

**2017 PROGRAM OPEN SPACE ANNUAL PROGRAM
WORCESTER COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION & PARKS**

PART 1 – INTRODUCTION

The Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks is designated by the Worcester County Commissioners to administer the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Program Open Space. Worcester County's priorities over the next five years, as determined by the 2012 Worcester County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan, will be the acquisition of additional recreational lands in the northern part of the county, as well as, an emphasis on the modernizing and updating of existing facilities.

In addition to county sponsored development and acquisition projects, the Worcester County Commissioners are cognizant of the importance of open space throughout the municipalities and have in the past allocated funds, when available, to each municipality for parkland development projects for Worcester County citizens. In years where funds are available for allocation to municipalities, the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks Director, Parks Superintendent, Recreation Superintendent, and Recreation Program Supervisor along with the Worcester County Recreation & Parks Advisory Board members may host a budget request meeting with the municipality representatives. After the Worcester County Program Open Space Liaison presents the proposed Program Open Space Annual Program, the Advisory Board along with the Director, who serves as the Worcester County Liaison to Program Open Space make recommendations to the Worcester County Commissioners for the Program Open Space Annual Program and the Program Open Space (POS) funding allocations. The commissioners make the final decision for the County POS Annual Program and the Worcester County and municipality park improvement and acquisition allocations.

The following items are provided to describe Worcester County's growth management procedures for parks and recreation programs. These items are:

1. Major Parks in Growth Areas.
2. Preserve and Protect Sensitive Areas.
3. Rural Area Park Development.
4. Environment Protection and Stewardship.
5. Natural Resource Conservation.
6. Parks and Recreation Contributions to Economic Growth.
7. Infrastructure.
8. Partnerships Create Financial Resources.

How Worcester County's land acquisitions and capital park improvements support these items are described following each statement.

Major Parks in Growth Areas:

The Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks successfully located their parks in planned population centers throughout the county. Through strategic planning, the larger county sports complexes have been positioned close to the growth areas and population centers. Additionally, Ocean City and Ocean Pines have public recreational facilities and programs that support recreation in these densely populated areas of the county. Concurrently, small parks are easily accessible to the rural areas and surrounding communities.

While parks are maintained throughout the county, the majority of the parks are located in the northern part of Worcester County where most growth is concentrated. Major park development has taken place at all county parks, particularly the parks located in the northern part of Worcester County.

Preserve and Protect Sensitive Areas:

The park planning and master planning process includes sensitive areas protection. Invasive plant species are managed to protect native flora. Where appropriate, park land is managed to encourage natural habitat. Prudent stewardship will ensure that the county's parks and natural resources are protected for many generations to come.

**2017 PROGRAM OPEN SPACE ANNUAL PROGRAM
WORCESTER COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION & PARKS**

Rural Area Park Development:

Through Program Open Space funding, the county has acquired and preserved open land in existing population centers in the rural areas. These smaller county parks located in the county's rural villages, such as Bishopville, Girdletree, Newark, Stockton and Whaleyville, help to maintain the rural quality of these less populated areas while also meeting the recreational needs of the citizens in the immediate surrounding areas. These parks fall within the limits of the established villages and can easily be reached with a minimal walk or bicycle ride.

Environment Protection and Stewardship:

The protection of the Chesapeake Bay has been an on-going priority of Worcester County. Protection of Maryland Coastal Bays has also been incorporated into Worcester County's long-term vision. Acquisition and protection of waterfront properties has been a high priority in the fast-developing northern portion of the county. Three bayfront parks have been acquired since 2003.

In 2003, the land for Homer Gudelsky Park, a passive beach park located on the Sinepuxent Bay was donated to Worcester County by the Gudelsky family. This park overlooks Ocean City and is locally known as an excellent fishing spot. In the agreement to convey this park to Worcester County, permission was granted to deposit spoil material from the Shantytown Channel onto the park. The park suffers considerable erosion throughout the year and the annual replenishment of sand is necessary for the park to maintain its existence.

Providing coastal stewardship was an essential factor in the decision of Worcester County to lease the Isle of Wight Park, as of July 2004, from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. This park is primarily surrounded by water that affords visitors the opportunity to participate in fishing, crabbing, clamming, kayaking and canoeing, along with picnicking and exploring this natural island on the Isle of Wight Bay.

The 2006 addition of a 574 acre parcel, Greys Creek Nature Park, located in northern Worcester County affords the County a unique opportunity to conserve one of the most ecologically significant properties along Maryland Coastal Bays. The property was purchased with \$6,500,000 of State and local Program Open Space funds and titled in the name of Worcester County to be managed as a passive recreation park and environmental education complex by the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks. Located at the top of Maryland Coastal Bays, the property offers views of Ocean City's skyline across the Assawoman Bay. This acquisition will protect coastal habitat and eliminate the threat of residential and commercial development on a property that sits at the center of one of the most biologically diverse areas in the mid-Atlantic region. This property is planned to serve as a base for environmental education programs, as well as a passive park with walking/hiking trails. Area school children will be able to utilize this site as a hands-on classroom for nature study.

Three intergovernmental programs – Chesapeake Bay Tributaries Strategies Implementation Team, the Ocean City and Vicinity Water Resources Feasibility Study, and the Maryland Coastal Bays Program – have been significant elements in the stewardship of our waterways. Worcester County faces a momentous challenge to protect these valuable water resources for all citizens of Maryland while also affording recreational opportunities.

Natural Resource Conservation:

Worcester County has strategically located parks in close proximity to existing developed areas and growth centers throughout the county. It is through this type of careful park planning that the county can continue to conserve resources while achieving efficient development patterns.

Since 2000, Worcester County has aggressively pursued funding for land protection in areas not targeted for growth, and over 8,500 acres have been permanently protected.

**2017 PROGRAM OPEN SPACE ANNUAL PROGRAM
WORCESTER COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION & PARKS**

In March 2010, Worcester County was awarded \$299,692 by the Maryland Energy Administration. These grant funds were utilized to provide engineering, construction, and installation of a complete Grid-Tied Photovoltaic System adjacent to the Recreation Center, which will supplement energy to the Recreation Center. This will help the County conserve energy.

Parks and Recreation Contributions to Economic Growth:

Worcester County understands the contribution of accessible recreational facilities to the economic growth of the county. The Worcester County Recreation Center opened its doors to the public on July 11, 2005, effectively creating a new base for all Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks programming operations to be administered. The center also provides an indoor recreational facility to serve the citizens of Worcester County and surrounding communities. Program Open Space graciously committed \$1,439,200 of the estimated 4.3 million dollar project. This facility is a major recreational facility drawing users from both within and outside of the county. The facility also provides an economic boost to both existing and new businesses in Snow Hill and Worcester County.

Land and water recreational programs provided by the county attract visitors who contribute to the local economy.

Infrastructure:

Worcester County has a significant supply of recreation facilities and acreage to serve current needs and anticipated future needs through 2022. However, the county recognizes that there is a deficit of recreational lands in the northern portion of the county where growth is concentrated.

Partnerships Create Financial Resources:

Worcester County relies on effective and innovative strategies and partnerships. Support and collaboration from Program Open Space, the Worcester County Commissioners' capital improvement and park improvement funds, and additional grant funding are all financial resources that are critical elements in assuring optimum use of the financial resources that are available for parks and natural resource protection. In addition, it should be noted that Worcester County requires that new development includes active and/or passive recreation and nature areas in support of the environment.

PART 2 - 2017 ACQUISITION PROJECTS

The citizens of Worcester County are fortunate to receive the support of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Program Open Space which is a significant factor in the acquisition of park land located throughout the county. However, due to the growth in the northern section of the county, the top recreation and parks priority is the acquisition of additional park land in this section of the county.

1. Northern County Property Purchase

PART 3 – 2017 DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

WORCESTER COUNTY RECREATION CENTER - SNOW HILL, MARYLAND

The 44,000 sq. ft. Worcester County Recreation Center opened its doors to the public on Monday, July 11, 2005. Through the contributions of the Worcester County Commissioners and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Program Open Space funding, this center was built to serve the citizens of Worcester County, Maryland and the regional areas. This center is located on the 80-acre John Walter Smith Park in Snow Hill, Maryland, which is an existing county park that was purchased and developed by Program Open Space funds several years ago.

This state-of-the-art recreation center, houses a climate controlled 40,000 square-foot gymnasium with retractable bleachers, a walking track and two courts that can be used for soccer, basketball, and a variety of sports. The flooring system throughout the gym was designed for an increased return of energy that is highly efficient. Essentially it provides the most "bang for the buck" for experienced

**2017 PROGRAM OPEN SPACE ANNUAL PROGRAM
WORCESTER COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION & PARKS**

runners and track participants. It also provides a shock-absorbing cushion that is ideal for walkers and joggers, particularly those who suffer from arthritis or have past injuries.

In 2016, a 6,000 square foot addition to the Recreation Center was completed. This addition houses a multipurpose room, conference room, weight room, aerobic workout room, and additional bathrooms. These new areas provide more programming options to be provided to our participants.

The following project is planned for FY 2017:

1. Sport Court Flooring System will allow us to install two additional basketball or volleyball courts in the gymnasium. The addition of these two courts will allow us to expand our programming.

JOHN WALTER SMITH PARK – SNOW HILL, MARYLAND

John Walter Smith Park is an 80-acre parcel of land with approximately 50-acres developed as an athletic complex to serve the citizens of Worcester County, Maryland, particularly in the central section of the county. John Walter Smith Park is located on Public Landing Road in Snow Hill, Maryland, and was purchased with Program Open Space funding. The park was named after the late Governor of Maryland, John Walter Smith, who resided in Snow Hill.

John Walter Smith Park is the home of the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks. This is the location where the majority of programs occur and all maintenance operations are administered. The Worcester County Recreation Center along with one senior league field, four little league fields, two softball fields, seven soccer fields and a Frisbee golf course are positioned in this park. In addition, John Walter Smith Park has two tennis courts, two basketball courts, a sand volleyball court, a pavilion, a playground, a concession stand with restrooms and other site amenities. Several storage buildings have been erected on the site to accommodate the many programs administered at John Walter Smith Park. These improvements would not have been possible without the continued support of Program Open Space. The following are planned for FY 2017:

1. Multipurpose Field Lighting Project will entail the removal of the existing wooden poles and replacing them with a new Musco Lighting System, the expansion of the current irrigation system and a power upgrade in order to accommodate two regulation soccer fields. The combination of new lights and regulation size fields will better support recreational programming as well as offer revenue opportunities with regard to hosting tournament play. The cost associated with the project is estimated to be in the \$530,000- \$575,000 range which includes \$20,000 for irrigation, \$50,000 for electric power upgrade and \$5,000 for general site work.

NORTHERN WORCESTER ATHLETIC COMPLEX – BERLIN, MARYLAND

The Northern Worcester Athletic Complex is a 76-acre parcel of land located in Berlin, Maryland. This land was purchased specifically for the purpose of constructing an athletic complex to serve the citizens of Worcester County particularly in the northern end of the County. To date, one senior league field, four multi-purpose fields, and one football field have been constructed. The senior league field, one multi-purpose and the football field have been equipped with lights. In addition to the athletic fields, an entrance sign and garden, service road, parking areas, a pavilion, and playground have been added. The most recent addition, at this site, was a permanent concession stand and bathroom facility that meets the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. Several organizations use the permanent concession stand to serve refreshments and provide restrooms for patrons of the park. Program Open Space has played a significant role in the development of this park.

1. Field Irrigation and Grassing Project will enable us to irrigate the Football Field (65,000 SF) and Multi-Purpose Field #4 (50,000 SF) and to re-grass the Football Field using Patriot Bermuda grass. Specifically, funding will be used to purchase and install a four zone Hunter Irrigation system on the Football field, provide a snap valve/ quick coupler irrigation system on Field #4, purchase two portable impact irrigation delivery devices for Field #4, soil amendments for both fields, and to contract for the sprigging/propagation of the Bermuda grass on the Football Field.

2017 PROGRAM OPEN SPACE ANNUAL PROGRAM
 WORCESTER COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION & PARKS

<u>Sponsor</u>	<u>Project Name, Project Description</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Source of Funds (for Annual Program)</u>			
			<u>Total</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>State(POS)</u>	<u>Federal</u>
COUNTY	Worcester County Recreation Center	80				
	Sport Court Flooring System		50,000	5,000	45,000	
COUNTY	JOHN WALTER SMITH PARK – LIGHT UPGRADE					
	Light Upgrade	80	575,000	57,500	517,500	

COUNTY **Northern Worcester Athletic Complex**

Field Irrigation and Grassing Project

76

16,000

1,600

14,400

Totals

641,000

64,100

576,900

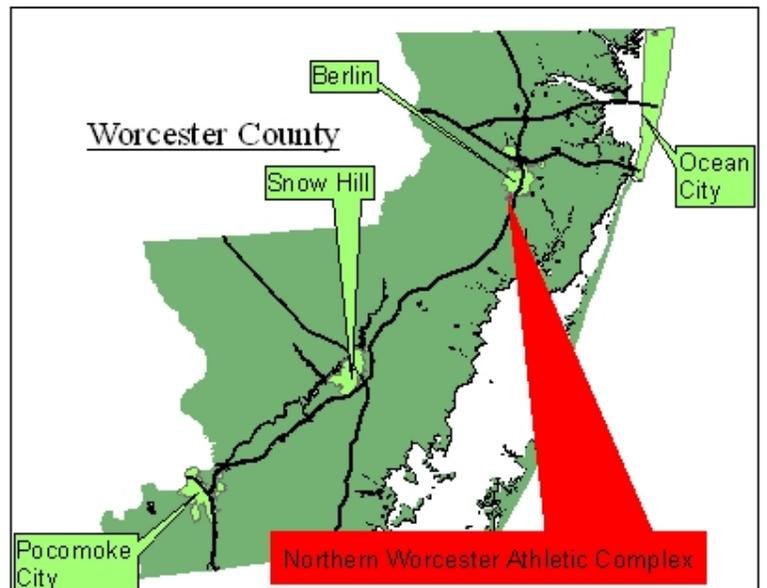
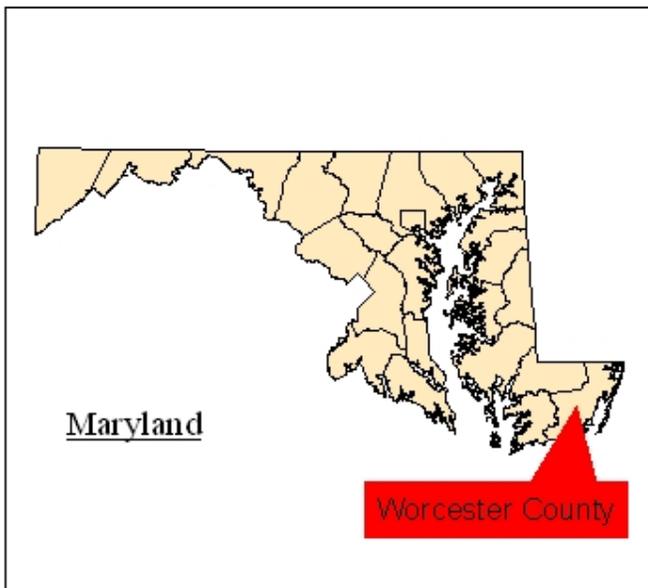
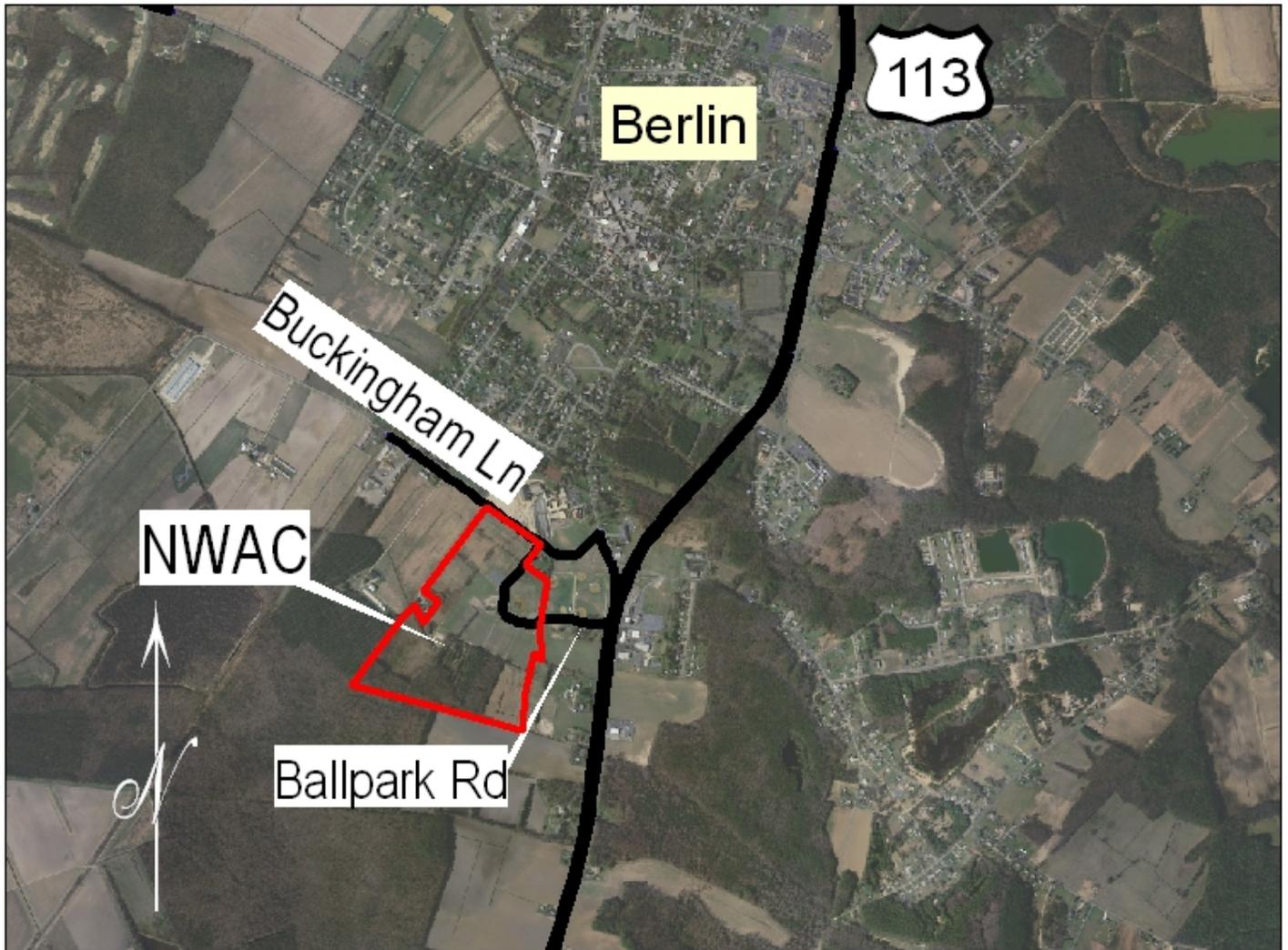
Revised: 12/1/16

2017 PROGRAM OPEN SPACE ANNUAL PROGRAM
 WORCESTER COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION & PARKS

<u>Sponsor</u>					<u>POS</u>	
	<u>Project Name, Project Description</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Local Share</u>	<u>State Share</u>	<u>Federal</u>
COUNTY	NORTHERN COUNTY PROPERTY PURCHASE		900,000		900,000	
TOTALS			900,000		900,000	

Revised: 6-30-16

Maryland Department of Natural Resources
Program Open Space
NORTHERN WORCESTER ATHLETIC COMPLEX
SPM 32, Parcel 276
76 Acres



Maryland Department of Natural Resources
Program Open Space
JOHN WALTER SMITH MEMORIAL PARK
SPM 63, Parcel 140
80 Acres

