



# Investing in Mission, Capacity & People

## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

### Overview

The rapid pace of advancements in society, technology and association management drives PRPS innovations to remain relevant to its varied members, partners and stakeholders. Based on the research and analysis revealed in the development of the new strategic plan, PRPS is intentionally investing in spreading its mission, expanding its technological capacity, and developing its people and relationships. This brief report highlights many of the Society's initiatives and missional progress.

### Governance

#### Mission

The Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society empowers recreation and park professionals and citizen advocates to enhance life-enriching services for all Pennsylvanians.

#### Vision

The Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society will improve environmental, economic, and

social health and wellness for current and future generations.

### Organizational Culture

The organizational culture of PRPS is expressed in the collective behavior of our leaders and members and how our actions are perceived and received by others. To facilitate the highest levels of relevance, capacity and influence, we integrate these six core values into all operations with consistency and unity.

- Integrity
- Excellence
- Innovation
- Education
- Equity
- Empowerment

### 2023 Board of Directors

Ken Lehr, CPRP

*President*

Todd Roth, CPRP, AFO

*President-Elect*

Doug Knauss, CPRP, CPSI

*Secretary*

Sudha Suryadevara, CPRP

*Treasurer*

Paula Willis, CPRP

*District 1 President*

Tammy Agesen, CPRP

*District 2 President*

Emily Baiada, CPRP

*District 3 President*

Erin Timby, CPRP

*Director-at-Large*

Kelsey Paul, CPRP

*Director-at-Large*

### Culture of Giving

An internal priority of the Board focuses on establishing a culture of giving within the Society and the need for 100 percent Board giving. Such a commitment would not only benefit PRPS directly, but would also meet a criterion of many grant applications for which PRPS is otherwise eligible. By championing this culture, the Board hopes to further the

philanthropic and sponsorship connections of the Society.

### **2024-2027 Strategic Plan**

During 2023, the Board of Directors revised the PRPS Strategic Plan to identify practical actions to advance specific outcomes in four broad issues affecting the statewide recreation and park industry: *Public Policy and Advocacy, Sustainable Funding, Collaborative Development, and Stakeholder Engagement*. Foundational to the plan's strategies is an astute assessment of PRPS's pertinent strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges in each of the four issues. With an understanding of conditions, trends, and relevant drivers of social and association change, the new plan maps an intentional future for PRPS.

### **People, Parks and Community Foundation**

Following the establishment of the People, Parks and Community fund, a task force consisting of representatives of PRPS, experts from community resources, parks and recreation, and financial management and philanthropy industries developed a draft manual to guide the operations of the new foundation. The PRPS fund created for this purpose exceeded \$1.3 million at the end of the year. In November, the Board of Directors passed a resolution to establish a foundation as a 501(c)(3) subsidiary of PRPS. Objectives for 2024 include recruiting and establishing a working Board of Trustees, as well as creating a website, digital application and other operational infrastructure. The first open grant application round may be in late 2024 or early 2025.

### **Administration Staff**

Brian "BK" Koehler, CPSI, CPRP

*Director, Park Maintenance Institute*

Dan Hendey, CPRP, CPSI

*Education Manager*

Emily Schnellbaugh

*Director of Communications*

Jane LaMar

*Administrative and Marketing Assistant*

Molly Hetrick, CFRM

*Director of Advancement*

Niki Tourscher, CPRE, CPSI

*Director of Training and IT*

Tim Herd, CPRE

*Chief Executive Officer*

Tracy Robert

*Membership Services Manager*

### **Administrative Plan**

The annual Administrative Plan forms the operational response to the longer-term organizational strategies outlined in the PRPS Strategic Plan. Much of the research that informed the new Strategic Plan also guides data-driven decisions for PRPS operational plans. These sources include national and state-specific research on recreation and park perceptions, funding, impacts, influence, demographics, and societal and workforce changes. The plan summarizes operational innovations and plans to meet projected needs, challenges and outcomes, and outlines the implementation of new operational strategies for the coming year.

### **Financial Standing**

**Annual Audit.** PRPS financial statements are audited annually by the independent CPA firm, Maher Duessel. For 2022, the auditors identified no material deficiencies in internal control and declared that the financial statements are fairly stated in all material respects.

**Investments.** Certain PRPS funds are invested with the objective of preserving the long-term real purchasing power of assets while providing a relatively predictable and growing stream of annual reinvestments in the Society. As of December 31, 2023, these funds include 116 shares of Microsoft Corp., and 51,807 shares of the Vanguard Balanced Index Fund Admiral, with a combined current value of \$2,353,262. From its inception in September 2015, the fund has yielded 8.1 percent and has produced a cumulative investment return of \$522,980.

**Operating Reserve.** The Operating Reserve is an unrestricted fund balance set aside to stabilize finances by providing a cushion against unexpected events, losses of income and large unbudgeted expenses, and consists of operating surpluses invested in the Vanguard Investment Fund, as well as other unrestricted net assets (such as cash, retained earnings and other assets). Of the portion that is Board-designated in the Vanguard

Fund, \$1,368,020 is restricted for the People, Parks and Community Fund. \$847,308 is set aside as Operating Reserve, which is equal to 54 percent of total annual expenses.

**2023 Financial Statement.** For the annual budget year that ended December 31, 2023 (unaudited), net revenues amounted to \$33,799, with net assets of \$2,365,443 (consisting of total assets of \$2,688,788 minus total liabilities of \$323,345).

### **Member-Driven Committee Work Conference**

The 2023 Conference & Expo saw a return to pre-COVID-19 numbers with 411 registrants and 72 vendors. Held from Sunday, March 19, to Wednesday, March 22, at the Hershey Lodge, the event managed to exceed budget estimates and feedback was positive from those involved.

Upon the announcement that the National Recreation and Park Association will host its annual conference in Philadelphia in 2026, PRPS updated our Conference & Expo schedule for 2026 and 2027. The 2026 event, originally scheduled for Kalahari Resort in the Poconos, will now be held at Spook Nook Sports in Lancaster from March 23-27. A return to Kalahari is set for March 16-19, 2027. No fees or penalties were paid for the required contract changes.

### **Governmental Affairs**

PRPS worked on a wide range of legislative issues during 2023, the first year of the two-year session of the General Assembly. Here are some highlights:

#### **Municipal Preschool Recreation Programs.**

PRPS continues to advocate on behalf of legislation that would preserve the ability of municipalities to offer popular and valuable preschool recreation programs. As a result of extensive conversations with prime sponsors Mary Jo Daley (D-Montgomery) and Barry Jowiak (R-Berks) and House Children & Youth Committee Majority Chair Donna Bullock (D-Philadelphia), the PRPS Board of Directors voted to make a change to our Protocol for Public Preschool Recreation programs. The change in the protocol, which is referenced in House Bill 1746, helped lead



to unanimous passage of the bill in committee and to ongoing discussions to try to find common ground with the Department of Human Services.

**Investments in Parks, Recreation and Conservation.** PRPS worked with many partners on behalf of a strong 2023-24 fiscal year budget for the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). The budget provided more than \$112 million in new investments in state park and state forest infrastructure, the largest such investment in history. Another highlight of the budget was dedicated to funding for the new Office of Outdoor Recreation.

PRPS is now working in support of several planks in the proposed DCNR budget for 2024-25, including \$8.5 million to upgrade park and forest trail systems and \$5 million in additional funding to expand the valuable work of the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps (POC).

**Updating Pennsylvania's Swimming and Bathing Regulations.** Pennsylvania's swimming and bathing regulations have not been updated since 2005. The federal Centers for Disease Control has developed a national swimming pool standard known as the Model Aquatic Health Code (MAHC). However, in the U.S., the federal government delegates the responsibility for developing, reviewing and approving bathing codes to state and local governments.

PRPS and members of our Aquatics Learning Network have consulted closely with legislators and staff on House Bill 1565, which would update Pennsylvania's Bathing Code and require the Department of Health to consult the MAHC when developing new regulations. The House Health Committee approved the bill on September 27, 2023, and PRPS is now working with stakeholders on changes to the bill to boost its prospects for passage in the House.

**Recreational Therapy Licensure.** PRPS worked with the Recreational Therapy Licensure for Pennsylvania Committee to develop legislation that would provide licensure and scope of practice protection for recreational therapists in Pennsylvania. Sen. Lynda Schegel Culver (R-Northumberland)



introduced Senate Bill 1091, and a House Democrat will soon be circulating a co-sponsor memo for a bill in that chamber. The next step is to seek a public hearing or informational meeting on the legislation.

**Helping Volunteers Who Help Our Parks and Trails.** House Bill 33 and Senate Bill 507 would provide limited liability protections from frivolous lawsuits against volunteers and volunteer organizations such as park friends and trail groups. PRPS is working closely with the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation on an amendment to try to address the concerns of the trial lawyers in order to move the legislation forward.

## Finance

The Finance Committee, chaired by the member-elected treasurer, assesses the annual budget and investments and monitors their management. It also reviews the annual audit and its recommendations to the

Board of Directors and updates the Financial Management Policy as needed. The committee also reviews Career Advancement Scholarship applications and makes recommendations for awards and amounts.

## Health and Wellness

The Health and Wellness Committee develops and disseminates information related to health-related priorities, trends and partnerships to highlight the connection between parks, recreation, and personal and community health. In 2023, the committee's activities included the Walk with a Doc, Park Rx and the Culture of Health camp programs. More than 20 camps enrolled in the spring with several instituting the program and reporting its results in an article for PRPS' magazine. Other health-related educational programs included three sessions offered at the PRPS Conference — one on dementia at the Therapeutic Recreation Institute and a webinar on Mental Health First Aid.

## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The Committee coordinated the Urban Exchanges held in Pittsburgh and Allentown, each offering educational sessions and roundtable discussions on best practices for inclusion and growing diversity. Six PRPS member agencies signed the DEIJ pledge during the year. Other educational outreaches included four sessions at the 2023 conference and the development of an Understanding Bias training, which was provided at the 2024 conference.

## Membership

The Membership Committee meets monthly to monitor, develop, and implement member recruitment and retention strategies. The committee's members continually strive to connect our new and existing members to practical training, resources and networking opportunities, and they strive to encourage full use of member benefits.

In 2023, the Membership Committee, guided by the results of a comprehensive Member Benefits survey conducted early in the year, focused its efforts on retention and benefits awareness. It brought back the Conference Mentor program, matching first-time attendees with seasoned professionals who extended a personal welcome, provided additional networking opportunities and hosted a pre-conference meet and greet via Zoom. The committee encouraged and rewarded member involvement through the Level Up engagement program and launched an Enroll-a-Friend promotion/contest at the fall membership meeting. Access to the Maintenance Institute was announced as a new member benefit, and the PRPS website and association management software received a major upgrade, providing a fresh new look and easier access to resources. Also, a new "Join Now" brochure was developed for both members and corporate members to encourage engagement and awareness of benefits and services.

The committee annually evaluates the membership dues structure for the upcoming year, and for the seventh consecutive year, recommending no change in annual dues, crediting PRPS' dedication to fiscal responsibility in keeping dues stable/affordable for members.

Member Type	Dec. 2022	Dec. 2023	Change	%
Professional	827	845	18	2%
Associate	74	95	21	28%
Student	550	582	32	6%
Retiree	33	31	-2	-6%
Patron	1	1	0	0%
Life	20	18	-2	-10%
Complimentary	30	30	0	0%
Honorary	43	46	3	7%
Board	338	305	-33	-10%
Corporate	95	101	6	6%
Total	2,011	2,054	43	2%
Friends	56,520	29,379	-27,141	-48%

## Recognition and Awards

The PRPS Recognition and Awards program acknowledges outstanding individuals, agencies and organizations for their significant contributions to the parks and recreation profession.

Award winners in 2023 include:

- **Outstanding Achievement Award in Honor of Fred M. Coombs:**  
John Mikowychok
- **Distinguished Member Award in Honor of Robert D. Griffith:** Mike Richino, Whitpain Township Parks and Recreation
- **Community Champion Awards:**  
Carmen Battavio, East Goshen Township, and Ron Robbins, Eastern York Recreation Authority
- **Outstanding New Professional:**  
Emily Baiada, Springfield Township Parks and Recreation
- **Agency of the Year Award:**  
Mechanicsburg Area Parks and Recreation
- **Excellence in Recreation and Parks:**  
10 recipients
- **Green and Sustainable Park Award:**  
City of Pittsburgh, Wightman Park

These awardees exemplify excellence and dedication in enhancing the parks and recreation profession and helping communities thrive through access to quality leisure activities and green spaces.

## Membership Services Member Benefits and Enrollment

PRPS actively promotes the economic, environmental, social and personal benefits of parks and recreation; advocates in support of recreation and park funding; monitors key legislative actions that impact the profession; and provides up-to-date information on safety standards and best practices. Member benefits include access to members-only publications; free posts on the PRPS Job Center; and eligibility for scholarships, mini-grants and the Recognition and Awards program.

## Professional Development

PRPS professional development opportunities continued to thrive in 2023. Total attendance increased by 47 percent, due primarily to the transition to a virtual Therapeutic Recreation Institute that included on-demand capabilities. Additionally, annual conference attendance was back to pre-COVID-19 numbers and Learning Networks kicked off in late fall.

Highlights include the Urban and Community Recreation Exchanges, Grant Writing and Lyme Disease webinars, and another successful Leadership Academy.

While total offerings only slightly increased from 2022, the overall increase in attendance

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	% change
<b>Programs/Events</b>	41	62	61	61	63	+3%
<b>Participants</b>	1,445	2,626	1,916	1,584	2,325	+47%
<b>CEU awardees</b>	273	377	298	311	699	+124%
<b>CEUs earned</b>	197.4	121.8	183	149	367	+146%

and CEUs awarded skyrocketed. Numbers below reflect PRPS and The Maintenance Institute workshops and trainings.

## The Maintenance Institute

Based on research and advice from the marketing consultant Graphtech, The Maintenance Institute has begun implementing three main operational changes to improve its reach and relevance: 1) It has dropped "Park" from its name to embrace a larger scope of other public lands and spaces; 2) its range of benefits and services now augment the full PRPS member package, no longer requiring a separate subscription; and 3) it will begin marketing revenue-sharing

partnerships with other state park and recreation associations to connect and deliver its unique hub of knowledge and training outside of Pennsylvania's borders.

The Maintenance Institute exhibited and/or presented for several organizations, including the PA State Association of Township Supervisors, the PA State Association of Boroughs, KAFMO, and the Greenways and Trails Conference, along with serving on several national and statewide committees.

## Communications and Marketing

In 2023, the PRPS communications team created a year filled with robust communication and marketing endeavors. Kicking off

the year, we embarked on a transition to a new marketing firm for our "Good for You" campaign. PINE Philly is an innovative firm with a wealth of expertise. We diligently curated and published our tri-annual magazine, as well as our indispensable annual *Membership Directory & Buyers Guide*. To engage with our members and partners, we crafted compelling event emails and flyers to distribute. The most notable achievement of the year was the launch of a new cutting-edge website in tandem with a new association management system. Months of collaborative effort concluded in a platform with user-friendly navigation, responsive design, rich content, interactive features and an intuitive menu structure, ensuring enhanced accessibility and engagement for all stakeholders. Social media continued with steady growth again this year as evidenced by the statistics below.

At the end of 2023, PINE Philly was also engaged in developing new membership materials specifically geared toward attracting new members to the Society. Through collaborative effort, this design series was crafted and will be promoted in 2024 using brochures, rack cards and supportive social media.

## It was a very GOOD year. ~ 2023 Review ~

### SOME GOOD STUFF:

- Good brand evolution - new look & logo
- New GoodforPA.com website
- A new, improved Park Finder with unique filtering capabilities and more!
- New PRPS.org website
- PA Park Love campaign started in February and continued through the year
- 26 blog posts
- 12 newsletters
- Article in PA Township News May issue about Good Gratitude Campaign
- Good campaign featured in in PA Township News Article in July issue

### SOCIAL MEDIA:

- Collaborated with influencers for more reach & exposure in social media
- Added a LinkedIn page and engaged businesses/local gov
- Road Trip initiative garnered a lot of attention on social and produced some great user generated content
- User shared content has been on the rise, with more and more users posting content with our #goodforpa hashtag

OVER  
**1,500**  
FOLLOWERS ON  
**Instagram**  
HUGE GROWTH FROM 2021

WE'VE SEEN THE  
MOST INCREASE IN  
**LinkedIn**  
WITH AN INCREASE ON ENGAGEMENT OF  
**204.35%**

**good winners**

PRPS AGENCY OF THE YEAR 2023: MECHANICSBURG AREA PARKS & RECREATION  
GOOD JOB AWARD 2023: STEPHANIE ROBINSON, PHILADELPHIA PARKS & RECREATION

## 2023 COMMUNICATION STATS

### Dig It! Blog

**29**  
Blogs published

**3,121**  
Views

**2,363**  
Visitors

### Top Performing Blog

Unplug. Reflect. Renew by Tonya Brown

### Social Media

**72K**  
Facebook/Instagram Reach

**10K**  
Facebook/Instagram Followers

**Website**

**237K**  
pageviews

**Emails**

**778K**  
Total Emails

### Top Posts of the Year

**Facebook:** 2023 Conference & Expo  
**6,322**  
Reach

**8,250**  
Impressions

**Instagram:** Things to Do If You're Feeling Down  
**278**  
Reach

**289**  
Impressions



## Collaborations and Partnerships

PRPS continues to develop an ever-expanding portfolio of industry partners and donors with 101 corporate members. PRPS continues to build and strengthen a variety of educational, advocacy and business partnerships to advance mutual goals.

**The PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)** and PRPS meet regularly to discuss and determine initiatives that are advantageous to park and recreation providers and users. DCNR staff regularly present at the PRPS Conference & Expo and hold advisory roles on multiple PRPS initiatives, including The Maintenance Institute, RecTAP and the Good for You, Good for All campaign.

**RecTAP Grants.** The Recreation and Parks Technical Assistance Program (RecTAP) is a statewide technical assistance grant program designed to help organizations receive expert advice on maintenance, recreation, park and trail issues. It matches recreation, park and trail professionals with municipalities and nonprofits to provide advice and assistance on specific issues that can be addressed within a limited amount of time. Projects completed in 2023 include those of Spring Grove Regional Parks and Recreation, Allegheny River Trail on Clarion County, Eldred Township and Lower Salford Township.

## Strategic Collaborators

In 2023, PRPS built and/or maintained strategic collaborations with:

- American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration (AAPRA) Mentorship Program
- Council of State Executives
- GP RED State of Education Committee
- Growing Greener Coalition
- Growing Outdoor Recreation in Pennsylvania, Recreation Engagement Coalition
- Keystone Athletic Field Managers Organization
- Lackawanna Heritage Valley
- National Association of Park Foundations, Board of Directors
- National Recreation and Park Association Advocacy, Conference Education

- National Recreation and Park Association Editorial Advisory Board, Mentor Program
- PA American Water Company
- PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Partnership
- PA Department of Agriculture Invasive Species Management Plan Workgroup
- Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation
- Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors
- Pennsylvania State Employees Credit Union
- Pennsylvania State University Extension Service
- Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission
- Philadelphia Circuit Trail Maintenance Steering Committee
- Rails to Trails Conservancy
- The Toro Company distributors E.H. Griffith, Grassland Equipment & Irrigation Corp., and Turf Equipment and Supply Company
- George Ely Associates Inc.
- Gyms For Dogs Natural Dog Park Products
- Herbert, Rowland & Grubic Inc.
- Lawn and Golf Supply Company
- M&W Precast LLC
- Most Dependable Fountains
- MRC – Gametime Playground & Park Equipment
- MyRec.com
- National Aquarium
- PA American Water Company
- PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
- Pannier Graphics
- Pashek + MTR
- Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau
- R.J. Thomas Mfg. Co. Inc.
- Recreation Alliance of North Pittsburgh
- Recreation Resource USA
- SERVEPro
- Sybertech Waste Reduction Limited
- Terrabilt Inc.
- TreeTrails Adventures
- Ultra Artists LLC
- UniqueSource
- USTA Middle States
- Wilson Consulting Group, PC
- Zambelli Fireworks

## Sponsors, Advertisers and Other Funding Partners

- A Pocono Country Place Property Owners Association
- Abacus Sports Installation
- Academy of Academy of Amazement
- Ag-Industrial Inc.
- B & R Pools and Swim Shop
- Best Line Equipment
- Carter van Dyke Associates
- Cunningham Recreation
- DaySmart Software
- Diamond Waterfronts
- Ferguson Waterworks
- General Recreation & Landscape Structures

Particularly in 2023, a special solicitation was crafted to ask for support for the Donald V. Joyce Memorial Scholarship, with the guidance and assistance of retired Executive Director Bob Griffith. This initiative allowed the Scholarship Committee to receive these funds and expand the outreach and opportunities the Joyce Fund allows for those in the field. \$2,590 was received from 28 donors in late 2023, with additional donations coming in 2024.

