

Sample Survey Questions:

Assess if the interviewee is a

Visitor Employee Neighbor

1. *How far do you travel to get here and if visiting, how often do you come to the park?*

2. *Why do you come to this park? Did you have a history of coming here as a child or with family? How often did you visit? What nearby facilities or services do you use when visiting the park (e.g. retail store, restaurant, gas station, etc)?*

3. *What are the important natural resources and natural features in the park that are important to you and why? What historic resources are in the park?*

4. *How should the park protect the natural resources that are important to you? The historic resources?*

5. *What recreational activities do you do when you are here?*

6. *What activities would you like to see developed at the park and where should they be located?*

7. *What facilities in the park need to be improved?*

8. *What facilities would you like to see added and where?*

9. *How should lands surrounding the state park be protected or developed?*

10. *How could the communities adjacent to state parks improve or enhance the state park?*

11. *How does the state park enhance the community?*

12. *What is the relationship of state parks to local municipalities?*

13. *How can municipalities enhance their resources to be compatible as a gateway to a state park?*

4. *After participants develop their survey, they are to administer the survey.* They are to summarize the data so that it is visually presented in written and/or graph form. They are to develop concluding statements that summarize the information. Groups will assess the information and present their findings to the class. They will demonstrate how the survey will be applied to the development project.

Activity 5:

Developing a Public Park Project

Summary: Your task is to apply the information learned in the program and develop a public park or greenway. Using the example provided, participants develop planning strategies for the development of a state park. Participants will utilize information to make decisions about its recreational uses and impacts to the natural resources. Participants will provide recommendations to the community to enhance the visitor experience to the park.

Questions: What are the main concepts that emerged in the design of the project? What factors are involved in successfully applying your design?

Preparation

- Develop teams for group activity and review the procedures for working in groups.
- Provide a base map and information for the park or greenway.
- Provide participants with markers and oak tag. Distribute available maps to each group.
- Make copies and be prepared to distribute the following:
 - Assessment Worksheet (p 196)
 - Bald Eagle Map (p 197) and Map Icons (pp 198-199)

- Park and Community Resource Inventory Worksheet (p 200)
- Park and Community Land Choices Project Review (pp 201-202)
- Designing a Conservation Subdivision (p 203)
- Public Land Community Dilemma Cards (pp 204-206)

Procedure

Your task is to apply the information learned in the course to develop a state park and provide land recommendations to the surrounding communities.

1. Review the following information:

A. How does land become public land? When land is purchased or donated directly from a private landowner, acquiring fee simple title to land, it is defined as the acquisition of complete title to the land with no restrictions. The title of the land is transferred to the buyer or buying agency such as the state government, municipal government or a land trust.

The seller may wish to make a charitable deduction or a donation for all or part of their land. Sometimes they will donate or sell the land but are able to live there until they die. Sometimes the seller refuses to sell. If the property is needed for a very important reason such as construction of a lake or reservoir, the state has the right to exercise the power of eminent domain. This legal action requires the owner to sell the land for the common good.

A conservation easement is a flexible planning tool that protects land from maximum development while leaving it in private ownership. The easement is a legal document which protects the future use of the land regardless of ownership. Easements (conservation, agricultural, forest or recreation easements) are

intended to permanently protect the land from development. Conservation easements help improve the value of land in a community.

B. How does money become available to purchase easements? In the past, federal money played a major role in purchasing land for state parks. Federal money is available for certain projects such as national trail development. Land trusts try to obtain funding through donations and grants to purchase land. Funding through state and federal government is becoming more readily available channeled through county, municipal and land trust organizations. Communities and counties may request their residents to vote on issuing bonds for the purpose of buying open space. The state administration has proposed bond referenda (Growing Greener I and II) to establish funding sources for open space initiatives including conservation and forest easements.

A very important aspect of protecting land is to protect interconnected networks of permanent open space. The greenways become corridors that connect communities and parks. These corridors could provide walking and biking pathways which connect to destinations and improve the quality of life for the residents of the communities. Greenways can also protect natural habitats, watersheds and forests in communities. Some are managed exclusively for this purpose.

C. How can communities provide protection of the natural resources as development continues to grow? Review the following examples.

The Official Map: Communities are authorized under the Municipalities Planning Code to establish the Official Map. Its purpose is to provide notice to landowners and intending developers that the municipality has identified certain areas or corridors for future acquisition to serve public needs

such as streets and parkland. Land can be identified on Official Maps many years before its intended acquisition. Municipalities are legally obliged to purchase that land at fair market value within 12 months if the landowner notifies them of his/her intent to develop the land. If the municipality fails to initiate a sale agreement, the designation is deemed null and void.

The Map of Potential Conservation Lands: This is a new approach loosely related to the Official Map. Unlike its more formal counterpart, the Map of Potential Conservation Lands does not identify land earmarked for public acquisition but is a tool that informs local officials of natural resources on property proposed for development. It is used by a municipality to identify parts of undeveloped properties that need protection so that there could exist an interconnected network of conservation land. Green space such as land along streams, blocks of mature woodland, wetlands, prime farming soil, and other natural and historic features are outlined prior to new development. This approach does not involve condemnation or public acquisition but instead relies upon creative ways of accommodating development while protecting interconnected open space.

Conservation by Design: Communities adjoining your state park could become aware of adopting conservation zoning ordinances and conservation subdivision designs for new development which would require protection of natural features.

Conservation by Design is an approach to development that encourages protection and conservation of green infrastructure. Developers may be offered incentives if they conserve a significant percentage of land. A conservation subdivision

design devotes half (50 percent) or more of the buildable land area within a residential development as permanent open space. An example of an incentive is the offering of a 25 percent density bonus for preserving 60 percent of the unconstrained land or offering a higher density bonus for preserving 75 percent of the unconstrained land.

By “greenlining” conservation elements to be conserved such as tree groups, wildlife habitats, historic sites and viewsheds, the developer avoids building in these areas and locates sites for development that minimize impact. Using a community-wide Map of Potential Conservation Lands as a template for the layout and design of conservation areas within new subdivisions, the green space in developments should help to create an interconnected network of open space.

2. Design a map of a park or community project. Follow the outline as a guide to complete your project. Be prepared to present your recommendations.

Based on the knowledge and the visitors survey developed in the course, participants, acting as Park Planners, will design a map that will include the state park and surrounding communities. Participants may use the icons provided or design their own symbols for their map. Participants will provide recommendations to the adjoining communities on conservation planning that will enhance the natural resources and benefit the park and the surrounding communities. Participants will respond to situations and provide recommendations for solutions.

3. Review project assessment. Groups will be judged on the following criteria: (Distribute the Assessment Worksheet and review the following.) Participants will:

- Demonstrate awareness and sensitivity toward natural resources: special habitats, watersheds, forest continuity, groundwater recharge and needs of special species.

- Demonstrate awareness to the needs of diverse visitors (including visitors with disabilities) and improving the quality of life for the communities.
- Demonstrate awareness of present and future education and recreation demands and trends.
- Demonstrate connectivity to communities and natural resources through greenways and partnerships.
- Demonstrate awareness of budget constraints and economic potential.
- Demonstrate knowledge of planning tools and conservation concepts for design and construction.

4. Gather Resources. Participants are encouraged to use state or local community parks for this activity. The activity involves Bald Eagle State Park as an example, and the sample maps of Bald Eagle State Park were developed by DCNR State Parks.

It is important to collect resources and information on your site. Obtain maps and references on natural resources, historic information and community data.

Individual park maps could be used in combination with the PA Tourism and Transportation Map. Review the maps and map keys. Distribute the Project Review Sheet. Groups will work together through the eight steps of the project. Review each step briefly.

Step 1: Sketch your state park and communities, enlarging your map on poster board. Use the map icons that are provided or develop your own icons to develop a map key. Use symbols, colors and words to label information. Identify natural areas including wetlands, forests, streams and other natural features. Identify and color code surrounding communities and label boroughs and townships. Identify and color code quarries, abandoned industrial land, railroads, roads and significant man-made features. Color code agricultural lands.

Step 2: Develop a land use vision statement. Write a land use vision statement for the park and surrounding community on paper or on the poster board. Write your vision in a two-line statement that will guide future development in your park and community. The vision statement should reflect health and well-being of users and protection of natural resources.

Step 3: Develop inventory of resources and develop land management strategies. Inventory the natural, cultural and historic resources within the park and the surrounding area using the nine elements recommended on the Park and Community Resource Inventory Worksheet. Label them on your map.

Display a minimum of four strategies for managing land in the park that demonstrates your awareness and concern for natural resources. Strategies could include recommendations for protecting headwaters, streams, water resources, sensitive natural areas, groundwater (e.g. type of paving for parking lots), removing invasive species, planting native species, deer management, elk reintroduction, mosquito abatement and erosion control.

Step 4: Develop your park design and sketch the facilities for education and recreation activities that will meet your vision and serve a diversity of visitors and meeting requests from the survey. The facilitator may direct participants to enhance existing facilities based on what we have learned from the visitor survey.

Groups should decide the location of roads, camp sites, swimming pool and other visitor services they would like to have at the park. Design and develop the infrastructure to support visitor services in locations that have the least impact on sensitive natural resources. Participants will explain their design and reasons for their choices to the entire group during the oral presentation. It is important to demonstrate

your awareness of the impacts to the natural resources while meeting current visitor trends and expectations.

Step 5: Develop recommendations for “green” planning strategies for the surrounding communities. Focus on land use strategies for adjacent lands and surrounding communities. Locate watersheds, forests, farms, and sensitive natural habitats outside of the park boundaries. Recommend implementation of a minimum of three planning strategies that will help communities protect the green infrastructure in communities surrounding the park. This could include recommended areas for conservation easements, farmland preservation, brownfields development, watershed protection areas, riparian buffer zones and rails to trails. Locate actual and/or hypothetical areas to demonstrate your understanding of the green infrastructure concepts.

Step 6: Design a conservation subdivision. Address a development proposal for 85-acres of mixed woods and fields located along a stream for a maximum of 42 houses. Read the description of the land and review the illustrations. If there is space, draw the development on the map or on a separate posterboard. Groups must demonstrate an understanding of “Conservation by Design,” ensuring that a least 50 percent of the land is protected as open space. Demonstrate how the subdivision could be connected to the state park and other features through proposed greenways.

Step 7: Recommend improvements to enhance the community to serve the visitor experience. Display a minimum of three recommendations for the existing community to improve ways it can be more livable and appealing to residents and visitors. Demonstrate a greenway connection from your project to other places to enhance experiences for visitors and community members. Identify and label your ideas on the map.

Step 8: Respond to a community dilemma. Each group will receive a scenario about a community situation dealing with land in or around a state park.

Participants will have 15 minutes to discuss the community situation and develop recommendations for solutions. Groups will present their recommendations in group discussion. Groups will discuss how to address the community situation demonstrating the best practices for protecting resources and serving visitor needs.

Step 9: Participants will present their maps and planning suggestions to the group. Discussions will further enhance knowledge and understanding of conservation planning.

Step 10: Participants could be more involved in helping their communities. Describe examples of actions that will help implement successful land choices in their community:

- Become involved in neighborhood improvement projects.
- Form or join an Environmental Advisory Council.
- Attend and participate in public planning meetings.
- Become aware of and involved with a land trust, conservancy or similar organization.
- Educate public, teachers and leaders about land choices.
- Partner with organizations that can assist in protecting open space. (e.g. inventory natural resources, land acquisition and support.)
- Support bond issues for land acquisitions.
- Participate in conservation volunteer activities. (e.g. planting native plants, removing invasive species, inventory of species, litter cleanup, water quality assessment, etc.)
- Document changes in the community.