



Vision 2030



Montgomery County Parks and Recreation Vision 2030 and Strategic Plan

Outdoor Recreation Focus Group Notes

May 3, 2010 7-8:30pm

Training Room of the Shady Grove Maintenance Facility

16641 Crabbs Branch Way

Rockville, MD 20855

Summary:

The purpose of the focus group meeting was to discuss the long-term needs for camping, boating, fishing, hunting, archery, etc. *For the purpose of this **Focus Group Discussion**, the definition of Outdoor Recreation refers to recreational activities, or the act of engaging in recreational activities, that depend specifically on outdoor, natural or semi-natural settings.*

Summary

Participants were asked to discuss the most important long-term needs for outdoor recreation, if there were any specific outdoor recreation activities that are currently not available, issues and challenges, priorities, and potential partnerships that can be encouraged to help meet the needs for outdoor recreation. Participants were also asked how the strategic plan could help to address the challenges.

Participants focused primarily on their areas of interest including deer management, needs of scouting groups, and expanding opportunities for adventure and extreme sports in the County. Continuation and expansion of the deer management program to include more recreational hunting was also discussed. An extensive part of the discussion focused on the needs related to scouting events including the need for access to large tracts of land that can be permitted for that use (including facilities for archery, BB guns, etc.) as well as access to large tracts of land for mountain bicycling. Additional discussion focused on the need for additional sites to jump bicycles without worry, especially in urban areas where skate parks are off limits to bicycles. The process for determining where mountain bicycles can be used was also discussed with a high degree of concern expressed about the lack of fairness in that process.

The following is a transcript of the discussion (edited for clarity)

1. What are the two or three most important long-term needs for outdoor recreation (camping, boating, fishing, hunting, archery, etc.) in Montgomery County?

2. Are there any specific outdoor recreational activities that are currently not available in Montgomery County that could be considered in the future?

- Continue the Deer Management Plan w/ more recreational hunting, especially late season opportunities
- Educational opportunities for deer management
- Publicity for camping; better use of what you have, e.g. Buck Lodge Forest Conservation Park
- Facilities for archery, bb guns (young age access to BB guns)

- Somewhere to jump bicycles w/o worry in the following order of priority:
 - 1 -Pump tracks
 - 2 - Challenge area- → not necessarily suitable for multi use/shared use; working now on some sites not sure of results
 - 3 - Jumps
 - 4 - BMX tracks nearest in Hagerstown or Fairfax
- Skate parks as places to ride (currently bicycles not allowed); urban riders don't have a place to ride (working w/ parks on this?) – results of lack of facilities is that some jumpers build their own make shift facilities in the woods
- Access to large tracts- acquire land, e.g. Izaak Walton League has sites (3 or 4 w/in 30 min. drive)
- Skeet & rifle, sporting range
- Sporting clays course/ similar to P.G. County @ Izaak Walton
- Fishing- be able to rent gazebo w/ bathrooms [young scouts for example]
- Orienteering course at Little Bennett Regional Park
- Geocaching
- Disc golf- could a course be developed?
- Model rockets/ planes ← county regulations on this
- Archery - 3-D Shoot & competition (could be late season) also needed for 15 & under
- Inclusion of all populations – desired activities should be available in Montgomery County (e.g. Cricket)

3. What are the most significant challenges for the County in meeting those needs?

- For big scouting events, the County tends to increase obstacles to permits after each submittal, even when they start 6 months in advance; the deposits for these events are based on estimates of attendance done well in advance, but sometimes it is difficult to know how many will come and the deposit size can be an obstacle. Other challenges for big scouting events include
 - Scout groups need exclusive access to an area for control purposes. They need access to potable water and ability to bring in porta-johns
 - Scouts would like some way to partner with parks so these events can be held nearby – they need a place where they can do setup as per scouting standards (BLUE APPROVED).
 - How do you permit non-programmed areas for field sports (not on a rectangular field?) Scouts need a big open space (e.g. some jurisdictions will give scouts the whole park for the event)
 - The site needs to be insurable for youth participation - Insurance policy by event is also difficult
 - Issue of non-permitted larger groups taking over an area (permit enforcement is an issue when they do make all the advance arrangements work)
- With regard to action/adventure sports such as mountain bicycling - small special interest groups have larger than proportional influence, thereby making it difficult to develop facilities
 - Montgomery County has more hoops to jump through than in other jurisdictions (some push back on that from other participants saying regulations can be a positive thing)
 - Youth access to adventure sports is limited by these regulations

- Astronomy: can't rent park at night (Little Bennett has some night programs)

4. *How can the strategic plan help to overcome those challenges?*

- Group/events- facilitation of the process; facilitation of permits, and MOU/MOA to better work together
- Obtain more land with proximity to population (now is a good time to buy)
- Access to nature- introduce nearby nature w/ families
- BUDGET CUTS HAVE HIT HARD IN PARKS. **Naturalists** in parks need to be there and are a key component to survival of parks
- Promises need to be followed through on both sides- citizens shouldn't be led on
- **Do more talking**- year to year similar to this focus group

5. *What potential partnerships could be encouraged to help meet the needs or overcome the challenges for outdoor recreation in the County?*

- Scouting- could contribute w/ eagle projects (scouts work w/ state parks but not much w/ Montgomery County) – suggestion made by staff to work through volunteer services office (Jane Hensch)
- Scout initiated projects will be accepted if it meets parks vision and values (hardly any eagle scout projects turned down)
- Eagle scout opportunity could be made more visible (through web links on both sides)
- Donation partnerships are simpler than public/private partnerships
- Fishing derbies! or other events related to adventure sports or outdoor recreation
- Mountain bicycling safety classes – such as at Montgomery College
- Activity sponsored by MNCPPC that features public interest groups late spring – is a good opportunity to promote outdoor recreation