

Chapter 9 – Action Plan

An Action Plan for Open Space Resource Protection and Recreation

This chapter provides a synopsis of the County Open Space Plan and outlines actions required to accomplish it. Four goals for the plan are outlined based on the four objectives sketched out in Chapter 1. Using these goals and the vision established by the Open Space Advisory Board, this chapter suggests a four-part plan to guide the County in its effort to permanently preserve open space. The parts of the plan are County Funding, Organization, County/Municipal Planning, and Marketing. Although “*Forever Green*” has been mentioned throughout this plan, marketing efforts are covered in detail for the first time in Chapter 9 and for this reason merit mention in this introductory paragraph. The top marketing priority is the creation of a program to promote this open space plan. It is recommended that the Monroe County Planning Commission lead in the development of this program. Top recommendations for this program include coordinating marketing efforts with Monroe 2020 marketing and developing “*Forever Green*” as a the conceptual title for the promotional program. This includes a logo and symbolic ceremonies to recognize participation in the program.

The other component of the marketing program is education. The top education priority is to initiate an outreach to Monroe County Schools in the form of a “Open Space Education Committee.” This could be led by the OSAB in conjunction with the MCPC and would provide public awareness programs for schools and the community about natural resource protection and the benefits of open space.

The Vision

This Open Space Plan for Monroe County outlines a vision of a county that is “*Forever Green*”— a county with parks and open space linked by a green infrastructure!

Twenty years from now, using Monroe 2020 as a blueprint, the residents of Monroe County and visitors will have access to an abundance of diverse natural areas. Recreation opportunities will be available throughout the County and will be natural resource based. Vital to this vision is a green infrastructure, or “greenways,” that are close to every household and link the vast array of open spaces and parks throughout the County while preserving and interpreting our unique cultural heritage.

“Forever Green”

A vision for the County’s Open Space Plan
of a county that is green and connected!

Open Space Goals

The primary goal of this Open Space Plan is to:

“Create an open space system with a network of interrelated preserved lands and trails protected through various actions. Land suitable for public access will be acquired through various acquisition strategies. Other lands will be protected through land use controls or other non-acquisition techniques. These non-acquisition controls will be established through a partnership between the County, municipalities, and landowners.”

— **Monroe 2020
Comprehensive Plan**

Using this as a foundation, four goals were established for this Open Space Plan. They are:

1. Create an open space system by acquiring priority lands with significant natural and cultural resources from a countywide perspective.
2. Utilize the “Growing Greener” approach as a non-acquisition technique to help build the open space system by putting conservation into local plans and ordinances.
3. Create a greenway system as a network of interrelated preserved lands and trails with public access where appropriate. Use the *Monroe Greenway Project Feasibility Study* as a demonstration and model greenway initiative for the County.
4. Acquire the land necessary to create a countywide system of parks and recreation areas.

A Plan to Achieve the Goals of the Open Space Plan

With the vision established by the Open Space Advisory Board (OSAB) and these goals, a four-part plan can guide Monroe County’s efforts to permanently preserve open space. The four parts are:

- **County Funding** – Provides an initial proposed allocation of \$25 million to protect open space in Monroe County by providing guidelines and allocation categories.

- **Organization** – Includes designating responsibilities and addressing resource needs crucial to the plan.
- **County / Municipal Planning** – Suggests roles building upon the County’s existing organizational structure and relationship with its municipalities, and provides specific actions for implementing an open space system that includes a:
 - *Countywide Greenway System* – A conceptual regional greenway system for the County that provides greenway spines across the entire County and into adjoining counties that municipal and sub-regional greenway efforts can be linked to;
 - *Heritage Preservation System* – Provides methods for identifying and setting priorities for the natural and cultural heritage resources of the County;
 - *Countywide System of Parks* – Includes the development of a countywide system of parks with respect to national, state, county, regional, local parks, schools, private non-profit, and commercial recreation facilities.
- **Marketing and Education**– Provide a strategy emphasizing the concept of “*Forever Green*” as a starting point in achieving long-term success and in order to acquire additional funding by promoting a strong and successful public presence.

Following is a detailed description of these four parts.

1. County Funding

The initial proposed allocation of funding for the \$25 million to protect open space in Monroe County is guided by this plan. Allocation categories and funding guidelines distribute these funds as follows:

- Open space acquisition grants to the municipalities – **40%**
- Natural resource-based County parkland and greenway connections – **30%**
- Agricultural preservation – **16%**
- Land with potential for active athletic and recreational use focused on family fitness – **10%**
- Plans, education, and studies – **4%**

This distribution is further illustrated by the Funding Guidelines for the County Open Space Program chart at the end of this section.

Direction

To make the best use of the Monroe County Bond Issue through leveraging the money with other funding sources; to provide appropriate levels of support for projects that are funded; to establish partnerships with other public and private organizations for collaboration on projects; and to generate a mix of funding sources that complement county efforts.

Targets

- Acquire or preserve 10,500 acres of land over the course of the current bond issue through outright purchase or through non-acquisition techniques.
- Work with municipalities to leverage non-county funds.
- Apply for state and federal grants.
- Collaborate with partners on projects that the County may not be able to undertake single-handedly.

Challenges

- Securing sufficient funding to achieve the plan’s goals that are beyond the reach of the \$25 million bond issue.

A. Financing Priorities

IMMEDIATE – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within the next year.

1. Allocate the county bond program as shown in the Funding Guidelines for the County Open Space Plan chart.

MID-TERM – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within two to five years.

1. Establish a mix of funding sources for additional acquisition, such as:
 - Community Conservation Partnership Funds (DCNR);
 - Growing Greener Funds;
 - Transportation Enhancement Act for the Twenty-First Century (TEA-21);
 - Community Development Block Grants;
 - Department of Community and Economic Development;
 - Foundations;
 - Land Trusts;
 - Private Fund Raising;
 - Gifts, bequests, and donations;
 - Land and Water Conservation Fund and other federal funding sources.

B. Acquisition Priorities

IMMEDIATE – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within the next year.

1. The OSAB should develop a standard open space acquisition application form.
2. The County should proceed with steps to acquire the tracts needed for the Godfrey Ridge Trail as referenced in the *Greenway Project Feasibility Study* initiated prior to this plan.
3. The MCPC, MCCD, and MCR&PC staff should design a project approval process. The process should account for the relationship between and among the OSAB, MCPC, MCCD, MCR&PC, and the county commissioners.

MID-TERM – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within two to five years.

1. The OSAB should provide the Commissioners with anticipated budget expenditures according to:
 - Single or multi-year time frames;
 - Land acquisition categories;
 - Project partners.
2. The County should proceed with the acquisition of important open space lands based on priorities set in conjunction with the development of this Open Space Plan.

FUNDING GUIDELINES FOR COUNTY OPEN SPACE PLAN
(Allocation for \$25 Million Open Space Bond)

Category	Proposed Allocation	Comments/Assumptions (Note: assumes leveraging funds with at least a 100% match with other funding sources)	Anticipated Total Amt. with Leveraged Funds
1. Open space acquisition grants to municipalities	\$10 million		\$12.5 million
2. Natural resource-based County parkland and greenway connections	\$5 million	Suggested criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Central to defined service areas - 200+ acre tract size - Connectivity to other protected lands and greenways - Quality natural resources - Important water resource function(s) Preservation of historic and scenic resources	\$6.5 million
3. Non-profit organizations such as conservancies and “friends” groups	\$2.5 million	May apply for using a predetermined set of procedures and guidelines.	\$5 million
4. Agricultural preservation	\$4 million	Works with the County’s existing program but allows purchase of smaller farms.	\$12 million
5. Land with potential for active athletic and recreational use focused on family fitness	\$2.5 million	Suggested criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Central to defined service areas - 50+ acre tract size - Connectivity to other protected lands and greenways - Suitable topography and soil conditions 	\$5 million
6. Plans, education, and studies	\$1 million	\$200,000 – Regional Open Space Plans \$200,000 – Growing Greener audits and assistance with code revisions \$600,000 – Other plans, education and studies	\$2 million
Total:	\$25 million		\$43 million

2. Organization and Operations

Monroe County's organization requires a holistic, coordinated approach to implementing this Open Space Plan. Designating responsibilities and providing adequate resources is crucial to moving forward. High priority should be given to organizing the divisions of county government, enhancing partnerships with the municipalities, and collaborating with the private and non-profit sectors.

An overall target for the Monroe County Open Space Plan is to acquire or preserve 10,500 acres of land over the course of the current bond issue through outright purchase or through the use of non-acquisition techniques. This target relates to standards developed for County parkland and preserves, which translates to 20 acres per one thousand residents based on a predicted population of 200,000 by the year 2020.

Direction

Monroe County's organizational strategies will focus on building upon existing resources, strengthening these resources where necessary, designating responsibilities for action, and building partnerships.

Targets

- Operate efficiently and effectively.
- Provide skilled staff to guide and protect Monroe County's investment in open space.
- Have an organizational structure that fosters collaboration
- Clearly communicate the roles and responsibilities of the groups and individuals involved.

Challenges

- The Open Space Plan is huge and multi-faceted.
- Different divisions of government are responsible for different parts requiring collaboration and communication.
- Phasing in staff and organizational support as the system grows.
- Allocating sufficient resources for staffing to support the plan.
- Building partnerships, as Monroe County cannot do all of this alone.
- Developing a common vision and consensus for the Open Space Plan amid a variety of strong public opinions about what the program should do for Monroe County.
- Working with a large group of citizen volunteers.
- Extensive night meetings required.

The initial focus should build upon the existing organizational structure through the Monroe County Planning Commission, the Monroe County Recreation and Park Commission and the Monroe County Conservation District. A network of partnerships related to open space protection needs to be established. The role of the Open Space Advisory Board will be to help guide and monitor this plan on an ongoing basis.

Three units of Monroe County government would be primarily responsible for the development of the County Open Space System: Monroe County Planning Commission, Monroe County Recreation and Park Commission, and the Monroe County Conservation District. In addition to the Open Space Advisory Board's role, an expanded focus should be established for the Agricultural Preservation Board working with the Planning Commission.

A. Planning Commission Priorities

IMMEDIATE – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within the next year.

1. Utilize the OSAB to help guide the Open Space Plan and to review the joint municipal plans, acquisition requests, and as a watchdog to insure that bond money is spent appropriately.
2. Provide technical assistance and outreach to the municipalities to:
 - Provide a clearinghouse of information on planning, grants, creative financing, e.g. Growing Greener;
 - Provide up-to-date information on County accomplishments and current events via the County's web site.
3. Provide GIS support for the municipalities to:
 - Update open space data sets on an ongoing basis;
 - Create additional open space data sets as required;
 - Provide mapping assistance;
 - Provide cartographic modeling assistance.
4. Encourage participation of non-profit organizations for a range of programs from land acquisition and management to citizen education.
5. Provide sound information to Commissioners about workload requirements. It is important to make the case for personnel required for program success. They need good information to make informed decisions about positions. Immediate needs include:
 - Add an administrative assistant to support the open space program;
 - Consider hiring a land acquisition specialist. This can be a staff person or an independent contractor;
 - Implement a flexible work schedule to insure that there is both county coverage of public meetings and administrative functions;
 - Salaries need to be commensurate with responsibilities, the job market, and comparative salaries in the private sector. Attracting qualified people in this job market mandates competitive salary levels.

MID-TERM – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within two to five years.

1. Evaluate the success of the Open Space Plan and make appropriate adjustments.

2. Ensure that the Planning Commission has equitable representation from the municipalities by establishing a delivery system that coordinates efforts of the non-profit organizations and the County.
3. Work with the County Agricultural Preservation Board to identify additional opportunities and to designate additional agricultural security areas or regional agricultural security areas.
4. Explore additional funding categories for agricultural preservation efforts.
5. Provide adequate staff for planning, land acquisition, and technical assistance for the municipalities. *Phase in* additional positions as work comes in and workload requirements are projected.
 - Implement a flexible work schedule to insure that there is county coverage of both public meetings and administrative functions;
 - Consider hiring an additional planner perhaps in a specialty area such as transportation planning;
 - Retain specialists such as tax attorneys or estate planners and others to provide the expertise necessary for creative land acquisition;
 - Salaries need to be commensurate with responsibilities, the job market, and comparative salaries in the private sector. Attracting qualified people in this job market mandates competitive salary levels.

LONG RANGE – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within five to ten years.

1. Prepare a comprehensive update for the Open Space Plan.

B. Recreation and Park Commission Priorities

IMMEDIATE – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within the next year.

1. Adopt the vision and mission statements put forth in this plan that would make Monroe County a unique type of county park and recreation system in Pennsylvania and serve as a model for other counties in the state.
2. Insure that adequate fiscal and human resources are available to implement the vision for Monroe County's future parks and recreation system and that all tasks are carried out to the greatest benefit of the public.
 - Consider hiring a full-time senior recreation manager to supervise current managers and oversee programs. This would enable the Director to work on issues and program related to developing the countywide system of parks;
 - Review new projects under consideration. Identify the fiscal and human resources that will be necessary to ensure that the project will be successfully accomplished;
 - Begin planning the development of a maintenance management system as the park and recreation system is expanded. The use of prisoners from the

County jail alone will not suffice as the system expands. Options include a county park maintenance system, partnerships with municipalities and regions, and contracting out services. If the County develops a park and recreation system some basic level of maintenance services and management will be needed;

- Incorporate trail planning and development and maintenance as a function of the Recreation and Park Commission. As greenways and trails are developed, the responsibility for trails should fall under the Monroe County Recreation and Park Commission. Trails that run through multiple jurisdictions should be a function of county government based upon cooperative agreements with the municipalities in the trail corridor. Greenways without trails would fall under the management purview of the Conservation District;
 - Hire a trail manager as suggested in the *Greenway Project Feasibility Study* (job description included in Appendix of that report) and expand the manager's role to include oversight of the entire greenway system as proposed herein.
3. Work with the regions in developing their parks, recreation and open space plans. Help to create strategies that will establish a countywide system of parks. Collaborate with the Open Space Coordinator in the Planning Commission to determine proper role and function in the regional plans.
 - The Director and an MCR&PC liaison should participate in the discussions with the municipalities about the future roles of the county and municipalities/regions in parks and recreation system. This should include facilities, programming, and management and happen during the regional planning process at the invitation of the regions at strategic times.

MID-TERM – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within two to five years.

1. Establish recreation councils in Monroe County to foster discussion. Recreation councils could consist of parks and recreation board representatives, special interests groups, state and national park employees and advisory boards, conservation groups, and potentially circuit riders. Meetings could be held just twice a year.
2. Conduct field trips. Field trips should be built into the planning process so that elected and appointed officials and the management team could see first hand similar facilities or operations elsewhere. The investment of time and money generates a solid return in terms of the knowledge and information that is needed to develop the kinds of facilities needed in Monroe County.
3. Consider doing a full-scale recreation plan. The following functions need to be addressed: recreation programs, marketing and outreach, keeping pace with trends in facilities and services, financing, partnerships, management, and regional recreation. This should occur after municipal plans are completed.

LONG RANGE – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within five to ten years.

1. Implement the recommendations of the Recreation Plan.

C. Conservation District Priorities

IMMEDIATE – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within the next year.

1. Designate that the Conservation District, in cooperation with the Open Space Advisory Board, be responsible for management of Monroe County Natural Areas.
2. Assume responsibility for management of County-owned greenways without trails that extend through multiple municipalities.

MID-TERM – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within two to five years.

1. Develop workload projections for additional responsibilities. Develop impact statements that document the additional staff and resources needed to manage additional lands. Present requests for additional staff based upon projections.

D. Partnership Priorities

IMMEDIATE – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within the next year.

1. Partnerships are crucial to the success of the Open Space Plan. All County organizational structures need to develop, enhance, and sustain strong partnerships with the following:
 - Private landowners whose property may be considered for incorporation into the open space system (every effort should be made to address landowner issues and concerns);
 - Public utilities (e.g. explore the use of their “rights-of way” for possible incorporation into the County’s greenway system);
 - Agencies such as the Game Commission, the National Park Service, State Forest Service, as well as local agencies and authorities;
 - Land preservation organizations in the county;
 - Other non-governmental organizations such as watershed organizations, scout groups, resort owners, hunting and fishing groups, and other group camps.
2. The County should also consider partnerships with locally based conservation organizations such as the *Pocono Heritage Land Trust* to advocate protection of priority natural areas, for outreach and education efforts, and as a landholder.

MID-TERM – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within two to five years.

1. Work on enhancing partnerships. It is relatively easy to initiate partnerships. It is challenging to sustain them long-term.

3. County and Municipal Planning

Continue plans to create open spaces. This plan recognizes that all of Monroe County’s municipalities will be preparing open space plans on a joint regional basis. Together, these plans and the County Open Space Plan will provide for an integrated open space system for the County.

Direction

To carry out the planning recommendations of this Open Space Plan and to assist in the development of the joint municipal open space plans.

Targets

- Feasibility studies and master plans for specific greenways.
- Master planning of county parks.
- Planning for management and operations to support the county open space and park system.

Challenges

- Phasing in the required planning due to the volume of the work;
- Allocating the required resources to undertake the planning;
- Allocating sufficient resources for staffing to support the program;
- The traditional focus of zoning where it exists;
- Citizen volunteers do not have the expertise required for conservation planning.

A. Conservation Design / “Growing Greener” Priorities

IMMEDIATE – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within the next year.

1. The MCPC will provide a Growing Greener audit for each of the remaining sixteen municipalities (four Growing Greener audits were prepared in conjunction with this plan). Also, consideration should be given as to how municipalities can work together based on the audits. For example, there may be cost savings if one consultant was hired to work for two neighboring communities with similar conservation challenges. Educational sessions could also be conducted on a joint municipal level, especially since residents are already familiar, through Monroe 2020, with this regional approach.

2. Municipalities should use design professionals, especially landscape architects, to review sketch plan developments in addition to the engineering consultant that most municipalities rely upon to review development applications. These costs can be borne by the applicant as authorized by the Municipalities Planning Code.
3. The MCPC should provide Potential Conservation Lands mapping from the County's GIS to the municipalities as a starting point for the development of their own mapping of Potential Conservation Lands.
4. The MCPC should expand their review of development plans to incorporate the potential impacts of development relative to the County's map of potential conservation lands (similar to their fiscal impact analysis).
5. The MCPC and the municipalities should conduct reviews of land development proposals/applications as early as possible with respect to potential conservation lands.
6. Municipalities should require that applicants for non-residential land development refer to the "Map of Potential Conservation lands" when siting new development and require that the development be located so that the undeveloped portion of the site adds to the community greenway network.
7. Municipalities should look for opportunities to establish public trails in non-residential developments.
8. Municipalities should continue to work with MCPC staff who can assist with Potential Conservation Lands mapping, development of Open Space Plans and ordinance assistance and enlist the services of professionals with experience writing conservation land use regulations.

MID-TERM – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within two to five years.

1. Municipalities should develop their own "Map of Potential Conservation Lands" and consider its adoption as a separate official map.
2. Municipalities should explore opportunities to complete a joint municipal "Map of Potential conservation Lands" especially where sensitive natural resources cross municipal boundaries and shared conservation approaches are desired.
3. Municipalities should make the "Map of Potential conservation Lands" readily available to developers so that they understand how their property relates to the conservation network and before large sums of money are spent developing plans.
4. Municipal non-residential zoning districts should be located outside the natural resource areas to the greatest extent possible.
5. The MCPC and municipalities should conduct training sessions for new elected officials and planning commission members, especially those who may not have participated in the Monroe 2020 process.

6. Municipal open space plans should note the condition of natural resources and identify stewardship needs (for example, where restoration is needed).
7. The MCPC should consider preparing a model document illustrating maintenance techniques for natural features typically found throughout the County for conservation development plans.

B. Important Natural Landscapes Priorities

IMMEDIATE – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within the next year.

1. The MCPC and the MCCD should begin an organized program of land acquisition and maximize the use of funding dollars to acquire lands based on priorities developed in conjunction with this plan and on the qualities of the sites.
2. Based on the Natural Areas Inventory update completed in conjunction with this plan the MCPC should work with local land trusts to pursue the protection of priority sites. While many of these sites involve large areas, an effort should be made to acquire at least portions of these sites in a manner that may help protect the remaining portions.
3. The MCPC should continue the identification of important heritage sites through the use of the NTR form and modifications of the same as suggested herein and expand the NTR program by promoting it through the public school system and by providing informational literature and conducting educational activities. A separate but related program to the NTR that focuses on the identification of Vernal Pools should also be developed.
4. The MCPC and the MCCD should assemble a Technical Oversight Group for the continuing identification and evaluation of important natural areas. This effort will require a team of experts to guide and nurture the process, especially in the beginning when inevitable logistical issues will arise. The team should include people with a balance of expertise in science, resource management, conservation, and policy.
5. The MCPC should also utilize the cartographic model developed in this plan as a first-cut evaluation of sites nominated through processes suggested in this chapter. The County should help refine and develop the cartographic model at the municipal and regional levels.
6. The MCPC should build additional data sets as suggested herein to be used in refining the cartographic model.

MID-TERM – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within two to five years.

1. The MCPC should conduct a Pilot Test and institute the six-step procedure outlined herein for “smart conservation” to identify and evaluate important natural areas on an ongoing basis and refine this process to ensure objectivity, fairness, and accuracy.

2. The MCPC should further refine and utilize the cartographic GIS model developed herein and the County's GIS database as a first-cut site selection tool for identifying and setting initial priorities for important natural areas in the County.

LONG-RANGE – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within five to ten years.

1. The MCPC should have the NAI process completed and updated on a five-year cycle with support from both TNC and the Monroe County Open Space Program. Public input should be solicited and, as in the past, that information should be made available for promoting inventory work.

C. Important Cultural Landscapes Priorities

IMMEDIATE – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within the next year.

1. The MCPC should begin an organized program of land acquisition and maximize the use of funding dollars to acquire lands based on priorities developed in conjunction with this plan and the qualities of the sites.
2. The MCPC should work together with the County Agricultural Preservation board to identify the most threatened farmlands and those that may be available for purchase especially with regard to those that do not meet the state minimum acreage requirement.
3. A representative of the County Agricultural Preservation Board should attend OASB meetings on a regular basis or conversely a member of the OSAB should attend County Agricultural Preservation Board meetings on a regular basis so that both Boards may be kept informed of the others activities with regard to agricultural preservation in the county.
4. The MCPC and County Agricultural Preservation Board should initiate an educational campaign to help inform farmland owners of the potential benefits and opportunities that may be obtained through the County's purchase of agricultural easements.
5. The MCPC should assist and encourage municipalities to identify additional agricultural security areas as appropriate to realize the additional opportunities presented with Open Space funding. Joint municipal agricultural security areas might also be identified.

MID-TERM – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within two to five years.

1. Municipalities should identify scenic resources in the development of municipal and regional plans and elaborate on scenic resources identified in this plan, including the delineation of important viewsheds.

2. The MCPC should pursue the restoration of scenic quality along “hot spot” roadway areas as identified in the County Comprehensive Plan.

D. Greenway System Priorities

IMMEDIATE – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within the next year.

1. Develop the Godfrey Ridge Greenway and trail as a model greenway or demonstration greenway in the county’s most urbanized core area, and an area that has served as a crossroads since humans first inhabited this area. Create a model for success! Implement recommendations in the *Greenway Project Feasibility Study*.
2. The municipalities/non-profit organizations should develop and enhance greenways in their region based on the countywide conceptual framework. Incubator projects should be identified and advanced within this framework.
3. The MCPC should take the lead in coordinating with the principals/owners of large tracts of Federal and State lands and large tracts of privately held lands.
4. The MCPC should lead in the procuring of additional greenway studies through the major corridors identified in this report. Those most threatened by development pressure should be pursued first, but all should be done as soon as possible.

MID-TERM – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within two to five years.

1. The MCPC should work with municipalities so as to help them build the potential countywide system (one development at a time) in ways that provide both short term and long term assistance that insures that opportunities are not lost through actions which may be slowed due to the development process.
2. In order to understand the current condition of local roadways and to assist greenway planning the municipalities should assess the bicycle compatibility of all roadways within their jurisdiction and the MCPC should develop a countywide bikeway plan.

E. County Preserve / Park System Priorities

IMMEDIATE – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within the next year.

1. Begin a land acquisition program for the County/Regional park system based on the standards established for Monroe County in this plan. Acquire 1,019 acres of County parkland as an initial priority. Locational criteria include:
 - Property (ies) 200 acres or more;

- Parkland located in each planning area and nearby to school district properties (two for Pocono Mt.);
 - Location within a 15-mile radius of the population, however travel time is a key factor in active recreation facility use and consideration needs to be given to travel time which affects use;
 - Features to include: scenic vistas, view, woodlands, historic or cultural features, significant natural resources, areas suitable for passive recreation uses, and preferably a significant water body;
 - Connectivity to identified greenway;
 - Preservation of historic and scenic resources;
 - Other factors include availability of the property including a willing seller, price, and environmental constraints.
2. Develop park master plans. Master plans should be developed in conjunctions with the park system as whole and not as isolated units.
 3. The MCRPC should consider the development of family fitness parks based on partnership incentives provided to the municipalities. Details need to be worked out from a regional planning perspective in collaboration with municipalities/regions. Locational criteria includes:
 - Minimum 50 acre site;
 - Location within a 15-mile radius of the population, however travel time is a key factor in active recreation facility use and consideration needs to be given to travel time which affects use;
 - Proximity to existing school;
 - Connectivity to other protected lands;
 - Connectivity to identified greenways;
 - Suitable topography and soil conditions for development of active recreation;
 - Other factors include availability of the property including a willing seller, price, and environmental constraints.

MID-TERM – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within two to five years.

1. The MCRPC in collaboration with the Monroe County Arts Council should establish an action plan for establishing a countywide arts program.

LONG-RANGE – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within five to ten years.

1. Conduct a feasibility study for an indoor recreation center and satellite community recreation centers.
2. By 2020, acquire an additional 3,000 acres.

4. Marketing and Outreach

Establishing public understanding and awareness of the Open Space Plan is an important part of developing open space. Building support for future efforts needs to be rooted in current planning efforts and the open space bond issue. Promoting successes will help to garner the support of the citizens for future efforts.

Direction

To develop a program of regularly assessing needs, determining relevant projects and services, enhancing communications, and promoting public awareness.

Targets

- Assessing needs of residents
- Working with PMVB and Chamber of Commerce to determine related tourism needs.
- Provide an effective system of communication related to the open space system, natural resource protection and parks and recreation.
- Promoting public awareness of the importance of resource conservation, open space preservation, the value of preservation vs. development, and the success of the bond issue.

Challenges

- Harnessing the various means of needs assessments that are done in the County.
- Organizing an effective communication network with all of the many partners and stakeholders.
- Educating the general public beyond those who are involved in the county planning programs.
- Creating an effective means for county effort's to stand out amid the deluge of information: the message has to be simple, direct, and catchy, with a high level of recognition.

A. Marketing Priorities

IMMEDIATE – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within the next year.

1. The MCPC and the OSAB should lead the development of an umbrella program to promote Monroe County's Open Space Plan.

- Coordinate open space plan marketing efforts with Monroe 2020 marketing efforts.
- Continue the County promotional efforts started for Monroe 2020.
- Develop the concept of “*Forever Green*” as the banner for the promotional program.
- Develop a logo for “*Forever Green.*”

- Create ceremonies to recognize the Growing Greener implementation.
- Have municipalities adopt a resolution endorsing the “**Forever Green**” program and have a ceremony with each community as they adopt the resolution featuring a symbolic tree planting and placement of a sign recognizing the community as a participant in the program.
- Develop a signage system for the program featuring the logo. The sign could be developed with an area for inclusion of a specific municipality’s name as well to foster local identity in the program. Every property acquired through “**Forever Green**” should have a sign. We recommend that the sign be a simple graphic without a lot of words.

B. Education Priorities

IMMEDIATE – Actions to be initiated or accomplished within the next year.

1. The OSAB in conjunction with the MCPC Open Space Coordinator should initiate an educational outreach to Monroe County schools that is consistent with the MCCD’s existing programs by establishing an “Open Space Education Committee” with representation from MCCD, MCPC, MCRPC, and the OSAB. This committee would provide the lead in establishing public awareness programs for schools and the larger community about natural resource protection, open space and the benefits of open space acquisition programs.
 - Develop target audiences for the educational outreach.
 - Promote the concept that Monroe County is “not lost” to development but that we are at a key point in history and development to preserve it “**Forever Green.**”
2. Monroe County schools should take on the responsibility of providing and incorporating natural resource protection and open space education concepts and materials in their programs.
3. All County organizations should use the promotional materials (the video and brochure) produced as part of the Monroe *Greenway Feasibility Study* as educational materials to take to schools, service groups and other organizations in the County. The broadcast of the video on local cable channels should also be explored.

Chapter Nine Notes