

NJ Trails Plan

5. A Vision for New Jersey's Trails

Introduction

A Vision is a picture of an ideal future. A shared vision describes a future towards which all interested parties will take action, both individually and collectively. A shared vision promotes collaboration towards common ends, and also helps to ensure that the actions of all parties working independently support common goals and improved opportunities for trails for all. This Plan presents a Trails Vision comprehensive enough to address the diverse populations who use and enjoy trails and to describe the places and facilities that together comprise a successful statewide trails system.

Trails Vision:

New Jersey's residents value the diverse networks of trails throughout the state, well-maintained facilities within cities, suburbs and countryside that provide everyone with access to a full range of outdoor recreation activities, transportation alternatives within and among communities, and quality trail experiences.

The Trails Vision for New Jersey describes a future where trail facilities (their diversity, location and condition) provide trail users (New Jersey residents and visitors) with quality experiences. Most important, the Vision describes a future in which everyone recognizes the importance of trails to the quality of life in New Jersey.

This chapter of the Plan presents seven *Vision Themes* that further describe an ideal future for New Jersey Trails, each focusing on a different aspect of trails implied by the Vision. Each Vision Theme is followed by a narrative in the present tense to aid in imagining the future world as it could exist. *Goals* for each Vision Theme describe the outcomes or conditions associated with the realized Vision. *Recommendations* are strategic short or long-term actions

*Cycle trails will
abound in
Utopia.*

– H.G. WELLS
English novelist,
1866—1946

that must be initiated or advanced to address the issues that are obstacles to achieving the Goals. With a vision for trails in place, it remains to identify a series of actions and priorities that would move New Jersey towards achieving the goals outlined for each of the Vision Themes. This chapter presents a range of actions organized under the seven Vision Themes. Together, these recommendations represent a wide range of ideas generated by the Plan Advisory Committee or through extensive outreach to stakeholders, trail advocates and the general public. The objective of this Plan is to document a full range of possible actions to guide the diverse trails community within New Jersey. It should be considered a menu of options. Ultimately, the order and priority of actions to be taken will depend on willing sponsors, opportunities and available funding.

Some of the recommendations are specific actions that can be completed within a set time period. Others are more general and are intended to be ongoing. A summary chart in Chapter 6 proposes recommendations that might be initiated within the short-term (1-2 years), mid-range (3-5 years) or long-term (6-10 years).

Considered together, the recommendations that follow are very ambitious and would require funding, leadership, cooperation and participation by every level of government, non-profit organizations and both trail advocates and users. There are even initiatives that would require participation by the health and school communities and private business. Naturally, to accomplish all these far-ranging initiatives would require a level of funding, organization and commitment that is unrealistic to expect at the outset.

The Plan identifies the Trails Program of NJDEP as the steward of the Trails Plan, offering leadership and direction to New Jersey's trails community in the implementation of recommendations. However, as was noted earlier, the Trails Program is currently staffed by one person and, overall, has few resources to put towards accomplishing these ambitious goals, many of which would require a high level of staff support and partner coordination. Therefore, increasing the staff and resources of the Trails Program is a critical first step in implementing the Plan.

Many of the recommendations with statewide application can only be realistically advanced, coordinated or supported by the state. With the staffing and resources in place for the Trails Program, other initiatives assigned to NJDEP and/or the Division of Parks and Forestry, or even the Trails Council become possible. Increasing resources on the state level would benefit all of New Jersey's trails community and, ultimately, the general public through expanding opportunities to enjoy well-maintained trails throughout New Jersey's urban, suburban, rural and natural landscapes.

Vision Theme Summary:

1. Trails for All:

All trail user types have access to sustainable recreational trails throughout different regions of New Jersey.

2. Trails for Community Connection:

The ability to find and use trails close-to-home for transportation, recreation and health is within the reach of people of all cultures, ages and abilities in New Jersey communities through an extensive network of community pathways and connecting trails within and among cities and towns.

3. Trail Maintenance and Operations:

New Jersey is renowned for the quality of its well maintained and managed trails and trailhead facilities.

4. Funding for Trails:

Adequate funding is available to support the Trails Program, trails planning, development, maintenance and operations from a diverse range of public and private sources on the state, regional, county and local levels in New Jersey.

5. Trail Advocates and the Trail Experience:

Trail advocates representing every type of trail use join together to support and advance New Jersey trails.

6. Trail Information, Communication and Promotion:

Public knowledge about New Jersey trails is at an all time high as a result of a variety of efforts to promote the use of and provide information about trails to the general public, decision-makers, trail advocates, and trail providers.

7. Trails Planning and Development:

State, regional, county, local and non-profit groups in New Jersey routinely come together to plan and implement trails projects.



VISION STATEMENT

New Jersey residents value the diverse networks of trails throughout the state, well-maintained facilities within cities, suburbs and countryside that provide everyone with access to a full range of outdoor recreation activities, transportation alternatives within and among communities, and quality trail experiences.



Vision 1 Theme

Trails for all

All trail user groups have access to sustainable recreational trails throughout different regions of New Jersey.

Imagining an Ideal Future...

In the future... A proactive approach to accommodate all trail user types in New Jersey has become a model nationwide. Users of all types can access their primary choice of trail within several regions of the state. Both single use and multi-use trails are available for everyone, including motorized and equestrian use.

All trails are located, designed and maintained to accommodate intended uses without compromising the environmental integrity of the land. Single use trails have been designated to separate user groups so as to deliver a quality experience. Each type of user will be able to access a trail solely dedicated to them within the Northern, Central, and Southern regions of the state. Multi-use trails have been designated for sharing trail facilities among various user types so as to maximize the accessibility of trails for all users. A significant increase in accessible trails for the disabled has also enabled those with sensory or mobility impairments to experience nature via trails. Trailhead facilities appropriate for the intended user groups, such as parking, trailers, lighting, restrooms, and signage, are established for every trail.

The increase in the supply of trails can be

attributed to an expansion of the land now available for trails. Abandoned rail corridors, transportation rights-of-way, utility corridors, preserved open space and farmland have all contributed to expanding the land available for trail uses. Cooperative agreements with rail and utility companies and changes in rail-banking statutes have opened up new locations for the development of multi-use trails. Success in providing access to some of the lands conserved by government has been a key development in establishing more trail rights-of-way. As a result, many trails have been extended and connected to form larger networks.

Recreational trails have been formed on designated open space and preserved farmland in areas where environmental conditions can support trail use. Dedicated separate facilities are available on appropriate government and private land through cooperative arrangements. Blueways for canoes and kayaking are finally provided the access they need to enter/exit the water. Equestrians are routinely provided access to water along equestrian trails. Bicycle touring routes provide access to and through New Jersey's scenic landscapes on bicycle-compatible roadways appropriately maintained for bicycle use.

Goals: Trails for all

- An adequate supply of clearly delineated multi-use and single purpose trails for all trail use groups throughout the state.
- Trail networks formed by extending and connecting existing trails.
- Guidelines and criteria established for locating, designing and maintaining trails for sustainability.
- An increased number of accessible trails for the sensory or mobility impaired throughout the state.
- Accommodation of and incentives for including trails in government land management and conservation programs and policies.

Recommendations: Trails for all

Needs Assessment

- 1) The Trails Council and a consortium of trails organizations should identify a lead organization(s) and funding to regularly perform a comprehensive survey or study of trail users to better understand trail use and trail user needs; this should complement and be coordinated with the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. A statewide needs assessment should then be conducted to determine deficiencies in the supply of trail facilities (including trail head facilities) for the various trail user types and to establish priorities for trail development, based on the Trails Inventory (see Information and Promotion).

Trail Development Priorities

- 2) As much as possible, prioritize trail development based on results of needs assessments to provide the types of quality facilities that meet trail user demand and address facility supply deficiencies.
- 3) Vigorously pursue the acquisition and development of major multiple use trails on their own rights of way, especially on rail rights of way (includes rails with trails).

Expanding Trail Development Opportunities

- 4) Explore opportunities to provide sustainable trail access on publicly owned preserved open space, developing criteria for the location and type of trail to ensure environmental integrity.
- 5) Incorporate trails use as an element of the farmland preservation program, to be included in negotiations where appropriate.
- 6) Encourage private landowners to make lands available to trail use; develop and incorporate incentives that directly address landowner liability concerns. For example, equestrian trail users have traditionally entered into arrangements with private landowners to access trails, and would benefit from strategies that alleviate landowner resistance based on liability concerns. Non-profit organizations such as land trusts may lead this initiative in partnership with other trail advocacy organizations.

Facilities for All Trail Activities

- 7) Expand trails opportunities for those trail uses for which deficits are known to exist. In particular there should be a focus on providing trails for the mobility and sensory impaired, trails or areas for motorized trail uses and trailhead facilities (put in-take out) for “blue” trails.
- 8) Establish water trails and associated facilities throughout New Jersey. Raise awareness of opportunities for water trails, facilitate coordination and address the special needs of this fast growing trail use. Blue trails require parking to accommodate the transport of boats, canoes, kayaks, etc., designated put-in/ take-out areas and signage.
- 9) Establish appropriate and sustainable motorized (OHV) facilities including both trails and OHV parks, with a focus on private initiatives. Develop a proactive NJ Off-Highway Recreational Vehicle strategy with the participation of state agencies (NJDEP, New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission) and motorized trail organizations, modeling successful strategies applied in other Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic states with similar size and population characteristics. A portion of OHV registration fees could help provide funding towards developing OHV parks and trail facilities, safety education, environmental education, trail signage and enforcement. Providing designated legal riding facilities would contribute towards reducing illegal OHV trail use. In addition, NJDEP's Off-Road Vehicle Use Policy Directive should be revised to conform to the applicable codes of the state land management agencies, such as the State Park Service Code.

Vision 2 Theme

Trails for Community Connections

The ability to find and use trails close-to-home for transportation, recreation and health is within the reach of people of all cultures, ages and abilities in New Jersey communities through an extensive network of community pathways and connecting trails within and among cities and towns.

Imagining an Ideal Future...

In the future... With urban and town-centered trails established in communities throughout the state, New Jersey citizens of all cultures, ages and abilities are choosing community pathways for transportation to key destinations - without stepping foot in motorized vehicles. Trails are an adjunct to networks of sidewalks and bicycle routes along roads within communities that connect neighborhoods to public transportation systems, downtowns, parks and public places. Community pathways also provide opportunities for New Jerseyans to enjoy outdoor recreation and nature close to home.

The benefits of urban trails are well known and have been proven to boost economic activity, promote healthy lifestyles and decrease traffic congestion and emissions. This statewide initiative to establish community pathways where people live, work, learn and play has been energized by the collaboration of partners that in the past had little or no involvement with New Jersey trails. Health professionals, school districts, local chambers of commerce, environmental organizations, neighborhood associations and corpora-

tions and businesses, large and small, have joined municipal governments and trail advocates to establish trails within New Jersey's walkable and bikeable communities. From cities to small towns, there are networks of safe and appealing corridors that make use of off-road trails, sidewalks and bicycle compatible roadways to reach key community destinations.

New Jersey's cities and towns are also connected through an extensive intercommunity network of trails, including both on-road bicycle facilities and off-road walking and biking trails. Many connecting trails have been established within linear greenways that link parks and natural areas throughout the state. In addition to serving as non-motorized transportation corridors, these greenway trails are located, designed and maintained for their environmental benefits, protecting stream corridors and water sources, filtering storm water and providing natural sanctuaries for native trees, plants and wildlife. This extensive network of connecting trails provides exceptional outdoor recreational and educational venues for New Jersey's town and city dwellers.

Goals: Community Connections

- Community pathway networks within New Jersey's population centers that provide a walking trail within 10 minutes of every resident and non-motorized connection to neighborhoods, schools, workplaces and public destinations.
- An extensive network of connecting trails throughout New Jersey for safe and easy movement between communities.
- An extensive network of greenway trails connecting parks and natural areas.
- Diverse partnerships among health, education, environmental, business and government sectors to advance community pathway networks and trails connecting communities.
- Society-wide recognition that community pathway networks support public health, community vitality and environmental protection.

Recommendations: Community Connections

Trail Development Priorities

- 1) Complete key linkages to establish trails continuity (within existing rights of way) or connections between trails to create longer trails opportunities. Provide bicycle and walking trails connecting residential areas with parks, major trails and trails systems. Capitalize on the transportation value of trails, using them to connect to non-park destinations.
- 2) Municipalities should seek to acquire property that would serve as rights-of way for trails connecting neighborhoods and adjacent communities. Counties should seek to acquire property that would serve as rights-of way for trails (and ultimately build trails) that connect regions within the county, and connect with trails or logical termini in adjacent counties.

Expanding Trail Development Opportunities

- 3) Establish state regulatory or legislative means whereby a 'rail-banked', disused or abandoned rail right-of-way can include trail development as an interim or long-term use and existing rails may be removed. Explore opportunities for trails using utility rights of way and, where appropriate, roadway rights of way.
- 4) Explicitly include trails in the New Jersey Safe Routes to School Program that can serve as travel routes to school.
- 5) Include trails and pedestrian facilities in development, redevelopment and transit proposals.

Vision 3 Theme

Trail Maintenance and Operations

New Jersey is renowned for the quality of its well maintained and managed trails and trailhead facilities.

Imagining an Ideal Future...

In the future... Trails and a quality trails experience for users are a primary focus among New Jersey State Park Service Supervisors and other managers of recreation programs. Management Plans have been developed for an expanding New Jersey Trails System and other significant trails, based on simplified models that can easily be prepared and updated. With a generally adequate supply and variety of trails in the state, a “fix it first” approach has been instituted by most trail provider/managers. Trail maintenance guidelines have been developed and are readily available. A large, organized and active cadre of volunteers plays a major role in the maintenance of New Jersey trails and trailhead facilities.

Trails organizations have contributed to the education of trail users, who collaborate to support rules and their enforcement. Because of efforts to designate trails for specific uses, to provide maps and information and to post trail rules on-site, security and enforcement on trails has improved. Stable funding and the appropriate staffing of security personnel, including innovative partnerships with governmental and non-profit organizations to extend resources, contribute to safety and reduce illicit use. Effective community programs to support maintenance and enforcement on community pathways within cities and towns have been replicated around the state.

Goals: Trail Maintenance and Operations

- Trail maintenance guidelines and training for all those involved in trail maintenance.
- Trail Management Plans for significant state and regional trails based on simplified and widely available models.
- Trail volunteer programs in all counties and for all state parks, including training and education.
- Stable funding and staffing to maintain trails and trail head facilities, provide security and limit illicit use of trails.

- Innovative public private partnerships to extend resources and staffing for maintenance and security, especially for community pathways within cities and towns.

Recommendations: Trail Maintenance and Operations

Trail Maintenance Policies, Priorities and Funding

- 1) State, county and municipal trail providers should institute policies to ensure a high standard of trail maintenance and security enforcement and support the policies through targeted funding for maintenance and operations.
- 2) NJDEP's State Park Service should support maintenance for state-owned trails through the provision of roving trail crews for labor and equipment intensive projects and targeted funding for trail maintenance. State, county and municipal trail providers should prioritize improvements to existing trails and trailhead facilities, sign systems and other user amenities to enhance the accessibility of trails for all intended users.

Trail Guidelines and Rating System

- 3) A consortium of trails groups, with the participation of the Trails Program, should endorse guidelines for trail maintenance to assist trail providers and maintainers.
- 4) A consortium of trails groups, with the participation of the Trails Program should endorse a Universal Trail Rating System. Trail providers and maintainers should evaluate, publish and post information about trail accessibility based on a Universal Trail Rating System for trail providers and users.

Volunteer Programs

- 5) State, county and municipal trail providers should engage volunteers in trail maintenance through cooperative programs and partnerships with non-profit organizations. Trail volunteer programs should be based on the (proposed) Statewide Trails Volunteer Program for training and using trail volunteers (see Trail Advocates and the Trail Experience). Obstacles to the use of volunteers, such as liability, should be addressed and removed.
- 6) State, county and municipal trail providers should participate in the (proposed) statewide volunteer awards program to recognize trail volunteers for their contribution to New Jersey Trails (see Trail Advocates and the Trail Experience).

Vision 4 Theme

Funding for Trails

Adequate funding is available to support the Trails Program, trails planning, development, maintenance and operations from a diverse range of public and private sources on the state, regional, county and local levels in New Jersey.

Imagining an Ideal Future...

In the future... Trails Program staffing and resources are adequate to support management of the State Trails System, the Trails Council and the implementation of priority strategies in the New Jersey Trails Plan. With trail program goals and priorities established and a statewide inventory of trails completed, a financial plan has been developed to support initiatives of the state Trails Program. Creative mechanisms and renewed financial support from government agencies, corporate philanthropy and individual contributions now provide a steady source of funding for trail development, maintenance and operations throughout New Jersey.

Increases in state funding and cooperative efforts among state agencies have ensured appropriate levels of support for planning, design, construction and management of state trails. Trails are routinely funded through yearly budgets, dedicated tax assessments, Green Acres and capital

improvement programs because their value to the community is understood and supported by elected officials and citizens. Trails are now also funded from sources related to tourism, health, economic development, transportation, and additional public and private sources.

Both county and municipal governments also allocate funding for trails through a variety of mechanisms, from yearly budgets and dedicated tax assessments to public-private partnerships with “friends” groups and trail organizations. These dollars are used to leverage state and federal funding, extending their value in expanding trail networks. Through municipal ordinances, developers routinely participate in contributing land and resources towards trail development, as the value of trails as community pathways through developments has been confirmed and widely accepted.

Goals: Funding for Trails

- Trail Program staffing and resources are adequate to support the State Trails System and implementation of the NJ Trails Plan.
- Financial plan to support the state’s trail program and to identify priorities and funding needs.

- Adequate dedicated funding for trails planning, development, maintenance and operation on the state, county and local levels.
- Diversification of state level funding sources through related programs.
- Corporate/private sponsorship and funding program.
- Widely adopted municipal ordinances to ensure the financial participation of developers.

Recommendations: Funding for Trails

State, County and Local Funding

- 1) State, counties and municipalities should provide funding for trails planning and development as needed, and provide a stable and dedicated source of funding for operations, maintenance and enforcement based on needs assessments.
- 2) NJDEP should provide additional staff support for the State Trails Program to enable the state to assume the role of the steward, monitor and prime implementer of New Jersey's Trails Plan (see Trails Planning and Development).
- 3) The state should provide resources and allocate funds to support, maintain and expand the New Jersey Trails System, and provide incentive points to designated trails applying for funding through state managed funding sources (Recreational Trails Program).
- 4) A funding mechanism should be developed for the preparation of management plans for eligible trails. New Jersey State Park Service should prepare a Needs Assessment and Financial Plan that would include an analysis of trails funding needs for current operations, including staffing and trail facility improvements, and for ongoing capital funding for expansion of trail facilities on state parks and forests (see Trails Planning and Development).
- 5) The state and counties should provide funding incentives to encourage multi-jurisdictional trail initiatives.
- 6) Local governments should consider taxing authorities, bond initiatives and innovative land development strategies to fund development of trails and community pathways networks.

Maximize Trails Funding Sources

- 7) Focus New Jersey's Recreational Trails Program funding guidelines to support Trails Plan goals by funding projects that serve as successful models of achieving Trails Program objectives. Examples might be to prioritize connecting trails and to increase funding ceilings for significant projects that meet Trails Program objectives.
- 8) Explore the potential to increase the share of Transportation Enhancements funding for trails development.

- 9) Reestablish and maintain funding programs (administered by NJDOT) that provide state funds for the development of pedestrian and bicycle facilities.
- 10) Ensure that trails are an eligible expense in the allocation of funding from the corporate business tax approved for recreation facility development.

Diversify Funding Sources

- 11) Include trails and trails-related improvements as a specified category eligible to receive funding within Green Acres or other similar funding source authorized through legislation. This categorical program would emphasize trails right of way acquisition and development in cases where trails would not compromise conservation objectives or environmental integrity, and would not compete with other Green Acres funding objectives, i.e. parks and open space. A portion could be used for stewardship purposes, be available to state agencies, and include both development and maintenance of trails. It should be noted that trails are currently eligible for Green Acres acquisition and development funding.
- 12) Funds from a future OHV registration (see Trails for All) should be applied towards the provision of dedicated OHV trails and parks, and for education programs. A NJ OHV Task Force comprised of OHV user groups should be established to oversee the expenditure of these funds.
- 13) Explore and implement non-traditional strategies for private, corporate and non-profit participation in supporting trails and trail-related improvements through the provision of funding and other resources on state, county and local levels. Strategies may include short-term targeted initiatives benefiting specific trail projects as well as longer-term mechanisms that support broader Trails Program initiatives. “Friends groups,” revolving trust funds, mitigation banking, corporate land donations, materials and resource donations and health and fitness sector participation are some of the strategies that have been successfully applied. Through ongoing training, workshops and conferences (see Trail Advocates and the Trail Experience), these strategies for non-traditional funding and successful program examples could be shared with trail providers and advocates throughout the state.

Document Existing and Potential Funding Resources

- 14) Develop a New Jersey Trails Funding Plan that identifies all existing and prospective sources of funding for trails development, implementation and operations. Coupled with the results of the User Needs and the Trails Needs Assessments, the Funding Plan would serve as a basis for the allocation of additional public funding for trails.
- 15) Maintain and distribute a trails funding information resource for government and non-profit use, with special emphasis on non-traditional sources and strategies.

Vision 5 Theme

Trail Advocates and the Trail Experience

Trail advocates representing every type of trail use join together to support and advance New Jersey trails.

Imagining an Ideal Future...

In the future... Recognizing an underlying common interest and the need to share limited land resources, trail organizations have been collaborating regularly to cultivate understanding, address specific needs of trail user groups, resolve differences and implement innovative solutions. Working together, trail advocates have participated in advancing trail policies and programs through partnerships with state, regional, county and local governments and in guiding decision-makers to establish an adequate supply of sustainable trails for all users.

In addition to designated single use trails for pursuits such as hiking, mountain biking and motorcycling, new multi-use trails have been developed. Trail advocates have played a significant role in supporting the establishment of an adequate supply of trails of all types, promoting good trail design and educating users to increase safety and satisfaction with trail experiences throughout New Jersey.

The partnership to develop innovative solutions to provide motorized recreation facilities is a model demonstrating the value of trail organization participation in statewide policies and programs. Motorized recreational trail organiza-

tions played a key role in establishing dedicated motorized trails, trail systems and areas on both private and government controlled lands meeting environmental criteria developed in partnership with the state. Other trail organizations supported the initiative, recognizing that the provision of facilities located, designed and maintained for sustainable motorized use reduces illegal use in conjunction with improved enforcement.

With a direct line of communication to New Jersey's many trail users, trail organizations have been educating trail users about trail etiquette and encouraging stewardship for the land and respect for other trail users. Trail organizations have mobilized trail users to become a powerful resource in support of trails. Trained volunteers coordinated through formal partnerships between trail organizations and land managers have become an indispensable workforce for establishing and maintaining trails. Statewide volunteer programs extend the ability of government to manage the growing network of trails throughout New Jersey. In addition, trail organizations have been sharing their expertise in working with local governments to expand trail networks across multiple jurisdictions.

Goals: Trail Advocates and the Trail Experience

- Statewide coalition of Trail Organizations.
- Trail Organization participation in formulation of statewide trail policies and programs: trail inventory and supply, design standards, user education and volunteer programs.
- Partnerships between Trail Organizations and state, county and local governments to provide technical assistance.
- Statewide volunteer training and support program.
- Trail user education programs.

Recommendations: Trail Advocates and the Trail Experience

State or Regional Conference/Workshops

- 1) The Trails Council, in partnership with the state and trail advocacy organizations, should provide regular forums (state and regional conference, workshops) that will enable different trail user groups to interact and to identify and explore common interests, goals and strategies for cooperation. The Trails Council and trails advocacy organizations should participate in conferences/ workshops with related interest groups that share common objectives. For example, bicycle and pedestrian advocates support walkable and bikeable communities and community pathway networks, which should include trails wherever possible. Participation in the National Trails Training Partnership (NTTP) should be encouraged. Conferences and workshops can highlight the many national, state and regional resources for planning, establishing and maintaining specific trail facility types.

Statewide Trail User Education

- 2) Raise trail user awareness of trail etiquette and rules, especially in relation to multi-use trails. A statewide campaign with participation from all types of Trails Organizations could include the development of brochures, publications and trails signage. Establish a Task Force for Trail Education, convened under the auspices of the Trails Council, to meet on a regular basis for the purpose of addressing issues relating to user group needs, etiquette and education. In particular, this Task Force should address issues specific to multi-use trails.

Statewide Trails Volunteer Program

- 3) Integrate trails into NJDEP's volunteer program in collaboration with trail organizations and trail providers to train volunteers in trail maintenance and to encourage trail managers to utilize this resource. This program can then be replicated throughout the state, with training available on a statewide and regional basis for trail managers at the state, county and local levels. Comprehensively address policy and institutional issues that commonly inhibit volunteer programs, such as liability. Develop a statewide volunteer awards program to recognize trail volunteers for their contribution to New Jersey Trails.

Specialty Technical Assistance

- 4) Under the auspices of the Trails Council, engage trails organizations in providing technical assis-

tance in the development of statewide trails initiatives, programs and policies. Promote opportunities for trails advocacy organizations to provide technical assistance through public and private partnership. Identify and establish a directory of experts representing various types of trail uses to provide guidance to trail providers on a project basis, from informal “ask the experts” web forums to “in person” evaluation of specific trails for state, county and municipal land managers.

Vision 6 Theme

Trail Information, Communication and Promotion

Public knowledge about trails is at an all time high as a result of a variety of efforts to promote the use of and provide information about trails to the general public, decision-makers, trail advocates, and trail providers.

Imagining an Ideal Future...

In the future... The availability of information about trails and their many benefits has been crucial to increasing trail use and trail stewardship in New Jersey. The State Trails System has expanded and is promoted as a centerpiece in the state’s network of trails. As a result of a comprehensive trails inventory, detailed trail information and maps of New Jersey trails are readily available to the general public from a variety of sources. Coordination of trail information for all of New Jersey has made it possible to access information easily through use of the Internet, including the location, type, length, challenge/difficulty, accessibility, uses, restrictions, amenities and nearby facilities associated with each trail. Signage at trail heads invites people to try a trail.

Statewide programs promoting the benefits of trails in conjunction with increased funding for trails development has led to greater participation

among counties and municipalities in developing trail networks. Information on topics such as funding and design, along with guidelines and studies, are readily available to assist land managers in dealing with common challenges associated with trail planning, development and operations.

Spreading the word on trails is a key objective of public agencies and non-profit organizations such as land conservation agencies and trail advocacy groups. The public and decision makers now immediately recognize that the term “outdoor recreation” is inclusive of trails, and trails use has been confirmed as the most popular form of outdoor recreation in New Jersey. Statewide trail promotion initiatives targeted to specific audiences have led to increased trail use by populations that traditionally have had little exposure and access to trails, particularly in cities and towns.

Goals: Trail Information, Communication and Promotion

- Widely available maps and information on trails through a variety of sources.
- An informed public, including decision-makers, regarding trail benefits and the role of trails in supporting active, healthy lifestyles.
- An invigorated State Trails System as the centerpiece of the state trails network.
- Guidance documents and supporting information on planning, development and operations widely available to trail providers.
- Trails and greenways promoted as key connections between parklands, rivers, historic sites and other natural resources.
- Promotion of trails are essential aspects of state and regional ecotourism plans
- Statewide trail promotion initiatives targeted to specific audiences.

Recommendations: Trail Information, Communication and Promotion

Statewide Trails Inventory

- 1) State, counties and trails organizations should collaborate in the development and regular updating of a comprehensive state sponsored inventory of trails of all types and make this information available to all through a web-based clearinghouse (see item 3 below). Objectives are to provide the public with readily available information about the location, type, length, challenge/difficulty, accessibility, uses, restrictions and amenities associated with each trail, and to facilitate trails planning by trail providers. The inventory should be established as a database covering the entire state of New Jersey, be regularly updated, and include ADA/Accessibility information.

The Trails Council and a consortium of trails organizations should collaborate to identify a lead organization and identify funding to host, manage and complete the statewide inventory. However, federal, state and county governments and other organizations that provide and manage trails should share the responsibility for collecting, preparing and updating trail data. The state and each county should be responsible for the inventory of trails within their jurisdictions. Each county should be responsible for identifying major municipal trails within county boundaries. The emphasis should be on county, regional and state level trails that serve a geographically broad constituency.

In partnership with county government and other organizations that provide and manage trails (including Federal agency representatives), the lead organization should collaboratively develop common standards or guidelines for trails data collection and mapping to support consistency in the types of information in the inventory. A standard database format can be developed to aid participants in preparing uniform information. GIS maps should be developed for the inventoried trails, and when possible, routes should be verified using GPS. GIS maps can also be used as a planning tool for establishing new routes or connectors between trails, or used for other land use planning purposes.

Trails Research and Studies

- 2) NJDEP should establish partnerships with other state agencies, educational institutions and non-profit organizations to conduct research and develop studies and information with specific relevance to New Jersey. Examples of such studies might include research on the impact of trail development on property values, economic impacts of recreational trails, landowner liability and case law, analysis of trail development costs, safety, use of rail and utility corridors, and case studies on innovative public and private funding strategies and partnerships.

Trails Clearinghouse

- 3) Develop a comprehensive Web-based clearinghouse of trail information for both trail users and trail providers that is part of or complements the Garden State Greenways interactive Website. The clearinghouse may be developed, hosted and managed by willing non-profit or educational institutions. In addition to posting information available through the New Jersey Trails Program, which should be more prominently positioned on the NJDEP Website, the Website should include links to NJDEP, NJDOT and sites maintained and updated by others. The site could include a New Jersey Trails list serve or forum to supplement the information resources, facilitating communication between and among trail providers, advocates and users regarding New Jersey-specific news, issues and discussion. Clearinghouse information may include:
 - Trails location and use information (see Statewide Trails Inventory above).
 - List of agencies and organizations involved with trails.
 - Benefits of trails, New Jersey case studies and related documentation.
 - Universal Trail Rating System guidance for trail providers and users.
 - County and Municipal Toolkit with trails planning, development and operating resources, such as sample ordinances, guide for working with developers, how-to-do a trail plan, funding sources, promotion, marketing trails, etc.
 - NJ Trail design guidance and a Best Practice Guide.
 - Trail maintenance guidance.

Trails Promotion

- 4) The Trails Council should initiate the development of a statewide map (or series of maps) of New Jersey's major trails, including open trails designated by the New Jersey Trails System and interstate trails, ensuring that every major trail type and use is represented. The map could also identify cities and towns that have demonstrated a commitment to implementing community pathway networks. This map would be the centerpiece of promotional campaigns for New Jersey's Trails.
- 5) The Trails Council should foster a trails colloquium or formal alliance of constituent trail groups to lead a statewide trails promotion campaign. The objective of the campaign would be to promote the value of trails in relationship to other societal priorities such as open space conservation, greenways and environmental protection, alternative transportation, walkable communities, Safe Routes to School, public health, active living initiatives, tourism and economic development, etc. The trails alliance may oversee a range of promotional activities, such as:
 - Develop promotional materials that can be distributed by trail advocates statewide.
 - Establish an annual awards program to recognize communities that complete community pathway initiatives.

- Develop and disseminate a newsletter that covers trails activity in New Jersey.
 - Conduct an annual statewide trails event designed to raise the awareness on the part of the public and governmental leaders about New Jersey's trails and community pathways for all.
- 6) State, counties and municipalities should develop or expand existing programs (e.g., Passport Program) to increase awareness of community pathways and trail networks within New Jersey's cities and towns. This could include a challenge to cities and towns to develop loop trails that link public destinations and recognition of model examples.
- 7) Trail promotion should routinely emphasize public health benefits, and the public health and medical community should be encouraged to participate in trail promotion programs from the state to local levels. More coordination between the trails and the health community is needed to realize the mutual benefits of this connection.

Vision 7 Theme

Trails Planning and Development

State, regional, county, local and non-profit groups in New Jersey routinely come together to plan and implement trails projects.

Imagining an Ideal Future...

In the future... Trails are a major consideration in transportation, tourism, economic development, open space and recreation planning. Training manuals on various aspects of trails planning have been developed and made available to trails providers. Best practices guidelines for designing trails have been prepared and are widely available. Professional development workshops on the technical aspects of trails planning and implementation have also been periodically made available to trails providers. Innovative approaches to provide state, county and local trail providers with limited and targeted technical assistance related to trail planning, development and maintenance reduce costs and accelerate project schedules. Permitting processes are coordinated and streamlined to fast track trail development.

Trails are routinely and explicitly considered in

municipal Master Plans in the recreation element and circulation element, or as a stand-alone element. Local development projects are routinely reviewed to ensure that trails both on- and off-site are consistent with local trails plans. All counties have Trails Plans or Recreation, Transportation and Open Space Plans that explicitly address trails and have been developed in coordination/consultation with neighboring counties, the state, and municipalities within their jurisdictions. The State Trails Plan is routinely updated, and many new trails have been added to the State Trails System. The long-range plans of other state agencies incorporate consideration of trails.

An expanding State Trails System that includes a wide variety of exemplary trails of regional and statewide significance.

Goals: Trails Planning and Development

- Cooperative trails planning and decision making within and among all levels of government.
- Trails built into land use laws so that developers are required to plan for trails as part of their site plans
- Consistent, comprehensive guidelines and standards and training available for all aspects of trail planning and design.

- Technical assistance available to support trail planning, development and operations.
- Coordinated and streamlined permitting processes.

Recommendations: Trails Planning and Development

Trails Planning

- 1) NJDEP should assume the role of steward, monitor and prime implementer of the New Jersey Trails Plan and update the Plan periodically as needed, such as every ten years).
- 2) NJDEP should continue to include and emphasize trail activities as part of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), which is periodically conducted to provide statewide policy direction and to fulfill the agency's recreation and preservation mandate. The SCORP serves as a status report and as overall guideline for recreation, resource preservation, planning and development. Outdoor recreation on New Jersey's trails should be a significant component of the SCORP to provide support for implementing the New Jersey Trails Plan in relation to the wider context of outdoor recreation and preservation.
- 3) NJDEP should aspire to accommodate recreational trail uses with dedicated single use and multi-use trails on state parks and forests based on a needs assessment (see Trails for All and Community Connections), an inventory of existing facilities (see Information, Communication and Promotion) and an analysis of the environmental characteristics of the land. The objective is to identify opportunities for accommodating trail uses within the state parks and forest system based on environmental and other land use characteristics, rather than to accommodate uses within each state park or forest. A special emphasis should be given to establishing and protecting hiking trails that provide an outstanding experience of natural and undeveloped landscapes, a diminishing resource.
- 4) The state should require state agencies, counties and municipalities to address trails, sidewalks and bicycling accommodations as part of their master plans and other strategic planning documents through amendment of the Municipal Land Use Law. Trails can be incorporated as a component of circulation elements, transportation elements, open space, recreation, health, economic development, development requirements and/or tourism plans. Representatives of the health community and other non-traditional partners should be invited to participate in the planning process.

Trail Planning and Development Resources and Technical Assistance

- 5) NJDEP should provide guidance to counties and municipalities regarding the preparation of trail plans to ensure that all trails planning documents address a standard set of issues, goals and priorities in support of the New Jersey Trails Plan; address all user groups; address both single use and multi-use facilities; address community pathways and opportunities for trail extension and connection.
- 6) NJDEP and partner agencies should initiate the development of criteria, guidelines and procedures for planning, designing and maintaining sustainable single and multiple use trails for all types of trails. The primary objectives are to establish trails that complement, not compromise,

environmental integrity and that address facility deficiencies identified through the statewide needs assessment (see Trails for All and Community Connections). These recommended guidelines and procedures would be a resource for all trail providers, including county and municipal governments. As much information already exists and is available from trail advocates and land managers, this initiative should be guided by a Steering Committee (or Special Task Force with oversight by the Trails Council) with representation from each type of user group, state, regional, county and municipal land managers, the environmental sciences, conservation interests, and other land use experts. The end products of this effort would be one or more handbooks for trails planning and development that may include:

- Benefits of trails, New Jersey case studies and related documentation.
- Universal Trail Rating System for trail providers and users.
- County and Municipal Toolkit with trails planning, development and operating resources, such as sample ordinances, guide for working with developers, how-to-do a trail plan, funding sources, promotion, marketing trails, etc.
- Coalition-building strategies to include non-traditional partners in trails planning and development (health and business community, for example).
- NJ trails design guidance and a Best Practice Guide.
- As a means of disseminating guidelines and priorities, this program might also include limited technical assistance to trail providers for specific trail plan and projects.

7) An Interagency Trails Council or task force should be convened to coordinate regulatory review of major trail projects early in the trail development process. The Task Force should also review policies and regulations to recommend changes that would improve and streamline trail permitting processes.

8) State, counties and municipalities should explore opportunities and incentives for the participation of land developers in supporting trails as part of the development process. The state should take a lead role in this initiative, exploring the potential for supporting legislation or other means to require consideration of trails and community pathways in developments, and encouraging municipalities to adopt ordinances and procedures accordingly.

New Jersey Trails System

9) The New Jersey Trails System was authorized through legislation to establish a process for designating eligible trails and trail systems that meet standardized criteria. NJDEP should continue developing the New Jersey Trails System by:

- Revitalizing the State Trail System as a centerpiece of New Jersey's Trails Program. Formally define the role of the New Jersey Trails System in relation to the Trails Plan and Trails Program priorities. Update criteria and processes accordingly, incorporating benefits and incentives for designated trails.
- Setting target goal for adding trails by 2010.
- Identifying eligible trails to be part of the System and facilitating the preparation of the required management plans, streamlining the process of designation through the development of a prototype management plan. This effort could include the provision of technical assistance to complete the management plans.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommended Time Frame for Initiating Action:

Ongoing	1-2 yrs.	3-5 yrs.	6-10 yrs.
---------	----------	----------	-----------

1 - TRAILS FOR ALL

Needs Assessment:

- | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| 1) Conduct a Statewide Trail Needs Assessment continuing the work of the Plan through a general public survey to statistically validate priorities (Trails Council, Consortium of Trails Groups) | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|

Trail Development Priorities:

- | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| 2) Prioritize trail development to address facility supply deficiencies based on needs assessment (State, Counties, Municipalities) | | | | |
| 3) Accelerate ROW acquisition and development of multiple use trails, especially on rail rights of way (State, Counties, Municipalities) | | | | |

Expanding Trail Development Opportunities:

- | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| 4) Identify opportunities to provide sustainable trail access on publicly preserved open space (Counties, Municipalities) | | | | |
| 5) Incorporate potential trails use into the Farmland Preservation Program (State) | | | | |
| 6) Encourage private landowners to make land available for public use (Trails Organizations) | | | | |

Facilities For All Trail Activities:

- | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| 7) Increase trails accessible to the mobility and sensory impaired throughout New Jersey (State, Trails Council, Trails Organizations) | | | | |
| 8) Collaborate to establish water trails facilities throughout New Jersey and raise awareness of water trail opportunities (State, Trails Council, Trails Organizations) | | | | |
| 9) Collaborate to establish OHV riding facilities, education programs and registration programs (State, Trails Council, Trails Organization) | | | | |

2 - COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Trail Development Priorities:

- | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| 1) Complete key linkages to establish trails continuity (State, Counties Municipalities) | | | | |
| 2) Acquire rights of way and provide trails that connect residential areas with community destinations – parks, trails, schools – and that connect neighborhoods and communities (Counties, Municipalities) | | | | |

Expanding Trails Opportunities:

- | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| 3) Establish state regulatory or legislative means to expedite establishing trails on unused rail rights-of-way and utility corridors (State) | | | | |
| 4) Encourage use of trails in the NJ Safe Routes to School Program (State) | | | | |
| 5) Include trails in development, redevelopment and transit proposals (Municipalities, Builders and Developers, NJ Transit) | | | | |

Recommended Time Frame for Initiating Action:

Ongoing	1-2 yrs.	3-5 yrs.	6-10 yrs.
---------	----------	----------	-----------

3 - TRAIL MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS

Trail Maintenance Policies, Priorities and Funding:

1) Prioritize and fund maintenance and enforcement programs continuity (State, Counties Municipalities)				
2) Provide “roving” trail crews and targeted funding for state trail maintenance (State Park Service)				
3) Prioritize improvements that enhance trail accessibility (State, Counties Municipalities)				

Trail Guidelines and Rating System:

4) Adopt/endorse maintenance guidelines and a Universal Rating System (challenge level) for trail providers and users (Consortium of Trails Groups)				
---	--	--	---	--

Volunteer Programs:

5) Expand Volunteer Programs to assist in trail maintenance (State, Counties)				
6) Support the development of a statewide volunteer awards program (State, Counties, Municipalities)				

4 - FUNDING FOR TRAILS

State, County and Local Funding:

1) Increase the capacity of the State Trails Program with additional staff/staff support/resources (State)				
2) Fund trails planning and development; provide stable and dedicated funding for operations, maintenance and enforcement (State, Counties, Municipalities)				
3) Allocate funds and resources to expand the NJ Trails System; provide incentives in state-managed funding sources; fund management plans for eligible trails (State, Recreational Trails Program)				
4) Conduct a needs assessment and prepare a financial plan for trail facilities on state parks and forests (State Park Service)				
5) Provide funding incentives for multi-jurisdictional trails (State, Counties, Municipalities)				
6) Consider taxing authorities, bond initiatives and land development strategies to develop trails and community pathway networks (Municipalities)				

Maximize Trails Funding Sources:

7) Update Recreational Trails Funding Guidelines to support Trails Plan goals (State, Trails Council)				
8) Increase the share of Transportation Enhancements funding for trails development (State)				
9) Reestablish NJDOT funding program for pedestrian facilities and continue funding program for bicycle facilities (State)				
10) Ensure that trails are eligible for funding through corporate business taxes approved for recreation facility development				

Recommended Time Frame for Initiating Action:

Ongoing	1-2 yrs.	3-5 yrs.	6-10 yrs.
---------	----------	----------	-----------

Diversify Funding Sources:

11) Include trails as an earmarked funding category under funding programs, such as Green Acres, Farmland Preservation Program, etc. (State)			
12) Apply funds from the (proposed) OHV registration towards OHV trails and parks, guided by an OHV Task Force (State)			
13) Explore non-traditional strategies for private, corporate and non-profit participation in trails (Consortium of Trails Groups)			

Document Existing and Potential Funding Sources:

14) Develop a NJ Trails Funding Plan that identifies all available and prospective funding sources (State, Trails Council)			
15) Develop a comprehensive trails funding guide with emphasis on non-traditional sources and strategies (State, Trails Council)			

5 -TRAIL ADVOCATES AND THE TRAIL EXPERIENCE

State or Regional Conference/Workshops:

1) Hold periodic trails conferences (Trails Council)			
--	--	--	--

Statewide Trail User Education:

2) Establish a Task Force for Trail Education to address the needs of trail users and promote trail use etiquette; conduct a statewide media campaign (Trails Council)			
--	--	---	--

Statewide Trails Volunteer Program:

3) Establish a statewide volunteer training and recognition program that can be replicated at regional, county and municipal levels (State, Trails Council, Consortium of Trails Groups)			
--	--	--	---

Specialty Technical Assistance:

4) Establish a public/private partnership program to engage trails organizations in providing technical assistance to state, county and municipal land managers (State, Trails Council, Consortium of Trails Groups)			
--	---	--	--

6 -TRAIL INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTION

Statewide Trails Inventory:

1) Conduct a comprehensive inventory of trails (Trails Council, Consortium of Trails Groups)			
--	---	--	--

Trails Research and Studies:

2) Conduct NJ-specific trails-related research and studies through partnerships among state agencies, educational institutions and non-profit organizations (State, Trail Organizations, Educational Institutions)			
--	--	---	--

Recommended Time Frame for Initiating Action:

Ongoing	1-2 yrs.	3-5 yrs.	6-10 yrs.
---------	----------	----------	-----------

Trails Clearinghouse:

3) Develop a Web-based clearinghouse of trails information for trail users and providers; develop tools and resources for publication (Trail Organizations, Educational Institutions)				
---	--	---	--	--

Trails Promotion:

4) Develop statewide map(s) of major trails representing all user groups (Trails Council, Consortium of Trails Groups)				
5) Establish a formal alliance of trail groups to lead a Statewide Promotion Campaign; hold a statewide trails event annually (Trails Council, Consortium of Trails Groups)				
6) Develop or expand programs to increase awareness of community pathways within cities and towns (State, Counties, Municipalities)				
7) Trail promotion should emphasize public health benefits; partnership between the public health and trails community should be encouraged from state to local levels (State, Trails Council, Trails Organizations)				

7 - TRAILS PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Trails Planning:

1) NJDEP should be the steward, monitor, and prime implementer of the NJ Trails Plan, updating the Plan periodically (State)				
2) Include trails in the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) (State)				
3) Provide both single use and multi-use trails in state parks and forests based on environmental conditions and needs assessment, with an emphasis on establishing and protecting “wilderness” hiking trails on undeveloped lands (State)				
4) Amend the Municipal Land Use Law to require trails to be included in municipal master plans (State); include trails in master plans and strategic planning documents (State, Regional Agencies, Counties, Municipalities)				
5) Establish guidelines for county and municipal trails planning documents to promote consistency with NJ Trails Plan objectives (State, Trails Program)				
6) Develop a NJ specific resource guide with procedures for planning and developing trails (State, Trails Council, Consortium of Trails Groups)				
7) Establish an Interagency Trails Council to coordinate regulatory review of trail policies and to advise the legislature (State, Trails Council)				
8) Explore legislative opportunities and incentive programs for land developers to support trails as part of the development process (State, Counties, Municipalities)				

New Jersey Trails System:

9) Revitalize the State Trails System as the centerpiece of the New Jersey Trails Program; increase the number of designated trails (State)				
---	--	--	---	--