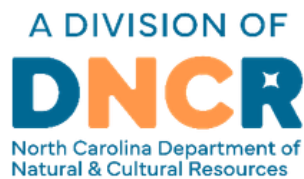




2026 APPLICATION GUIDE FOR THE LOCAL LWCF GRANT PROGRAM



Land and water Conservation Fund: 2026 Application Guide

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Land and Water Conservation Fund

The Land and Water Conservation Fund State Assistance Program (LWCF) supports the protection of public lands and waters – including local, state, and national parks and recreation areas. The LWCF Program provides up to dollar-for-dollar matching grants to eligible applicants for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation sites and facilities, or a combination of both.

A project must be located on a single site, and a project must meet at least one priority in the [State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan \(SCORP\)](#).

A key feature of the program is that sites assisted with LWCF funding must be open, operated, and maintained in perpetuity as public outdoor recreation areas and may not be converted to other uses without suitable replacement of equivalent parkland and approval by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior.

The LWCF program is operated by the National Park Service (NPS) in partnership with designated lead agencies in individual states. In North Carolina, the program is administered through the Division of Parks and Recreation (Division) within the North Carolina (NC) Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR).

The State of North Carolina (N.C.) offers federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) assistance for land acquisition and the development or renovation of outdoor recreational facilities. LWCF grants are provided to states, and through the states, to local governmental jurisdictions, on a matching basis for up to 50% of total project-related costs for the acquisition of land, the development (and renovation) of facilities for public outdoor recreation, and fulfillment of the program’s planning requirements. Eligible local applicants, also known as project sponsors, include counties, municipalities, and federally recognized Native American tribes (local governments).

LWCF funds are apportioned to the states by the Secretary of the Interior each federal fiscal year. The Division is responsible for submitting eligible project proposals to NPS. The Division selects projects through this competitive call for proposals, in accord with North Carolina’s Open Project Selection Process (OPSP). Projects submitted for LWCF funding are evaluated for how well they align with the adopted NC Outdoor Recreation Plan’s priority rating system and project evaluation criteria.

The current OPSP consists of the following seven components required by the NPS. These components are identified and explained in the following sections:

- Public Participation
- Priority rating system
- Recurring funding cycle
- Public notification
- Project selection process
- Amendments
- Application assistance

The full OPSP text can be found [here](#).

The Division has an established partnership with the Recreation Resources Service (RRS) team at North Carolina State University's Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management to provide technical assistance and field administration for the LWCF grant program. Eligible applicants should review this application guide in its entirety and [contact their RRS consultant](#) to discuss potential projects.

go.ncsu.edu/rrs

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Meet The Team

RECREATION RESOURCES SERVICE

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2026 LWCF Local Grant Program Schedule

May 1, 2026	Announcement: The Division informs eligible applicants about the availability of LWCF matching grants and how to apply.
May 20, 2026	Opening Webinar: Grants and Outreach Program staff will conduct a workshop for eligible applicants to explain the application process and requirements. Details about the webinar will be published on the Division’s website as well as Recreation Resources Service’s (RRS’s) Grant Administration
August 28, 2026	Technical Review Deadline by RRS Consultant
November 2, 2026, by 5pm	Application Deadline: Applications must be submitted by 5 pm on November 2, 2026. Late submissions will not be accepted. Only completed applications will be accepted for review.
Spring 2027	Funding Recommendations: The Division will recommend grant recipients to the National Park Service (NPS).
Summer 2027	Grant recipients are announced.

Where to submit the application

Applications are submitted through an electronic folder in Microsoft SharePoint. Applicants should contact their RRS regional consultant to request access to the SharePoint folder. Applicants are encouraged to request access early in the process to allow for technical support, as needed.

LWCF Local Grant Program Overview

Program Requirements

Perpetuity and Public Use Requirements

Outdoor recreation areas and facilities assisted by the LWCF must be open to the general public and not limited to special groups. All new parkland acquired with LWCF funds must be open to the public within three years of purchase, including provision of public access amenities (such as parking and general access). For development projects, construction must begin within one year of authorization and be completed and open to the public by the end of the three-year project period. All project types must result in deed restrictions specific to LWCF language preventing conversions.

As a condition of LWCF, the entire park in which the project is located must be put under permanent protection to be used for public outdoor recreation in perpetuity. This protection is recorded in the property deed and is referred to as the “LWCF Boundary”.

The perpetuity requirement is applied to the assisted park or other recreation area as a whole. Exceptions for boundaries that would apply to a lesser unit of a park will be considered only if the unit is a stand-alone (i.e., its borders do not include other areas of the park), self-sustaining (i.e., it does not rely on adjoining park area for access, utilities, support facilities, etc.) recreation area.

Conversion of any LWCF funded properties to any uses other than public outdoor recreation is a lengthy process that must be approved by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, and equivalent replacement property must be provided as a result of any conversions. Both the Division and NPS strongly discourage LWCF conversions.

North Carolina Outdoor Recreation Plan

To be eligible for LWCF funding, States must have a current State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) in place that assesses demand and need for outdoor recreation resources within its borders and sets priorities for the use of LWCF funds. The most recent SCORP for North Carolina is the 2025-2030 N.C. Outdoor Recreation Plan, titled [Shaping Outdoor Recreation from Mountains to Sea \(2025-3030\)](#). It is a strategic, policy-focused document updated every five years to guide the management of state parks, trails, and recreation resources, while also ensuring eligibility for LWCF funding. It must include an open, competitive grant selection process known as the Open Project Selection Process (OPSP).

Open Project Selection Process (OPSP)

The N.C. OPSP was developed in accordance with National Park Service requirements. Information on the current OPSP assures equal opportunity for all eligible project sponsors and all sectors of the public to participate in the benefits of the LWCF State and Local Assistance Program and enables the state to affirmatively address and meet priority recreational and facility needs. Please refer to the LWCF Application Evaluation section for a list of qualifying priority facilities and instructions on how to demonstrate a local priority facility. The LWCF manual used for the current OPSP is v72.1 dated April 21, 2025, and reflects National Park Service (NPS) requirements cited in the OPSP chapter of the LWCF Federal Financial Assistance Manual.

Environmental Review Requirements

All proposed projects must demonstrate compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106, through the completion of the necessary agency correspondence and reviews.

Eligible Applicants

N.C. incorporated municipalities, counties, towns and federally recognized Tribes are eligible to apply for LWCF assistance. Non-profit organizations, associations, land trusts, educational institutions, and other private entities are not eligible.

Applicants should be in compliance with the stewardship requirements on any existing LWCF sites. If an applicant is out of compliance, the Division may allow the applicant to apply if it has made substantial progress toward an approved remedy.

This grant opportunity may be a good fit for your organization if:

- On an acquisition project, you have a seller who is willing to allow appraisals and other research to occur during the application and award process. The full process minimally takes approximately one year but can take up to two years.
- Your development project is nearly ready for construction or can move to construction within one year of award. Projects still in the scoping phase of project design but with approval to move through the design phase could still fit but may not be ready for in the current grant cycle.
- You have already started or are ready to move quickly with a NEPA-level environmental review. The Division encourages you to coordinate with state agencies sooner rather than later to allow for their windows of response time (typically 60 days).
- You already have a source or sources of non-federal funds to leverage for a dollar-for-dollar match with an LWCF grant award.
- You are both responsive and patient. LWCF is often a “hurry up and wait” process, with tight pushes for deadlines and periods of waiting for action on the federal level.

Eligible Projects

LWCF grants can be used to acquire land for a public park, develop a new park site, or renovate/replace outdoor recreational or support facilities at existing park sites.

A project must be located on a single park site, and a project must meet at least one priority in the [N.C. Outdoor Recreation Plan](#).

Projects involving school systems are not eligible.

The [LWCF Manual](#) describes project eligibility requirements (Ch. 3) and eligible costs (Ch. 5) in detail.

Acquisition Projects

Acquisition of lands, wetlands, and waters for public outdoor recreation are eligible for assistance in this category. This could include acquisition to create a new park or to expand an existing park. Acquisition of land must be in fee simple and may be accomplished through purchase, transfer, or by donation. The property must be opened for public use within 3 years of project closeout.

Federal funding for acquisitions is based on the appraised value. All land acquisition projects, including donations, must be appraised in conformance with Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions (UASFLA) and Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice (USPAP), often referred to as a Yellow Book Standard appraisal. The completed appraisal along with a third-party appraisal review must accompany the application. Acquisition projects submitted with any other type of appraisal other than a Yellow Book appraisal will be declared ineligible.

Acquisition projects must result in at least one new recreation opportunity for the public within three years of the completion of the acquisition. The entire park development does not need to be completed; a phased portion is acceptable. Property acquired with LWCF assistance must be restricted forever for public outdoor recreational use only.

All easements, existing and future, should be identified on application maps. Only useable recreation acreage should be included in the LWCF boundary and total acreage encumbered.

Applicants should NOT take ownership of the property, either through purchase, transfer, or donation, until the LWCF grant is awarded, and the grant agreement is fully executed by the grantee and the Division, unless they have an approved waiver of retroactivity for land acquisition.

Applicants can submit a request for a waiver of retroactivity for land acquisition to move forward with the acquisition in advance of award, based on an urgent need. The request for a waiver should include a justification for the necessity to immediately acquire land, a description of the resources to be acquired, and the public outdoor recreation uses proposed for the site. If the Division and NPS grant a waiver, the retroactive costs will be eligible for assistance if the grant agreement is later executed.

Waiver approval is only an acknowledgement of the need for immediate action; it does not imply nor assure either Division or NPS approval of the project. The costs are incurred at the applicant's risk. LWCF waivers shall be in effect for 12 months from the date of approval by NPS. At the time the formal acquisition project is submitted, the applicant shall include all the necessary documentation required for acquisition projects.

Development Projects

LWCF assistance is available for the development of a wide range of outdoor recreation uses and the recreation facilities needed to support the use and enjoyment of these areas. Park areas and facilities must be open and accessible to the public with no restrictions such as membership. Facilities renovated or replaced with LWCF assistance, as well as the park site where the facilities are located, are to be used for public recreation in perpetuity.

Funding for development projects is based on the detailed budget provided by the applicant that provides a realistic and fair valuation of all amenities to be constructed in the project scope.

A clear budget with 50% Local and 50% Federal funding request is preferred for development projects.

A development project may consist of one improvement, or a group of related improvements designed to provide facilities for outdoor recreation, including facilities for access, safety, security, health, and protection of the area, as well as those required for the outdoor recreation use of the area.

LWCF does not permit indoor recreation facilities to be developed on the project site unless they enhance public outdoor recreation. Gymnasiums, community centers or similar buildings are not permitted without NPS approval.

The non-construction expenses such as planning, feasibility studies, preliminary design, environmental review and other federal and state compliance, preparation of cost estimates, preparation of construction drawings and specifications, and similar items necessary for project proposal preparation **may be** eligible for assistance, if incurred up to 3 years prior to final project submission to NPS. Proper documentation and justification must be provided including the funding source; these expenses can be applied to the project only if clearly described in the application's budget narrative specific to the project scope and subsequently authorized by NPS.

A waiver of retroactivity for development may be approved by the Division and NPS with appropriate justification in limited circumstances.

[The LWCF Manual describes project eligibility requirements \(Chapter 3\) and eligible costs \(Chapter 5\) in detail.](#) Final eligibility determination is at the discretion of NPS.

Funding & Project Cost Information

NC's LWCF Funding Apportionment

LWCF funds are apportioned to the states by the Secretary of the Interior each federal fiscal year. The annual apportionment to North Carolina is subject to change, based on the annual federal budget decisions made by Congress.

The state liaison officer (SLO), who is appointed by the Governor, reviews the LWCF apportionment in consultation with the Grants & Outreach staff. The SLO determines the minimum and maximum amount of funding for state parks projects and local projects.

During each funding cycle, the Grants & Outreach staff will review and evaluate each application submitted, consider the ranking of the projects, and recommend a list of projects for funding. The Division recommends the list of projects to NPS for final review and funding.

Maximum Request

Applicants can request up to a maximum of \$750,000 with each application. There is no minimum request, and no priority is given to applications requesting the maximum. Applicants may submit multiple applications in a single grant cycle.

Local Matching Funds

An applicant must match the grant at least dollar for dollar. There are strict limitations on the use of federal funds as local matching funds. The only federal funds allowed as match are the Federal Highway Administration's Recreational Trail Program Grants and Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Community Block Grants.

Donated property can be used as a match. The value of donated real property shall be established by an independent appraiser in accordance with the UASFLA. The appraisal must be assessed by a state-certified third-party reviewer. The amount of donation that is matchable is the value of the donation or the amount of cash spent by the sponsor for additional acquisition or development, whichever is less.

In the event that an anticipated funding source does not materialize, the applicant will be expected to cover this portion of the match.

Ratio of Grant Funds to Total Project Cost

Grantees will receive up to 50 percent in reimbursement through LWCF assistance. As such, the Grants and Outreach Program staff recommend applicants request LWCF funds to be 50 percent of the total cost of the project for development projects. For example, if the total cost of the project is \$430,500, the LWCF grant request would be \$215,250. Local matching funds would also be \$215,250.

Please refer to the federal form SF-424C to see how the percentage of federal funds is calculated. The federal share of the total project costs is entered on line 17 of the form.

Reimbursements

LWCF grants are paid as reimbursements of documented and eligible expenses. Grantees may submit requests for reimbursement on a quarterly basis according to the budget. LWCF assistance (matching share) shall not exceed 50 percent of their eligible expenses for each budget category per the 424C, and grantees will receive up to 50 percent of their eligible expenses in reimbursement.

Ineligible Project Costs

LWCF funds may not be used for (not a fully inclusive list):

- Indoor facilities such as recreation centers or facilities that support primarily non-outdoor purposes like dining facilities or overnight accommodation (such as lodges or hotels; simple lodging facilities that support outdoor recreation experiences may be eligible)
- Facilities for professional or semi-professional arts or athletics
- Acquisition of or restoration of historic sites and structures
- Acquisition of land, or interests in land, that completely restrict access to specific persons (e.g., non-residents of a community)
- Operation and maintenance activities
- Renovations necessary due to neglect or lack of proper maintenance
- Condemnation of any kind of interest in property
- Indirect costs/ administrative fees, including in-house project administration
- Equipment to be used for maintenance including, but not limited to, automotive equipment, tractors, mowers, etc.
- Interest expenses, contingency reserves, and charges in excess of the lowest responsive bid when competitive bidding is required.

Stewardship & Post-Completion Considerations

LWCF-assisted properties must be maintained to ensure safe public access. Properties shall be kept reasonably open, accessible, and in sanitary condition. For further details, [review Chapter 8 – Post-Completion and Stewardship of the LWCF Manual](#).

LWCF Acknowledgment Sign

Permanent signs shall be installed on the property to acknowledge the federal-state-local partnership role in providing new high quality outdoor recreation areas and facilities and to facilitate continued awareness of the LWCF Act obligations by recipients/subrecipients as well as the public. A sign must be continuously maintained at the site. An initial sign will be provided by the Division at project closeout, and the cost of manufacturing future replacement signs is the responsibility of the project sponsor.

Post Completion Inspections

Inspections are regularly performed on LWCF assisted areas to monitor the project sponsor compliance with program and stewardship requirements. Sites found in noncompliance will be notified in writing of the problems and a time frame for remediation.

Conversion of Use

In cases where inspections discover conversions of use, the Division, in consultation with NPS, will provide guidance to the project sponsor on the Conversion of Use process and a time frame for initiating it.

LWCF assisted areas cannot be converted to any use other than public outdoor recreation use without the written approval of the Secretary of the Interior. This approval is contingent upon the conversion being found consistent with the N.C. Outdoor Recreation Plan and the project sponsor replacing the area to be converted with a new recreation area involving land of at least equal fair market value and reasonably equivalent recreational utility.

Project sponsors considering conversions of use must coordinate with the Division. **The conversion process can take upwards of several years and NPS approval is not guaranteed.** Documentation must be compiled for both the proposed conversion and replacement property including UASFLA appraisals and NEPA correspondence. The project sponsor would be responsible for all costs of the studies as well as the replacement property. LWCF funding is not available for conversions.

Application Assistance

Recreation Resources Service (RRS)

The Division provides technical assistance to eligible applicants through a contract with RRS at NC State University. Contact your [regional consultant](#) early in the process to discuss the LWCF project you are proposing.

Complete the application by 5 p.m. on November 2, 2026. A technical review can be completed by RRS, if scheduled in advance, to ensure your application is complete.

Application Resources

Planning & Public Involvement

Your proposed LWCF project should be the result of a planning process that reflects the public's preferences. Read the entire application guide and understand how each application is evaluated. Start early to assemble all items on the checklist to submit a complete application.

Making Facilities Accessible

All facilities funded by LWCF must comply with the [Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines](#) (ADAAG). Applicants are encouraged to include the costs of access routes to the accessible facilities in the grant application.

Universal Design: can further enhance the usefulness to all park users. Please refer to guidance provided in [Universal Design in Public Park Settings](#).

Playground Safety Guidelines

The Division suggests all applicants purchase playground equipment and playground surfacing that meets the latest [American Society for Testing and Materials \(ASTM\) standards](#) for public playgrounds. The Division encourages all applicants to adhere to the guidelines established by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's (CPSC) Handbook for Public Playground Safety (publication #325) for management and maintenance of playgrounds intended for public use.

Utility Lines

All utility lines funded with an LWCF grant must be placed underground.

Future Road Improvements

Review the [N.C. Department of Transportation](#) planned road improvements to determine if any planned construction projects might impact proposed LWCF boundaries for the park.

DOT, FERC & FEMA Permitting for Facilities

If your project includes a bridge, or other facilities that requires a Department of Transportation (DOT), the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), or Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) permit, it is strongly recommended that the local government obtains the approved permit before applying for an LWCF grant. The permit process can be lengthy and cause delays that prevent a grant recipient from completing a park project on time.

Environmental Review & NEPA Compliance

All proposed projects must demonstrate compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106, through the completion of the necessary agency

correspondence and reviews. This process must be complete, and documentation of the process submitted to the Division as promptly as possible - preferably with the grant application.

Potential project sponsors are strongly encouraged to begin the process of agency correspondence as soon as possible. It may be necessary to conduct cultural and/or ecological surveys at the request of corresponding agencies; if this is known early the project review and approval can be a smoother process. These actions may or may not be valid for reimbursement. Additional expenses incurred after project authorization would have to be filed as project amendments, which is the authority of NPS to approve. Projects unable to complete NEPA review and other NPS submission requirements will not be recommended for funding in this grant cycle, and applicants are encouraged to reapply when said requirements can be met.

Cultural Resources

The [NC State Historic Preservation Office \(SHPO\)](#) will determine if the project impacts any cultural resources. ***Please allow at least 90 days for this review.***

- Please visit the [State Historic Preservation website](#) for a GIS mapping service that provides locations of potential impacts
- If impacts are listed, please consider alternative or avoidance plans to comply with listed structures or sites.
- All projects must be submitted to SHPO for review even if the GIS mapper doesn't present any listed impacts. Look to their website for instructions on submitting projects for review.
- They require photographs of the project location—refer to their website for additional details.

Applicants should obtain the SHPO review response as soon as possible. Note that NPS will complete the required Federal Tribal consultation for Section 106 requirements, however the Tribal consultation cannot begin until a SHPO determination has been provided. Please provide correspondence, if any, already completed by the project sponsor with tribal contacts.

Wetlands

The [Regulatory Division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#) can assist in identifying wetlands. This agency determines the permitting requirements for impacts to wetlands and jurisdictional waters of the United States. ***Please allow at least 60 days for this review.***

Please contact your county [USACE permitting specialist](#). Contact this agency as early as possible in the application process.

Threatened/Endangered Species

The US Fish and Wildlife Service will determine if your project impacts federally threatened and endangered species. There are two offices serving North Carolina. Please visit their website to determine which office serves your county. ***Please allow at least 60 days for review.***

USFWS Asheville Regional Office
160 Zillicoa Street
Asheville, NC 28801
(828) 258-3939

USFWS Raleigh Regional Office
PO Box 33726
Raleigh, NC 27636-3726
(919) 856-4520

Floodplains

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) [floodplain map](#) contains N.C.'s current information. The permitting process before construction of facilities will determine the applicable storm water requirements for the project.

LWCF Application Checklist

Use this checklist to ensure that all the required documents listed are included with your application. When uploading files to your SharePoint folder, follow this naming convention, using the Document Name indicated in parenthesis on the checklist: Document Name_Applicant (Project Name)_Date Updated
(Ex: Basic Facts_NCDPR (Test Project)_1.11.2025)

Project Information	
Basic Facts & Assurances (BFA)	
Application & Revision Form (A&R)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All projects, complete sections 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0. - For Acquisition and/or Combination projects, complete sections 2.1. - For Development and/or Combination projects, complete sections 2.2. 	
Description and Notification Form (DNF)	
Project Timeline (Timeline)	
Project Narrative (Narrative)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Description and justification 	
Justification: consistency with the N.C. Outdoor Recreation Plan	
Applicant's Self-Scoring Review	
Financial Information & Risk Assessment	
Budget Narrative (Budget)	
Source of Matching Funds (Matching Funds)	
Federal Information for Construction and Acquisition Programs (SF 424C)	
Compliance Reports for Each Prior Grant	
Site Information & Maps	
Site Control / Proof of Ownership (Ownership)	
Project Location Map (Location Map)	
LWCF Boundary Map (Boundary Map)	
Site Plan (Site Plan)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For Acquisition projects, a conceptual plan should be provided (Conceptual Plan). - For Development projects, building floorplans with detailed information should be provided (Building Floorplan). 	
Acquisition Projects only	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Land Acquisition Form (Acquisition Form) - Appraisal (Appraisal) - Appraisal Review (Appraisal Review) - Legal Description of the Land (Land Description) - History of Conveyance (Conveyance) 	
Environmental Review & NEPA Documentation	
Review Letter from SHPO (SHPO Letter)	
Copies of all agency correspondence and reviews required for NEPA	
Copies of any required permits or documentation of progress	
Planning & Public Involvement	
Master Plan for the park (Master Plan)	
Parks & Recreation Systemwide Plan for the Jurisdiction (Comp Plan)	
Capital Improvement Plan for Parks & Recreation (CIP)	
Local Board Minutes or Resolution Adopting Planning Documents	
Documentation of Public Involvement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recreational Needs Survey (Survey) - Public Meeting & Evidence of Advertisement / Public Support (Public Meeting) - Civic Group Presentations & Evidence of Support (Civic Groups) - Support from Parks & Recreation Advisory Board (Advisory Board) 	

LWCF Basic Facts & Assurances

A signed Basic Facts & Assurances is required for application eligibility. It should be signed by the applicant's chief elected official, certifying the applicant will provide the required matching funds if awarded.

The local contact for the grant project should be the primary grant administrator. This person will be contacted with questions regarding the application and will be the primary contact for grant -related communications if awarded. This person must be an employee of the local government.

The project costs should match the grant request, matching funds, and total project costs reflected on the budget documents.

Application & Revision Form (A&R)

Please download the form at this link: [A&R Form](#)

The A&R form collects pertinent information about the grant, from the project description to environmental

Impacts. It captures the **Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How**.

All Application types must complete the following sections and subsections:

- A&R Cover Page
 - Grant name should be project name from Basic Facts & Assurance
 - Date Prepared
 - Brief description of proposal should be your project description. This should include what is needed, who is asking for it, where it will take place, and the existing condition of facility/site.

- 1.0 NEW PROJECT GRANT APPLICATION
(This should be the same contact as the local government contact on the Basic Facts & Assurances form.)

- 2.0 SITE BASED PROJECT GRANTS
 - A. Sub-recipient (grant sponsor) information
 - B. Public Benefit

- 3.0 SITE INFORMATION
 - A. Basic Information
 - B. Stewardship Considerations
 - C. Environmental Resources Survey
 - NEPA Pathway Recommendation will be reviewed and potentially changed by the Division.
 - D. Cultural and historic resources review

All Acquisition & Combination projects must complete the following section(s) and subsections:

- 2.1 ACQUISITION AND COMBINATION GRANTS
 - A. Need
 - B. Acquisition schedule & appraisal / waiver valuation certification
 - The Division's SLO / ASLO will sign in 2.1-B once the document is finalized and no additional revisions are required.
 - C. Property Information
 - D. Acquisition Approach

All Development & Combination projects must complete the following section(s) and subsections:

- 2.2 DEVELOPMENT AND COMBINATION GRANTS
 - A. Grant Elements
 - B. Design Elements

Description and Notification Form (DNF)

Please download the form & instructions at this link: [DNF FORM](#).

Project Timeline

Please provide your projected timeline. All elements noted in the budget narrative must be addressed in the timeline. [A template is provided on the Division website.](#)

Project Timeline - EXAMPLE				
Already in progress*	Completed 6 months after contract start date	Completed 1 year after contract start date	Completed 2 years after contract start date	Completed during 3rd year of contract
Project planning began February 2020 (List the start date of pre-award expenses)	Award bid Land Acquisition - all parcels	All demolition Site prep Retaining wall Playground	Bocce court Picnic shelter w/ restroom	Parking lot Lighting
<p>Provide notes as needed, for example: <i>If project contracting is delayed, a land acquisition waiver may be needed as owner of parcel 075385893, as part of the land acquisition contract has required that the land transaction be closed before (insert date).</i></p>				
Previous experience with federal grants				
<p>Do you have recent experience completing similar projects with federal grant funding (LWCF or other)? If so, please describe and include project identification number.</p> <p>For example: <i>No recent LWCF funding, but in 2019 we successfully completed a project funded through the Recreation Trails Program (U.S. Department of Transportation’s Federal Highway Administration) completed 8-months prior to grant end date.</i></p>				

Project Narrative

The project narrative should include two parts. [A template is provided on the Division website.](#)

A project description should be 3-5 sentences and include the acres acquired or facilities developed or renovated with LWCF assistance. This description could be published or used publicly, so it is important to be concise and discerning. This description may be edited for accuracy or length by Division staff prior to publishing.

A project justification is the why and how. It should discuss why the project is needed and outline how the project will impact the applicant's community.

Consistency with N.C. Outdoor Recreation Plan

Using citations from the [N.C. Outdoor Recreation Plan](#), explain how your project aligns with the plan, citing the specific recommendation and action item. [A template is provided on the Division website.](#)

The N.C. Outdoor Recreation Plan identifies 4 themes:

1. Health & Well-Being: Transform parks into dynamic spaces for physical activity, mental rejuvenation, and social connection.
2. Recreation for All: Reimagine all parks as welcoming, safe, and valued places for all users through universal access.
3. Resiliency: Achieve lasting resiliency and build sustainable, adaptive park systems that prepare our communities for future challenges.
4. Economic Impact: Harness the transformative power of parks to stimulate business development, tourism, and community investment.

For each theme, there are identified goals and action items. Applicants should provide the theme, goal, and action item reference and an explanation of how the proposed project aligns. Please see Appendix III of this guide to review the goals and action items.

Example:

Theme #2 Recreation for All

Goal 2.2: Renovate, replace and revitalize existing park amenities across the state.

d) Renovate existing facilities to serve new purposes.

Citation: 2.2.d

This project will renovate two tennis courts, replace the surfacing, and add lines to allow for pickleball and tennis play.

Facility and Activity Priority Investment Ratings (PIR)

Through the SCORP planning process, the Division conducted a statewide engagement campaign, including a public survey, a scientific survey, and a tribal survey. Based on this data, a list of priority public recreational facilities was developed.

Applicants will receive up to 30 points for projects providing these priority facilities.

Alternatively, an applicant may demonstrate through planning and public involvement that a facility not included is a local priority, and points will be awarded if sufficient supporting documentation is provided.

When completing the self-scoring system, applicants should list each facility provided by the project, indicate whether the facility is a state-identified or local-identified priority, and attach any supporting documentation for local priority facilities.

Any facilities listed should also be reflected on the application budget, project narrative, and site plan.

Budget Narrative

A template is provided on the [Division website](#). All elements listed on budget narrative should be included in project description, maps, etc. Consistency throughout the application documents is key.

Budget Narrative using Cost Categories from 424C- Example

Administrative costs (Incidental land costs are not eligible for land acquisitions)

Element	Unit	Cost per unit	Federal share	Match share	Total
Landscape Architect	General	N/A	\$17,000	\$17,000	\$34,000

Land acquisition

Parcel #/PIN	Acres	Cost per acre	Federal share	Match share	Total
075385893	12	\$10,000	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$120,000
075365425	1	\$1,000	\$500	\$500	\$1,000

Site Work

Element	Unit	Cost per unit	Federal share	Match share	Total
Grading	5,000 cubic feet	\$10	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$50,000
Retaining wall	100 linear feet	\$200	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$20,000

Demolition and Removal

Element	Unit	Cost per unit	Federal share	Match share	Total
Playground removal	Bulk	\$3,000	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$3,000
Basketball court	Bulk	\$2,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000

Construction

Element	Unit	Cost per unit	Federal share	Match share	Total
Playground	3 elements	\$30,000	\$45,000	\$45,000	\$90,000
Bocce Court	2 courts	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000
Picnic shelter w/ restroom	400 square feet	\$150	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$60,000
Pave parking lot	20 spaces	Bulk	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$20,000

Miscellaneous

Element	Unit	Cost per unit	Federal share	Match share	Total
Shelter lighting	4	\$2,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$8,000
Parking lighting	General	N/A	\$10,250	\$10,250	\$20,500

Totals			Federal share total	Match share total	Grand total
			\$215,250	\$215,250	\$430,500

Explain how the budget was developed: A licensed engineer was used to provide the estimates on all development costs. A federal Yellow Book appraisal was provided to determine the value of the property.

Total anticipated pre-award expenses: \$34,000 (Landscape Architect Designs)

Describe project elements/costs that will improve site resiliency (i.e., response to threat of flood or climate change) and facility longevity, if any: *Maintain consistency in cost classification categories across all budget documents: 424C, Budget Narrative and if awarded, the Detailed Expenditure Report.*

Source of Matching Funds

Use the format below to show the sources of your matching funds. Please indicate if these funds are currently available or are the funds yet to be approved. If funds are yet to be approved, list the date for approval. Full land donations are eligible as matching funds. Partial donations (bargain sale) are not eligible as match.

Source of Matching Funds (EXAMPLE)			
Example Source of Matching Funds			
State match	Description of funding source	Description of funding availability	Amount of match
North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF)	This is a state grant that funds local park capital and land development projects	An application for this project was submitted in May of this year. The grant was awarded in August of this year and is available now.	\$100,000
North Carolina Land and Water Fund (NCLWF)	This is a state grant that funds land acquisition and water improvement projects. The NCLWF permits a very limited number of types of outdoor recreation, which aligns with our future needs	A land acquisition project was submitted for this site last year and was awarded. Money is available now.	\$25,000
Local match			
Town's CIP	The town plans for land acquisition and development needs in 5-year periods.	Half of these funds are available now. The other half will be available next fiscal year.	\$200,000
Other			
Private donation	A private citizen bequeathed funds or property to develop a park in the town.	The funds will be available as soon as needed.	\$100,000
Local fundraising	Local park support group has raised funds for local parks.	The group has raised funds over the past three years. They will transfer the funds to the town when the grant is awarded.	\$50,000
Total match			\$475,000
<p>Most federal funds cannot be used to match LWCF grant funds. Exceptions: Recreational Trails Program and Community Development Block Grants. <i>In the event that an anticipated funding source does not materialize, the local government will be expected to cover this portion of the match.</i></p>			

Federal Information for Construction/Acquisition Programs (SF-424C)

Please download, complete, and submit the federal “Budget information for construction programs” (SF-424C) form using this [Grants.gov link](#). For the calculations to work correctly, the PDF version of the form must be downloaded to a computer, then opened from the list of downloaded files. The downloaded file name should appear as “SF424C_2_0-2.0.pdf”. This pdf file can be edited and saved.

Example: The sample SF-424C form presents how to correctly complete the form using the sample Budget Narrative Do not overmatch for development projects. Best practice is to use a 50% multiplier for each line item.

View Burden Statement
OMB Number: 4040-0008
Expiration Date: 02/28/2022

BUDGET INFORMATION - Construction Programs			
NOTE: Certain Federal assistance programs require additional computations to arrive at the Federal share of project costs eligible for participation. If such is the case, you will be notified.			
COST CLASSIFICATION	a. Total Cost	b. Costs Not Allowable for Participation	c. Total Allowable Costs (Columns a-b)
1. Administrative and legal expenses	\$ <input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>
2. Land, structures, rights-of-way, appraisals, etc.	\$ <input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>
3. Relocation expenses and payments	\$ <input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>
4. Architectural and engineering fees	\$ <input type="text" value="50,000.00"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text" value="50,000.00"/>
5. Other architectural and engineering fees	\$ <input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>
6. Project inspection fees	\$ <input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>
7. Site work	\$ <input type="text" value="273,800.00"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text" value="273,800.00"/>
8. Demolition and removal	\$ <input type="text" value="62,000.00"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text" value="62,000.00"/>
9. Construction	\$ <input type="text" value="447,000.00"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text" value="447,000.00"/>
10. Equipment	\$ <input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>
11. Miscellaneous	\$ <input type="text" value="167,200.00"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text" value="167,200.00"/>
12. SUBTOTAL (sum of lines 1-11)	\$ <input type="text" value="1,000,000.00"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text" value="1,000,000.00"/>
13. Contingencies	\$ <input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>
14. SUBTOTAL	\$ <input type="text" value="1,000,000.00"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text" value="1,000,000.00"/>
15. Project (program) income	\$ <input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>
16. TOTAL PROJECT COSTS (subtract #15 from #14)	\$ <input type="text" value="1,000,000.00"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text" value="1,000,000.00"/>
FEDERAL FUNDING			
17. Federal assistance requested, calculate as follows: (Consult Federal agency for Federal percentage share.) Enter the resulting Federal share.	Enter eligible costs from line 16c. Multiply X <input type="text" value="50"/> %		\$ <input type="text" value="500,000.00"/>

Compliance Reports for Each Prior Grant

Applicants should complete a post-completion inspection for each prior grant funded site in their jurisdiction. A self-certifying inspection is due every 5 years post-completion for grant compliance.

Applicants can look up their prior grant projects on the [RRS Park Locator Map](#). Please reach out to the regional RRS consultant for support and assistance in completing these inspections.

Site Control Certification (Proof of Ownership)

The local government must show that it has control of the entire site of a proposed development project for providing public recreation by November 2, 2026. The project must be located on a single contiguous site. The certification must be signed by an attorney. [The template is provided on the Division's website.](#) Please contact your regional consultant about linear parks and greenways.

Important: The application can be declared ineligible without this certification.

Exception: This certification is not required for applications only proposing land acquisition or applications proposing to acquire the site of a proposed development project.

Project Location Map

Please provide one copy of an 8½" x 11" map showing the location of the proposed project.

Required Elements:

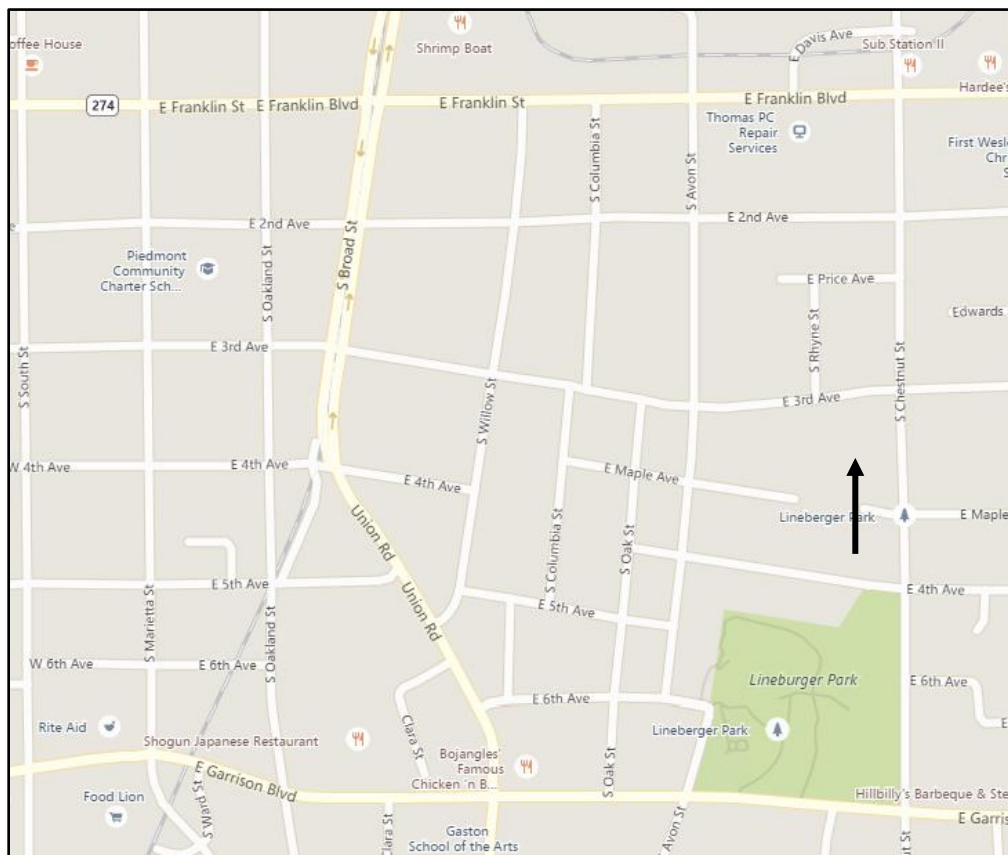
- Title of the project
- The name of the road a visitor uses to get to the park entrance.
- The closest major road
- Legible street names
- North arrow
- Physical address (such as a street address)
- Latitude/longitude coordinates of the central point in the site

Helpful to include but not required: main entrance coordinates, location of site within state & county, area of potential effect (APE)

Sample: Project location map

Lineberger Park, 632 Garrison Blvd., Gastonia, NC

Latitude / Longitude: 35°15'16.8"N / 81°10'19.7"W



LWCF Boundary Map

Required Elements:

- Official park/site name and location
- Sufficient detail to legally identify the lands subject to the LWCF Act (Clear Boundary)
- All known outstanding rights and interests in the area held by others (including details of leases)
- Total acreage of the area within the LWCF boundary
- North arrow
- *Signature Block
- Signature of Chief Elected Official
- Signature of the SLO or alternate and applicant representative with authority to sign contracts

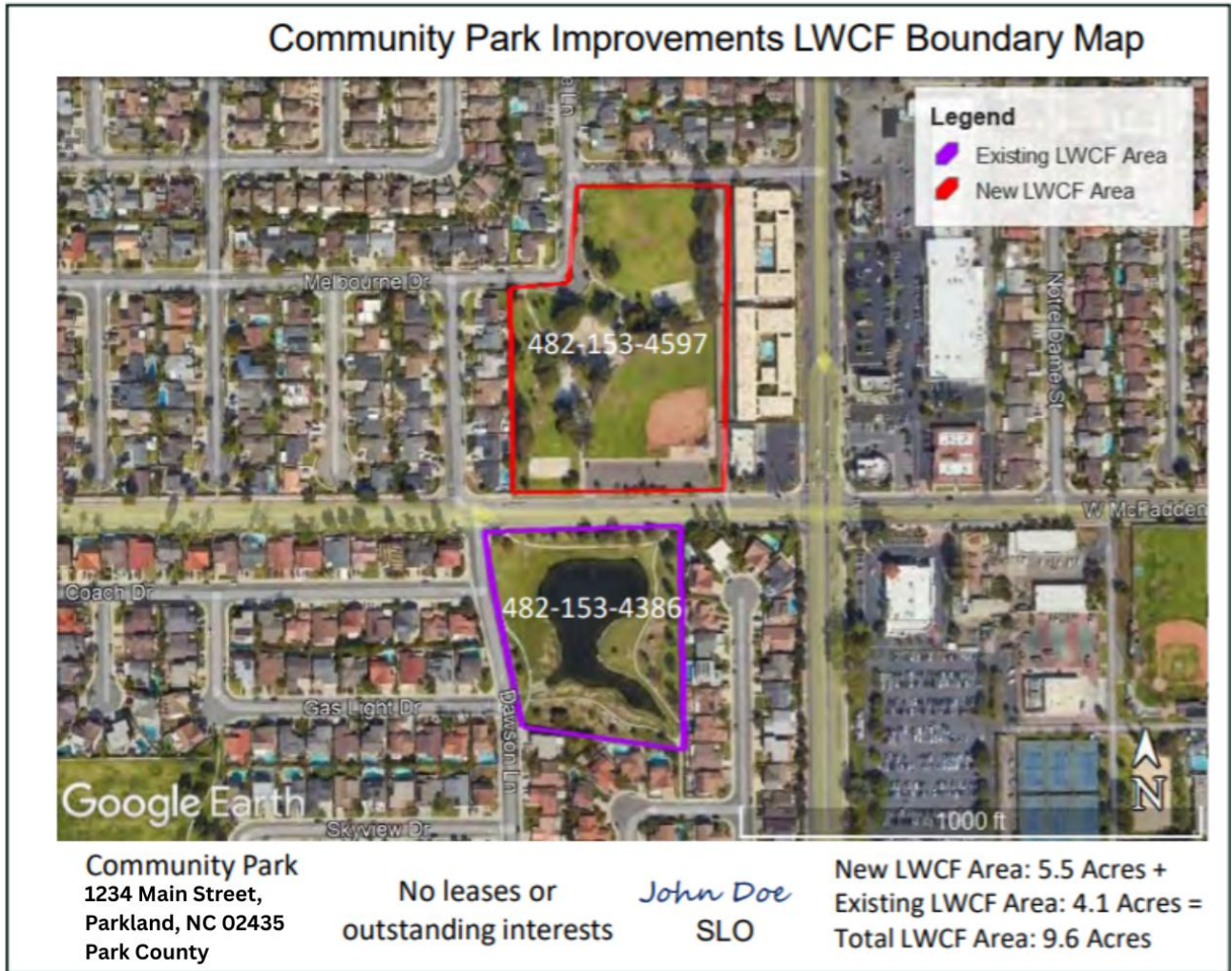
Recommended Features

- Satellite Imagery
- Project Name
- Scale Bar
- Legend
- Address or Coordinates
- Street Names
- Parcel/Deed identifiers
- Previously encumbered acres & newly encumbered acres

Land & Water Conservation Fund Boundary Map	
	LWCF Project #
	Sponsor
	Project Name
	Park Name
	Park Area Acres _____
	LWCF Boundary Acres
	Type of Control __Fee simple __< Fee simple __Lease
	Lease Term and End Date
	Sponsor Signature/Date _____
	SLO/ASLO Signature/Date

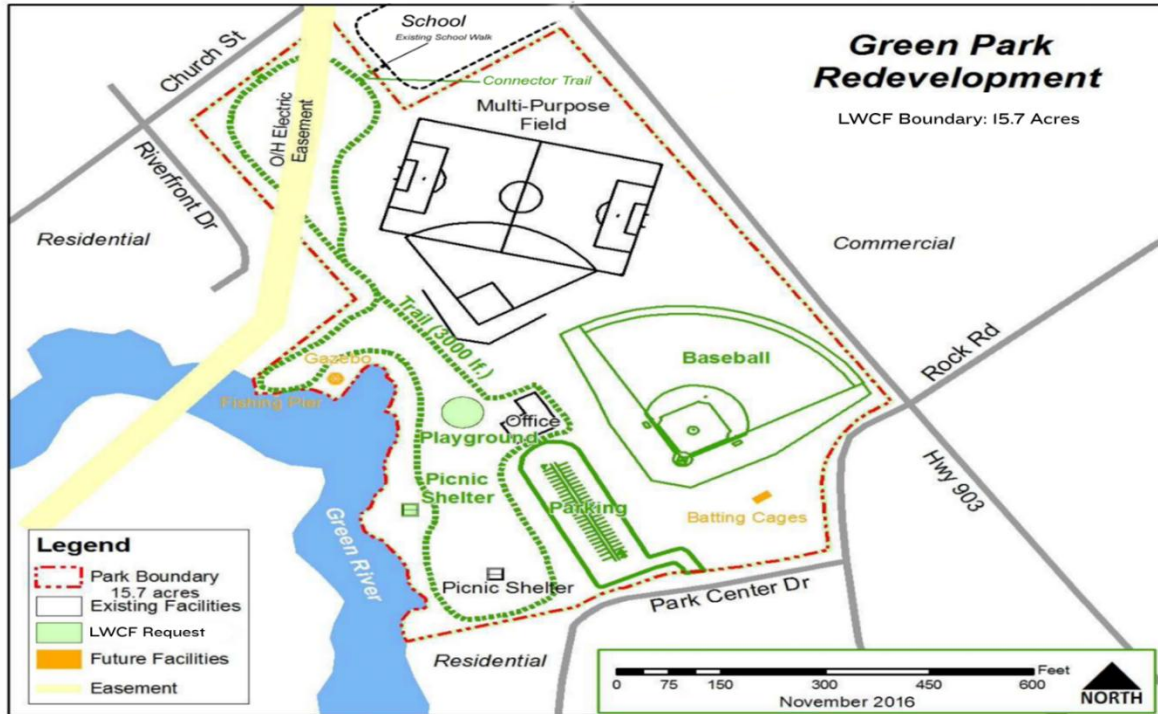
*Signature Block to be used on Boundary Map and Site Plan

LWCF Boundary Map Example



Project Site Plan

Use the example below as a guide for the site plan, including the listed items and color coding. A site plan is required for every project. Development projects should denote in green the elements to be renovated/replaced. For land acquisition only projects, a conceptual plan displaying proposed future development must be displayed in orange. Include the items and color codes listed below on the site



plan.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title: Name of project and applicant • Acreage • Elements of the proposed LWCF project: light green. Include land to be acquired, recreational & support facilities. • Known streams, lakes, and wetlands: blue • Park boundaries: red for existing/ green for new land to be acquired • Existing facilities: black and white • On new property being acquired, denote in black and annotate, planned future indoor facilities to support outdoor recreation. • Number of acres that are/will be in the LWCF boundaries. LWCF boundary restrictions are presented below. • Entrance and access roads to the site • Future facilities: orange 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utility easements (power, sewer, and water lines): yellow • Names of adjacent roads • Use of adjacent property • Deed reference • Metes and bounds (not required) • Length of lease & expiration date (if applicable) • Legend showing color coding • North arrow • Date the map was prepared • Scale • Signature Block • Signature of Chief Elected Official
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Land Acquisition Form

List of Properties to be Acquired						
Applicant						
Title of Project						
Will the property be: - Purchased - Donated ¹	Current Owner	Parcel		Estimated Value		Proposed Purchase Price
		Number	Acreage	Land	Improvements for Public Park Purposes ²	
Totals:						

Notes:

1. Full property donations and bargain sales can be used as matching funds.
2. Identify the value of each existing improvement that will be used or renovated/replaced for public park purposes.
3. Describe how an existing facility(s) will be used for public recreation as part of the project in this application in the space below the table.

(Example: Existing boat ramp on the property to be acquired will be used for a public boat ramp)

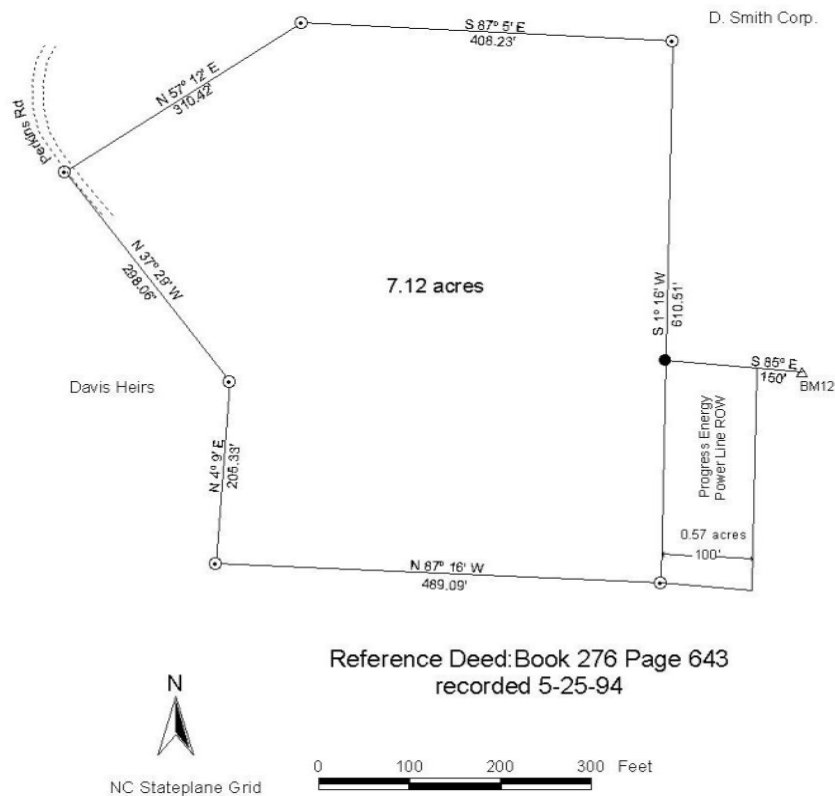
Legal Description of Property to be Acquired

Applicants proposing to acquire property with an LWCF grant are required to submit a legal description of the property. Legal descriptions include surveys, plat maps, tax maps or other maps that include metes and bounds. A legal description is needed for all parcels included on the "List of Properties to be Acquired". Resource impacts within the proposed LWCF boundary area must be described including any future easements, right of ways, leases, and other agreements about the use of the LWCF-assisted area.

The legal description should be submitted on a single 8½" x 11" page or an 11" x 17" page. Include the following items as shown on the sample below:

- Project title, acreage, north arrow, scale, date prepared
- Metes and bounds of the property
- Any easements or restrictions on the public use of property
- Owner and/or uses of adjacent property
- Significant reference points such as state plane coordinates, benchmarks, iron stakes, major streets, highway, or other landmarks
- Deed book number, page number, and date recorded

In addition to the legal description, applicants with acquisition only projects must submit a copy of a conceptual plan showing the property to be acquired and future development for public recreation. Instructions for the conceptual plan are combined with the "Site Plan" instructions.

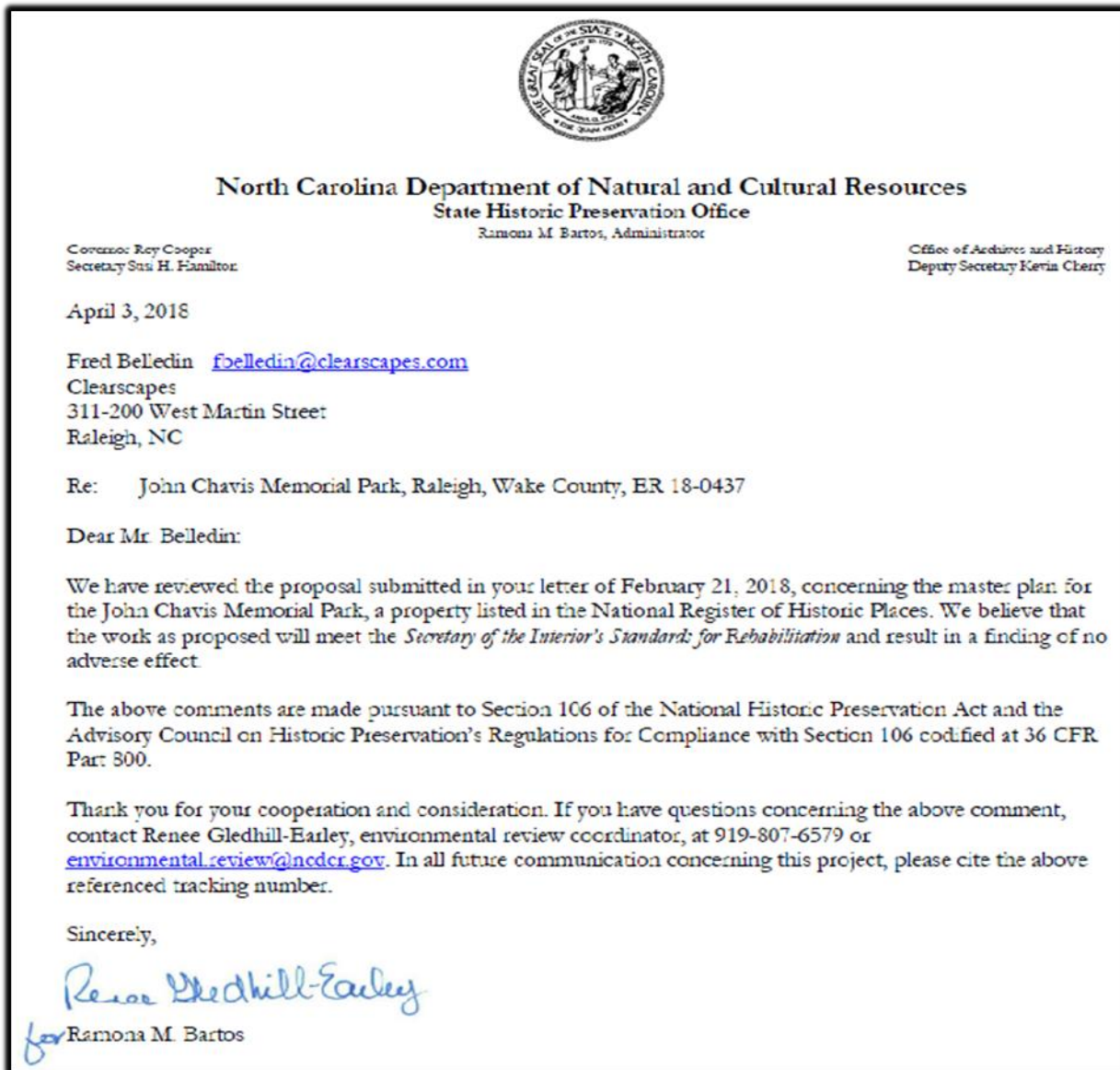


Oak Leaf Park - Legal Description

Review Letter from SHPO

Please provide a letter of approval from the North Carolina State Historical Preservation Office declaring that the site has been reviewed for adverse impacts. Allow 90 days to receive this.

Example:



LWCF Application Evaluation

From the Open Project Selection Process:

- A. Planning
- B. Level of Public Involvement in Developing and Supporting the Project
- C. The Applicant’s Commitment to Operating and Maintaining the Project
- D. Land Acquisition Importance and Impact
- E. Consistency with N.C. Outdoor Recreation Plan
- F. Facility and Activity Priority Investment Ratings (PIR)
- G. Goals per Prosperity Zone
- H. Additional Points

Possible Points by Type of Project			
Category	Acquisition	Development	Acquisition and Development
Leading Practices			
A. Planning	10	20	20
B. Level of public involvement	15	15	15
C. Operation and maintenance commitment	15	15	15
D. Land acquisition importance and impact	30	0	30
Consistency with the N.C. Outdoor Recreation Plan			
E. Alignment with themes	20	20	20
F. Facility and activity priority investment ratings (PIR)	0	30	30
G. Goals per prosperity zones	50	50	50
H. Additional points: +/- 12 possible points	+12	+12	+12
Total possible points:	152	162	192

A. Planning: (20 possible points)

1. Master plan for a park and/or greenway system (10 points)

- a. The local applicant has a master plan created or revised within the past five years for the project site and the project conforms to the plan. (9 points)
- b. The local applicant has a master plan created or revised within the past six years to ten years for the project site and the project conforms to the plan. (4 points)
- c. The planning document has been adopted by the state or a local governing board. (1 point)

Documentation Required

- One copy of the planning document.
- One copy of the local applicant governing board's meeting minutes or resolution showing evidence of adoption or acceptance.
- List the page number(s) where the project is referenced in the plan.

2. Comprehensive systemwide parks and recreation plan for the local government's jurisdiction (7 points)

- a. The local applicant has a Comprehensive Systemwide Parks and Recreation Plan or Greenway System Plan produced or revised in the past 10 years, and the project conforms to the plan. (6 points)
- b. The plan has been adopted by the state or a local governing board. (1 point)
Must show evidence of adoption to receive points

Documentation Required

- One copy of the comprehensive systemwide parks and recreation plan or Greenway System Plan.
- One copy of the applicant governing board's meeting minutes or resolution as documentation of the official adoption or acceptance.
- List the page number(s) where the project is referenced in the plan.

3. Three-to-five-year capital improvement plan for parks and recreation (3 points)

- a. The applicant has a three-to-five-year capital improvement for parks and recreation, and the project is identified in the plan. Date the plan was adopted required for points. (3 points)

Documentation Required:

- One copy of the capital improvement plan.
- One copy of the applicant governing board’s meeting minutes or resolution documenting adoption of the plan as a part of the local government’s budget process. Must show evidence of adoption to receive points.
- List the page number(s) where the project is referenced in the plan.

B. Level of Public Involvement in Developing and Supporting the Project: (15 possible points)

1. Public meetings (5 points)

- a. The applicant conducted a public meeting(s) exclusively for discussing the project and obtaining comments. The public supported the project.

Documentation Required:

- A document describing the means used to widely advertise the meeting, such as newspaper advertisements, Facebook, websites, and community announcements, and include copies of any advertisements. Must show at least two sources of advertisement.
- One copy of the minutes including the discussion of the project, who was present, and public comments. Must show evidence of public support.

2. Recreational needs survey (5 points)

- a. The survey findings determine the recreational needs in the applicant's jurisdiction to show that the residents support the project. The survey must have been conducted during the past ten years.

Documentation Required:

- The following information about the survey:
 - Copy of the questionnaire
 - Results of the survey
 - Describe how the survey was distributed
 - Give the date(s) of distribution and the number of surveys distributed
 - Provide the number of respondents and demographic information that they are representative of the local government's jurisdiction
 - Describe how the results of the survey show that the residents support the project.
- Note: To receive points for the survey, the following must be demonstrated in the documentation provided:
 - The number of respondents should be sufficiently large enough to adequately represent the population of the jurisdiction.
 - The results should include at least three of the following demographics (age, gender, education level, race, ethnicity, household income or household size) to ensure that they are representative of the population in the jurisdiction.

3. Support from civic (non-governmental) groups (3 points)

- a. The applicant presented the project to two or more local groups. Examples: civic groups, neighborhood associations, youth organizations, and advisory boards.

Documentation Required:

- One copy of the agenda, minutes or thank you letter from the groups that confirm the dates of the meetings and the presentations given by the applicant.
- Must present to at least two eligible groups to receive points.
- Note: support letters from a group do not count as presentations.

4. Support from parks and recreation advisory board (2 points)

- a. The applicant presented the project to the parks and recreation advisory board or a similarly appointed group and received a motion of support for the project.

Documentation Required:

- One copy of the minutes from the meeting included support for the project.

C. The Applicant's Commitment to Operating and Maintaining the Project: (15 possible points)

- The applicant has a full-time parks and recreation department that will manage the project site to provide programming and to ensure adequate operation and maintenance. (15 points)
- The applicant has a full-time staff, such as a public works, who will manage the project site to ensure adequate operation and maintenance. (8 points)
- The applicant will manage the project site with part-time staff or by contractual agreement to ensure adequate operation and maintenance. (4 points)
- An organized volunteer group, such as a civic group or youth sports association will operate and maintain the site. (2 points)

Name of the organization should be provided. If the applicant is going to operate the site with part-time staff, contractual agreement or an organized volunteer group, applicant must describe how and when the site will be open to the public.

D. Land Acquisition (ACQ) Importance and Impact: (30 possible points)

1. Identify and provide a justification for the ACQ type and impact to protect the unique natural resources. Select one of the following three options and explain why land ACQ will create a positive impact on the community. (15 possible points)

- The site is a significant, unique, and threatened natural resource that will be used for other development purposes if not acquired. The recommendation is to conserve/protect the resource while providing low-impact passive recreation, education, and conservation opportunities. (15 points)
- The site is an excellent natural resource that will be protected in addition to providing active and passive outdoor recreational opportunities and supports education and conservation efforts. (10 points)
- The site is an average natural resource that will be used to provide predominantly active outdoor recreation opportunities and support the education and conservation efforts. (5 points)

Applicant must provide a detailed justification for their selection above.

2. Number of acres of land ACQ – parcel acres or linear ACQ for greenway/ trails (15 possible points)

- 5 acres or less (5 points)
- Medium acquisition, 6-25 acres (10 points)
- Large acquisition, 26 or more acres (15 points)

Documentation Required:

Use the boundary map legend below to provide necessary parcel information with relevant supporting documentation (deed, easement agreement, etc.).

Land & Water Conservation Fund Boundary Map must include:

- LWCF Project #
- Sponsor
- Project Name
- Park Area Acres
- LWCF Boundary Acres
- Type of Control
- Lease Term and End Date
- Sponsor Signature/Date
- SLO/ASLO Signature/Date

E. Consistency with N.C. Outdoor Recreation Plan (20 possible points)

1. Justify the project alignment with N.C. Outdoor Recreation Plan themes (up to 5 points per theme)

- Health and Wellbeing
- Recreation for all
- Resiliency
- Economic Impact

For each theme, there are identified goals and action items. Applicants should provide the theme, goal, and action item reference and an explanation of how the proposed project aligns. Please see Appendix III of this guide to review the goals and action items.

F. Facility and Activity Priority Investment Ratings (PIR) (30 possible points)
Public outdoor recreation facilities and /or activities provided by this project. Not applicable for acquisition only applications.

The project will provide priority facilities or activities from the N.C. Outdoor Recreation Plan. The facilities may be new or renovated (see definitions for what qualifies for renovation). Priority facilities are listed in the tables below. If a local applicant can demonstrate that a facility not included in the state priority table below is identified as a priority by the community, points will be awarded.

- 3 or more types of facilities or activities (30 points)
- 2 types of facilities or activities (20 points)
- 1 type of facility or activity (10 points)

Applicant should list types of facilities to be provided with this project and identify if it is a state priority or community-identified priority. If applicant is developing facilities not identified in the state priority table, include justification and evidence from local community engagement. Include support documents and page numbers if applicable.

Table 2 – Facility and Activity Priority Investment Ratings

High Priority Facilities	PIR
Trails – hiking, walking	184
Gardens – public arboretum	171
Camping – cabins	161
Camping – tent	150
Swimming – beach or lake	143
Trails – paddling	138
Education exhibits – visitor center (supporting outdoor recreation)	136
Lake access – boat/canoe/kayak SUP	136
Picnic shelter – areas	131
Garden – community	129
Trails– bike, rollerblading	128
River access – boat/canoe/kayak SUP	126
Zoological area	120
Swimming – pool	118
Amphitheater, stage, concert	116
Orchard	113
Fitness – challenge course area	108
Fishing – freshwater bank, pier	108
Shooting – range	106
Camping – hike-in, backpack	103
Dog park	100
Medium Priority Facilities	PIR
Water park	95
Swim – beach, ocean	93
Sprayground/splash pad	92
Court(s) – pickleball	88
Playground	89
Course – mini golf	87
Camping – RV	86
Climbing wall, bouldering	83
Course – ropes	82
Course – disc golf	80
Track – running	80
Biking – mountain	79
Snow and ice activities	75

Ocean/Intracoastal access – boat/canoe/ kayak SUP	74
Courts – cornhole	72
Camping – paddle-in	70
Off-highway vehicle (OHV) area	69
Fishing – freshwater boat	69
Train – miniature	69
Water park	95
Swim – beach, ocean	93
Court(s) – multipurpose	68
Yard games	68
Carousel	67
Skate park	65
Fishing – saltwater, onshore pier	65
Court(s) – sand volleyball	64
Trail – horseback riding	63
Batting cages	63
Court(s) – tennis	61
Golf – driving range	60
Court(s) – horseshoe	59
Table games	58
Court(s) – hard surface volleyball	57
Court(s) – Bocce Ball	55
Low Priority Facilities	PIR
Lake – boat, marina	49
Boat ramp – motorized	47
Fishing – saltwater boat	46
Course – golf	46
Field – rectangular	45
Court(s) – shuffleboard	43
Field – diamond	42
Ocean – boat, marina	33
Camping – equestrian center (supporting outdoor recreation)	31
Pump track (bike)	31
Field(s) – field hockey	25
Field(s) – cricket	22
Court(s) – futsal	19
Aircraft flying	17

G. Goals per Prosperity Zone (50 possible points)

Through our state engagement campaign, the following goals were determined for each prosperity zone as defined by the N.C. Department of Commerce. These goals address the priorities of the public, including barriers to access, how people like to spend time, recreation providers' priorities, and important improvement and expansion actions. These goals are prioritized by number of points within each prosperity zone (Table 3).

Table 3 - Goal Prioritization by Prosperity Zone

Priority Goal	Western	Northwest	Piedmont-Triad	North Central	Northeast	Southeast	Sandhills	Southwest
Protection of Natural Resources	20	20	20	20	5	20	20	20
Providing local, regional, and state trails	15	15	15	15	15	10	10	15
Acquisition of new parkland	7.5	5	5	10	10	5	5	10
Improvement & Maintenance of existing infrastructure and facilities	7.5	10	10	5	20	15	15	5
Total Points	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50

H. Additional Points (+12 or -12 possible points)

1. Applicants are developing their first park (+3 points)

OR

Applicants have received previous LWCF and/or PARTF-funded projects and has good administration and compliance on all grant funded sites. (+3 points)

2. **Application is a joint project between two or more units of government, or the project is identified in a multi-jurisdictional parks and recreation plan adopted by each applicant(s). (+3 points)**
 - a. Multi-jurisdictional plan and evidence of adoption by each must be provided as supporting documentation to receive points.
3. **Application provides a trail connection that links daily destinations (+2 points)**
 - a. Examples: bus stop, retail, existing recreation area(s), school(s), businesses, and/or communities located outside of the project site.
 - b. Trail connection must be identified on the site plan and included in the budget to receive points. Include name of trail.

- 4. The applicant provides maximum accessibility to outdoor recreation opportunities (+2 points)**
 - a. Maximum accessibility is defined as the site, facility, work environment, service or program is compliant and meets the accessibility standards as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and as required by law. Additionally, it has been designed with the intention of barrier removal to create usability by all people to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or modification. The design allows for seamless connectivity and usability between all features. Applicant should include relevant information in budget narrative (width of walkways, surfacing material, etc) and on site plan to receive points for maximum access.
 - b. Minimum accessibility: the site, facility, work environment, service or program is compliant. It meets the accessibility standards as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and is required by law. All projects receiving grant funds must meet ADA requirements. No additional points for minimum or ADA access only.
- 5. Project provides public access to public waters (such as river, ocean, sound, or lake). (+2 points)**
 - a. Public water and access must be labeled on site plan and included in the budget to receive points.
- 6. Previously funded site(s) in the jurisdiction are not open, maintained and/or safe for public use. (-6 points)**
 - a. All sites acquired and/or developed with grant funds are required to be operated and maintained for public recreation in perpetuity and should be open, safe, and accessible to the public.
 - b. Applicants with an approved temporary non-conforming use in place are in compliance with this requirement.
- 7. Compliance: Applicant currently has an outstanding issue(s) on LWCF funded sites that is/are not being addressed (-3 points)**
 - a. Refer to definitions (page 15) for more details on compliance issues.
- 8. Poor application documentation (unclear maps or incomplete site plan, instructions not followed, missing documentation, unrealistic budget, inconsistencies throughout application documents, etc.) (Up to -3 possible points)**

Appendix I: Definitions

The North Carolina Outdoor Recreation Plan

Development – Refers to any new, like, or renovated facilities in the project scope.

Renovation: The extensive reconstruction of a facility to restore or improve its usefulness to its original purpose within an LWCF-assisted park. A renovation project will not be awarded points under the scoring system if the facility’s deterioration is due to inadequate maintenance during its reasonable lifetime.

Obsolete facilities: Project sponsors are not required to continue the operation of a particular recreation area or facility beyond its useful life. However, Section 6(f)(3) of the LWCF Act requires project sponsors to maintain the entire area within the Section LWCF boundary in some form of public outdoor recreation use. Notwithstanding neglect or inadequate maintenance on the part of the project sponsor, a recreation area or facility may be determined to be obsolete if:

- reasonable repairs are not sufficient to keep the recreation area or facility operating;
- changing recreation needs dictate a change in the type of facilities provided;
- park operating practices dictate a change in the type of facilities required; or,
- the recreation area or facility is destroyed by fire, natural disaster, or vandalism.

Replacement: The replacement of an existing recreation facility that has been deemed obsolete with an outdoor recreation area or facility. This can be replacement of the same type or different type of facility if public demand has changed. Discuss “Significant Change of Use” vs. “Obsolescence” at existing LWCF sites with your RRS Consultant.

Outdoor Recreational Facility: The following list provides examples outdoor recreational facilities or areas. Indoor recreational facilities are not eligible.

Examples of Recreational Facilities and Areas:

- Sports facilities including tennis courts, soccer fields, ballfields, running tracks, volleyball courts and basketball courts.
- Swimming facilities including swimming pools, splashpads, wave-making pools, wading pools, and swim beaches.
- Trails within a park with a minimum continuous length of 1/4 mile including nature trails, hiking trails, bicycling trails, and equestrian trails.
- Greenways - linear open spaces connecting parks or other public areas that are 1/4 mile or longer and usually contain a multi-purpose trail.
- Camping facilities including cabins, group camps, and tent and trailer campgrounds.

- Picnic facilities including picnic shelters with tables and grills, or picnic areas with groups of tables, grills, and trash receptacles.
- Interpretive facilities for nature study, viewing scenery and photography including observation decks, viewing platforms, boardwalks.
- Playgrounds and tot lots.
- Amphitheaters.
- Fishing and boating facilities including man-made lakes or ponds, docks, launching ramps, piers, and marinas.

Support facilities are not recreational facilities: Support facilities include parking lots, roads, lighting, bleachers, restrooms, concession buildings, site preparation, bridges, utilities, and sidewalks.

Master Plan for the Park: A long-range plan for one park that contains a site analysis; a description of the community's recreational needs; property acquisition boundaries; and the proposed location of all capital improvements. A master plan document must adequately address all the following items to receive points:

- Site analysis - Describe and evaluate the site's natural, historic, and man-made features. These include items such as topography, soils, vegetation, hydrology, significant natural communities, wetlands, existing structures, and public access.
- Recreational needs - Identify the recreational opportunities that the public prefers using meetings or a survey. Describe how the recreational opportunities being proposed by the master plan relate to existing recreational facilities and services in the jurisdiction (this may be a part of the system-wide comprehensive plan).
- Program description - Identify the main purposes of the park including a description of the how the local government will design the park to be used by the public.
- Physical needs - Identify the physical needs of the park's site. Include any land the local government will acquire and any capital improvements (buildings, recreation facilities, roads, utilities). All land and capital improvements proposed in the LWCF application must be included in the master plan.
- Project costs for property acquisition and capital improvements, divided into phases if necessary. The cost information can be provided in a separate document that is submitted with the master plan.
- Site plans and illustrations depicting the boundaries of land to be acquired and the location of facilities.
- Public Involvement - Describe how the local government involved a broad range of the citizens in its jurisdiction as the master plan was being developed. Examples include public meetings or advisory committee meetings. This description can also be provided in a separate document that is submitted with the master plan.

Greenway System Plan - A long-range plan to develop a framework for building an integrated system of trails that will link citizens to the outdoors. A greenway system plan must adequately address all the following items:

- Vision, Goals and Objectives - The goals and objectives the local government would like the plan to accomplish related to the different uses/benefits of the greenway, especially in reference to recreation/fitness/health.
- Inventory Existing Data and Related Plans – the identification and mapping of existing natural resources, man-made features and linear greenway corridors within the local jurisdiction that might influence the development of the greenway system.
- Analyze Data and Develop/Map Proposed Greenway – review and analysis of all data collected to allow the local government to:
 - Identify potential greenway corridors,
 - Identify hubs/destinations that are either natural resource based or man-made (or a combination of the two) which should be part of the greenway system,
 - Identify important and threatened open space that should be part of the greenway system including ecologically or biologically significant areas or hubs,
 - Identify and discuss greenway development challenges such as floodways, active railroad tracks/crossings, major roadway crossings, etc.
- Mapping - the result of the above analysis is a map(s) and text to describe the proposed system. The map(s) should illustrate not only existing greenway system elements, but also the proposed greenway network envisioned by the local government.
- Action Plan – develop a specific action plan that will position the local government to move forward in realizing the proposed greenway system. The action plan should include:
 - A listing of action steps that set priorities,
 - Roles and responsibilities in implementing the plan,
 - Cost estimates, resources and potential funding options needed to address action steps, and
 - Greenway corridor segments identified as potential pilot projects.
- Public Involvement - A description of how the local government involved a broad range and representative number of its citizens as the greenway plan was prepared. Examples include a random survey of the citizens; a series of public meetings that would give most citizens an opportunity to participate; a series of focus group meetings that involve the representatives of the jurisdiction’s population; or a combination of these efforts. Please address the number of people who participated and who they represented for each level of public involvement used.
- Maintenance, Management and Operational Policies – address policies that will provide the basis for making decisions related to trail maintenance, management, and security.
- The cost information and description of public involvement can be provided in a separate document that is submitted with the greenway plan.

Comprehensive Systemwide Plan for Parks and Recreation: A long-term plan that describes how a local government will address the recreational needs of the citizens in its jurisdiction. A systemwide plan document must adequately address all the following items:

- Produced or revised within the past ten years.
- A description of the jurisdiction's residents and their preferences for recreational activities and facilities.
- An evaluation of existing recreational facilities and park land such as local and state parks, school facilities, the YMCA or YWCA, churches, private sector, etc. to determine if the community's current and future recreational needs are being met.
- An estimate of the park land to be acquired and the recreational facilities to be developed to address shortfalls in current services.
- A detailed description of how the local government involved a broad range and representative number of its citizens as the plan was prepared.
- Examples include a random survey of the citizens; a series of public meetings that would give most citizens an opportunity to participate; a series of focus group meetings that involve the representatives of the jurisdiction's population; or a combination of these efforts.

Capital Improvement Plan / Three-to-Five-Year Park and Recreation Plan: A plan that lists all capital expenditures and/or specifically all park and recreation projects that a local government has approved for funding and scheduled for the near future. The plan is a component of the local government's regular budget cycle.

Survey of Recreational Needs: A survey of the citizens in the local government's jurisdiction to identify their needs and preferences for recreational opportunities. The local government can use the survey as one of the first steps in developing a master plan for a specific park or a system-wide comprehensive park and recreation plan for the entire jurisdiction. Through the survey, citizens can give their preferences for different types of recreation and facilities. The local government uses the survey results to establish recreational priorities for the jurisdiction. The local government must distribute the questionnaire to a broad and representative sample of its citizens. The questionnaire can be distributed through the mail, door-to-door, by telephone, in focus groups and in public meetings. The following key elements of the survey must be documented:

- The survey should be distributed to a sample of citizens that is sufficiently large and varied enough to be representative of the population in the jurisdiction. A random sample of the population is preferred.
- The number of respondents should be sufficiently large enough to adequately represent the population of the jurisdiction, at a minimum, ten percent of the distributed surveys.
- The questions must be clear and unbiased.
- The questions should not limit the citizens to choosing from a narrow list of recreational opportunities.
- Copies of the same questionnaire must be distributed to everyone in the sample.

- The survey should include at least three of the following demographics to ensure a representative population of the jurisdiction: age, gender, education level, race, ethnicity, household income or household size.
- The survey must have been conducted within the past ten years.
- The survey must have been conducted, and results received, before the local government begins planning the LWCF project.

Appendix II: Recreation Resources Service

Recreation Resources Service is a technical assistance program jointly administered by the Division and North Carolina State University's Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management. With its team of consultants, RRS regularly helps local governments submit grant proposals and follows through with project inspections, application processing, conversion issues, and closeout processing. Technical assistance also includes assistance with the establishment of new parks and recreation departments; organization and training for new parks and recreation advisory boards; benefits-based programming; playground safety; Job Service Bulletins; grants; and workshops.

Your RRS consultant is your first point of contact for grant application support, project questions, and if awarded, grant management support.

Find your RRS Consultant



Appendix III: N.C. Outdoor Recreation Plan Themes, Recommendations, and Action Items

Plan Theme #1: Health & Well-Being

Transform parks into dynamic spaces for physical activity, mental rejuvenation, and social connection.

Goal 1.1: Support improvements in public health and fitness by increasing opportunities for physical activity. Action Items for this recommendation are:

- a. Provide adequate parkland and recreational facilities to encourage children and their families to be more physically active.
- b. Promote public and private partnerships, especially with third party recreation providers, healthcare organizations, and insurance companies, to encourage physical activity through outdoor recreation.
- c. Provide communities with up-to-date information about the role of parks and open space, and nonmotorized and active transportation routes in promoting healthy lifestyles.
- d. Encourage the development of community policies regarding recreational facilities, the use of school facilities, and trails and bicycle-friendly routes to help people be more physically active.
- e. Focus on designing intergenerational amenities that appeal to diverse residents for holistic health benefits.
- f. Encourage local providers to use the Priority Investment Rating findings to provide relevant new amenities that increase opportunities to stay active.
- g. Include tutorial placards on park amenities that support physical activity. For example, fitness stations, walking loops, or open play.
- h. Include signage noting the benefits of exercise. (i.e. Three full walks around this park is the equivalent of 15 minutes of structured exercise needed by most adults.)
- i. Leverage the use of apps and online data sources to support positive health and wellbeing outcomes

Goal 1.2: Promote programming, facilities, and built environment improvements that provide physical and mental health benefits.

- a. Raise awareness of using local and regional trails to engage in exercises such as walking, biking, hiking, roller blading, etc.
- b. Incorporate and promote unique offerings at parks that encourage staying active, including play areas, fitness areas, sports courts, and water-related activities.
- c. Support local communities in building amenities that encourage socialization, such as event spaces, festivals, group gatherings, etc.
- d. Promote parks that offer nature-based activities to provide deeper connection to nature.
- e. Create an 'Unplugged at State Parks' campaign to highlight offline activities and offerings at state parks.
- f. Support and promote programs that encourage mindfulness and improve mental health.

- g. Provide basic outdoor recreation courses, particularly in urban areas, to increase comfort with more intensive outdoor activities such as kayaking, camping, backpacking, etc.
- h. Encourage and support overnight camping programs within larger county and municipal parks to reduce demand and strain on state parks.
- i. Encourage the development of intergenerational programming to bring diverse user groups together and create teach-learn opportunities.
- j. Focus on protection and expansion of tree canopies within state parks, particularly in and adjacent to vulnerable communities.
- k. Provide education on the benefits of tree canopy protection to local agencies and support their efforts to protect and expand tree canopy in local parks.
- l. Work with local planning officials to determine planting requirements to be applied to all developments.

Goal 1.3: Identify the disparities in how people access park system and champion efforts to reduce inequities in access.

- a. Use GIS maps and data within SCORP to identify health-vulnerable areas within your community.
- b. Create a comprehensive inventory of outdoor recreation opportunities, including parks, amenities, greenways, and trails in relation to socially vulnerable areas.
- c. Liaise with local hospitals and health care organizations as they conduct their community health needs assessment.
- d. Forge data-sharing agreements with your local hospitals and health care organizations.
- e. Stay updated on health equity measures, data, and assessments.
- f. Continue partnerships with NC State University and other educational institutions to promote research into recreation best practices.
- g. Share current research and best practices to educate healthcare providers, interested organizations, and the public about the importance of parks and open space investment in areas of need for improving health indicators.
- h. Partner with relevant organizations to assess current safe access levels and opportunities for infrastructure improvements to increase safe and fair access for communities and visitors.
- i. Strategically expand parks and recreational spaces in areas with limited access to health-promoting natural environments.
- j. Acquire public park land in areas with high health vulnerability.

Goal 1.4: Support the creation of more regional trail organizations like the Carolina Thread Trail, Piedmont Legacy Trails, and the Triangle Trails Initiative to add trail development capacity at a regional level across the state.

- a. Continue regional trail planning through the Division.
- b. Identify existing nonprofit or local government partners that may be candidates to house new regional trail organizations.
- c. Identify a funding source to provide operational support to start up organizations.

Goal 1.5: Increase opportunities for adaptive trail users by encouraging new natural surface trails to be built to adaptive trail use standards or identify existing natural surface trails that can be retrofitted to meet adaptive trail use standards.

- a. Develop an assessment tool to measure and rate the trail accessibility to help users select trail routes that meet their need for level of difficulty for walking/hiking.
- b. Establish an adaptive trail use standard through the Division based on national best practices.
- c. Identify parks with existing adaptive trail programming as opportunities to promote and showcase trail planning and construction best practices for adaptive uses.
- d. Include adaptive trail activities as a user type when inventorying trails within state parks.

Goal 1.6: Establish annual trails programming based on the Year of the Trail model to increase trail programming across all 100 counties.

- a. Designate an internal liaison within the Division to lead trail programming coordination.
- b. Provide adequate resources through the Division or statewide partner organizations to effectively provide programming support and leadership to communities at a statewide level.

Goal 1.7: Support the continued development of trail benefits studies.

- a. Identify opportunities for studies on the impact of paddle trails, in addition to studies of land-based trails.
- b. Support communication channels that share these resources with local jurisdiction partners.

Plan Theme #2: Recreation for All

Reimagine all parks as welcoming, safe, and valued places for all users through universal access.

Goal 2.1: Meet the needs of North Carolina's rapidly growing population by providing more recreation opportunities in areas of the state where growth is taking place.

- a. Add additional recreation opportunities near major urban areas to help decrease the long-term demand on the more ecologically sensitive state parks and natural areas.
- b. Provide funding to local parks and recreation departments for new recreation amenities in areas with growing populations.
- c. Better educate residents about current and future outdoor recreation resource needs for a growing population.
- d. Extend information and data sharing capacity between recreation providers and non-recreation providers within government agencies so that more holistic planning practices are possible.
- e. Grow recreation regional planning capacity on all levels and incentivize these plans by promoting their best practice in grant applications.
- f. Encourage construction of multi-use facilities to allow flexibility for diverse uses and interest groups.
- g. Provide beginner-level programs and learning opportunities for outdoor recreation activities targeted specifically for individuals with limited access to outdoor experiences.

- h. Encourage local agencies to provide space for pop-up events and amenities like pop up play, movie nights, block parties, etc. to increase access to outdoors where permanent access to recreation is not available.

Goal 2.2: Renovate, replace and revitalize existing park amenities across the state.

- a. Target funding to renovate, replace and revitalize existing recreation amenities for state and local agencies before facilities go into disrepair due to overwhelming demand.
- b. Retrofit existing facilities to enhance access to all user groups, including age and ability levels.
- c. Ensure that all updates demonstrate best practices for accessibility.
- d. Renovate existing facilities to serve new purposes.

Goal 2.3: Increase opportunities and public awareness of the state's natural resources and recreation opportunities for the unaware and current non-users.

- a. Promote opportunities that align with grade-level science and social science curriculum and take students outdoors to learn about the environment through visits to state and local parks.
- b. Continue to design recreational facilities to ensure universal access with recognition of the needs of special needs and aging populations.
- c. Encourage local agencies to identify unaware and non-users and provide funding and engagement opportunities in these areas.
- d. Identify key partners to address challenges and enhance access to recreation in areas with fewer recreational opportunities.
- e. Develop targeted outreach efforts for non-users and unaware users to identify specific barriers to access and engagement with the parks system.
- f. Identify key partners who work with non-users to help raise awareness about outdoor recreation.
- g. Utilize education, outreach and marketing efforts, trainings, and other customized tools to promote unique experiences in local and state parks.

A. Goal 2.4: Improve outdoor educational programs to achieve multiple benefits such as local history, cultural awareness, and environmental stewardship.

- a. Find opportunities to increase culturally focused programming events and efforts.
- b. Identify local partner organizations and institutions to help create programs focused on local history and traditions.
- c. Create new programs with a focus on location-specific environmental stewardship.

B. Goal 2.5: Address the real and perceived barrier of 'overcrowding' in parks.

- a. Promote strategies such as 'low impact' recreation and enforcement of rules to ensure long-term sustainability of sensitive ecosystems.
- b. Train staff and educate visitors about the 'Leave No Trace' principles while outdoors. Source: <https://www.ncparks.gov/conservation/park-safety-and-respect/leave-notrace>.
- c. Create online live dashboards or other ways for more popular parks to suggest nearby alternative destinations or alternative days and times to visit.
- d. Provide alternative immersive digital experiences using VR technology, media, videos, etc. to reduce human footprint on highly sensitive habitats.

- e. Allow intentional area closures to let the landscape and local flora to heal and recuperate from human impacts.
- f. Provide guided, timed tours of highly popular recreational amenities.
- g. Explore options such as shuttle services from nearby parking areas in popular seasons to reduce vehicular traffic on sensitive park properties.
- h. Develop information for potential visitors to direct them to other parks/areas that provide similar unique outdoor experiences.

Goal 2.6: Develop multi-layered strategies to provide easier access to local and state parks for all residents.

- a. Continue to advance the State's parks system to provide access to state parks within thirty minutes to an hour's driving distance.
- b. Promote and encourage local agencies to provide outdoor recreational opportunities within a 10-minute walk for all residents.
- c. Work with local agencies to provide transportation in areas without vehicle ownership and single-car households.
- d. Work with local nearby towns to provide shuttle transportation and day-tours to state parks.
- e. Raise awareness and knowledge of close-to-home facilities and parks in collaboration with local agencies.
- f. Encourage the development of time-bound programs for users with time limitations to enjoy the outdoors.
- g. Develop tools and resources to educate people about alternative modes of transportation to access the outdoors, including public transport, trails, and bike routes.
- h. Include public transportation information on park websites.

Goal 2.7: Create a more welcoming environment in parks across the State.

- a. Provide Spanish Translation on signage within the park system.
- b. Provide Spanish Translation of visitor materials at State Parks.
- c. Provide educational signage and storytelling component to celebrate Black History in State Parks.
- d. Work with NC American Indian Heritage Commission (AIHC) and local tribes to ensure accurate and respectful storytelling about American Indian communities of the past and present at our parks.
- e. Work with disability advocate groups to name gaps in the existing system and shared initiatives and funding opportunities.
- f. Adopt the Principles of Universal Design as a requirement for all future park projects.
- g. Encouraging inclusive design in park facilities to ensure all visitors feel welcome and safe.
- h. Create internship opportunities for youth from diverse backgrounds, including people of color, interested in future employment positions.

Goal 2.8: Promoting workforce diversity to strengthen ties between parks and diverse user groups.

- a. Conduct an internal staff audit to figure out the diversity of staff within State Parks, as it aligns with the demographics within a 0.5-1-hour driving distance.

- b. Encourage local agencies to hire Bilingual/ Multilingual staff in specific parks to allow easier communication with diverse user groups.
- c. Include cultural competency training to improve engagement and reduce communication barriers.

Goal 2.9: Leverage technology to enhance outdoor experiences when visiting State parks.

- a. Engage the Division staff and local providers in training to gain familiarity with emerging technology to enhance outdoor experiences for visitors.
- b. Train existing staff on tools like Translation apps to interact with bilingual users easily.
- c. Expand digital sources, mapping, and online information to encourage people to get outside.
- d. Use digital sources, storymaps, and virtual tours for historic resources that have limited accessibility for mobility-challenged visitors.
- e. Encourage visitors to share their experiences on existing social media platforms to attract new visitors to enjoy parks, trails, and other destinations.
- f. Leverage technology to educate the public in their language of choice about environmental, cultural, and historic resources.
- g. Develop pre-recorded audio tours, digital education materials in multiple languages.

Goal 2.10: Leverage the strong presence of federally and non-federally recognized indigenous communities to expand recreation experiences.

- a. Develop strategic collaborative efforts with the American Indian organizations to inform outdoor recreation experiences.
- b. Incorporate intentional engagement and feedback from indigenous communities for planning, design, and programming at local and state parks.
- c. Promote cultural awareness about indigenous communities through outreach, education, and marketing efforts.
- d. Partner with statewide cultural organizations to showcase outdoor recreation as an integral part of all human experience.

Plan Theme #3: Resiliency

Achieve lasting resiliency and build sustainable, adaptive park systems that prepare our communities for future challenges.

Goal 3.1: Protect and conserve North Carolina's high-quality natural resources and landscapes.

- a. Encourage local agencies to identify environmentally sensitive natural areas near high-growth areas for protection, conservation, and passive recreation.
- b. Encourage the Division or local agencies to acquire unique natural areas that are at risk of development.
- c. Develop a standard operating procedure (SOP) for the Division to pass along land acquisition opportunities to other entities that do not meet the State Park acquisition criteria.
- d. Explore land-holding mechanisms for properties that could be turned over to local governments for development and operation, especially for the development of greenway corridors.

- e. Continue collaborations with land conservancies to provide planning resources to local governments for land conservation and property acquisitions.
- f. Explore opportunities to allow for land preservation around military installations, linking agriculture and defense to strengthen the state's economy and military readiness.
- g. Seek partnerships with federal, state, and local governments, as well as nonprofits on coordinated goals for the continued protection, enhancement, and expansion of important natural resources and landscapes.
- h. Pursue land donations such as easements, inheritance trusts, developer incentives, etc. to assist in acquiring and preserving important outdoor natural resources.

Goal 3.2: Continue to focus on the protected and unprotected wetlands across the state for conservation efforts.

- a. Continue pursuing use of parks as protection for critical areas within the state's watersheds.
- b. Determine priority for acquisition of wetlands based on the acquisition criteria established in the Wetlands Assessment for SCORP and the updated North Carolina Conservation Planning Tool once published.
- c. Continue to prioritize isolated wetlands mapping to ensure their protection as part of the planning and design of parks.
- d. Treat unprotected and isolated wetlands as a natural resource and leverage current and future parks to protect these features. Some wetlands may need preservation as open space instead of being a part of the state or local park system.
- e. Support local agencies that provide voluntary restoration and protection of wetlands through parks and open space management.
- f. Continue to partner with other governmental organizations that are leading initiatives to improve water quality, sensitive habitats, and conservation efforts.

Goal 3.3: Invest in infrastructure improvements that consider the impacts of climate change on outdoor recreation.

- a. Invest in ecologically sensitive and resilient infrastructure that can tolerate the environmental impacts of climate change.
- b. Install pilot projects and demonstration sites that use native and adapted plants and pollinators in outdoor recreation areas and support other agencies in their efforts to do so.
- c. Prioritize data-driven strategies in highly sensitive areas with the greatest need for interventions to ensure high-quality outdoor recreation is available for the community. These strategies could include data related to the frequency and impact of natural disasters, vulnerable demographics, presence of threatened and endangered species, unique cultural resources, etc.
- d. Implement nature-based solutions to gain layered benefits for the community and the environment.
- e. Plan, design and construct projects using Nature-Based Design Solutions to ensure the essential infrastructure enhances the natural setting.
- f. Proactively incorporate disaster planning efforts into recreational planning, design, construction, and parks management to ensure functionality of park spaces before, during, and after emergencies.

- g. Invest in new technology and tools to project and monitor the impacts of natural disasters to help proactively plan for recovery efforts.

Goal 3.4: Raise community stewardship across the State to protect natural, cultural, and historical resources.

- a. Identify and implement best management practices to encourage stewardship across the State.
- b. Provide training to staff and parks visitors to raise awareness about human impacts on resources.
- c. Develop awareness campaigns using social media and technology to educate visitors about protection and conservation of resources.
- d. Champion stewardship efforts by volunteers, friends groups, and partners in state and local parks.
- e. Utilize partnerships with nonprofits and private entities to relay consistent messaging for environmental awareness campaigns.
- f. Use storytelling tools to share the impact of environmental stewardship efforts from the Division and key partners (Department of Commerce, Department of Transportation, etc.) on outdoor recreation.

Plan Theme #4: Economic Impact

Harness the transformative power of parks to stimulate business development, tourism, and community investment.

Goal 4.1: Promote the economic benefits of the state's recreation opportunities for communities across North Carolina.

- a. Use the GIS layers from the 2025-2030 SCORP assessments to identify the economically challenged areas across the State and promote strategic planning efforts for outdoor recreation.
- b. Develop innovative programming efforts that examine underutilized or underdeveloped recreation opportunities in economically challenged areas.
- c. Promote marketing efforts with partners like Visit NC in economically challenged areas to increase participation and enhance the economic impact.
- d. Develop and promote recreation programs, events, and facilities that attract regional travelers, to encourage overnight stays in economically challenged areas.
- e. Develop targeted recreation opportunities that help residents in economically challenged areas and serve to improve the local and regional economic vitality.
- f. Establish partnerships with local artisans – and especially tribal communities – to sell their goods at NC Parks' gift shops.

Goal 4.2: Develop strategies around funding allocations to ensure the needs of all communities are met.

- a. Allocate funding specifically to areas with limited access to parks, green spaces, or recreational services. This may involve prioritizing resources for urban areas or rural communities that face geographic, economic, or social barriers to access.

- b. Provide recurring funding to small communities for grant assistance and deferred maintenance of amenities that have received grant funding for initial construction.
- c. Encourage local agencies to engage residents in the planning and decision-making process to understand the process of where and how funds are allocated.
- d. Continue partnering with Recreation Resources Service and other relevant organizations to manage grant programs that are adaptable to the diverse needs of different regions and communities, including those that may not have the infrastructure or capacity to apply for larger or more rigid grants. This can include smaller grants, technical assistance, or simplifying application processes.
- e. Funding opportunities for training, technical support, or seed funding should be considered as the Division continues working with organizations and agencies in underserved areas to build their organizational capacity.
- f. Encourage local agencies to develop fair funding policies that not only address immediate needs but also focus on long-term sustainability, ensuring that communities can maintain and manage parks and recreation facilities for future generations.
- g. Create awareness campaigns around health saving benefits of outdoor recreation while promoting the economic benefits.

Goal 4.3: Explore diversifying funding sources to support the federal grants allocations in expanding recreation opportunities for state and local parks.

- a. Continue to support advocacy efforts for state and local funding.
- b. Support increases to dedicated government funding, leverages private funding, and partnerships to address the aging infrastructure needs.
- c. Encourage partnerships with nonprofits, private providers, and other state departments including Department of Commerce to strengthen the outdoor recreation economy.
- d. Encourage and expand private investments in outdoor recreation.
- e. NC Parks should conduct periodic (i.e., every 4-5 years) analysis of how investments into State Parks and trails are stimulating increased resources for local communities through higher property tax revenues.

Goal 4.4: Market North Carolina as recreation destination.

- a. Develop dedicated branding efforts to boost visitation and economic impact for special events and programs. This could include logos, marketing material, highlighting unique stories, experiences, and distinct identity.
- b. Provide easy access to information about diverse events, programs, and festivals through various platforms and partner sources.
- c. Continue to share success stories of public-private partnerships and celebrate the impact of private investments across the State in order to encourage more organizations to show their commitment to enhancing outdoor recreation experiences.

Goal 4.5: Prepare proactively for unforeseen challenges with natural disasters or other events.

- a. Explore the feasibility of setting aside emergency funds for resources and grants for unforeseen needs.

- b. Continue to fund park investments in areas with high environmental vulnerability such as frequent flood events, high temperatures, wildfires, landslides, etc. that focus on resilient design strategies.

Goal 4.6: Continue to promote trails network across the State as economic driver.

- a. Fund key gaps in the statewide trail network to attract trails-related tourism to promote outdoor recreation economy.
- b. Fund local trails to provide easy, close-to-home access to outdoors for communities.

Goal 4.7: Identify a funding source for implementation of the Great Trails State Plan and designate an entity to continually update the Great Trails State Network.

- a. Continue collaborations with the Great Trails Coalition to seek reauthorization of the Great Trails State funding from the General Assembly.
- b. Develop an annual reporting process for the Great Trails State Plan network which includes updated GIS data and statistics on status changes for trail segments that have advanced to a new stage of design or completion.

Goal 4.8: Increase the capacity of Partner organizations to coordinate planning, design, and construction activities for their State Trail.

- a. Assess the current capacity building grants provided through the Complete the Trails Program to understand the impact of those dollars related to hiring and maintaining staff at partner organizations dedicated to their State Trail.