



## **Parks and Recreation Investment in Pennsylvania**

### ***Position Statement***

updated February 2, 2023

Inadequate funding for parks, forest and other public spaces is a major constraint to a more sustainable, equitable and healthy future for all Pennsylvanians. How we develop, use, and maintain our public spaces for individual and collective benefits is a major influencer of our health and wellness, economic viability, environmental quality and social justice.

Investments in parks and recreation are often based on grants and alternate funding sources beyond the capacity of a municipality's resources. Many recreational infrastructure improvements, land acquisitions, park and trail developments, and preservations would not be possible without funding from dedicated public park and conservation funding sources. These dedicated funds offer many recreational entities the ability to introduce or expand recreational opportunities throughout the Commonwealth.

Such projects positively impact the Commonwealth's economy. Pennsylvania's outdoor recreation industry contributes about \$13.6 billion, or 1.6 percent of the state's gross domestic product, giving it the sixth-highest GDP from the industry among all states, according to a recent report by The Bureau of Economic Analysis.

The Commonwealth is also the fifth-highest in the nation in outdoor recreation employment, with an estimated 151,000 jobs that generate \$6.8 billion in salary and wages.

The Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund, the Environmental Stewardship Fund, the Land and Water Conservation Fund and other funding streams had supported more than 2,700 community park development projects, including ballfields, playgrounds, pools, picnic areas, and recreation centers; and more than 920 trail projects for walking, bicycling and other recreation uses.

DCNR's Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2) has funded projects in every Pennsylvania county. More than 40 percent of Pennsylvania's 6,200+ local parks have received a C2P2 grant. This grant program has funded more than 8,000 projects since it began in 1995, totaling over \$1.1 billion in awards. On average, every dollar of C2P2 funds leverages another \$1.66 in matching investment. In 2022 alone, C2P2 funded more than 300 local projects that included: 142 built or rehabilitated parks, 54 constructed miles of trails, and 7,000+ acres of land permanently protected for outdoor recreation.

However, the demand for C2P2 grants continues to outpace available funds. Since 2012, annual applications have increased 30 percent, while funding requests have more than doubled. On average, DCNR is able to fund only about half of the grant dollar requests.

PRPS fosters collaboration between parallel-missioned organizations, state and local governments, funding professionals, and citizen advocates with a call to advance and expand funding for Pennsylvania parks, forests, recreation and conservation.