

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The significance of outdoor recreation in Maryland cannot be summarized in a single sentence. The diverse landscape of the Old Line State is the perfect setting to get outside and choose your own adventure. There are endless outdoor opportunities in Maryland that have far-reaching and positive impacts on public health, the environment, and the economy. National, state, and local parks, forests, trails, beaches, and open spaces are foundational infrastructure that support the variety and quality of outdoor recreation experiences in contributing to Marylanders high quality of life and make the state attractive to visitors.

“The Department of Natural Resources leads Maryland in securing a sustainable future for our environment, society, and economy by preserving, protecting, restoring, and enhancing the State’s natural resources.”

*Maryland Department of Natural Resources
Mission Statement*

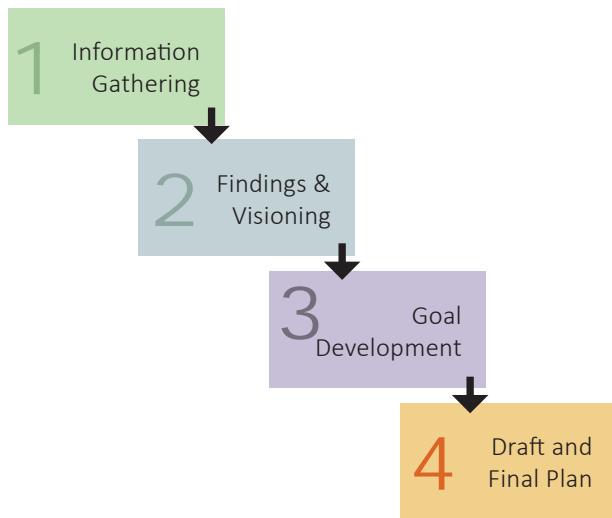
A. PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN

Every five years, Maryland updates its Land Preservation and Recreation Plan to better meet the needs of our citizens, identify current recreational trends, address service provision challenges, and update our goals and priorities to improve statewide outdoor recreation opportunities. The 2019 Land Preservation and Recreation Plan is a resource and a guide for strategically enhancing public outdoor recreation opportunities statewide over the next five years. Completion of the 2019-2023 Plan maintains the state's eligibility to receive federal Land and Water Conservation Fund grants and helps guide Maryland's Program Open Space. The Land and Water Conservation Fund was established in 1965 and has provided over \$90 million to fund over 400 projects in Maryland to improve public access to nature and outdoor recreation.



Boating The Drops by Charles Shepherd

B. PLANNING PROCESS SUMMARY



Development of the 2019 Land Preservation and Recreation Plan followed a multi-faceted planning process that began in December 2017 and concluded in March 2019. The planning process focused on analyzing data and issues impacting outdoor recreation, including citizen and stakeholder feedback, enhancing GIS-based inventory and analysis, and input and guidance from a multidisciplinary team of senior staff from multiple state agencies and partners in outdoor recreation including the National Park Service, Frostburg University, the Maryland Parks and Recreation Association, and the Maryland Association of Counties. This collaborative approach allowed a diverse group of partners, citizens, and staff to contribute their expertise, local knowledge, and institutional history to the process.

C. EXISTING OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

The primary providers of public outdoor recreation opportunities in Maryland are the Department of Natural Resources, local jurisdictions, and the National Park Service. In total these public agencies manage approximately 2,200 parks, open spaces, and outdoor recreation properties that provide residents and visitors with access to water recreation, natural areas, picnicking, trails, hunting, or fishing.

The Department of Natural Resources and its partners are well positioned to maintain and leverage the many strengths of the state's system of public parks, natural areas, and open spaces to enhance opportunities for residents and visitors to get outdoors and participate in activities that benefit them as individuals and Maryland's public at-large. Many residents are regular participants in outdoor activities, and most Marylanders are keen believers in the health, environmental, and economic benefits that can be realized through land conservation and getting active outdoors.

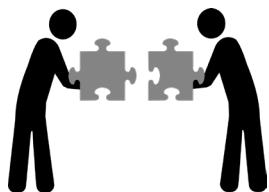


Floral bridge by Casey Terrell

D. KEY ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

Contemporary issues impacting the provision of public outdoor recreation opportunities identified through the update of the Land Preservation and Recreation Plan did not differ significantly from five years ago. The 2019 Plan provides a current view on pertinent issues, validates many of the key findings of the last plan and identifies

recommendations for enhancing the provision of public outdoor recreation areas and services for the next five years. While many important issues were considered, through 2023, the Department of Natural Resources and its partners in outdoor recreation should seek to achieve the following goals.



Goal 1: Coordination and Collaboration

Strengthen coordination and collaboration between federal, state, and local government agencies and other key stakeholders in planning for the provision of outdoor recreation opportunities and land conservation initiatives.



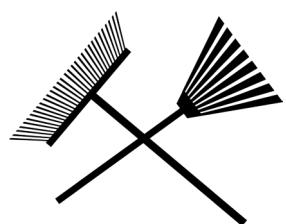
Goal 2: Promote the Benefits of Outdoor Recreation and Conservation of Natural Lands

Promote the economic, cultural, health, and environmental benefits of outdoor recreation and conservation of natural lands. Seek to increase the public's understanding of these benefits to enhance interest and participation in recreating outdoors in Maryland.



Goal 3: Increase Access to Open Spaces and Waterfronts

Increase and improve opportunities for all segments of the population to access land and water-based outdoor recreation opportunities.



Goal 4: Improve What's Already Available

Improve the overall quality of outdoor recreation infrastructure at public parks and outdoor areas across the state.



Goal 5: Develop an Informed Stewardship Culture

Promote environmental education and use of parks and outdoor areas as teaching tools to foster a positive stewardship ethos among children, youth, and their families.



Windsurfing on the Bay with Coast Guard Eagle in Background by Dennis Raulin