legislative mandate, and concurs with marketing and advertising research completed by the West Virginia Department of Tourism showing that visitors to the state experience a longing to return.

In order to bring fresh understanding to the role of West Virginia State Parks as an economic generator in West Virginia, the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR) commissioned an economic impact study in Fiscal 2023. A key finding of this study is that the total economic impact of the system annually ranges between \$500 million and \$522 million. Economic impact is a measure of new money infused into the state's economy that likely would not have been generated in the absence of the state park system. In other words, for every dollar of general tax revenue provided to the West Virginia state Parks, \$18.54 on average was generated in new money that would not be present except for the operation of state parks and forests. Economic impacts were also calculated for each park location. In Fiscal 2025, total state park revenue exceeded \$39.4 million.

Established in 2021, the West Virginia State Parks and Recreation Endowment Fund is a special revenue account funded by mineral royalties beneath the Ohio River alongside designated gifts and grants. Managed by a board of trustees and invested through the State Treasurer, the funds generated income is dedicated to the ongoing maintenance, repair, and procurement of infrastructure and equipment across state parks, forests, and rail trails. One significant project was the replacement of the entire HVAC system at Chief Logan Conference Center with costs estimated at \$6 million.

Building on the foundation of previous initiatives, the major bond-financed development programs, including the transformative upgrades to lodge and cabin systems—are now successfully complete. To sustain this momentum the 2026 Legislature has allocated an additional \$10 million specifically earmarked for future park system improvements. This fresh influx of capital will address the ongoing modernization of equipment and infrastructure needs that extend beyond original funding levels. By continuing to target critical infrastructure and guest amenities, these upcoming projects will build directly upon past successes to ensure long-term safety, regulatory compliance, and revenue growth. LWCF funding





has been and could be a huge contributor to this continuing need.

Fiscal 2025 saw many notable improvements. Perhaps the most significant was the construction of two trams, new cabin and campground construction. These projects were grand in design, size, and scope, and included trams at Pipestem and Hawks Nest, seven new cabins at Coopers Rock, campgrounds at Cass Scenic Railroad and Lost River State Park.

Hiking continues to be the number one reason guests make their first visit to a state park, which is why the Park System committed significant resources last year to trail construction, maintenance, and repairs across the state. To protect these assets and ensure quality, dedicated trail maintenance coordinators were hired in areas demonstrating a special need. As a part of this deep emphasis on trails, the Park System is actively expanding mountain bike opportunities by partnering with local communities, foundations, and entities such as the National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA). A key highlight of this initiative includes the development of brand new, purpose-built mountain bike trails at

Blackwater Falls, Cacapon Resort, and Canaan Valley Resort State Parks. Together, these targeted investments and strategic partnerships ensure that West Virginia's trail systems will continue to provide top-tier, diverse recreational experiences for all outdoor enthusiasts.

Significant paving work has been completed on roadways across the Park System by the West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDot). Other noteworthy individual projects completed in Fiscal 2025 included: golf course paving at both Pipestem and Twin Falls State Park, construction of bathhouses at Beech Fork, Little Beaver, and Kanawha State Forest, addition of new cabins and campsites at Coopers Rock and significant wi-fi expansion across the system.

West Virginia continues to aggressively expand opportunities to enjoy its natural beauty, transitioning a former pilot initiative into a permanent outdoor asset. At Cabwaylingo State Forest, the off-road motorized riding trail system is no longer a pilot solution but has become a permanent, legislated mandate, operated successfully alongside state parks business partner, the

Hatfield-McCoy Regional Recreation Authority. Meanwhile, traditional trail systems have seen massive capital injections, highlighted by Cacapon Resort State Park's brand-new, 35 mile network of premier mountain biking trails constructed at a cost of \$35 million. Additionally, the iconic Elk River Trail has expanded significantly due to a recent strategic land purchase and key lease agreements that have greatly extended its overall mileage. Together with the state's other major rail trails, these developments ensure that visitors can explore dynamic new tiers of West Virginia's outdoor recreation for generations to come.

Critical to its mission of providing public recreation, the system is deeply committed to delivering services, facilities, and programs to all people in a safe, welcoming, and accessible environment. While most of the items identified in the original systemwide ADA assessment are now complete, evolving accessibility needs remain and require continuous financial investment. Moving forward, normal state park funding will be directed to address these ongoing Americans with Disabilities Act

(ADA) requirements, ensuring the park system remains fully inclusive for all visitors.

The West Virginia State Parks and the West Virginia Department of Tourism continue to work hand-in-hand on collaborative marketing campaigns and strategic advertisements to elevate the state's outdoor profile. A cornerstone of this ongoing partnership includes a major rebranding project for park entrance signs across the state, alongside comprehensive preparation for the upcoming 100-year anniversary of the state park system.





Abundance of Wildlife

The Statewide Wildlife Management Program is designed to conserve and manage high-quality habitats for a variety of wildlife species and to improve public access to enjoy those resources. There are 96 Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) in West Virginia. WMAs are in almost every county of the state and provide publicly managed acreage for hunting, trapping, fishing, and other wildlife-associated recreational activities and draw numerous hunters and anglers to West Virginia. The rugged mountains cut with river valleys and woodlands provide excellent habitat for over 300 bird species. The diverse terrain and species draw many people to the state for birding opportunities. There are nearly 449,000 acres of state-managed WMA land that is publicly assessable. The state also provides various opportunities to discover, connect and appreciate the local flora and fauna.

Wildlife-Focused Recreation Opportunities

Over 9,000 acres in new wildlife management areas have been added in the last five years, including over

8,100 acres in Boone County as the Little Coal River WMA – the first WMA in Boone County for many years. An important project of the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (DNR) continues to be the work with the elk restoration program. Prior to the Civil War and the Industrial Revolution, elk were common in Appalachia. Beginning in 2016, the reintroduction and restoration of elk began, and the herd is estimated to be around 140 spanning over the 25,000 acres between Tomblin and Laurel Lake WMAs. Also, a wildlife viewing tower and visitor center have been constructed for the Tomblin WMA to provide the public with the opportunity to see the diverse wildlife found in the area. West Virginia is home to the Cranberry Glades Botanical Area; the network of bogs features plant life that is typically found in northern climates such as those in Canada. The West Virginia DNR plans to increase opportunities across the state for the public to access WMAs to meet the demands for outdoor wildlife-associated recreation.

TRAVEL REGIONS & PRIORITIES



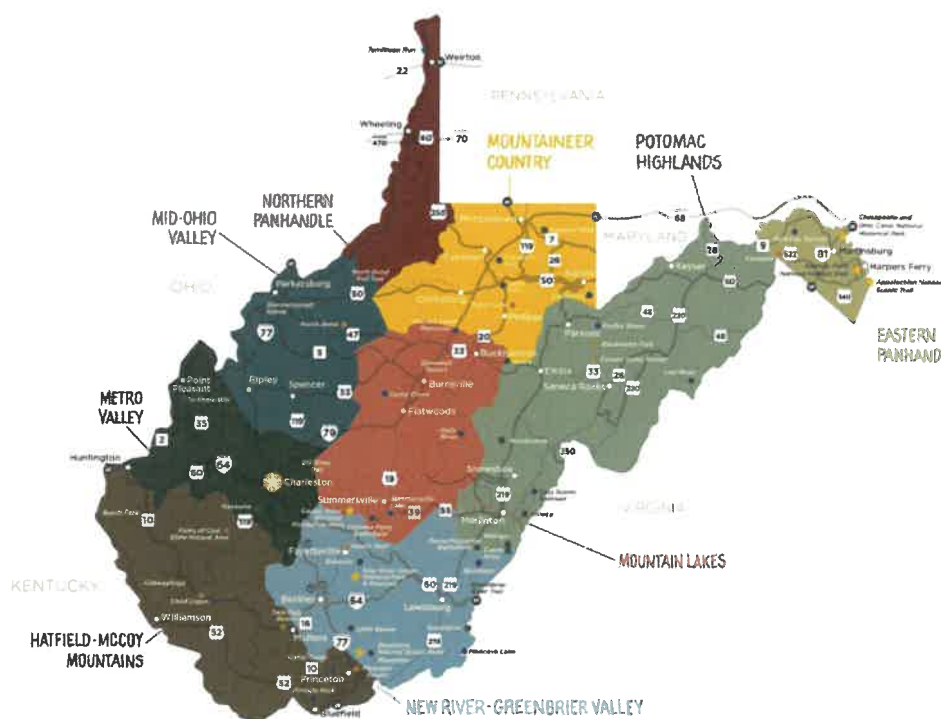
The state of West Virginia has nine distinct travel regions from rolling hills to deep gorges and canyons, that offer unique recreation experiences. They include the Eastern Panhandle, Hatfield-McCoy Mountains, Metro Valley, Mountain Lakes, Mountaineer Country, New River-Greenbrier Valley, Potomac Highlands, and the Northern Panhandle. Each region has its own renowned landmarks and outdoor activities. West Virginia provides diverse outdoor experiences for all levels and activities within the state. West Virginia residents and visitors can travel to each region and do something different each time. The unique geography allows West Virginia to be a four-season state where outdoor recreation can thrive year-round.

Facility Categories

Recreational interests tend to vary by region. Interests surveyed with a 70% or more response were classified as Primary Needs. 30-60% interests were classified as Secondary Needs. Primary and secondary interests could also

vary between residents and providers, which differences were noted in the consolidation of survey results. Interests distinct for a given region but not generally supported elsewhere included Tertiary Needs and niche interests with less than a 30% response. While lacking the mass appeal of broader interests, niche needs are valuable and worthwhile to create special recreational draws to a particular travel region.

The specific types of facilities included in the prioritized general categories include the following:



- Boating facilities: whitewater/flatwater/jet skiing/ power boating/water skiing/ramps/docks/walk-in sites/designated parking for trailers.
- Golf courses: executive/par-3/minature golf.
- Motorized trails: ATV/UTV/side-by-side/e-bike.
- Non-motorized trails: walking/jogging/hiking/ ADA trails/bicycling/mountain biking/BMX pump tracks/paved/unpaved/bench amenities/equestrian bridle paths/rental concessions.
- Playgrounds: natural/adventure/manufactured.
- Picnicing: large group shelters/family shelters/ nearby restrooms/in-ground trash bins.
- Hunting/Fishing: game preserves/shooting ranges/trap areas/lake fishing/bank fishing/stream walk-in sites.
- Court facilities: basketball/tennis/pickleball/volleyball.
- Field game facilities: baseball/softball/football/ soccer.
- Swimming/Water facilities: pools/restrooms/ concessions/spraypads/aquatic playgrounds/ lake beach areas.
- Winter sports facilities: downhill/cross-country/ skating/snowmobiling.
- Festival facilities: amphitheaters/stages/lighting/ designated group parking/restrooms.
- Nature/Historic centers/displays:kiosks/exhibits.
- Camping: R-V/cabins/yurts/primitive/dispersed/ concessions.
- Special interests: dog parks/disc golf/community gardens.
- Support facilities: restrooms/benches/lighting/ parking/kiosks/fountains/

General statewide facility needs and priority improvements are noted below with metro and non-metropolitan park priorities displaying slight variations on the overall state patterns (following page). Priorities by travel region are summarized on the pages following to characterize area differences in recreational user demands.

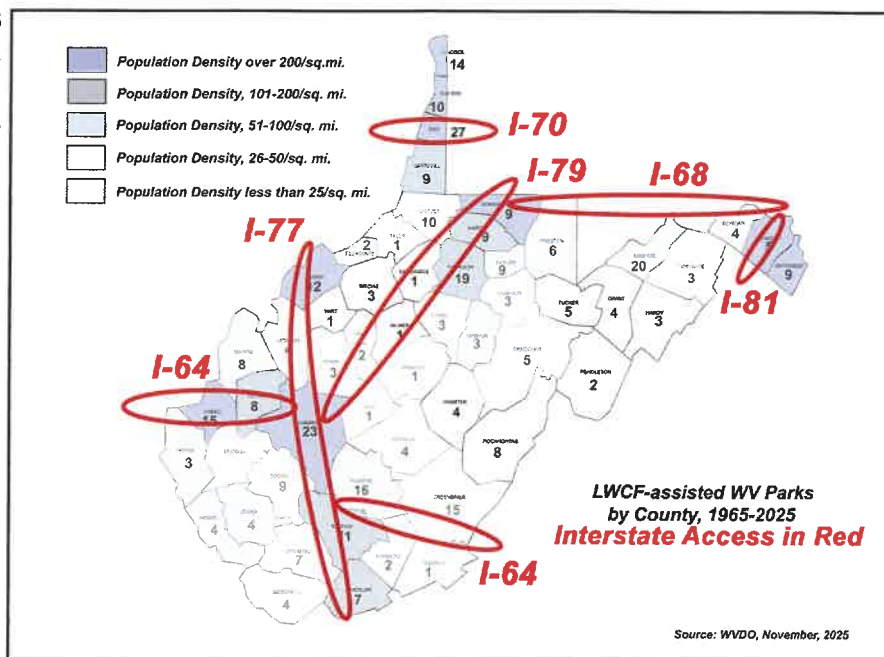
State Interest Priorities - State Improvement Priorities

primary	secondary	tertiary	primary	secondary	tertiary
daily leisure parks	swimming	dog parks	trail improvements	water access	playground upgrades
event-oriented parks	boating (all types)	mountain biking	restroom upgrades	improved seating	shelter upgrades
non-motorized trails	motorized trails	camping	general maintenance	ADA improvements	security lighting
picnicking	fishing	field games			
court games	playgrounds	hunting			

West Virginians are literally recreating with their feet. Interests and demands for trail improvements have been consistent across all demographics and areas, fueled by easy outdoor access, rising health concerns, and low entry costs with everyday footwear doubling purpose for exercise and ordinary use. 93% weekly walking participation was noted as the highest activity engagement of any particular outdoor interest. This interest spurs demands for improvements to standard park amenities such as restrooms, benches, lighting and ADA upgrades.

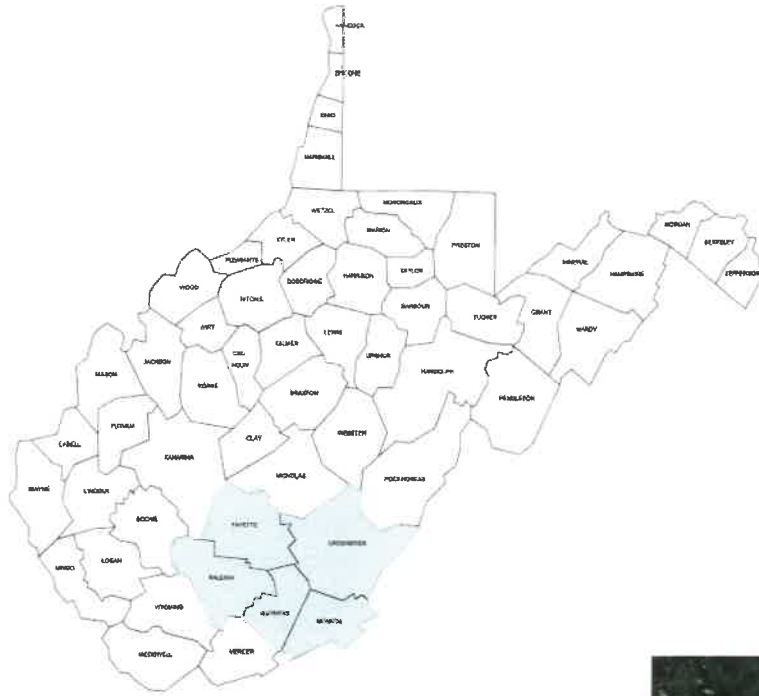
At scale, greater demands on existing facilities wears the most on existing facilities, many of which are over 40 years old that are becoming functionally obsolescent, particularly in non-metropolitan areas of the state. Areas such as these commonly have the fewest grants to help offset increasingly expensive costs, which fact can be drawn from the few number of LWCF grant awards made in non-metro areas of the state. At the other extreme, state metro areas where population settlement follows major highways, easy park access to larger crowd attractions creates demands for larger picnic shelters and picnic areas, more trails, and festival and event facilities. While most state areas have experienced population decline, growth in eastern and northern areas are stressing existing facilities from the influx.

Statewide Facility Needs					
Metro Areas			Non-Metro Areas		
Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
non-motorized trails	pickleball	field games	non-motorized trails	fishing	camping
festival support	dog parks	camping	festival support	dog parks	field games
picnicing	fishing	canoe/kayaking	picnicing	playgrounds	canoe/kayaking
Niche interests: golf/rock climbing/equestrian			Niche interests: ATVs/hunting/rock climbing		



Statewide Improvement Needs					
Metro Areas			Non-Metro Areas		
Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
trail upgrades	lighting	water access	trail upgrades	ADA improvements	concessions
restrooms	benches	kiosks	restrooms	lighting	benches
ADA improvements	concessions	fountains	water access	kiosks	playground improvements

This is particular evident in the Mountaineer Country travel region near Morgantown and in the Eastern Panhandle, which share relatively few grant awards similar to the experience of communities in non-metro state areas.



NEW RIVER/ GREENBRIER VALLEY TOURISM REGION

The five county New River/Greenbrier Valley travel region of Fayette, Raleigh, Summers, Greenbrier, and Monroe counties is one of West Virginia's most visited outdoor recreational areas since the designation of the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve as the nation's newest federal park. Explored early for its timber and mineral resources, the area now offers an array of diverse outdoor recreation activities. Among its LWCF-assisted parks, the City of Beckley's New River Park is unique for its development over the site of a 1903-vintage coal mine, now an exhibit.

Primary Interests

Highest outdoor recreational activities included passive park visits, including historic or nature exhibits, with a 94% interest from area residents. Second was the use of non-motorized trails at 93%. While primary trail use was for walking or hiking, Fayette County registered the second highest bicycle trail use at 63% and Greenbrier County registered second-highest mountain-biking trail use at 54%. Third activity interest was attendance at area fairs and festivals at 89%. Fourth highest interest



Major LWCF-assisted park: New River Park, Beckley WV



Major area attraction: New River National Park and Preserve

87%, with a high need for more and larger picnic shelters noted at 38%. Court facilities including basketball, tennis, and pickleball recorded 78% interest, while swimming activities including pools and sprayspads finished at 77%. Last primary interests were arewide boating activities at 72% including power and non-power varieties, however, this figure conceals statewide peak interests in flatwater paddling from Fayette County residents at 78% and whitewater paddling at 65%. Greenbrier residents boating interests were a close second at 76% for flatwater paddling and 42% interest for whitewater paddling.

Secondary Interests

Secondary outdoor recreational interests in the New and Greenbrier River region included motorized trail use at 64% including ATVs, UTVs, and motorcycles; playgrounds at

62%, fishing at 59% including bank fishing and in-stream fishing, and off-leash dog parks at 53%. Community garden interests followed at 32%. Fayette County residents expressed a niche interest in rock climbing at 40%.

Tertiary Interests

A wide variety of niche and seasonal activities completed the extent of New and Greenbrier area residents' outdoor recreational interests. Included in this group were field games at 37% including baseball, football, and soccer; hunting at 29%, particularly deer hunting; golf at 28% including executive and par-3 courses; camping at 20% including primitive and RV-styled campgrounds; disc golf at 19%; equestrian activities at 17%, and winter sport activities at 13% including downhill and cross-country skiing and snowmobiling.

New River/Greenbrier Valley Tourism Region

Primary Interests	Secondary Interests	Tertiary Interests
Daily-Leisure Parks	Motorized Trails	Field Games
Non-Motorized Trails	Fishing	Hunting
Fairs & Festivals	Dog Parks	Golf
Court Games	Community Gardens	Camping

Improvements

Residents and providers responses for park improvements in the New River/Greenbrier Valley region roughly followed statewide patterns for nine improvements areas noted on the next page. Both providers and residents agreed upon trail improvements (more trails and improved trails) as their top priority. This agreement is consistent with the high usage trails receive in this area with its influx of visitors from in and out of

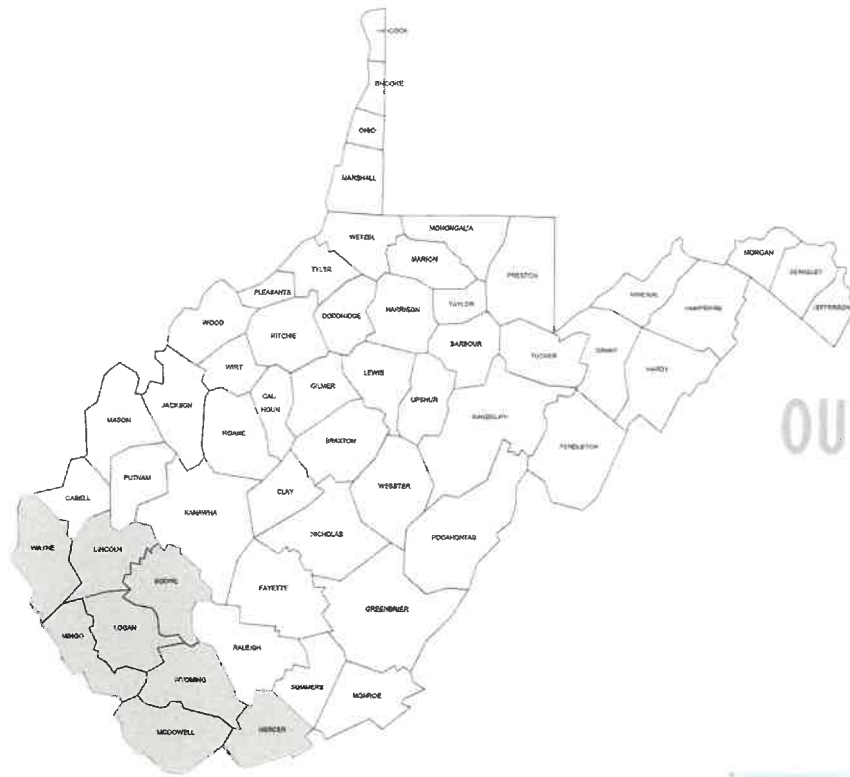
state. With minor exceptions, residents saw a greater than average need for specific improvements in seven of eight other work areas. Compared with residents' opinions, providers in this region saw even more need for improvements across all work areas when compared to statewide averages for the same work items. Detailed comparisons of park improvements between work areas, state residents, area residents, and area providers is found on the following page.

As noted, resident and provider concerns were alike for trail improvements, however for most concerns providers' interests were greater than that of residents for every area of improvement, particularly in the areas of restroom, shelter, and security improvements. This would be evident from the providers' greater perspective on the impacts of visitation-state's SCORP survey, the New River/Greenbrier Valley Travel Region had the highest number of visitors' visitation responses, second only to visitor responses from the state's Potomac Highlands region. Aside from trail work, providers' concerns were greatest for shelter improvements with responses 40% greater than that of residents. Second to this concern were providers' perceived need for security improvements which were 33% more than that of residents.

improvements at 23% greater than the improvement needs as seen by residents. Each of these particular work area is a direct reflection on the strains of necessary support facilities in response to increased visitation and utilization. ADA improvement needs are another impact of increased visitation. While ADA improvements were seen as less of an improvement need compared to statewide averages by area residents, area providers noted a 15% greater need. This again is another indication of the providers' greater perception of a more diverse population of visitors with a greater range of needs than that seen by area residents. Third behind trail and support facilities were greater needs for water access improvements, particularly in Fayette and Greenbrier Counties, with their high fishing, boating, and whitewater activities.

New River/Greenbrier Valley Tourism Region Improvements

work item	residentss	providers	state average
trail upgrades	99%	99%	64%
restroom improvements	63%	78%	60%
general maintenance	55%	78%	53%
water accrss	58%	66%	52%
better seating	46%	54%	43%
ADA improvements	41%	56%	42%
playground upgrades	37%	44%	33%
shelter upgrades	38%	78%	31%
security improvements	23%	56%	24%



OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL PRIORITIES: HATFIELD-McCOYS REGION

The Hatfield-McCoys Mountain Travel Region occupies the western edge of West Virginia bordering Kentucky and comprises the eight county area of Wayne, Lincoln, Boone, Logan, Mingo, Wyoming, McDowell, and Mercer Counties. Historically the first area of coal discovered in West Virginia in Boone County, it is now better referred to as the Southwest Coalfields in the state. Among motorized trail enthusiast, this region is a major draw for the Hatfield-McCoys Trail Authority comprised of more than 1,000 miles of contiguous ATV and UTV trails in a nine county area, the largest such system east of the Mississippi River.

Primary Interests

Residents in the Hatfield-McCoys region expressed the highest number of primary (over 70%) outdoor recreational interests of any of the nine state travel regions. Highest outdoor recreational activities included daily leisure park visits, having a 94% interest. Second was the use of non-motorized trails at 90%. This figure



Major attraction: Hatfield-McCoys ATV Trails



Major LWCF-assisted park: Waterways Park, Julian WV (Boone County)

represents primary trail use for walking or hiking; bicycling on paved trails represented 37% of trail interests while mountain biking interests drew 29%. Third primary interest was attending fairs and festivals at 91%. Fourth in interest were court games, including pickleball, basketball, and tennis, at 88%. Additional primary activities included swimming, including pools and splashpads, at 85%, picnicking at 84%, and motorized trails at 83%. Boone County's ATV, UTV and motorcycle participation was third highest in the state at 90% behind Gilmer County in the Mountain Lakes region at 99% and that of the Mountaineer Country region at 95%.

and soccer

Secondary Interests

Fishing and boating were the highest interests in this cate

gory at 63% and 60%, respectively, followed by playgrounds at 59%. Dog parks were the third-most recreational interest at 51%, followed by camping at 47% and field games at 46%. Activities in this category included baseball, football, and soccer. Bicycling had a participation rate of 37% while mountain biking's participation rate was 29%.

Tertiary Interests

Chief among tertiary interests in the Hatfield-McCoy region was deer hunting at 31%. Other interests included mountain biking and community gardens tied at 29%, whitewater paddling at 23%, equestrian interests at 17%, and winter sports activities at 16%, including downhill and cross-country skiing and snowmobiling.

Hatfield-McCoy's Mountain Travel Region Outdoor Interests

Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
daily leisure parks	fishing - boating	deer hunting
non-motorized trails	playgrounds	mountain biking
event-oriented parks	dog parks	community gardens
court games	camping	whitewater paddling
swimming	field games	equestrian
picnicking	bicycling	winter sports
motorized trails		

Improvements

Residents and providers in the Hatfield-McCoy's region roughly followed statewide priorities for improvements in outdoor recreational facilities (see next table). Both

residents and providers agreed upon trail improvements (more trails and trail upgrades) as their top priorities, with providers seeing a greater need in this area of improvement. Providers consistently saw greater needs

in all facility areas except for water access and playground improvements. An 80% need for general maintenance improvements in providers' responses was derived from their comments regarding increased general operation and maintenance for the past five years and projections for increased O&M and capital replacement costs for the next five year period. Greater improvement needs in a variety of support facilities including restrooms (more restrooms and better maintained restrooms), more seating arrangements, additional ADA improvements, more and larger picnic shelter facilities, and increased security measures were all highlighted by area providers, exceeding both residents and state-

wide responses for the same work items, with restrooms being a notable exception where area residents saw a greater need for restroom improvements than the need seen by either area providers or residents statewide. Providers' responses in general were greater based upon their better perspective on the impacts of increased visitation upon outdoor recreational attractions in the region. Among the nine state travel regions included in the state's SCORP survey, out-of-state visitor returns for the Hatfield-McCoys region accounted for 17% or roughly half of the statewide average of 33% returns from area visitors.

Park Improvements: Hatfield-McCoy Mountain Travel Region

work item	residents	providers	state average
trail upgrades	81%	92%	64%
restroom improvements	67%	58%	60%
general maintenance	56%	80%	53%
water access	55%	25%	52%
better seating	52%	75%	43%
ADA improvements	44%	75%	42%
playground upgrades	38%	17%	33%
shelter upgrades	33%	58%	31%
security improvements	28%	50%	24%



Primary Interests

Major area attraction: Charleston Sternwheel Regatta, Haddad Riverfront Park, Charleston WV



Major LWCF-assisted park: Ritter Park, Huntington WV

Picnicking registered 76% interest, while flatwater boating (powered and non-powered) finished at 71%.

Secondary Interests

Swimming, including pool or splashpad visits, had 67% interest, followed by bicycling (paved trails) at 66%. Fishing, both bank and boating varieties, recorded interest at 52%. Dog parks and motorized trails (ATV's, UTV's and motorcycles) tied at 49%. Playgrounds and mountain biking tied next at 48%. Camping registered 40% interest and field games, including baseball, football, and soccer, registered 38% interest. Community gardens registered 35% interest.

Tertiary Interests

Third-order interests included winter sports, including downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling, had 27% interest. Whitewater paddling had 25% interest.

Disc golf registered 22% interest, slightly ahead of hunting at 21%. Golf, both executive and par three types, had 17% interest, followed by equestrian interests of 16% and geocaching at 12%.

Improvements

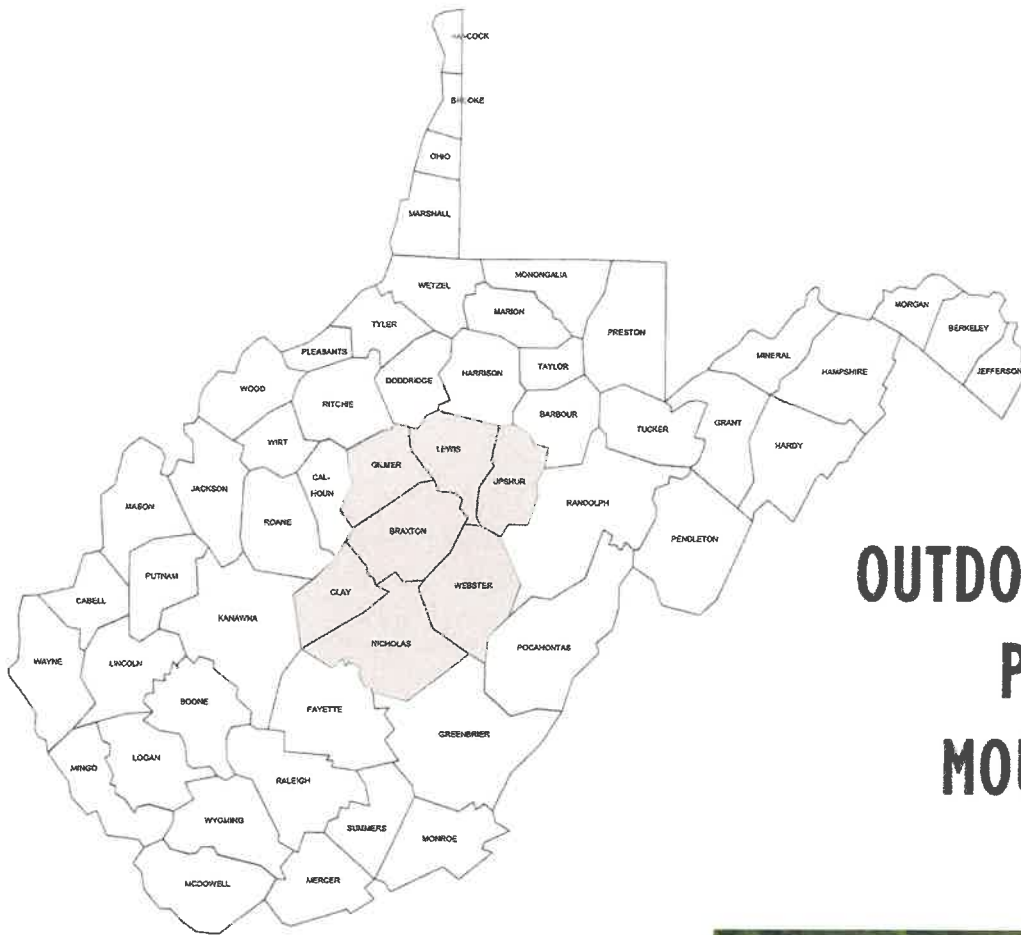
Area providers noted the greatest need for improvements in the areas of trail and shelter improvements (99%), playground upgrades (60%) and security improvements (40%), exceeding both residents and statewide averages for the same work items. In other respects, area residents and providers improvement priorities roughly followed statewide patterns, with trail improvements noted as the area most in need of improvement, followed by restroom upgrades, general park maintenance, and improved water access. (See table on following page for specific ratings).

Outdoor Recreation Interests in the Metro Valley Region

primary	secondary	tertiary
non-motorized trails	swimming	winter sports
daily-leisure parks	bicycling	whitewater paddling
event-oriented parks	fishing	disc golf
court games	dog parks motorized trails	hunting
picnicking	playgrounds mountain biking	golfing
flatwater boating	camping	equestrian
	field games	geocaching
	community gardens	

Priority of Outdoor Recreational Improvements in the Metro Valley Region

work item	residents	providers	state averages
trail upgrades	61%	99%	64%
restroom improvements	55%	60%	60%
general maintenance	53%	40%	53%
water access	52%	20%	52%
ADA improvements	39%	40%	42%
playground upgrades	30%	60%	33%
shelter upgrades	24%	99%	31%
security improvements	27%	40%	24%



OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL PRIORITIES: MOUNTAIN LAKES REGION

In the heart of central West Virginia lies the six county Mountain Lakes tourism region, consisting of Clay, Nicholas, Webster, Braxton, Lewis, and Upshur Counties. The state's densest hardwood forests and largest freshwater lake are to be found here creating a variety of public outdoor recreational opportunities. Unique among the area's LWCF-assisted parks is the state's only zoological park known as the West Virginia Wildlife Center, home to more than 30 species of native and once-native wildlife fauna.

Primary Interests

Highest resident interests were noted for visitation to historic or natural passive parks at 94% followed by attendance to area fairs and festivals at 92%. Non-motorized trails visitation including walking and hiking registered third at 89%, followed by picnicking at 82%. Swimming, including pool and spray-pad opportunities, registered at 72%, while court



Major area attraction: Summersville Lake State Park



*Major LWCF-assisted park: West Virginia Wildlife Center
French Creek, WV*

games, including pickleball, basketball, and tennis, registered at 71%.

Secondary Interests

Motorized trails (ATV's, UTV's and motorcycles) showed the most interest at 68%, followed by flatwater boating (powered and non-powered varieties) at 62%. Fishing (bank and boating) registered 56% interest, along with playgrounds. Interest in dog parks was 50%, followed by camping at 44%, bicycling (paved paths) at 43%, deer hunting at 41% and field games at 40%, including baseball, football, and soccer.

Tertiary Interests

Third-order interests here included mountain biking at 35%, community gardens at 34%, whitewater paddling at 28%, golf (executive and par 3) at 24%, winter sports including downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling, at 21%, and equestrian interest at 15%.

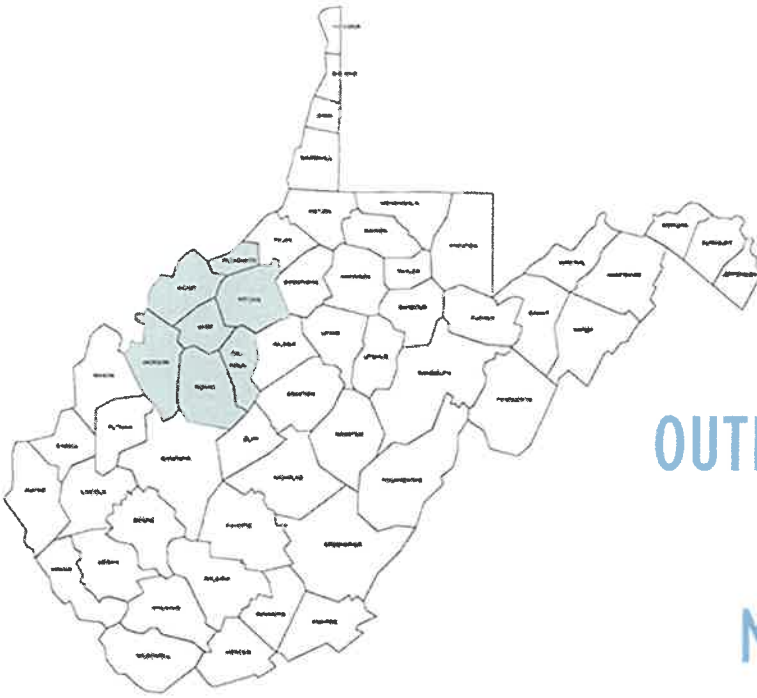
Improvements

The greatest number of improvements prioritized among West Virginia counties was noted in the Mountain Lakes region, particularly in Braxton, Gilmer, Upshur, and Nicholas Counties. Both residents in this region expressed higher than average concerns for upgrades in the ten areas of improvement included in the state's survey. Specific improvement areas included a need for restroom upgrades, water access, shelter improvements and playground improvements in Braxton County; restroom and ADA improvements in Gilmer County; general maintenance improvements and shelter and playground upgrades in Upshur County; and better security improvements in Nicholas County. Priorities of area providers exceeded statewide averages by wide margins in several areas including trails, general maintenance, water access, improved seating, upgraded shelters and improved security (see table next page).

primary	secondary	tertiary
daily leisure parks	motorized trails	mountain biking
event-oriented parks	flatwater boating	community gardens
non-motorized trails	fishing playgrounds	whitewater paddling
picnicking	dog parks	golfing
swimming	camping	winter sports
court games	bicycling	equestrian
	deer hunting	
	field sports	

Improvement Priorities in the Mountain Lakes Travel Region

work item	residents	providers	state averages
trail upgrades	53%	86%	64%
restroom improvements	66%	63%	60%
general maintenance	56%	77%	53%
water access	53%	63%	52%
better seating	48%	50%	43%
ADA improvements	48%	25%	42%
playground upgrades	11%	25%	33%
shelter upgrades	44%	63%	31%
security improvements	33%	28%	24%



OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL PRIORITIES: MID-OHIO VALLEY REGION

Growth of the Mid-Ohio Valley Travel Region of Wood, Wirt, Jackson, Pleasants, Roane, Calhoun, and Ritchie Counties increased steadily from the onset of an 1860's oil boom in Wirt County, boosting the importance of Parkersburg as a trade center and shipping point during and after the Civil War. Parkersburg's City Park became the state's oldest municipal park, established in 1896 which still provides a wealth of outdoor recreational activities for the greater Ohio Valley area.

Primary Interests

Highest statewide interests in historic or natural passive park visitation and attendance at fairs and festivals was noted by the area residents at 95% and 94%, respectively. Picnicking and motorized trail participation (ATV's/UTV's) were second-order, primary interests tied at 86%. Close third priorities were court games at 76% including pickleball,



Major LWCF-assisted Park: Parkersburg City Park



Major area attraction: Fort Boreman Park

basketball and tennis, and swimming, including both pool and splashpad experiences, at 74%.

Secondary Interests

Tied at 58% interest were flatwater boating (power and non-powered varieties) and visiting playgrounds, followed closely at 57% by interests in fishing, both bank and boating types. Dog park visitation was third at 53% interest, followed by bicycling (both paved paths and pump tracks) at 43%. Camping and hunting interests were tied at 40%. The last secondary interest noted was mountain biking at 35%.

Tertiary Interests

Tertiary interests below 30% included field sports at 28%, including baseball, football, and soccer, and geocaching at 25% interest; 25% interest was also shown for community gardens. Winter sports including downhill skiing, cross-country skiing and snowmobiling recorded 21% interest. Finally golf, including executive and par three varieties, shared 17% interest along with participation in equestrian activities.

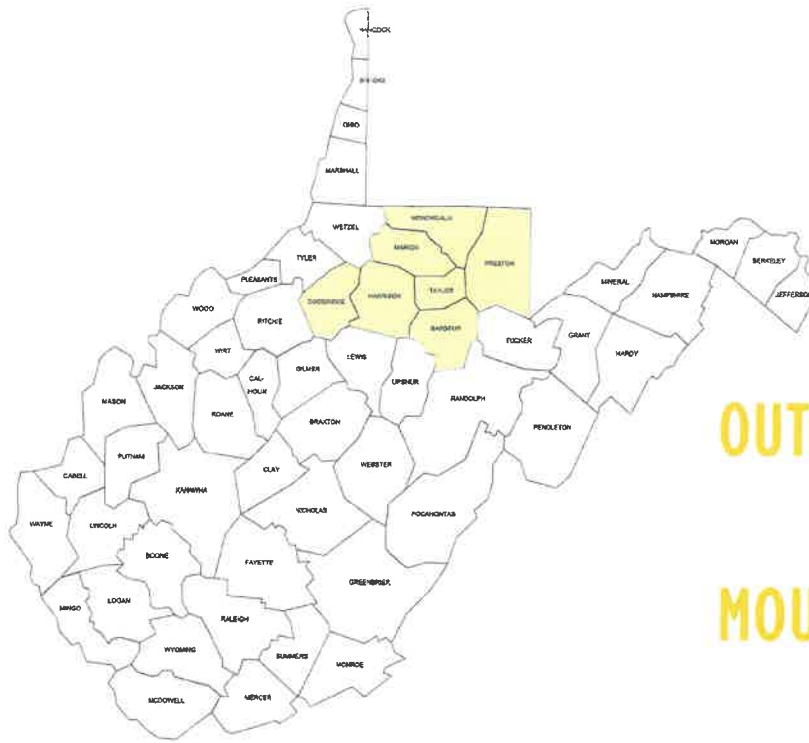
Improvements

Both area residents and providers' order of wanted park improvements followed the rough priority of statewide improvements noted by residents and providers elsewhere. Exceptions to this generalized pattern were area residents' needs noted for shelter improvements at 55%, ADA improvements at 50%, and playground improvements at 40%. Area providers showed greater than statewide average concerns for trail improvements at 71%, shelter upgrades at 71%, and security upgrades at 43%. The higher trail, shelter, and security concerns of area providers was judged to be similar to patterns among providers elsewhere, attributed to their greater view of facility impacts due to higher visitation. The overall spread of improvement priorities in the Mid-Ohio Valley region can be reviewed in the table on the following page.

primary	secondary	tertiary
daily leisure parks	playgrounds	field games
non-motorized trails event-oriented parks	flatwater boating fishing	community gardens
picnicking motorized trails	dog parks	winter sports
court games	bicycling	golfing equestrian
swimming	camping hunting	
	mountain biking	

Priorities of Improvements in the Mid-Ohio Valley Region

work item	residents	providers	state averages
trail upgrades	48%	71%	64%
restroom improvements	58%	57%	60%
general maintenance	55%	29%	53%
water access	45%	43%	52%
better seating	46%	43%	43%
ADA improvements	50%	29%	42%
playground upgrades	40%	14%	33%
shelter upgrades	35%	71%	31%
security improvements	26%	43%	24%



OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL PRIORITIES: MOUNTAINEER COUNTRY REGION

The Mountaineer Country travel region includes Monongalia, Preston, Marion, Taylor, Harrison, Doddridge, and Barbour Counties. The state's largest number of incorporated cities and towns are to be found in this area including its third largest city of Morgantown, located in the second-fastest growing county in the state. This region draws the third greatest weekend trips from out-of-state visitors behind the Potomac Highlands and Greenbrier Valley regions, and has the second-highest number of LWCF-assisted parks to be found in the state.

Primary Interests

Non-motorized trails showed the greatest interest at 95%, followed by visitation to historic or natural area passive parks at 92%. Third primary interest was attendance at area fairs or festivals at 89%, followed by picnicking at 77%. The region's last primary



Major area attraction: WVU Mountaineer Football, Milan Puskar Stadium, Morgantown WV



Major LWCF-assisted park: Veterans Memorial Park, Clarksburg, WV

interest was split between swimming and court games, including pickleball, basketball, and tennis, at 70%.

Secondary Interests

The descending priority of secondary outdoor recreational interests in this region included bicycling (paved trails) at 68%, flatwater boating (powered and non-powered) at 63%, dog park visitation at 52%, rock climbing at 50% playgrounds at 48%, fishing (both bank and boating varieties) at 43%, camping at 40%, motorized trails (ATV's/UTV's/motorcycles) at 37%, and mountain biking at 32%.

Tertiary Interests

First tertiary areawide interest was in field games, including baseball, football, and soccer at 31%, community gardens at 30%, winter sports (downhill skiing, cross-country skiing and snowmobiling) at 29%, whitewater paddling at

23%, hunting ageocashing at 22%, golf (both executive and par3 types) at 15%, and equestrian interests at 9%.

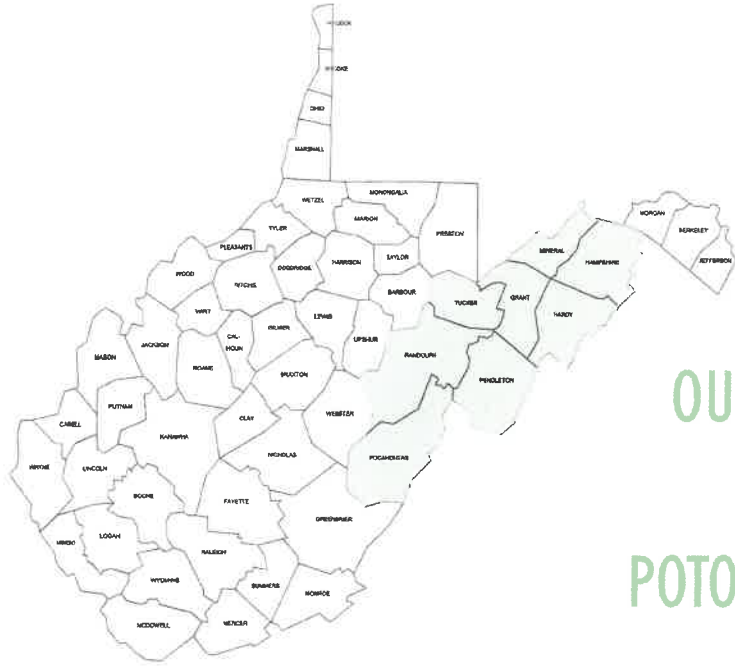
Improvements

Area residents and providers generally agreed with statewide priorities of improvements, with the area providers highlighting priority needs for trail and ADA improvements and upgrades to the areas' park shelters. This was consistent with providers' improvement priorities elsewhere, judged to be based on their greater perspectives on increased visitor impacts and expectations of state and local park facilities. Top overall improvements wanted by area residents included upgrades to trails, restrooms, general park maintenance, and improved water access. Comparisons of recreational needs across resident, providers, and statewide averages is noted on the table found on the following page.

primary	secondary	tertiary
non-motorized trails	bicycling	field games
daily-leisure parks	flatwater boating	community gardens
event-oriented parks	dog parks	winter sports
picnicking	rock climbing	whitewater paddling hunting
swimming court games		geocaching
	camping	golfing
	motorized trails	equestrian
	mountain biking	equestrian

Priority of Outdoor Recreation Improvements in the Mountaineer Country Travel Region

work item	Residents	Providers	State Averages
trail upgrades	87%	82%	64%
restroom improvements	56%	55%	60%
general maintenance	50%	20%	53%
water access	49%	27%	52%
better seating	34%	27%	52%
ADA improvements	35%	64%	42%
playground upgrades	28%	9%	33%
shelter upgrades	25%	46%	31%
security improvements	23%	18%	24%



OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL PRIORITIES: POTOMAC HIGHLANDS REGION

The eight county travel region of Pendleton, Randolph, Pocahontas, Hardy, Tucker, Grant, Mineral, and Hampshire Counties bordering the state of Virginia contain the highest, coldest, and most environmentally sensitive areas to be found in West Virginia. By our state's SCORP survey they were also found to be the areas most visited by out-of-state visitors in search of some of the state's most unique outdoor recreational experiences. Among these experiences is the state's Cass Scenic Railroad State Park, the only extant logging railroad east of the Mississippi River, still operated with Shay steam locomotives from the former company town of Cass to the state's highest peak of Spruce Knob at 4,863 feet elevation.

Primary Interests

Highest outdoor recreational activities among residents were visiting natural or historic scenic areas and non-motorized trails, tied at 94% interest. Non-motorized trail use here includes walking and hiking in which Pocahontas County registered the state's highest hiking/walking trail use at 96%. Other primary interests in this region included



*Major Attraction:
Spruce Knob-Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area*



*Major LWCF-assisted park:
Cass Scenic Railroad State Park, Cass WV*

attendance at fairs and festivals at 93%, picnicking at 88% interest, and swimming including splashpads at 73% interest.

Secondary Interests

A wide variety of secondary outdoor recreational interests were noted in this region including motorized trails (ATV's and UTV's) at 66% interest, flatwater boating at 65%, rock climbing and court games including pickleball, basketball, and tennis tied at 60%, fishing, including bank and boat fishing, at 59% interest, playgrounds at 52% interest, dog parks at 49%, hunting at 38%, and field games including baseball, football, and soccer at 36%. Significantly, Pocahontas County recorded the highest statewide interest in mountain biking at 64%.

Tertiary Interests

The Potomac Highlands registered a variety of tertiary outdoor recreational interests, beginning with winter sports including downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling at 33% interest. Camping and whitewater paddling had tied interests at 30%, followed by community garden interests at 31%. Lesser niche interests in this region included golf, including executive and par three varieties, at 22%, geocaching at 21%, and equestrian interests at 20%.

Improvements

Area providers' matters of concern broadly followed the pattern of providers' interests elsewhere. Highest concerns were for trail upgrades including more trails and better maintained trails at 89%, the highest interest level noted

primary	secondary	tertiary
daily-leisure parks non-motorized trails	motorized trails	winter sports
event-oriented parks	flatwater boating	camping whitewater paddling
picnicking	rock climbing court games	community gardens
swimming	fishing	geocaching
	playgrounds	golfing
	dog parks	equestrian
	mountain biking	
	hunting	
	field games	

statewide. Other significant providers' interests were for for ADA improvements at 56% and shelter improvements at 44%, both higher than statewide and area residents' interests. This pattern again reflects the providers broader views of visitor impacts and demands for facility upgrades.

Residents' improvement needs mirrored those noted statewide, but with lesser demands in the areas of upgrading restrooms, general maintenance, water access, better seating, and playground and security work. Exceptions with greater demands were noted for further improvements to trails and shelters (see table below).

work item	residents	providers	state averages
trail upgrades	75%	89%	64%
restroom improvements	53%	56%	60%
general maintenance	46%	30%	53%
water access	50%	44%	52%
better seating	34%	22%	43%
ADA improvements	44%	56%	42%
playground upgrades	32%	33%	33%
shelter upgrades	39%	44%	31%
security improvements	20%	22%	24%



OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL PRIORITIES: EASTERN PANHANDLE REGION

The state's smallest travel region is also its fastest growing. The Eastern Panhandle region of Morgan, Berkeley, and Jefferson Counties lies on the edge of the Washington D.C. Metro area and owes much of its growth from people moving to West Virginia from Virginia and Maryland. The area is rich from its pre-Civil War history and transportation importance during the war, and later prominence as a mid-point along the multi-state Appalachian Trail.

Primary Interests

Highest outdoor recreational interests were shown for non-motorized trail use for walking or hiking at 93%. Visitation to passive parks with historic or natural landscape features was a close second interest at 92%. Local fairs and festivals ran third at 91%, followed by picnicking at 79% interest. Court games, including pickleball, basketball, and tennis, were the last primary interests, recording 77% interest.



*Major area attraction:
Harpers Ferry National Historical Park*



*Major LWCF-assisted park: War Memorial Park,
Martinsburg WV*

Secondary Interests

Swimming facilities, including pools and sprayspads, tied at 67% interest with flatwater boating, including both power and non-powered varieties. Bicycling (paved paths) showed 61% interest. Playgrounds registered third at 55% interest. Interest in dog parks was next at 51%. Fishing, both bank and boating varieties, registered 44% interest. Mountain biking followed at 41% interest. Lastly, field sports, including baseball, football, and soccer, finished at 34% interest, ahead of community gardens with 32%.

Tertiary Interests

Winter sports, including downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling, registered first at 24%, followed by geocaching at 22%. Motorized trails (ATV's/UTV's) and whitewater paddling tied for third at 21% interest. Camping and rock climbing tied next at 20%. Hunting interest showed

18% interest, followed by golfing (executive and par three) at 16% and equestrian interests at 15%.

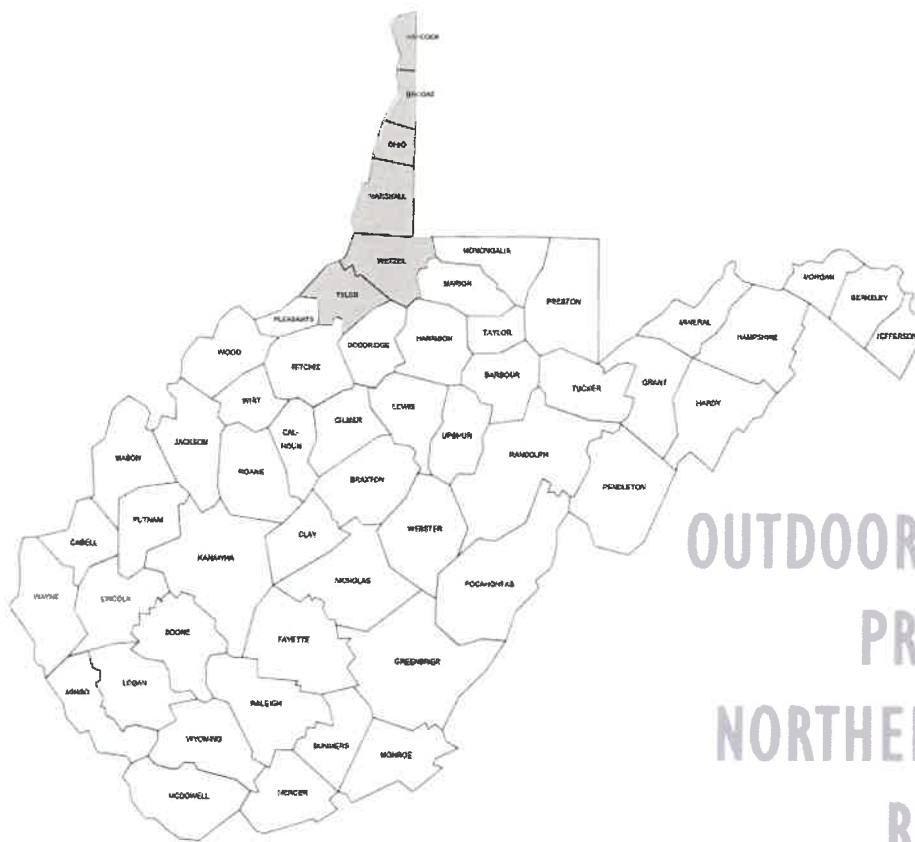
Improvements

Both residents and area providers registered park improvement needs in roughly the same order as seen in statewide averages (see table on next page). Resident priority needs were for trail improvements at 67%, improved water access at 57% and restroom improvements at 48%. Providers' priority interests were more pronounced for restroom improvements, improved water access, and upgraded shelters at 99% and restroom improvements at 75%. Residents here registered the least need for general maintenance and security improvements. Providers' concerns were consistent with other providers elsewhere for facility improvements to deal with increased visitor demands.

primary	secondary	tertiary
non-motorized trails	swimming flatwater boating	winter sports
daily-leisure parks	bicycling	geocaching
event-oriented parks	playgrounds	motorized trails whitewater paddling
court games	fishing	camping rock climbing
	mountain biking	hunting
	field games	golfing
	community gardens	equestrian

Priority of Outdoor Recreational Improvements in the Eastern Panhandle Travel Region

work item	residents	providers	state average
trail upgrades	67%	75%	64%
restroom improvements	48%	99%	60%
general maintenance	40%	50%	53%
water access	57%	99%	52%
better seating	34%	25%	43%
ADA improvements	30%	75%	42%
playground upgrades	30%	50%	33%
shelter upgrades	29%	99%	31%
security improvements	17%	50%	24%



OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL PRIORITIES: NORTHERN PANHANDLE REGION

The six northernmost counties of Brooke, Hancock, Ohio, Marshall, Wetzel and Tyler Counties comprise the area known as the, “Birthplace of West Virginia,” for the establishment of the state’s first capital in Wheeling in 1863. An early manufacturing center, Wheeling’s parks shared in that industrial heritage with Ohio magnate’s Earl Oglebay’s 1,600 acre bequeath to the city that became Oglebay Park, the state’s only self-sufficient public park system.

Primary Interests

Highest outdoor recreational interests included fairs and festivals at 96% and passive park visits, including historic or natural exhibits, at 93%. The Northern Panhandle region logged the highest interest in paved trail bicycling at 81%. This region retained the state’s highest interests in picnicking at 91%, swimming at 82%, and playgrounds at 80%.



Major LWCF-assisted park: Oglebay Park, Wheeling WV



Major area attraction: Italian Heritage Festival, Wheeling

Secondary Interests

Northern Panhandle residents expressed a wide variety of secondary public outdoor recreational interests include camping at 69%, mountain biking at 60%, court games including basketball, pickleball, and tennis tied at 50% with rock climbing, fishing including bank and boat fishing at 49%, field games including baseball, football, and soccer at 46%, community gardening at 44%, and hunting at 43%.

Tertiary Interests

Resident interests in the 30 percent range or less included dog parks at 39%, whitewater paddling at 38%, motorized trails including ATV's and UTV's at 36%, winter sports including downhill and cross-country skiing and snowmobiling at 34%, golf including executive and par three courses at 21% and equestrian activities at 14%.

Improvements

Area providers' priorities consistently outweighed those of residents in all nine areas of improvements surveyed. In several areas, providers interests outweighed those found among residents statewide, including improvements to restrooms, ADA improvements, shelter upgrades, and security improvements. These differences, similar to providers' priorities elsewhere, were judged to be a reflection of the area providers greater awareness of impacts from obsolescence and increased visitation. In other respects, residents and providers opportunities for recreational facility improvements roughly followed stateside patterns, with trail upgrades, restroom improvements, and general maintenance improvements being the major work items prioritized (see improvements table on the following page).

Outdoor Recreational Priorities in the Northern Panhandle Travel Region

primary	secondary	tertiary
event-oriented parks	camping	dog parks
daily-leisure parks non-motorized trails	mountain biking	whitewater paddling
picnicking	court games rock climbing	motorized trails
swimming	fishing	field games
bicycling	community gardens	winter sports
playgrounds	hunting	golfing
		equestrian

Northern Panhandle Travel Region Improvements

work item	residents	providers	state averages
trail upgrades	54%	63%	64%
restroom improvements	55%	75%	60%
general maintenance	53%	50%	53%
water access	41%	50%	52%
better seating	31%	0%	43%
ADA improvements	36%	88%	42%
playground upgrades	44%	13%	33%
shelter upgrades	17%	38%	31%
security improvements	52%	75%	24%

RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings

For more than 60 years, state and local park facilities of all types have benefited from the National Park Service's Land and Water Conservation Fund in West Virginia, having assisted or help acquire 35 state and 324 local park sites with more than 600 park projects. However, the state's near-term LWCF program for the 2027-2031 funding cycle needs address problems from the physical or functional obsolescence of past LWCF projects while supporting future unmet park needs from increased visitation and the reduction of disparities between urban and rural areas where limited population growth reduces abilities to pay for services and consequent growth potential.

In this post-pandemic period, the state of West Virginia has seen out-of-state visitation greater than ten times its resident population, particularly in the Eastern Panhandle, Potomac Highlands, New River-Greenbrier Valley, and Mountaineer Country travel regions. Visitation combined with modest immigration raises expectations for additional or more modern facilities. Chief among new facility demands are those for increased non-motorized trails or upgrades for existing non-motorized trails. With ever-increasing appeals to exercise, trails require only the cost of shoes as gear for participation. The utility of athletic footwear for everyday wear and recreation, combined with daily leisure park usage as the state's highest outdoor recreational interest makes trails an affordable gateway for West Virginians to nurture their casual or incidental



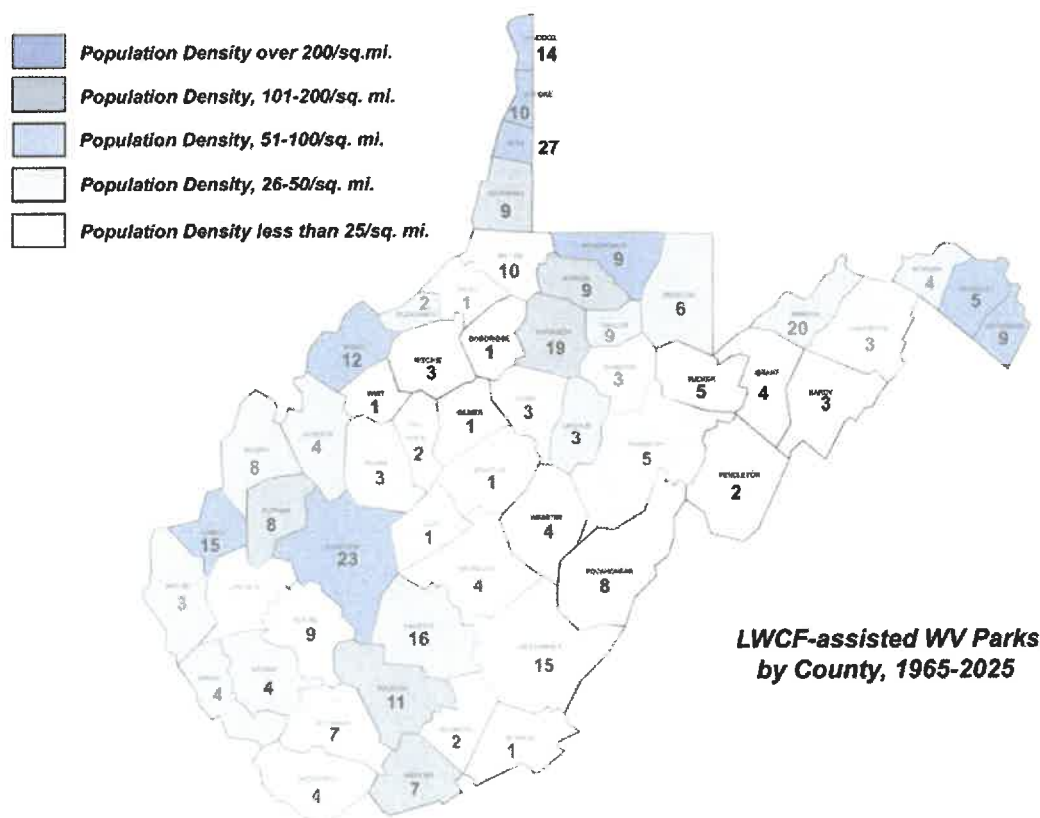
use of low-intensity parks using versatile clothing they already wear for their ordinary activities. The leisure use of parks also invites engagement with a more diverse group of people using trails for other types of trail-related recreation including running, hiking, biking, and camping. Over time this can lead to tangible results in more stable or additional local retail and restaurant growth besides businesses supporting wider area interests in other outdoor activities such as hunting, fishing, or boating where these exist.

Agreements on priorities for facility improvements between state residents and providers was another tell for increased visitation impacts. People expect modern facilities when they recreate, but many park improvements built 40 or more years ago--a majority of which were funded with prior LWCF assistance--have reached the ends of their functional life and are now wither physically or functionally obsolescent. Calls for increased general maintenance and larger or additional shelters and restrooms are indicative of these impacts. Always a challenge, financing necessary repairs and replacement for basic improvements is particularly difficult for the state's small towns and rural counties because of their limited resources to do

more than provide essential services. Because the recreational needs of these communities are indeed basic, the funding of essential park improvements is a principle recommendation for many of the state's communities.

Since over 90 percent of the state's counties have poverty rates above the U.S. median, costs of recreational park improvements represent a significant barrier for the timing and financing of specific park improvements. Disparities between funding capabilities of large and small communities are evident from the distribution of LWCF awards over a 60-year period, with costs and funding favoring those communities having an ability to pay. The state lacks supplemental funding to assist local projects for many of the same financial reasons shared with its smaller governmental units. Federal share requirements aggravate the barrier of contemporary replacement costs since the

cost of a new playground can be equal to that of a house. Increased costs elevate an overall need for communities to evaluate their proposed park improvements within their ability to pay, both for original construction and continuing operations and maintenance. For the state's small towns and rural areas, this reinforces the priority to review basic park improvements before other park betterments. In that regard, the state's risk assessment of project proposals, based on reports from the state's inspector general, fairly indicates future park funding capabilities based on past park funding expenditures. Many communities that fund park improvements from non-park accounts can credit themselves better by crediting their park expenditures to a park and recreation account on reports to the state inspector general. This could work to their advantage by documenting evidence of financial capability to better document matching share requirements and continued maintenance support.



Source: WVDO, November, 2025

State visitation in large numbers signals a need for reinvestment in parks, not only in greater capital repairs but in funds to acquire new parklands as part of a broader community and economic development effort. Parks and attractive natural areas base their appeal on the image of a high-quality environment, which for any community can make the difference between looking like a waypoint or a destination. Overdevelopment elsewhere in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic creates an innate draw for people seeking nature, wellness, and escape--three top state motivations surveyed, that complements West Virginia having high scenic values and the lowest population density in the Northeast outside New England. Outworn and over-used facilities jeopardize this innate attraction and encourage people--residents and visitors alike--to go elsewhere for their recreation. General park main-

tenance improvements were and are a recognized park improvement priority. Aiding this stated need are greater efforts to develop local knowledge between community leaders and other area outdoor groups and users to not only review and connect local outdoor recreational assets with their support for local businesses but also to promote greater connectivity with related and complementary attractions in neighboring communities and regions to offer visitors a broader outdoor recreational experience. These efforts are to be encouraged for their long effort to produce results. A current example of active collaborations is a state trails effort (WVtrails.org) to promote state trail connectivity and to 'ground-truth' parks with community development objectives to promote greater trail use and enjoyment.

SCORP Priorities for the 2027-2031 Funding Cycle

By statute, LWCF funding is limited to the following purposes: 1) acquiring lands and waters for public outdoor recreation, and 2) developing basic outdoor recreation facilities to serve the general public. Following the general goals outlined above, the specific SCORP priorities for the West Virginia LWCF program are the following:



Acquire and/or develop local basic park and playground facilities in rural, non-metro areas of the state to increase access across the state to quality outdoor recreation. Simple park developments, built within a community's ability to maintain, that facilitate social gatherings, encourage physical activity options for all ages, or increase economic vitality by enhancing local outdoor recreation and tourism assets are encouraged. Basic facilities proposed can include shelters, walks, restrooms, shade and play areas, benches, trash receptacles, and signage.



Provide funding assistance for the maintenance of, or addition to, local or state parks, forests, or wildlife management areas when such assistance is needed to restore or maintain services beyond the present. Capital repairs represent the largest demand and most difficult to fundraise to sustain a high quality outdoor recreational attraction. Many if not most LWCF applications are expected to fit this priority as a significant number of state and local park facilities are near or past their physical or functionally useful life.



Continue to develop, renovate, or expand state or local parks with new facilities and/or land acquisitions. Proposed activities should demonstrate how the new facilities and/or land acquisitions will improve community health and wellness, develop and promote outdoor recreation assets associated with tourism and new resident attraction, or encourage conservation and stewardship of natural areas that contribute to outdoor recreation.

SCORP SYNOPSIS:

The Open Project Selection Process (OPSP)

LWCF outdoor recreation infrastructure matching share grants are based upon a competitive application process, starting from a West Virginia Division of Economic Development (WVDED) invitation to units of state and local government and others interested. The announcement is usually made once yearly following WVDED confirmation of its LWCF apportionment from the National Park Service (NPS). Projects are screened by the WVDED for recommendation to the NPS which makes the award decisions. A 'second round' WVDED application cycle is possible in a given federal fiscal year if the state's LWCF fund balance exceeds its apportionment and the NPS has sufficient time to review and award project proposals before September 30th, the end of the federal fiscal year.

Timelines

Timing is everything with the development and submission of a LWCF application. ***Call the WVDED first and early rather than late*** (304-558-2234 or 304-352-3959) to determine eligibility of the applicant and project and also to generalize ideas, steps, financial plans, review criteria, suggestions and any particular areas of concern. Three months is given for project planning, but LWCF applicants are encouraged to plan year-around to avoid having incomplete or ill-timed projects being submitted. Vetted applications are more competitive applications, as amended.

Zero to three months (application deadline). This is the time to get plans, resources, support and deliverables secured. Technical assistance is available from the WVDED and is particularly encouraged for first-time applicants, new staff not familiar with the LWCF program, or old staff not up-to-date on NPS program changes. The WVDED encourages the submission of a trial application prior to a submission deadline for vetting purposes--trial applications received prior to deadline make for more competitive projects, as amended. ***Call for questions early and often!***

Three-four months from deadline. This is time for the WVDED to complete error and omission reviews on the applications received. Major applications errors and omissions (E&O) include lack of detailed plans, lack of detailed budgets, lack of professional opinion of probable cost, lack of documented match, lack of National Historic Preservation or National Environmental Protection Act clearance, missing or incomplete UASFLA*-qualified appraisals on land acquisition projects (*Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions), missing or incomplete project or budget narratives, missing or incomplete plans and plats. Two weeks to resolve E&O matters may be inadequate before the WVDED needs to submit complete applications to the NPS, hence the emphasis on starting early rather than late. ***72-hour turnarounds may be necessary on requests.***

Four-eight months from deadline. WVDED project ratings (see following section) start from complete project applications meeting state SCORP priorities and NPS review criteria. Incomplete project proposals may be the basis for resubmission in a subsequent funding cycle at an applicant's discretion. This period is reserved for the WVDED to complete on-site project inspections, NPS application reviews, and NPS award decisions, which end this period.

Eight-twelve months from award. Federal and state-local contract documents and financial records are set-up for execution. Deed restrictions on park property recorded. Project periods are typically 36 months but may be extended to five years for cause by amendment, subject to NPS review and approval. Grantees are encouraged to start early rather than late on their projects as the time value of money diminishes the face value of a grant with late starts and slow finishes.

2027-2031 LWCF PRIORITIES

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Rating Projects

The WV-SCORP's program goal translates into themed project priorities. The scaling of project applications starts from having a complete application by NPS guidelines. Incomplete applications are not rated. Follow-up error and omission matters are time-sensitive and typically have no more than a week to be resolved following an application due date. Anything left incomplete or unresolved to NPS satisfaction in the follow-up process can end a project's consideration for that funding cycle.

Relationship to WV-SCORP Priorities (see preceding paragraphs) - Maximum 30 points
(see Likert scale below)

0 pts. 15 pts. 30 pts.

30 pts. - Better than expected

15 pts. - Expected

0 pts. - Less than expected or not observed

Site and Project Suitability

Criteria include public access and ownership, ADA compliance, plans available, other services proximate, UASFLA-qualified appraisal and review completed on land acquisition proposals, completed environmental reviews.

- +5 pts. Site and project plans to scale with application
- +5 pts. ADA access includes accessibility to project vicinity from park entrance
- +5 pts. Material cost estimates shown by unit prices and material quantities
- +5 pts. Land acquisition includes development
- +10 pts. Land acquisition includes completed review appraisal from state
- +10 pts. Value-added park developments that adjoin or are near existing historic sites, restaurants or other tourism draws, schools or former school sites, hospitals or clinics, and floodplains or other underutilized natural areas to stimulate or rejuvenate a community's visitation or increased physical activity opportunities

Demographics

Criteria includes age range suitability for LWCF-eligible project; evidence of public consensus; evidence of trend analysis or justification for project demand. Ratings based on stratification of SCORP resident survey responses to particular recreational activities or facilities (See Appendix ##); niche interests not elsewhere supported need evidence of expressed support for that activity; support facility improvements without a constituency need evidence of park usage or attendance to establish need.

- +15 pts. Project's purpose within upper third of state residents' facility preferences
- +10 pts. Project's purpose within middle third of state residents' facility preferences
- +5 pts. Project's purpose within lower third of state residents' facility preferences
- +5 pts. Niche qualification of project purpose not elsewhere classified
- 15 pts. No evidence of park user data or engagement

Infrastructure

Criteria includes the age and condition of existing parks or public spaces, or the absence of any parks to justify the need for one; descriptions of recent park improvements, park programming of activities for residents or visitors, or efforts to develop new parks.

- +10 pts. Project within ARC-defined distressed or at-risk area
- +10 pts. Project for new park development or most recent LWCF grant prior to 1990
- +10 pts. Project's park area free of other LWCF problems: ADA access, groundskeeping, conversions, lack of capital repairs or replacement of physically or functionally obsolete facilities
- 10 pts. Deduction for existing, active LWCF project grant or LWCF grant completed within previous three years
- 15 pts. Evidence of unresolved LWCF public land conversion on park project site

Government Finances

Criteria includes evidence of the project sponsor's capacity to operate and maintain the proposed park improvements by review of the past five years of general budget support or other evidence of local capacity to budget park maintenance; evidence of park capital improvements budgeted in the last five years; evidence of cash or cash equivalents on hand for park maintenance; detailed project budget; local capacity to insure park improvements in a floodplain.

- +10 pts. Operations & maintenance budget for parks evident from past five years
- +10 pts. 50 percent match evident from source documentation and governing body resolution
- +10 pts. Evidence of current reserve, levy, or other special revenue budget funds evident for park support
- 15 pts. No park budget history or plans to suggest operations and maintenance capacity necessary to sustain park or playground operation

Citizens Engagement

Citizens participation is commonly restricted to superficial activities in the design development of a project. However, the lack of public support may make a project's usefulness unproductive or dissatisfying to its would-be users if planned without purposeful engagement. Among state non-profit organizations surveyed by the West Virginia Nonprofit Association, 25 percent said they did not have a vision compelling enough to unify a governing board, staff and would-be donors that could facilitate decision-making. The same problem could be said of many small communities. Worthwhile participation for a decision-based outcome to pursue a federal construction grant is layered into "parts" that should roughly include evidence in a given application of the following participatory elements:

◦ Basic Information

When and how is the end product proposed or its alternative/s described, and which parts of the whole generate the most interest among residents as consumers? What is the experience/s wanted as a guide? Any stories to relate? State LWCF apportionments exist primarily to support public open space acquisitions and development, however the WVDED, as liaison agency for the NPS, can oversee park and natural areas impact studies of statewide importance and relevance to the WV-SCORP by and for other units of state government.

◦ Argument

The basic question is one of 'agree or disagree,' but successful responses can go further to nuance whether a given project is, 'better with..., or better without..., some part or another or what priorities at what costs are there for the different project pieces, up to the limits of a community's ability to pay?

◦ Commitment

At this point the governing body should be the most active participant in trying to prompt interest in a given project while residents offer their passive response (these roles may be reversed), but at this point a consensus should emerge where leaders and residents see some combination of individual project pieces becoming a whole project. Passiveness about a given project should then translate to enthusiasm. This step, if successful, leads to the last "part" below.

◦ Co-Production

"Next Steps" should involve some organization and division of labor between officials and resident supporters or others based on their motivation, knowledge, or skills to aid an application effort. Specific parts to consider involve getting cost estimates, designing the layout, writing the proposal, working on a financial plan or donors, and promoting interest and support for the project through social media or word-of-mouth relationships. The WVDED encourages the use of the state's Regional Planning and Development Council staff to help in the organization of a project proposal.

Project Amendments/Multiple Projects

To accommodate bid overruns for an existing scope of work or extra work on the same project site, the WVDED Community Development Director may authorize submission of a project amendment to the NPS for a LWCF award increase, up to the limits of the state's unobligated LWCF fund balance at the time of project amendment. Award increases require justification for NPS review purposes as part of the amendment process.

Units of state or local government may submit more than one LWCF application at different funding levels to improve their competitive position or phase part of a comprehensive park development plan; however, each project must be functionally complete and not dependent on subsequent phases or stages to become operational. No more than two active LWCF projects for the same grantee will be entertained in each funding cycle, and the grantee must be able to demonstrate a financial capacity to operate both projects, if funded.

Planning Projects

State LWCF apportionments exist primarily to support public open space acquisitions and development; however, the WVDED, as liaison agency for the NPS, can oversee park and natural areas impact studies of statewide importance and relevance to the WV-SCORP by and for other units of state government. Studies including the economic impact or management of park developments or the protection of natural, ecological or recreational resources of statewide importance can be prepared in consultation with the NPS, provided they do not duplicate other research efforts and can provide the necessary, 50 percent matching share required. Site specific master plans, capital improvements plans, project design development plans, tourism or other marketing studies are not eligible for assistance.

