APPENDIX A • FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESS

An implementation overview of Pennsylvania Outdoors, the Keystone for Healthy Living, 2009-2013 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
2009 GOAL 1: Strengthen Connections Between Outdoor Recreation, Healthy Lifestyles and Economic Benefits in Communities

The connection between outdoor recreation and the economic and physical health of citizens has been a goal of Pennsylvania’s recreation plans over the past 40 years. The 2009 plan had nine recommendations and 27 specific actions to continue to make progress as a state in these areas. Some notable accomplishments include:

An interagency health and recreation committee met quarterly and organized Pennsylvania’s first Healthy and Active Communities Summit in 2011. The South Mountain Conservation Landscape in southcentral Pennsylvania followed with two “Go Local for Health” regional summits in 2012 and 2013. A third summit is being planned for 2015. Summits have helped to bring together professionals from parks and recreation, health care, local government, community health and other fields to showcase best practices and resources available to improve community livability and encourage close-to-home recreation.

With a $60 million allocation from the 2009-2012 Transportation Improvement Program, the PA Department of Transportation selected 50 projects that best supported local economic development; encouraged walkable, multi-modal, mixed use corridors; enhanced the existing transportation network; and improved connectivity. The Lehigh Riverfront Development Plan in Lehigh Valley, the Pine Creek Rail Trail/Jersey Shore trail connector project in Lycoming County and the Lewisburg Area Recreation Authority rail trail project in Union County are examples of such projects. Because of the success of these community-based transportation projects, PennDOT set aside additional funding in the 2011-2014 TIP to advance more ideas that display Smart Transportation Principles.

The Pennsylvania Land Trust Association launched in January 2010 its one-stop conservation tools website conservationtools.org. The online resource provides land trusts and other conservation organizations and planners with guides, model documents and expert guidance in order to advance local land use policies that support best conservation practices. The site now includes in-depth guidance on more than 90 topics, 13 model documents and over 1,100 library items.

Considerable progress was made in documenting the economic benefits of outdoor recreation. The Green Space Alliance and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission in southeast Pennsylvania completed an economic impact study of parks and open space that serves as a model for other regions, including Berks County and the Lehigh Valley. The report makes a case that protection of natural, recreational and agricultural lands is a sound and strategic investment in the
region’s economic prosperity. In 2012, Penn State researchers updated their 2009 economic analysis of Pennsylvania state parks and found that state parks return more than $1.1 billion to local economies, generating $12.41 of income for every dollar invested in state parks. An economic analysis conducted in 2012 of water trails in Pennsylvania by the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee calculated that the economic impact of four major water trails over a six-week period was $731,000. The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy completed several surveys on the significant contributions long-distance rail trails were making in communities across the state. Their study of the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail found an estimated 158,507 annual user visits in 2013 resulted in an impact of $7.47 million, with $6.9 million of that going directly back to the local economies.

In April 2013, DCNR expanded the award-winning TreeVitalize community tree-planting and education program to communities across the state. Funded through DCNR’s Bureau of Forestry grants and municipal, private agency and company involvement, TreeVitalize has helped to build community support to increase tree canopies across the state and educate and engage citizens in the care and selection of these new trees. The program, which previously had been a success in 14 major urban areas, has resulted in almost 392,000 new trees planted to make Pennsylvania’s communities greener.

The PA Downtown Center launched its Nature-Based Placemaking Program in 2012, a comprehensive and contemporary approach to community revitalization organized around an area’s natural and recreational assets. The nature-based placemaking strategy combines existing successful programs like trail towns, river towns, community gateways, conservation landscapes, Elm and Main street programs and other economic development initiatives into one package. The concept is being tested in communities across the state including: Curwensville, Clearfield, Columbia, Wrightsville, Marietta, Oil City, Franklin, Emlenton, Foxburg, Tionesta and Emporium.
To increase opportunities for physical activity, the Pennsylvania Department of Health teamed up in 2011 with the University of Pittsburgh’s Center for Public Health Practice to implement WalkWorks. WalkWorks promotes physical activity and social connections by creating walking groups and walking routes in six western Pennsylvania counties: Washington, Greene, Cambria, Crawford, Venango and McKean. Walking group leader toolkits, posters, brochures and other materials are available on the program’s website.

Pennsylvania’s Safe Routes to School program continued to enable and encourage all students to walk or bicycle to school, including students with disabilities. Program funding was used to develop a central clearinghouse for information to develop, implement and maintain safe, healthy walking and bicycling routes to schools. The Resource Center features teacher lesson plans for bicycling and walking, educational videos, online walk-or-roll-to-school day kits and funding sources for infrastructure.

Goal 1’s Impact on 2014 Plan
Considerable work is still needed to strengthen the connection between outdoor recreation and healthy lifestyles, and it is a high priority for the 2014 plan. Pennsylvania continues to have an obesity crisis that may take decades to change, and challenges still exist to create safer pedestrian and bike-friendly communities.

**2009 GOAL 2: Reconnect People to the Outdoors and Develop a Stewardship Ethic**

Those citizens who spend time recreating outdoors tend to appreciate the value of our lands and waters. An appreciation and understanding of the outdoors can lead to greater support and enthusiasm for our natural and recreational resources. This goal strived to help citizens make meaningful outdoor connections through seven recommendations and 31 action steps. Some highlights include:

In today’s information-filled society, people need to be easily informed of how they can experience the outdoors. One of the more significant accomplishments of the 2009 plan was the statewide expansion and implementation of the Get Outdoors PA program. Already a successful recreation program in the Pennsylvania state park system for 10 years, Get Outdoors PA expanded its reach when DCNR partnered with several state agencies, non-profit partners and local community conservation and recreation agencies and organizations to offer close-to-home organized recreation events. Now, more than 60 local partners are providing outdoor opportunities across the state. Through a portal website, getoutdoorspa.org, people now have access to hundreds of guided recreation programs like kayaking, bird watching, archery, camping and more. The website also gives partners access to recreation planning tools, resources and information sharing.

For the first time, DCNR undertook a comprehensive effort to catalog and categorize all local parks in Pennsylvania through Geographic Information Systems technology. The preliminary phase of the multi-year project plotted more than 7,800 park locations, including school-owned recreation areas. This inventory documents the geographic footprint of the parks plus their recreation facilities.

A two-year, $200 million effort to improve our state parks and forests was launched in 2013. Enhance
Penn's Woods is making needed infrastructure improvements to dams, roads, bridges, buildings, overnight facilities and more. It’s the largest short-term investment in state parks and forests in their history.

DCNR’s Bureau of State Parks created GO Teach workshops to help teachers make the connection between outdoor recreation and environmental stewardship. Since its inception in 2010, GO Teach has trained more than 270 school teachers in hiking, snowshoeing and GPS use. Hoping to reconnect kids to the outdoors, the Pennsylvania Game Commission’s Archery in Schools Program expanded to 170 schools, with more than 45,000 students participating.

Several Pennsylvania Heritage Areas maximized their outdoor recreation and tourism potential through trail sojourns, package tours and specialty trails such as the Tall Timbers Trail in the Lumber Heritage Area and the Laurel Highlands Trout Trail in the Lincoln Highway Heritage Area.

**2009 GOAL 3: Develop Statewide Land and Water Trail Network to Facilitate Recreation, Transportation and Healthy Lifestyles**

Building trail networks and completing critical connections was a strong focus of the 2009 plan. Six recommendations and 20 accompanying action steps focused around the commitment to making Pennsylvania a top trail state. Some plan accomplishments include:

A top plan recommendation was to establish an official, recognized trails committee to suggest policy and coordinate trail efforts in Pennsylvania. In 2012, after a year of planning and deliberations with trail stakeholders, the Pennsylvania Recreational Trails Advisory Board, in existence since 1992, was expanded and renamed the Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee. The now 20-member committee assists with carrying out the 2009 trail recommendations while continuing to meet the requirements of the federal Recreational Trails Program.

A major responsibility of the committee is to present an annual report to DCNR on major trail accomplishments that occurred during the year. The 2013 report featured 71 completed trail projects that added 83 new trail miles and advanced trails in 36 counties.

The committee’s top accomplishment was launching DCNR’s Trail of the Year Program, designed to build community enthusiasm and support for trails both big and small throughout the state. The 51-mile Redbank

**Goal 2’s Impact on 2014 Plan**

Reconnecting people to the outdoors has become an overall 2014 plan purpose across all priorities. These have been challenging economic times for Pennsylvania’s school districts, and many of the 2009 school-based actions have been difficult to advance. Work with diverse audiences and youth continues under the 2014 Health and Wellness priority.
Valley Trails in three western Pennsylvania counties was crowned the winner among 18 nominees vying for the first-time honor in 2014.

Brought on by the plan’s recommendation to develop a one-stop trail website, DCNR launched ExplorePATrails.com in 2009 as a central place to find trails of all uses. Trail enthusiasts for years had been clamoring for such a resource. Users can now view photos uploaded to the site by other users, create printable maps, and even be a contributor of trails data to make the site richer and more inclusive of what is available. A mobile version now extends the reach of the site and allows people to access on the go more than 11,000 miles of trail information and almost 500 trails.

Pennsylvania continues to be a national leader in water trail development. Since 2009, the Pennsylvania Water Trail Partnership has designated six new water trails, bringing the state’s water trail total to 27 designated trails totaling more than 2,100 miles. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission also released a fishing and boating access strategy identifying more than 300 new or upgradeable access sites statewide and a collaborative process to prioritize and implement these projects. PFBC and PennDOT have been working to build or maintain river access during bridge replacements and to develop overhead signage on state bridges to help orient water trail users. Regional fishing and boating maps now highlight each region’s water trails with water trail access data collected and maintained through the use of GIS.

In 2013, DCNR released The Pennsylvania Trail Design & Development Principles: Guidelines for Sustainable, Non-motorized Trails, which provides statewide guidelines to encourage uniform trail construction, maintenance and signage. It also gives best practices to ensure continued maintenance and future sustainability of trails and related facilities.
Goal 3’s Impact on 2014 Plan

Many of the 2009 land and water trail recommendations have been accomplished. For the 2014 plan, the Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee and key trail builders have developed a new five-year strategic plan for trails that is included as an appendix to this plan.

2009 GOAL 4: Enhance Outdoor Recreation Through Better State Agency Cooperation

Almost every implemented action item in earlier goals was carried out through cooperation and collaboration among many public and nonpublic agencies, including state agencies. This goal specifically called out 20 actions across Pennsylvania’s state agencies. Given the economic constraints of the past five years, it was challenging to advance new state agency initiatives. Key accomplishments include:

DCNR formalized its Green and Sustainable Parks Initiative to provide technical assistance and outreach to grant program applicants on acceptable green practices and technologies. A Green Scorecard helps applicants determine the amount of “green” in their project designs and where they could make improvements. A yearly Green Parks Award was launched in 2010 to recognize those projects that exemplify practices to conserve, protect and educate about natural resources.

Pennsylvania’s conservation landscape program continued to add partners and increase its value in the seven formalized landscapes. A two-day conference in January 2013, Naturally Connecting People and Places, attracted 223 attendees from around the state to showcase work being done at the regional level to build sustainable communities; conserve land and water; make trail connections; enhance visitor experiences; and improve outdoor recreation opportunities. Several conservation landscapes completed marketing plans, websites, visitor tours and mobile apps to raise the awareness of the natural and heritage values of their regions.

Restoring Pennsylvania’s rivers continued to be a high priority. In 2013, for the 11th year in a row, Pennsylvania led the nation in river restoration through dam removal projects by having 12 dams removed, bringing the total over the past five years to 83 dams removed. Agency support from the DEP, DCNR and PFBC was integral to successful removal projects.

Providing more recreation opportunities for underserved populations was a key recommendation addressed through the development of the DCNR, PA Recreation and Park Society and PA Municipal League Urban Recreation Initiative. Six focus groups provided considerable input into the unique needs of urban areas. The partnership also developed an action plan that is currently being implemented to address how Pennsylvania cities and larger boroughs are operating with fewer staff, less funding, higher demands and more diverse audiences.

Goal 4’s Impact on 2014 Plan

Implementing plan recommendations through interagency partnerships is an overarching theme of the 2014 plan. Rather than a stand-alone goal, the partnership theme is integrated throughout the five plan priorities and accompanying recommendations.

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