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COUNTY COMMISSIONERS Association of Pennsylvania

The County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) is the voice of county government; a statewide nonprofit, nonpartisan association representing all 67 counties in Pennsylvania. CCAP members include county commissioners, council members, county executives, administrators, chief clerks and solicitors. CCAP strengthens the counties' abilities to govern their own affairs and improve the well-being and quality of life for every Pennsylvania resident. It advocates for favorable state and federal legislation, programs and policies on behalf of counties. CCAP is committed to service excellence through education, information, insurance, technology and other programs that support effective county government. Founded in 1886, CCAP is a partner with the National Association of Counties.

To acquire an article idea submittal form for CCAP's *Pennsylvania County News* please email John Buffone at jbuffone@pacounties.org.

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summer
2022

PENNSYLVANIA county news

Summer is a time for getting outside and enjoying everything Mother Nature has to offer. Although often overlooked, Pennsylvania counties actually play a large role in constructing, maintaining and improving many of the outdoor destinations we all enjoy. Through their hard work, counties play a key role in upholding and promoting Pennsylvania's natural beauty.



features



Putting Outdoor Recreation to Work for Pennsylvania Communities



America250PA planting Liberty Trees in each Pennsylvania County



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president's commentary



DARYL MILLER

President
County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania

Serving this year as President of our association is a great honor and privilege. And yes, the time passes by very quickly. As I'm writing this, we are more than halfway through 2022. One of my focuses for this year was to promote greater involvement by the membership. I truly believe we need to be engaged and active in forming the positions CCAP advocates for on our behalf. Recently we started an outreach by holding what will be a number of regional (or district) meetings, the first of which was held in Williamsport in June. From all indications, those who participated in that meeting came away thinking it was a great opportunity to gather more informally, network with neighboring commissioners, council members and hear from our Executive Director Lisa Schaefer and other CCAP staff members.

More of these meetings are planned to be held around the state in hopes of giving members who may have not been able to attend one of the larger conferences recently, or who may have been newly elected since 2019 and until now been unable to attend due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, a chance to participate. This is an association, and as such it is a member driven entity. CCAP's core function is to work on behalf of its members. That representation takes on many different forms, such as advocacy, education and at times, providing services like the many insurance programs they provide.

Recently CCAP embarked on an effort to take an introspective look at revisiting our mission and vision statements in order to see if they adequately describe to staff, members and others as I put

it, "who are we, and what do we do." Developing, or in this case, redeveloping a Vision / Mission statement may sound like a rather easy task. However, it's not as easy as it sounds. To put together short concise descriptions defining who you are and what you do or stand for, especially as an organization is challenging. In the early summer, several Board Members and staff members met for a day to attempt to do just that. It was an interesting day, to say the least. Facilitating the process that day was Liz Weber, who some of you may remember from previous CCAP Conference presentations. It was fascinating to see the different directions the conversations and process took throughout the morning and into the afternoon. Ultimately though, when the final wording was settled upon, it was clear how worthwhile the time spent was to the final product.

Mission Statement

CCAP advocates as the unifying voice of all Pennsylvania counties and provides leadership and support for excellence in county government.

Vision Statement

CCAP is the recognized leader for Pennsylvania county government.



The vision statement decided upon was "CCAP is the recognized leader for Pennsylvania county government.". As for the mission statement, "CAP advocates as the unifying voice of all Pennsylvania counties and provides leadership and support for excellence in county government." These are statements which are truly the guideposts describing "who CCAP is, and what they do."

When you consider our association is governed by a set of bylaws containing hundreds of words, our (CCAP's) platform contains several thousand words, and the priorities adopted annually contains again several hundred words, all driven by membership input which becomes a daunting task to (in a couple of sentences) describe what CCAP is and what CCAP does. Saying all this again, my

focus has been and will continue to be to encourage participation and engagement by our membership! This is your association, and as such it is through your participation and involvement that directs the association leadership and staff to work on your behalf! Thank you for all tireless work you do on behalf of your constituents and counties. Likewise, to the CCAP Staff and leadership, who work tirelessly on your behalf to support your efforts! I am very proud to be a part of this process and honored to be your President this year! 🍷

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CCAP is pleased to offer a variety of opportunities to vendors who wish to do business with Pennsylvania counties including participation in the associate member vendor program, technology vendor partnership program, conference attendance and sponsorship, advertising in the *Pennsylvania County News* magazine, and more. There also is an opportunity to participate in a bundled package which includes a variety of year-round benefits for firms looking to increase their exposure among Pennsylvania county officials. CCAP is pleased to welcome the following vendors who have signed on as 2022 participants in the bundled sponsorship packages. We thank them for their support of CCAP and counties in Pennsylvania.

For more information about our vendor opportunities, please contact Mandi Glantz, Director of Marketing and Vendor Relations, at (717) 736-4739 or mglantz@pacounties.org.

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Contact: Kimberly Hall

The National Association of Counties (NACo) unites America's 3,069 county governments. Founded in 1935, NACo brings county officials together to advocate with a collective voice on national policy, exchange ideas and build new leadership skills, pursue transformational county solutions, enrich the public's understanding of county government and exercise exemplary leadership in public service. NACo's Programs and Services offer counties unique opportunities to help your residents, your employees and your county meet the needs of the future. CCAP has a long standing relationship with NACo and their sponsoring programs. As a CCAP member you have the opportunity to participate in the following endorsed programs: NACo Live Healthy-Dental and Health Discount Program (www.naco.org/health), NACo 457 Deferred Compensation administered by Nationwide Retirement Solutions (www.nationwide.com) and cashVest® administered by three+one® (<https://threeplusone.us>).

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Did you know that every spring and fall CCAP's Insurance Programs mails out a FREE publication called the GLIMPSE? The GLIMPSE catalog provides a detailed listing of workshop topics being offered that season. CCAP's Insurance Programs offer a full schedule of workshops statewide. These workshops include risk management and professional development opportunities for county officials and county employees. Workshops are offered at little or no cost to your county and are FREE to attend if your county is a member of the sponsoring insurance program.

Stay tuned for a copy of the 2022 Fall Glimpse Training Catalog! We are hoping to have in person trainings for the fall and will be following all safety precautions.



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To learn more about our workshops or to receive a copy of the Glimpse Training Catalog contact Linda Rosito at (717) 736-4728 or lrosito@pacounties.org.

Putting Outdoor Recreation to

WORK

for Pennsylvania Communities



Nathan Reigner, PhD

Pennsylvania's Director of Outdoor Recreation

I am fond of a story I learned early in my outdoor recreation career about fishing. In this story, two anglers are being questioned about how they could have had a good day fishing without catching any fish. Their responses were something like – the day of fishing was good not because of the number of fish I caught but because I spent time with friends in nature being themselves, shared experiences with them, and made valuable memories. In other words, there is more to fishing than catching fish and therefore there is more to outdoor recreation than simply having a good time outside.

Outdoor recreation is a system of recreationists, their experiences, the places where people recreate, the organizations and institutions that support recreation, and all the benefits that are generated from our recreation. This system is both embedded in and grows out of Pennsylvania communities. For example, virtually all municipalities and counties have park and recreation responsibilities and operate recreation resources like parks, pools, and trails. Appreciation of and support for outdoor recreation are some of the most commonly held values among all residents of a community. Recreation assets like trails and parks physically and culturally connect communities and they are often the product of and cooperatively managed by community partnerships. Increasingly, and with success, outdoor recreation is an engine of community and economic development.

These connections between community and outdoor recreation are noteworthy because of the variety and importance of the community concerns for which outdoor recreation is part of the solution – solutions that communities can activate while improving the quality of life, climate resilience, and bottom lines. What follows is a selected list of just a few of the many ways outdoor recreation is being put to work by Pennsylvania communities to address infrastructure, management, economic, equity, and sustainability challenges.

YORK COUNTY

Like small, rural towns in much of Pennsylvania, many of the towns along the York Heritage Rail Trail had inadequate broadband service, the result of a combination of geographic, infrastructure, and economic challenges. While broadband did not adequately connect these communities, the York Heritage Rail Trail did. Once a corridor for rail transportation infrastructure, it was repurposed as infrastructure for bicycle, pedestrian, and equestrian transportation and recreation. Now, in the 21st century, the rail trail corridor is being repurposed yet again – this time to transport information. Using federal COVID-19 relief funding, York County installed broadband fiber optic cables under the Heritage Rail Trail. The catalyst for the innovation and simplicity of this solution for broadband connectivity was an appreciation that recreation assets like trails and parks are

as essential a part of community infrastructure as roads and utilities. The York County Economic Alliance has been a leader in the commonwealth in both seeing the conceptual connection between outdoor recreation and infrastructure and finding effective paths for project funding and implementation.

UNION AND NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTIES

Like rivers, weather, and wildlife, outdoor recreation does not typically align with the administrative boundaries of towns or counties. In fact, it often purposefully crosses them. Consequently, recreation initiatives can face challenges to aligning priorities and coordinating resources. These challenges are compounded by the fact that many recreation projects begin as the passion projects of committed, but nonetheless volunteer, enthusiasts. In some cases, these volunteer enthusiasts lean more toward the volunteer side, working in partnership with governments and community members. In others, they are more enthusiast, building their vision. In all cases, recreation projects require long-term commitment and administrative capacity that are difficult for volunteer groups to satisfy independently.

Varieties of these challenges emerged around recreation projects in Union and Northumberland counties, both of which have established county authorities to help sustainably manage recreation

resources that connect across land ownership boundaries. The Union County Trail Authority was created by the county to own, manage, and develop the Buffalo Valley Rail Trail that connects Mifflinburg and Lewisburg. The Northumberland County Anthracite Outdoor Adventure Area Authority was created to formalize management of previously informal, and in some cases unauthorized, motorized and non-motorized recreation on trails crossing both public and private land. These authorities, and others like them around the commonwealth, create the capacities necessary at the local level to address common recreation project challenges including convening of multiple stakeholders, eligibility for funding, and long-term administrative stability. Incidentally, the York County Rail Trail Authority played an important role in the rail trail-as-broadband infrastructure recounted above.



PITTSBURGH

Once known as a city of heavy industry, Pittsburgh is now known as a city of innovation. The city's innovation in medicine, robotics, and computing is powered by partnerships among companies, universities, and government. Recent advances in Pittsburgh outdoor recreation, specifically urban camping, are similarly the result of public-private partnerships. For many Pittsburgh youth a campout under the stars was an impossibility. Impossible because they did not have the ability to travel to camping locations far from their homes in the city and impossible because Pittsburgh laws made spending the night and erecting a temporary shelter in a city park illegal. This meant that it was also impossible for many Pittsburgh youth to experience the wonder and joy of camping or to develop the skills necessary for a lifetime of outdoor recreation. Recognizing this as an unnecessary disservice to its youth, Pittsburgh leveraged its partnership-based park and outdoor recreation system to amend city laws and establish a precedent-setting urban camping program. Through its robust partnerships, Pittsburgh's city council, city parks, parks conservancy, Outdoor Inclusion Coalition, and Venture Outdoors joined together to advocate for, accommodate, and lead young Pittsburghers to become new campers. This expansion of access to outdoor recreation for youth follows on the heels of Pittsburgh voters' own decision to increase their property taxes to more fully fund and enhance their park and recreation system.

WARREN AND CONNELLSVILLE

Warren and Connellsville, like many rural Pennsylvania communities, have seen persistent population declines in recent decades, which correspond with associated employment and business development challenges. Also like many rural Pennsylvania towns, Warren and Connellsville are proximate to outstanding recreational assets, respectively the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers and the Jakes Rocks and Great Allegheny Passage trails. In both towns, these recreational assets are inspiring visitor and entrepreneurs and fueling the development of outdoor centers that cater to the interests of tourists and residents alike. In Warren, outdoor recreation and business development are coalescing downtown into a combined outdoor retail, river guide and outfitter, indoor climbing, and brewery. In Connellsville, outdoor recreation was instrumental in transitioning the Connellsville Comfort Inn from one of the worst performing Comfort Inns in the nation to one of the best, which now offers outdoor recreation services and is the seed from which a new combined lodging, food and beverage, and outdoor recreation hub is growing. These new and exciting centers of energy are adding the kind of vibrance for visitors and quality of life for residents that is a proven path toward economic development.

LEHIGH VALLEY, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, AND KITTATINNY RIDGE

Outdoor recreation infrastructure and programming is sometimes seen as a cost borne by communities and too often thought of and funded only after more utilitarian infrastructure and programs. This framing unfortunately ignores the economic returns gained through investment in and promotion of outdoor recreation. These returns include increased property values, reduced healthcare costs, reduced gray infrastructure costs (e.g., stormwater management, urban temperature regulation, water purification), and direct stimulation of economic activity. Led by counties in the Lehigh Valley, Montgomery County, and the counties along the Kittatinny Ridge, among others, re-

gional and community planners and developers are realizing the returns from outdoor recreation. Through the quantification of *Return on Environment*, which is indeed a form of return on investment, the natural capital of our outdoor spaces and the interest and dividends they pay through outdoor recreation are being accounted for and helping to balance the proverbial books of Pennsylvania communities.

A CONCLUDING THOUGHT – THE TREE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

Through the selected examples listed above, I hope you can join me in acknowledging that the tree of outdoor recreation bears a lot of fruit for Pennsylvania communities. With the variety of fruit it bears (physical

and mental health benefits, community and economic development benefits, conservation and green infrastructure benefits) perhaps we should even think about it as an outdoor recreation ‘fruit salad’ tree. Like all trees, the tree of outdoor recreation requires attention to both its cultivation and harvest. With their direct connection to community residents and businesses, municipalities and counties are uniquely positioned to be the cultivators and harvesters of the tree, identifying recreation assets and business opportunities for development and realizing the economic and quality of life benefits that will grow from them. As Director of Outdoor Recreation for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, I stand ready to encourage and support you as you put outdoor recreation to work for your community. 🍷



The CCAP Board of Directors held its two-day meeting in Bradford County in June. But the participants experienced much more than a conference room.

In addition to their meeting, the Board of Directors were also given a tour of Bradford County that included the Bradford County Museum, the Hamilton Liberty Power Project and Eureka Resources.

The Liberty project is a natural gas fueled, 829MW combined cycle generating station that can supply the needs of up to 1 million homes and is the first plant in the Marcellus Shale region.

Eureka Resources has the technology to take produced water from natural gas and extract the chlorides, which can be sold as pool salts.

"It was an honor to be able to showcase Bradford County's rural charm to commissioners across the state," said CCAP President and Bradford County Commissioner Daryl Miller. "This was a great opportunity to show that a county can maintain natural beauty while moving forward with economic growth."

Miller is only the second CCAP President to hail from Bradford County since 1896 and the first since John E. Snedeker in 1943.

CCAP serves to strengthen Pennsylvania counties' ability to govern their own affairs and improve the well-being and quality of life of their constituents. To this end, the Association effects the achievement of favorable state and federal legislation, programs and policies,

and provides appropriate programs, services and training to its membership, county leaders, and their staff.

"Daryl has done an exceptional job at representing both Bradford County and CCAP this year," said CCAP Executive Director Lisa Schaefer. "His commitment to strengthening the 66 counties in addition to his own has helped us make great strides in 2022." ▼





County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania Announces Graduates from its Center for Excellence in County Leadership

The County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) Center for Excellence in County Leadership (CEL), a premier professional development program for county officials, today graduated 12 county officials from its two and a half-day intensive training program.

CEL training focuses on fostering individual growth through interactive and high level classroom training aimed at improving participants' communication, management and leadership skills. CEL includes intense classes in styles of leadership, managerial versatility, interpersonal dynamics, crisis communication, media management, daily communication problem solving, decision making, and other areas.

Participation is available to one eligible person per county per year, with a maximum of 12 participants annually. An application is required for admittance to the program, with final selection being made by a standing CCAP Committee. The program is open to county commissioners or council members, chief clerks, county administrators and solicitors of Pennsylvania's 67 counties. Key county leaders and department heads are also eligible. The 2021 CEL program was produced by The Professional Edge, Inc.



The 2022 graduates include Laura O. Burke, Blair County Commissioner; Thomas Giovanni, Northampton County Commissioner; Dave Glass, Clearfield County Commissioner; Robin Gorman, Indiana County Commissioner; Lynn Hill, Luzerne County Division Head of Human Services; Scott Hunt, Cambria County Commissioner; Mark Kingston, Forest County Commissioner; Marian Moskowitz, Chester County Commissioner; Aaron S. Poole, Armstrong County Chief Clerk/County Administrator; Jeffrey Reber, Union County Commissioner;

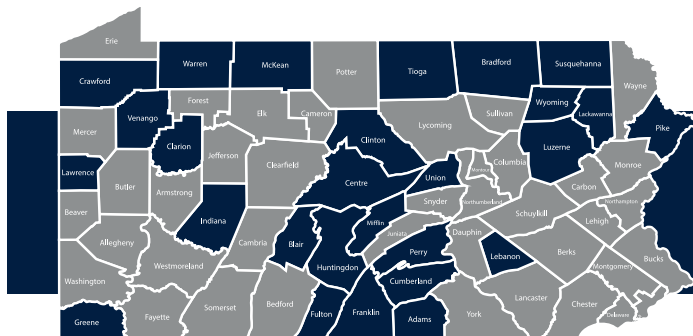
Stacy Snyder, Cumberland County Chief Clerk/Chief Operations Officer; and, Rick Wilbur, Wyoming County Commissioner.

Program sponsors include: PCoRP, The Pennsylvania Counties Risk Pool; PComp, PA Counties Workers' Compensation Trust; CCAP UC Trust, Unemployment Compensation Trust; Cafardi Ferguson Wyrick Weis + Gabriel, Ilc (CFWW+G); and, Campbell Durrant, P.C.

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America250PA planting **Liberty Trees** in each Pennsylvania County

America250PA, in partnership with the Pennsylvania Freemasons, planted their first certified Liberty Tree in Pennypacker Mills Park in Montgomery County as part of a multi-year celebration commemorating the 250th anniversary of the United States in 2026. Thanks to this partnership, one certified Liberty Tree will be planted in each of Pennsylvania's 67 counties prior to 2026.





The Pennsylvania Commission for the United States Semiquincentennial (America250PA) was established by the legislature and Governor Wolf in 2018 to plan, encourage, develop, and coordinate the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States.

“America250PA is truly a historic Commission that provides the Commonwealth a platform to showcase our Pennsylvania pride on the national stage. We are most appreciative of the partnership with the Pennsylvania Freemasons. Without their support, this project would not be possible. Our goal is to highlight 250 years of contributions of Pennsylvanians to our nation. Planting certified Liberty Trees and watching them grow over the next 250 years, just as our Commonwealth and nation did over the last 250 years, is something we are excited to be part of and leave here as a legacy of this Commission for future generations,” said Cassandra Coleman, Executive Director of America250PA.

During the American Revolutionary War, the Sons of Liberty would

often gather under the original Liberty Trees. In 1775, the British destroyed a symbolic Liberty Tree in Boston, though it did not stop revolutionaries throughout the 13 colonies from using these trees as meeting places. One Liberty Tree, which stood on the campus of St. John’s College in Annapolis, Maryland, survived until 1999, before it was badly damaged by Hurricane Floyd. Thanks to local landscaper Mark Mehnert, this historical Liberty Tree, a Tulip Poplar, was rescued and propagated.

Ahead of the 250th anniversary of the nation’s independence in 2026, America250PA is partnering with organizations and individuals across the Commonwealth to make 2026 E.P.I.C, to Educate, Preserve, Innovate and Celebrate Pennsylvanians of the past, present, and future. In the spirit of American liberty, the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania will be sponsoring the planting of a Liberty Tree in each of the 67 counties across the Commonwealth. A plaque placed beside each tree will indicate the planting of each tree by America250PA and the Pennsylvania Freemasons. 🍂



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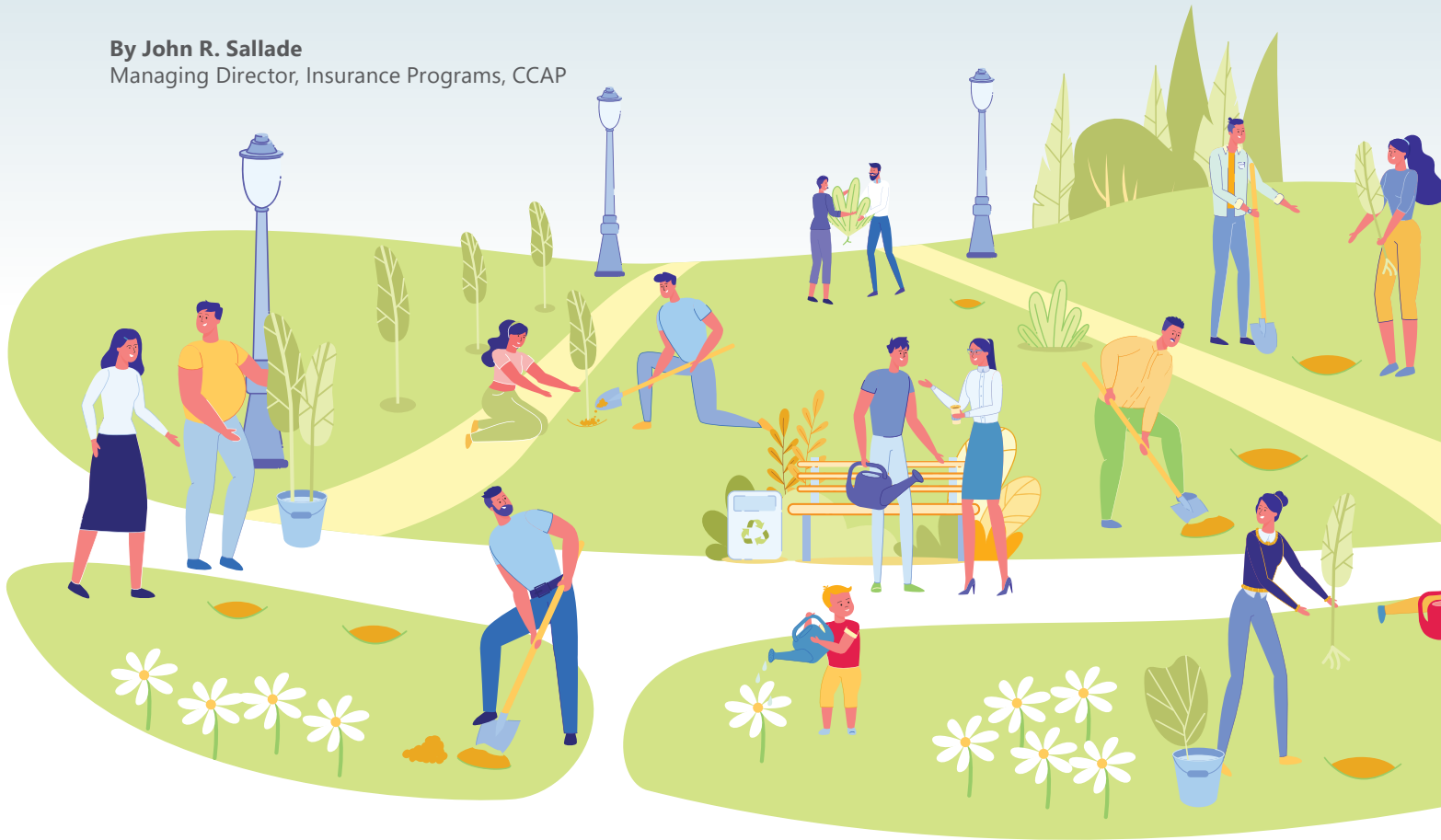
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PARK AND RECREATION Risk Management

By John R. Sallade
Managing Director, Insurance Programs, CCAP



Suppose the good news is that in the 34 years I've been at CCAP, I have never written an article on park and recreation risk management. That has mainly been because until recent years, county parks and recreation areas are not typically the source of many liability claims. CCAP's Insurance Programs have seen property damage claims to park buildings and structures, but very few liability claims. Until the last several years.

In general, I believe the public is very appreciative of the open spaces, parks and recreation areas provided by counties. This was especially true during the pandemic when usage of all parks skyrocketed. But there are increasing numbers of claims due to injuries sustained in county parks, regardless of the sensible (or often not so sensible) use of the parks by the public. Many county parks do not have full time or even part time staff. What can counties do to reduce claims? Enter risk management.

CREATING SAFE PARK ENVIRONMENTS

People seek out parks because they provide contact with the natural environment and a social environment which offers opportunities for meeting with friends, watching others and being seen – all of which help to establish a feeling of comfort and security.

Well-designed and well-used parks and recreation areas are a great asset for the public. But that asset can quickly become a liability.

“Citizen involvement fosters a sense of ownership and pride and builds a constituency of users with an interest in keeping parks safe.”



ty when parks become unsafe and as a result, lose their value and benefit to the community. Keeping park and recreation facilities safe is a key to community wellness and has a direct relationship to their usage rate.

THE SOLUTION TO PARK SAFETY: MORE THAN DESIGN

Addressing the issue of safety in parks and open space is a complex task. According to the National

Recreation and Park Association, the problem cannot be solved by design alone or by any one single action. What is required to create and maintain safer park spaces is a strategy involving design, programming, maintenance and citizen involvement.

The key finding in park safety research shows that there is a connection between park and recreation use and safety: where people use parks in a positive way and in substantial numbers, all people feel more secure.

EVALUATING PARK SAFETY: THE SAFETY AUDIT PROCESS

How is a park judged to be safe? Many look to crime statistics, but these can be misleading. Many crimes, particularly sexual assault, go unreported; and low crime statistics may in fact be influenced by people’s avoidance of areas they perceive to be high risk. Thus, when evaluating whether a space is safe or not, perceptions may be more important than crime statistics.

Park managers frequently employ an audit in order to determine the relative safety of a given park or recreation area. The safety audit method was first developed in Canada by METRAC (the Metro Action Committee on Public Violence against Women and

Children), and has been successfully used across North America to evaluate perceived risk in the urban environment.

The safety audit process is based on participation and feedback from users of a given space. It allows for an evaluation of the physical environment in terms of fear of crime and perceptions of safety. When users become involved in identifying their safety concerns, they become an integral part of the solution. The findings from community based safety audits are an important starting point for creating and implementing strategies for enhancing personal safety. Audits also provide an inventory of design, operational and programming solutions to make parks safer.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER IN CREATING SAFE PARKS

The design of a park or recreation area can have a direct impact on people’s perceptions of safety and their willingness to use a space. Designing a park for safety is based on what is generally considered to be good design: it meets the needs of its users; it is diverse and interesting; it connects people with place; and it provides people with a positive image and experience. While good design can create the preconditions for effective control the following are areas

to consider when evaluating the safety and perception of safety of a park or recreation facility:

- Locate programmed activities near the park perimeter, beside an entrance or along a main pedestrian path
- Locate food concessions at the park edge that serves both the street and the park
- Make sure that activities in the park include a human presence from early morning to evening
- Create programming and physical design of the park to encourage use of the park during the evenings
- Develop activities beyond those for organized sports facilities and playgrounds

Some key factors to consider when dealing with park safety issues are:

- Perceptions that a park is unsafe are as important as actual safety
- Involve users in the design or redesign of park spaces
- Clear and understandable signage helps enhance the feeling of safety because it allows people to orient themselves
- Formal/informal surveillance or the extent to which activities in parks can be observed by other people, is important for reducing vandalism, inappropriate activities, and feelings of isolation
- Lighting to enhance perceptions of safety, although this may not reduce actual crime rates. Improved lighting and increased legitimate activity allow for greater nighttime surveillance

- Clear sightlines which give the perception of actual safety because people can see what is ahead and around them and if other people are visible
- Physical access should be maximized by providing users with a choice of legible routes to and from park areas
- Good maintenance is crucial to maintain perceptions that areas are low risk. Vandalism can contribute to perceptions of fear because litter, graffiti and broken furniture all suggest a place is uncared for and possibly unsafe
- Diversity can attract a higher intensity of use. Variety in the form, color, and texture of landscape elements as well as a range of activities contributes to an interesting environment that attracts users
- Signage in the form of maps and descriptive text promotes a greater sense of safety because people feel safer when they know where they are and how to get to where they want to go
- Access to telephones and park staff can provide a greater sense of well-being and safety.
- Citizen involvement fosters a sense of ownership and pride and builds a constituency of users with an interest in keeping parks safe
- Enforcement of rules concerning inappropriate activities need to be maintained to prevent a cycle of withdrawal and hence a reduction in positive use

CONCLUSION

Increasing numbers of people are expressing concern for their personal safety in urban, suburban and rural park settings. This fear of violence and the perception that an environment is unsafe is, in effect, a barrier to many people's use and enjoyment of public space. ▼

Note: A significant amount of this article it taken from an Issue Brief from the National Recreation and Park Association, www.nrpa.org. This article is not intended to be legal advice, and the author is not an attorney. Counties are encouraged to review the matters included in this article with their solicitors and the county's insurance producer.





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DCNR Grants Available to PA Counties

There are a variety of grants available to counties from the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR).

DCNR's Bureau of Recreation and Conservation (BRC) assists local governments and recreation and conservation organizations with funding for projects related to:

- Parks
- Recreation
- Conservation

Applications for DCNR's Community Conservation Partnerships Program grants are accepted once a year, typically during the spring.

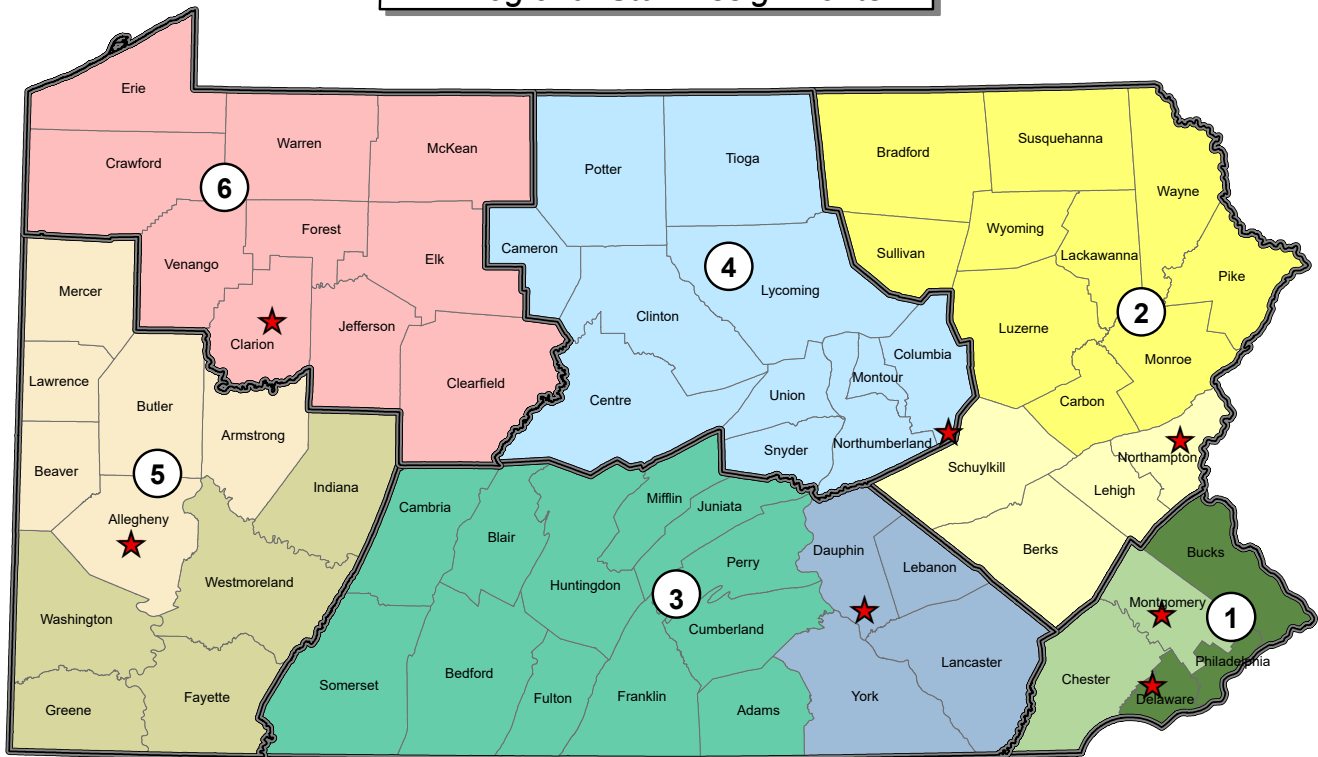
WHAT TYPES OF PROJECTS CAN BE FUNDED?

Community Conservation Partnerships Program grants can fund:

- Planning, acquisition, and development of public parks
- Recreation areas
- Motorized and non-motorized trails
- River conservation and access
- Conservation of open space
- Grants also support regional and statewide partnerships that build capacity to better develop and manage resources.

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Updated: November 8, 2022

COMMUNITY RECREATION AND CONSERVATION PLANNING FUNDING

Planning projects “lay the groundwork” for future land acquisition, development, and/or management of parks, recreational facilities, critical habitat, open space, natural areas, greenways, and river/watershed corridors. Examples include:

- Master Site Development Plan
- Swimming Pool Complex Feasibility Study
- Indoor Recreation Facility Feasibility Study
- Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space and Greenway Plan
- Rivers Conservation Plan
- Land Conservation and Stewardship Plan
- Combination Projects

PARK REHABILITATION AND DEVELOPMENT FUNDING

These projects involve the rehabilitation and development of public parks, recreation facilities, greenways, and river conservation projects. Examples include:

- Park Rehabilitation and Development
- Small Community Development
- Land Acquisition and Conservation Funding

These projects involve the purchase and/or donation of land for:

- Park and recreation areas
- Greenways
- Critical habitat areas
- Open space

MOTORIZED AND NON-MOTORIZED TRAIL FUNDING

Trail projects include the acquisition, planning, development, rehabilitation, or maintenance of designated routes on land or water for motorized and non-motorized recreation activities. This includes the purchase of equipment for trail construction or maintenance.

Examples of project that can be funded include:

- Acquisition
- Planning
- Development, rehabilitation, or maintenance
- Purchase of equipment
- Education programs

STATE AND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP FUNDING

Partnerships projects are collaborative statewide or regional initiatives that help build local, county, regional, and statewide capacity to better develop and manage recreation and park facilities and to promote the conservation of natural and heritage resources through plan implementation, education, and training.

Funding can be provided for:

- Convening, education, or training
- Special purpose and planning studies
- Implementation projects
- Mini grants to develop small grant programs

PEER AND CIRCUIT RIDER FUNDING

These grant programs fund projects that help municipalities, counties, multi-municipal partnerships, and councils of government to increase local capacity for recreation, parks, and conservation.

The Peer program funds collaborative projects that focus on a specific need identified by the grantee and its partners.

The Circuit Rider program aids in the hiring of a full-time park, recreation, or conservation professional whose services are shared by the members of a formal partnership, commission, or authority.

RIVERS CONSERVATION GRANTS

Rivers Conservation projects focus on protecting and enhancing the conservation or recreation value of Pennsylvania's waterways.

Applications are submitted under the appropriate primary grant category. For example, funding for a Rivers Conservation Plan would be requested through a Community Recreation and Conservation Planning grant application; an easement or purchase to protect a headwaters area would require a Land Acquisition and Conservation grant.

Examples of rivers conservation projects that can be funded include:

- Acquisition of land to protect a sensitive water resource
- Rivers conservation plan
- River access point development
- Water trail management

DCNR RIPARIAN FOREST BUFFERS

The DCNR Riparian Forest Buffer Program provides financial assistance to identify locations in need of riparian forest buffers, and to design, establish, monitor, and provide short-term maintenance for those buffers.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

Eligible applicants for Community Conservation Partnerships Program funding include:

- Counties
- Municipalities
- Municipal agencies
- Nonprofit organizations
- State Heritage Areas
- Prequalified land trusts
- For-profit enterprises (for some grant types)
- Most programs require a minimum cash or non-cash matching contribution from the applicant that is equal to 50 percent of the project cost. ▼



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Defining Community Parks

Using an Asset Management Lens

Brian "BK" Koehler
Director of the Park Maintenance Institute



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Parks and public open spaces are more than amenities – they are essential elements of community infrastructure. It is important for county commissioners and other government officials to look beyond playgrounds, sport fields, swimming pools, or walking trails, and recognize these precious capital investments are solutions to stormwater mitigation, health and wellness initiatives, and youth development services; providing social and economic prosperity for all surrounding communities.

Recreational opportunities and connection to natural outdoor spaces help to build community physical and cultural resilience. However, the purpose of this article is not completely intended to reinforce the value and importance of parks and

public open spaces, but to outline important considerations implicit to stewardship and management of these unique capital assets:

1. What are the differences between national parks, state parks, county parks, or municipal parks?
2. How could asset management principles help public officials become better land stewards?

Touching upon the first question, let's begin by outlining three considerations that define public spaces:

- Who owns the assets? (Ownership)
- How are the assets intended to be used? (Land Use)
- Who manages the assets? (Governance)

OWNERSHIP

One of the biggest defining factors for public land are boundary lines. All federal public lands are owned by U.S. taxpayers whose money goes toward maintaining national parks, forests, wilderness areas, wild rivers, and scenic rivers.

State parks and forests are controlled by state governments and often are required to generate operation funding. In response, some states require usage fees at the gate and/or annual passes, while other states generate revenue through other funding sources.

Local parks are controlled by a variety of municipal and private land owners, and often supported by tax revenue, private donations, and/or corporate sponsorship.

LAND USE

While looking at a map, it is important to remember not all boundary lines have been created for the same purpose. For example, there are differences between parks and forests in the public sector. While parks and forests are both public lands, the intended use differs. National Park Service land is preserved and cannot be used for anything else, while national forests are governed by a multiple-use mandate, and can be used for timber as well as recreation and sustenance of wildlife. However, national parks and forests cannot be sold without taxpayer approval. Meanwhile in some jurisdictions, state park and forest lands are a commodity that could be sold to make up a budget deficit if the state government deems necessary.

While there are more distinct purposes for state and national boundaries, the intended use of public land serving local communities are more unique and harder to generalize. For example, the definition of "municipal" varies greatly from state to state, and even region to region within jurisdictions. Although legislative language may differ, the goal of serving communities is consistent across states.

GOVERNANCE

National parks and national forests are governed by branches of the federal government. National parks fall under the Department of the Interior, and national forests are run by the Department of Agriculture.

State parks and forests are under the jurisdiction of state officials, often under the umbrella of a Department of Conservation and Natural Resources or similar branch.

Municipal parks and public spaces are the responsibility of community officials. Borough council members, county commissioners, township supervisors, Police Jurors, and any other form of local government, elected or appointed, have sworn to serve as stewards to all capital assets owned by their communities.

At this point, you may ask – "How does this help me to become a better steward of the municipal parks and public open spaces within my community?" My response – to best serve the needs of stakeholders and effectively manage capital investments, municipal leaders should consider using an asset management lens while making infrastructure decisions.

I hope this article has reinforced your support for recreation and green industries, or helped you gain a new perspective on parks and public open spaces as essential municipal assets. My intent was to stimulate strategic initiative – now it is your community's turn to do the work. Experts would not ever recommend a cookie-cutter approach to infrastructure, because one size does not fit all. This is why it is essential to design parks and open spaces at the neighborhood level, specific to communities with common priorities and objectives. While the finer details of each project may be unique, there are best practices and templated resources to help guide process. Asset management principles could be the right fit for your community. 🍷

Brian "BK" Koehler
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Resources

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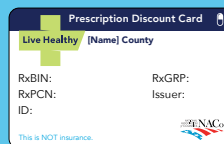
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Tree Plantings

It's easier if we do it together!

By Rebecca Lauver
PA Forests Projects Coordinator
Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

Trees play a critical role in creating healthier, safer, and more connected communities.

They clean our air, filter our water, and even slow storm surge and flooding. Trees also add to the health of a community through beautification, and economic stimulation.





This riparian forest buffer planting is located at the South End Borough Park in Christiana and is now 3 and a half years old. The trees will help to shade out the walking path there while also holding the stream banks in place. Photo Credit: Rebecca Lauver

There is a growing interest in converting areas of unused lawn into forests that can also not only reduce maintenance costs over time but help local communities reach their stormwater reduction goals in a cost-effective way. Though the return on investment of a tree planting can be huge, county officials know firsthand the challenges that may arise from maintenance of these plantings.

Maintaining tree plantings takes a lot of time and manpower that many counties just don't have. There are a growing number of contractors that will do site-wide maintenance in the form of mowing and herbicide application, but not many that will do the tree-by-tree care that is also crucial.

THERE ARE SOLUTIONS!

The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, along with county partners, is working to address the challenges of maintenance. Through its Riparian Rangers program, volunteers develop their overall skill sets, boost the capacity of tree stewards, and collectively get involved to

provide the extra care needed to enhance the survival rates of new trees in the ground.

WHY MAINTENANCE?

The maintenance of trees can lead to healthier forests and a more positive effect on the local community. After a tree planting, young trees will need immediate and regular follow up in order to sustain themselves long term or turn into successfully established forests that would provide the ecosystem benefits needed.

Without follow up maintenance, some trees may survive, but it is unlikely the planting a community worked so hard to install would grow to its potential, and poorly tended tree plantings can foster negative opinions around future projects as well as harmfully impact the aesthetics and sustainability of private and locally-owned properties. Trees have a significant impact on local economies so taking on the challenges of maintenance at the root, quite literally, is essential!



Removing bird nets before the trees get tangled in them, as shown in the photo, is a simple maintenance task that can make a big difference in the long term health of a tree. These bird nets can be removed when the trees are within the top 3-6 inches of the tree shelter. Photo Credit: Rebecca Lauver



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RIPARIAN RANGERS

While asking a volunteer to mow and spray herbicide is a little tricky with licensing requirements and equipment limitations respectively, volunteers can easily be trained how to do tree-by-tree maintenance, thus sharing the workload of getting young forests established.

The Riparian Rangers build on this exact idea. With the goal of providing much-needed support to newly installed riparian forest buffers, trained Riparian Ranger volunteers are assigned to a planting site to perform monthly maintenance over the growing season from April through October. They are taught how to identify invasives, address damaged saplings, remove tree shelters, and other important maintenance tasks. After each visit, the Rangers fill out a monitoring report form which allows the Alliance and county partners to know if there are additional issues to address or missing supplies that volunteers need to properly complete their maintenance tasks. Equipped with tools for additional outreach, Rangers are also able to work with the general public to ensure the community is exposed to good examples of what a tree planting should look like.

Ryan Davis, Senior Forests Projects Manager at the Alliance, started the program back in 2019 and noted, "when we started our riparian forest buffer program it became clear pretty quickly that we would need more help keeping an eye on all of our new sites. We simultaneously had volunteers looking to help beyond planting the trees, and the rest is history!"



In an area that was previously just mowed as a lawn, Hampden Township implemented a riparian forest buffer with the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay. The walking trail takes people through the tree planting which has informational signage as well. Photo Credit: Rebecca Lauver

The Riparian Rangers program has proven successful at rapidly addressing flood and wind damage to young trees that would normally go unnoticed or unaddressed for months. But not only has the program helped to complete this much tree needed maintenance, alleviating the work that landowners, organizations, and county staff have to do in order to make sure their trees are healthy and properly taken care of, it also offers opportunities for community members to strengthen their knowledge of tree care and deepen connections to the environment around them.

COUNTY EXPANSION

Beginning the summer of 2021, the Riparian Rangers program expanded to have regionally-focused "Branches" that are run by county partners. These Branches recruit their own volunteers and help care


for an assortment of tree plantings, while the Alliance provides informative resources and periodic trainings to the new volunteers. The program now has around 60 volunteers that are taking care of sites within Lancaster, Lebanon, Chester, York, Adams, Franklin, Centre, Cumberland, and Dauphin Counties.

The York County Branch of Riparian Rangers is led by the county's conservation district. Rachel Stahlman, York Countywide Action Plan Coordinator, reflected on the program stating, "the Riparian Rangers program has been paramount in ensuring that the Countywide goals for the Chesapeake Bay are attainable." She continued, "we launched our program branch in the fall of 2021 and to date, have more than 30 Rangers caring for upwards of 20 riparian buffer and lawn conversion sites. We are laser focused on

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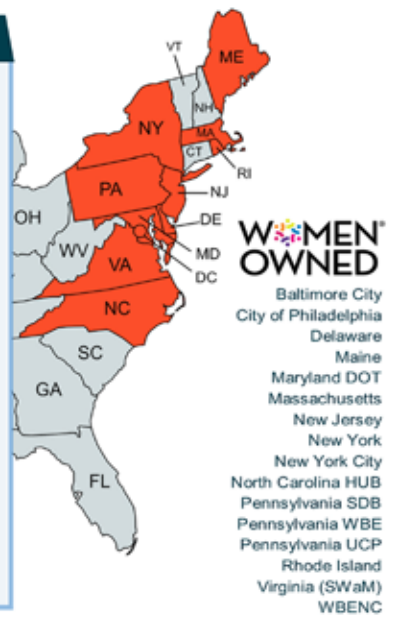
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Riparian Rangers Dave and Alice complete their monthly site check. This site was planted in the spring of 2019 and soon some of the tubes will be ready to be removed. Photo Credit: Rebecca Lauver



The Cumberland County Riparian Rangers Branch had their first training earlier this summer which trained around 15 attendees. The volunteers who attended were assigned their own sites to take care of. Photo Credit: Shawn Fabian

growing those numbers over the next three years and beyond as we try our hardest to implement many acres of needed riparian buffers and lawn conversions.”

Expanding this volunteer program through county focused Branches helps to pair these tree planting goals with community action. Locally focused watershed associations and conservation districts are able to provide and organize volunteers that have the potential to take care of sites on land managed by counties or other local entities. Due to the high levels of success the program has seen, the Alliance is currently working to expand it next into Maryland!

With focus on volunteer engagement and proper execution, the Riparian Rangers program will continue to address the key challenges of tree planting maintenance. In return, the program hopes to not only create an abundance of successful plantings across their reach, but also help counties take full benefit of their tree investments.

For more information on trees and proper maintenance of riparian forest buffer tree plantings, check out some of these resources:

1. A Local Government Guide to the Chesapeake Bay: Capitalizing on the Benefits of Trees
2. Riparian Rangers Resource Page

3. Growing Great Buffers
4. Riparian Restoration 101: A Typically Maintained Buffer
5. USDA Forest Service: i-Tree mapping tool
6. Forests for the Bay
7. Chesapeake Tree Canopy Network

Other tree maintenance programs:

1. Department of Conservation and Natural Resources: TreeVitalize Program
2. Pennsylvania Horticulture Society: Tree Tenders Program 🍷



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(617) 977-8408 x15 | stephan@ptgma.com



Parks

Q: Are there any new county parks being planned?

A: Delaware County Council has approved a proposal to create a plan to transform a 213-acre property into the largest public park in the county and its first major park in more than two decades. The park will engage the public in the planning process for conservation of open space and natural features as well as for the buildings and historic resources on the property. The master plan is expected to be completed in December 2022.

Q: How many state parks are there in Pennsylvania?

A: Pennsylvania is home to 121 state parks that are spread out across the commonwealth's 67 counties.

Q: Where can I find a list of local parks?

A: Visit www.maps.dcnr.pa.gov/localparks to search for local parks around your county. ▼

Travel

Q: When did the current mileage reimbursement rate increase go into effect?

A: On Thursday, June 9, the IRS changed the 2022 mileage rate for the final six months of the year. The new rate of .625 went into effect on Friday, July 1, 2022. ▼



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Life Jacket Loaner Programs

Save Lives



Gail R. Kulp
Executive Director of the Sea Tow Foundation

Water is essential for life. It is necessary for drinking, bathing, and cooking as well as watering crops, cleaning and it can also be a source of recreation and enjoyment. In the U.S., boating and fishing is the number one outdoor activity across nearly all of the states and powerboat sales have reached record numbers every year for the last few years as more and more people take to the waterways to spend time with family and friends.

Pennsylvania has been no stranger to this. Our entire state is covered by rivers and lakes from the Delaware River in the southeast to Lake Wallenpaupack in the northeast and the Susquehanna River that runs north to south in the middle

of the state. The Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers converge in Pittsburgh to form the Ohio River and we can even lay claim to Lake Erie in the northwestern part of the state. According to Penn State, Pennsylvania is made up of over 83,000 miles of streams and rivers with another 4,000 lakes, reservoirs and ponds and it is very likely that your county has at least one area where people can access the water to boat or fish.

Statewide in Pennsylvania, there have been an average of 60 boating accidents and 11 deaths each year over the last five years and all 9 deaths that occurred in 2021 were the result of drowning. Yet, drowning can be preventable with access to life jackets.

The nationwide nonprofit Sea Tow Foundation has been successful at doing just that – preventing drowning. Our Life Jacket Loaner Program has been in existence since 2008 and we have nearly 1,000 locations across the country where boaters can borrow life jackets for a safe day on the water and then return the life jackets at the end of the day. Each life jacket loaner station is stocked with life jackets ranging in size from infant to adult so that they are available for everyone, regardless of age or size. You can find locations of these life jacket loaner stations at www.boatingsafety.com/map.

The Life Jacket Loaner Program is saving lives as many of the Sea Tow Foundation's volunteer loaner



stations hosts have demonstrated. State parks that previously had numerous drownings per year are now reporting no drownings taking place. And, this is despite seeing record numbers of visitors over the pandemic.

The concept is simple. The Sea Tow Foundation opens an application over the winter months and organizations, agencies and municipalities across the country apply. Those selected receive a stand, signage, and a set of life jackets to stock the stand along with a manual and guidance on how to set it up and maintain it over the boating season. All of this is provided at no charge as part of a larger grant that the Sea Tow Foundation receives from the US Coast Guard's Office of Boating Safety. When accepting the grant award, hosts agree to do monthly reporting during the summer months so that data can be collected to see what the overall life jacket usage is.

“Statewide in Pennsylvania, there have been an average of 60 boating accidents and 11 deaths each year over the last five years and all 9 deaths that occurred in 2021 were the result of drowning. Yet, drowning can be preventable with access to life jackets.”

In May of 2022, the Sea Tow Foundation presented a free life jacket loaner station and life jackets to Safe Kids of Dauphin County at the Pennsylvania Society of Association Executive's Conference in Harrisburg. This loaner station will be placed on City Island in Harrisburg this summer for anyone visiting the island to borrow a life jacket to be safe while recreating on the water. A river rescue organization will help maintain and restock the loaner station throughout the summer and early fall months while people are still spending time on the water. This is an excellent example of multiple local groups working together to keep the

citizens safe in their area. Many of our other loaner station hosts work with scouting groups or local civic organizations to help them with maintaining the life jacket loaner stations so that the workload can be shared.

As the summer boating season gets into full swing, your county may be interested in ways to keep your boaters safe, and the Sea Tow Foundation encourages you to apply for our 2023 season. Applications open November 1, 2022 on our website at www.boatingsafety.com and we will review applications and notify applicants of the decisions by the end of March

2023 so that there is plenty of time to get ready for next summer's boating season!

The Sea Tow Foundation also provides access to education, tools and resources available on our website to help encourage your county citizens to have a happy and safe boating season. And please feel free to reach out with any questions about boating safety. Gail R. Kulp, Executive Director of the Sea Tow Foundation, is a Pennsylvania resident and may be available to help your local efforts with boating safety. ▾

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The **Significant Payback** of Roofing and Building Envelope Asset Management

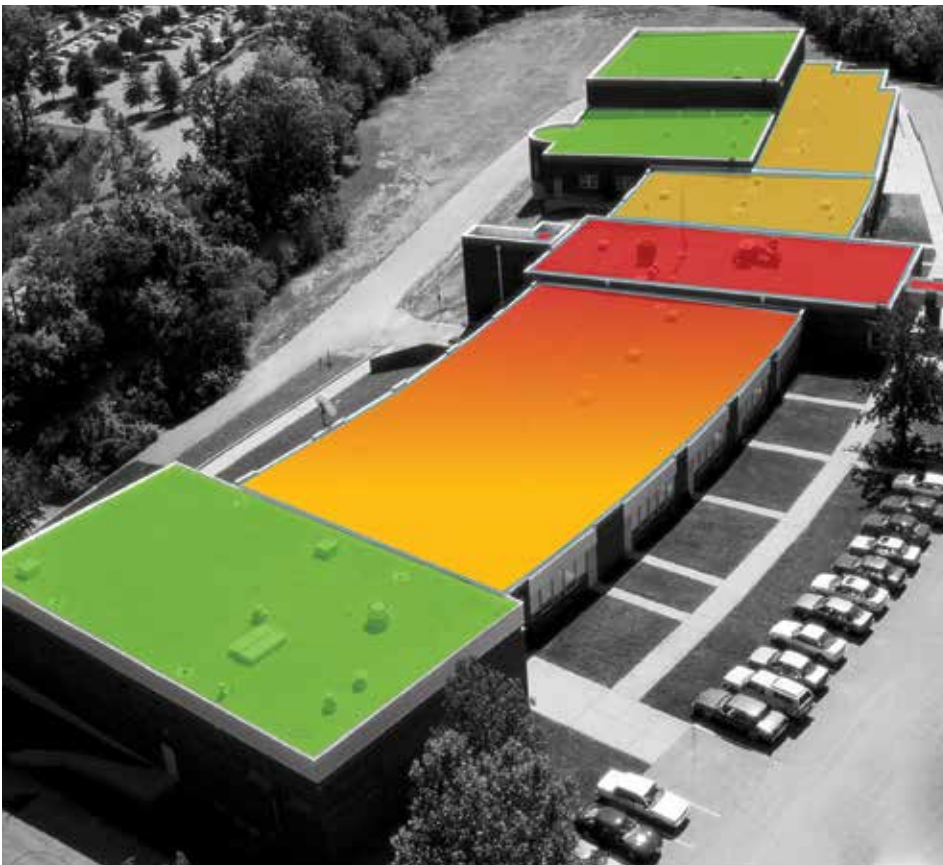
Randal W. Kline, CDT
Senior Field Advisor
Tremco Roofing & Building Maintenance

Here's an all-too-common scenario: leaking roofs are the first indication of a problem, and by the time the cause is discovered, warranties have lapsed, and the only option is an expensive, total roof replacement. Letting roofs "run to failure" is costly, disruptive and can be avoided by taking a proactive "asset management" approach.

THE ASSET MANAGEMENT METHODOLOGY

The first step to the asset management methodology is to "triage" the condition of all roof areas and then categorize them as Green (Maintain), Amber (Restore) and Red (Replace). This gives you the information you need to build a structured and proactive long-term (10-20+) year plan. This same approach can be used for all aspects of your building envelope – not just roofing.

Being truly proactive is about continually monitoring your roofs and building envelope, consistently conducting inspections/diagnostics/ maintenance, and then doing restoration projects before replacement is the only option. And



-  Maintain the Good
-  Restore the Marginal
-  Replace Only the Failed

that's where significant cost savings lie – especially when it comes to your roofs. Roof replacements cost significantly more than roof restoration. And roof replacement projects have greater disruptions, longer project cycle times, and higher labor and material costs, not to mention negative environmental impact and landfill waste.

TODAY'S ADVANCED RESTORATION TECHNOLOGIES

If you're not familiar with today's low-odor, fluid applied roof restoration systems, they are designed to be repeatedly restored, so roof performance can be extended for the life of the building. By taking a proactive approach, your investment in repair and maintenance today sets you up to restore rather than replace roofs in the future. With each restoration, you may extend roof life by 20 years or more, and when needed, restore again.

THE DOLLARS AND SENSE

When looking at your roofing and building maintenance program, are you judging what you're doing based upon how much are you spending on all of your inventory? Proper inspections, maintenance and restoration can, over time, significantly lower your dollars per square foot per year. I've been in the roofing industry for more than 30 years in Pennsylvania, and I'd say that on average, 40% of the

roofs we look at can be restored. Say your county has 20 buildings totaling one million square feet of roofing. If 40% of that inventory is restorable, that'd be 400,000 square feet. At an approximate savings of \$15 per square foot with restoration over replacements, you're looking at a savings of \$6 million.

MINIMIZING DISRUPTIONS AND LIABILITY

While budget savings are important, most county facilities would rank lack of disruptions as being equally important – especially in sensitive environments. Imagine a complete roof tear off and replacement at a high security prison facility. Opening that roof, and all the equipment, personnel and time required to replace that roof, introduces a host of potential liabilities. What if a storm comes in while the roof is open or there is asbestos in the torn-off roof system? While valid concerns with a roof replacement, those concerns disappear when restoring a roof. Typically, at the weekly progress meeting for a roof replacement project in a high security facility, you may have 10-15 individuals from the facility attending, all on high alert. For roof restoration projects, there are usually fewer folks involved and everyone is in a much, much more relaxed state. This speaks volumes as to how much less disruptive a restoration project is.

BEYOND ROOFING

When adopting an asset management approach, it makes sense to start by addressing your roofing inventory. This is where the greatest upfront payback lies. However, taking an asset management approach to your whole building envelope – roofs, walls, windows, doors, masonry skin, foundation, etc. – and all their connections, as well as the "air barrier" that separates the conditioned air on the inside of your building from the unconditioned outdoor air – can save you significant time, money, and hassle. It all comes down to knowing the condition of your facility assets, prioritizing their condition, and making a realistic plan that enables you to lower your costs and stick to a predictable budget. 📌

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CCAP Executive Director Lisa Schaefer and former CCAP Executive Director Doug Hill

Officials spanning the Commonwealth met in Lancaster August 7-10 for the 2022 CCAP Annual Conference and Trade Show.

The four-day conference hosted more than 500 county members, vendors, exhibitors, guests and speakers.



Opening session of the 2022 CCAP Annual Conference in Lancaster



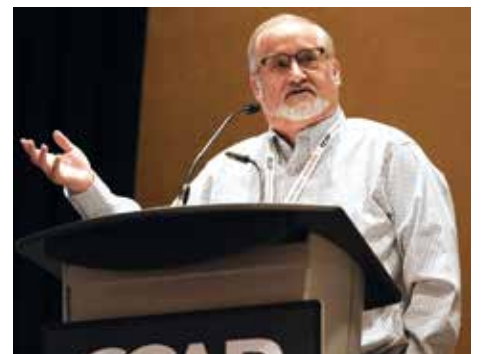
Union County Commissioner Preston Boop



Venango County Commissioner and CCAP 1st Vice President Chip Abramovic



Scott Burford, Chief Clerk of Dauphin County



John Sallade, CCAP Managing Director of Insurance Programs, receiving the "Friend of County Government" Award



NACo President Denise Winfrey



Kedren Crosby, MPS, Founder and President, Work Wisdom, talks about moving from conflict to collaboration



Berks County Commissioner Christian Leinbach (center) receives the President's Award alongside his wife, Jennifer (right)

2022 Awards

President's Award: Christian Leinbach, Berks County commissioner

Affiliate of the Year: Pennsylvania Association of County Administrators of Mental Health and Developmental Services

Friend of County Government Award: John Sallade, CCAP Managing Director of Insurance Programs

Technology and Innovation Award: Philip Walter, Adams County Chief Information Officer

Outstanding Solicitor Award: Jack Purcell, Fayette County

Outstanding Chief Clerk/Administrator Award: Lori Altman, Butler County

Outstanding Commissioner/Council Member Award: Francis Weiderspahn, Crawford County commissioner



Lawrence County Commissioner Dan Vogler



Tioga County Commissioner Erick Coolidge



The Exhibit Hall at the Lancaster County Convention Center



2022 fun run

Explore the Past Look to the Future



Opening session of the 2022 CCAP Annual Conference in Lancaster



State Senator and gubernatorial candidate Doug Mastriano



PA Attorney General and gubernatorial candidate Josh Shapiro



CCAP Director of Media and PR, John Buffone (left) talking to John Losh, NACo Associate Membership Director (right)



CCAP Staff at the Awards Ceremony



CCAP President Daryl Miller (left) and CCAP 1st Vice President Chip Abramovic (right)



A magician performs a card trick in the Exhibit Hall



The Exhibit Hall during the 2022 CCAP Annual Conference in Lancaster

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Operation Green Light

to shine light on veterans' needs

Mary Ann Barton

NACo County News Editor & Senior Writer

NACo is getting behind Operation Green Light, an initiative to shine a light on the plight of veterans in counties across the country who are having a hard time connecting with benefits after serving their country.

A new program dubbed Operation Green Light for Veterans hopes to shine a light on the plight of veterans in counties across the country who are having a hard time connecting with benefits after serving their country.

The new program endorsed by the NACo Board at its meeting July 23 in Adams County, Colo., is being promoted by Carbon County, Pa. Commissioner Chris Lukasevich.



Carbon County, Pa. Commissioner Chris Lukasevich talks to the NACo Board Saturday, July 23 about the plight of veterans and how Operation Green Light can connect them with much-needed services. Photo credit: Denny Henry

"We're seeking formal recognition of Operation Green Light to connect veterans with benefits they have earned," said Lukasevich, who is retired from the U.S. Army and serves as the chair of NACo's Veterans and Military Services Committee. He noted that the veteran population in his county in Pennsylvania is among the top five highest in the state and has the highest suicide rate.

Other statistics about veterans show:

- As of 2019, 11.7 million veterans are over the age of 65, which is about 61 percent of all veterans.
- Veterans make up roughly 11 percent of adults experiencing homelessness.
- Some 70 percent of veterans experiencing homelessness also experience substance abuse, and 50 percent live with mental illnesses like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

"We have a problem in this country, it's extremely difficult to transition from military to civilian life," Lukasevich told NACo Board members.

One problem, he noted, is that counties don't know when veterans have moved to their community, which makes it difficult to connect them to benefits.

With Operation Green Light launching nationwide, counties will literally shine green lights from their county buildings from Nov. 7-13 (Veterans Day is Nov. 11) to "send a clear message to inspire veterans to reach out to their county veteran service officers," Lukasevich said. He noted that he was inspired to make Operation Green Light a national cause after it first got underway in New York.

NACo is offering a toolkit online for counties to get the word out. The toolkit includes a blueprint for declaring a resolution in your county; sending out press releases; writing a letter to the editor to your local newspaper, writing a letter to Congress and posting information on social media. Visit the NACo website for more information. ▾



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