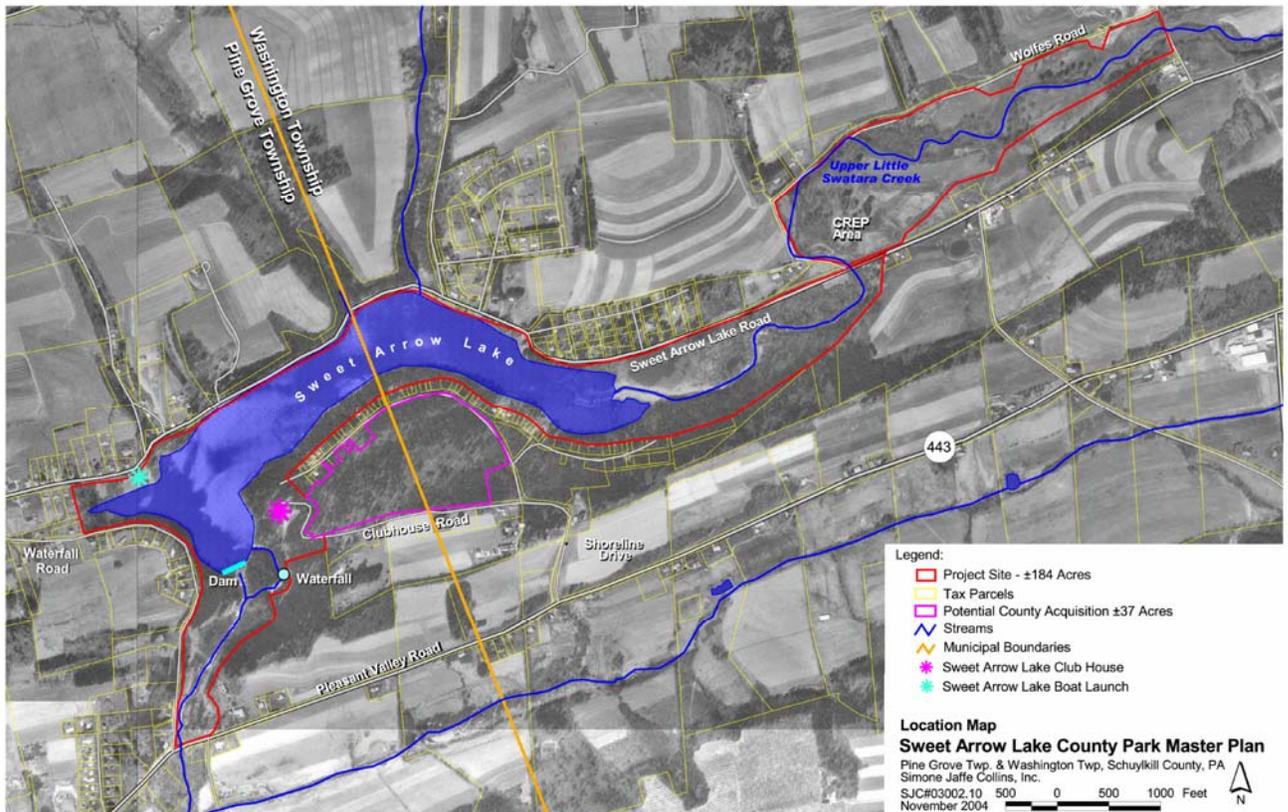


Introduction

Sweet Arrow Lake County Park is located east of Pine Grove, PA in the southwest corner of Schuylkill County. The park contains approximately 184 acres of land situated in Pine Grove Township and Washington Township. Sweet Arrow Lake covers an area of approximately 70 acres and the park property includes approximately 40 acres of emergent and forested wetlands along the Upper Little Swatara Creek. The land was formerly owned by PP&L and the Borough of Pine Grove prior to purchase by Schuylkill County in 2001 with the intent to repair the Sweet Arrow Lake dam and create the first County park. The PA Department of Environmental Protection had declared the dam unsafe. The County was successful in acquiring a Growing Greener Grant to construct a new compacted concrete reinforced dam.

An additional 70 acres of land along the banks of the Upper Little Swatara Creek, north of Sweet Arrow Lake Road, was purchased by Schuylkill County in 2002. Approximately 20 acres of this land has been enrolled in the federal Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and the County maintains a conservation and public access easement on the entire tract. This land is therefore considered within the project site area of the Sweet Arrow Lake County Park Master Plan.



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The master plan also considers the possibility of the County acquiring the 37-acre Wiest property that is located on the north side of Clubhouse Drive. This land adjoins the County owned parkland and is protected by a conservation easement held by the Wildlands Conservancy.

Sweet Arrow Lake and the Sweet Arrow Lake Clubhouse have historically been used for recreational uses. An existing boat launch is located on the northern side of the lake with access from Sweet Arrow Lake Road. The boat launch area includes parking areas for cars and vehicles with boat trailers. Sweet Arrow Lake is currently enrolled in the PA Fish and Boat Commission Adopt a Lake Program and the Fish Commission provides enforcement of the posted rules and regulations through a cooperative agreement with Schuylkill County. A copy of this agreement is included in the appendix of this report. Sweet Arrow Lake is regularly stocked with trout. Warm season fishing, ice fishing, and ice skating make the lake a year-round destination. The existing park facilities on the south side of the lake include a picnic pavilion, a gravel parking area, and the Sweet Arrow Lake



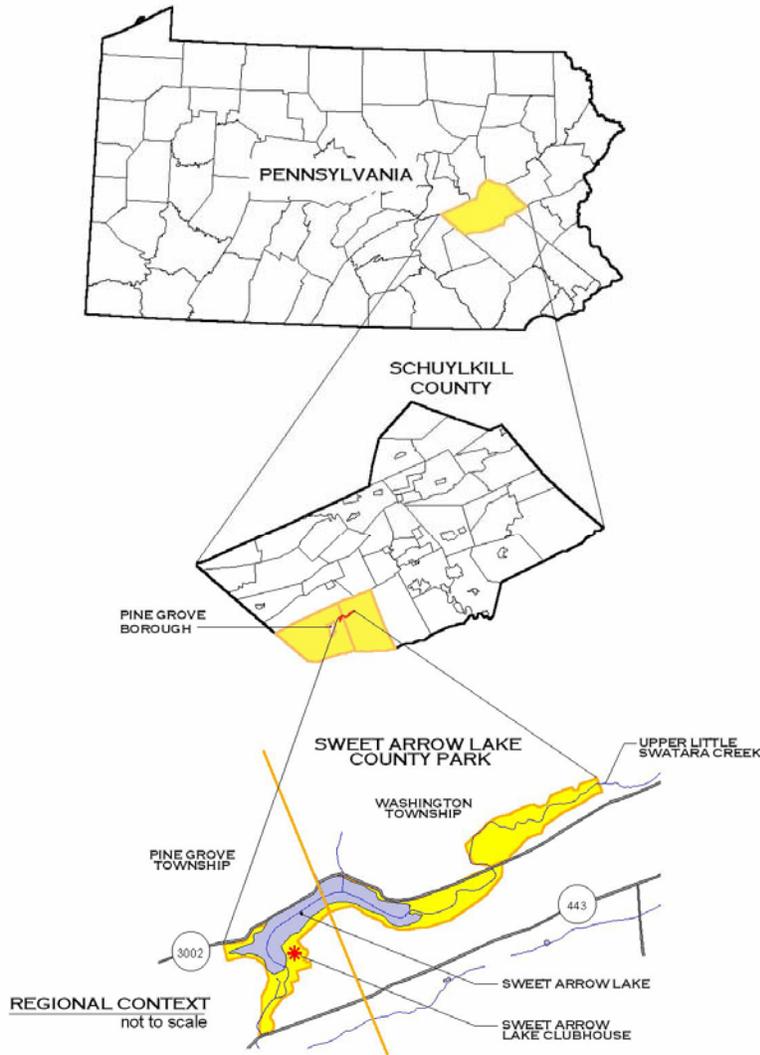
Existing boat launch parking area.



Proposed parking area below the reconstructed dam.



The Clubhouse, recently renovated by the County.



Clubhouse that has undergone recent renovations including: a new roof, new restrooms and ADA accessibility improvements. An existing earth path leads from the Clubhouse area south along the Upper Little Swatara Creek to connect to Pleasant Valley Road. It is important to note that a short segment of this trail is located on privately owned land. An additional gravel parking area is located off of Waterfall Road in an area below the Sweet Arrow Lake Dam.

The Regional Context image to the left shows the relationship between Sweet Arrow Lake County Park, Pine Grove and Washington Townships, Schuylkill County, and the State of Pennsylvania.

The Local Context exhibit found at the end of this Chapter 2 shows the relationship between Sweet Arrow Lake County Park and other recreational facilities and state owned lands that are located within Schuylkill County.

Consultant Selection and Master Plan Funding

In the fall of 2003, Schuylkill County solicited proposals from consultants for the development of a master plan for Sweet Arrow Lake County Park. From the proposals received, the County interviewed and selected Simone Jaffe Collins Incorporated to complete the work. The Simone Jaffe Collins project team included Alfred Benesch and Company - Engineers, E.L Crow Inc. - Economists, Reed Haldy McIntosh - Marketing Research Consultants, and Patrick Stasio - Certified Leisure Professional.

The Sweet Arrow Lake County Park Master Plan was funded by Schuylkill County and a grant from the Community Conservation Partnership Program under the administration of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation.

Introduction

Benefits of Parks

The decision to purchase the land for the development of Sweet Arrow Lake County park and the idea of implementing a County park system has been debated as County residents have raised concerns regarding land acquisition, park improvements and providing for the future park maintenance and upkeep. Additionally, concerns were raised regarding the fact that Schuylkill County has an abundance of publicly owned state game and forest lands. While acknowledging these concerns, it is important to consider the many benefits that are possible by developing Sweet Arrow Lake County Park.

The many benefits of public parks and open spaces can be broadly grouped into individual benefits, community benefits, economic benefits, and environmental benefits:

Individual Benefits of Parks and Open Space:

- Physical health and wellness by providing opportunities for active and passive recreation.
- Enhanced quality of life. People visit natural settings to photograph and paint nature, bird watch, observe plants and enjoy quiet contemplation.
- Reduced stress by providing opportunities for relaxation and rest.
- Social and community benefits of parks as an alternative to non-productive or self-destructive behavior. (The National Association of State Parks Directors)

Community Benefits of Parks and Open Space:

- Social opportunities to interact with other members of the community. Parks can promote ethnic and cultural harmony, and reduce anti-social behaviors.
- Families that recreate together report greater stability and satisfaction.
- Parks and open spaces increase and maintain the beauty of the surroundings and contribute to community pride.
- Recreation can provide leadership opportunities and increase community involvement and management of resources by providing volunteer opportunities.
- Integrated and accessible facilities are critical to the quality of life for physically disabled and economically disadvantaged individuals.

Economic Benefits of Parks and Open Space:

- Parks and open space contribute to the well-being of a healthy and productive work force.
- Parks, open space, and recreation facilities attract residents, employees, tourists and retirees to an area.
- Parks and open space have a positive effect on real estate values because people consider these areas important in locating or purchasing a home or locating a business.
- According to the National Association of State Parks Directors, communities with active recreation programs have reduced rates of crime. Meaningful leisure services can reduce the occurrence of vandalism and criminal activities.

Environmental Benefits of Parks and Open Space:

- Parks and open space protect natural resources and increase environmental awareness and stewardship.
- Parks and open space can safeguard water quality by reducing the sediment load that enters waterways and by filtering out toxins and excess nutrients.
- Parks and open space protect biological diversity.
- Parks and open space protect natural and historical features of the landscape and offer educational opportunities.

Project Goals

The following goals were identified by Schuylkill County and the Sweet Arrow Lake Steering Committee prior to the start of the Master Plan development process:

- Lake Restoration
- Master Site Development Plan
- Preserve Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Relevant Planning Documents

Existing and on-going planning documents that provided background information to this master plan included:

- Pine Grove Township Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, August 8, 1990.

Introduction

- Pine Grove Township Zoning Ordinance, Amended September 13, 1995.
- Schuylkill County Subdivision Regulations.
- Schuylkill County Zoning Ordinance, Amended June 7, 2000.

The Pine Grove Township Zoning Ordinance (1995) and Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (1990) protect the health, safety, and welfare of the township and residents. The Zoning Ordinance outlines permitted land uses within certain zoning districts and establishes setbacks and building heights applicable to the development of Sweet Arrow Lake County Park facilities on County land that is located within Pine Grove Township. The Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance generally deals with the specifics of required improvements and provides design standards for all types of development within the township.

Washington Township does not have a Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance or Zoning Ordinance. The development of County park facilities on land situated within Washington Township is therefore subject to compliance with the Schuylkill County Zoning Ordinance and Schuylkill County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.

Recognizing the need to analyze current development patterns and to plan for future development, the Schuylkill County Commissioners directed the creation of a Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee to update the 1973 Comprehensive Plan. Preparation of the 2003-2004 Schuylkill County Comprehensive Plan and Open Space/Greenway Plan began in 2003 and a draft was issued in June 2004. It is anticipated that the Schuylkill County Commissioners will adopt these planning documents in early 2005.

The draft Comprehensive Plan and Open Space/Greenway Plan identifies the importance of protecting open space, protecting open space networks along riparian corridors, and supports efforts to provide trail systems throughout the County. Establishing Sweet Arrow Lake as the first County park is consistent with the draft Comprehensive Plan and Open Space/Greenway Plan goals that include:

1. Preserving open space in Schuylkill County for recreational, environmental, cultural, and tourism-related purposes.
2. Protecting existing open space in Schuylkill County and the establishment of an open space and greenway system.
3. Providing increased recreational opportunities for county residents and visitors.

Other Related Studies and Projects

Peer-to-Peer Study

Schuylkill County received a \$7500 grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR) to conduct a Peer-to-Peer Study prepared by consultant Jan LeBlanc. The purpose of the Peer to Peer Study was to review the current and future aspects of the Sweet Arrow Lake Recreation area and to provide options and recommendations to improve the overall delivery of park and recreation services in Schuylkill County.

The Peer to Peer Study provides budget and personnel recommendations to provide a solid foundation for the establishment of Sweet Arrow Lake County Park and outlines organizational recommendations to clarify the relationship between the Schuylkill County Park and Recreation Commission and the Sweet Arrow Lake Board. Additionally, the Peer to Peer Study provides guidelines for park maintenance, marketing, improvement funding, and partnership opportunities. These guidelines and recommendations were used in the preparation of the Sweet Arrow Lake Master Plan and have been incorporated throughout this report.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

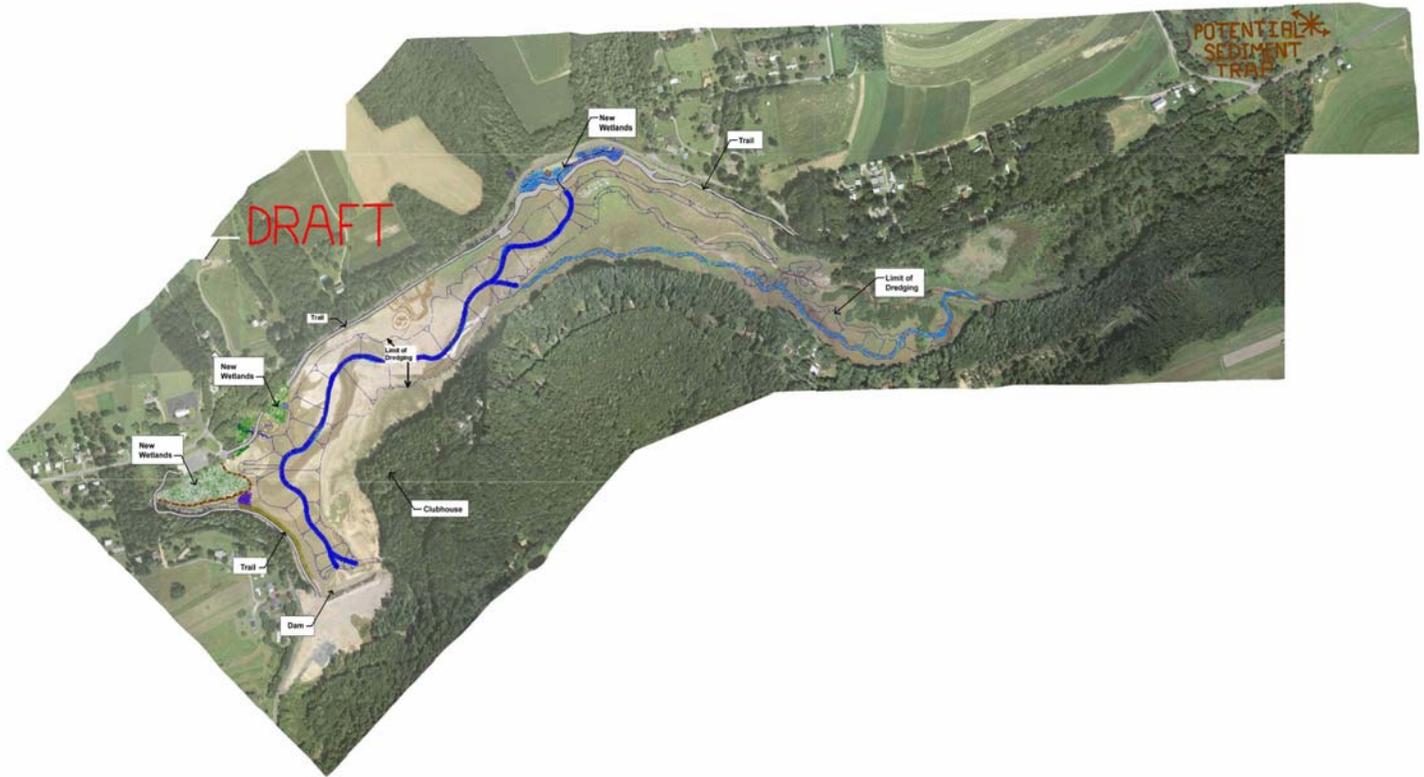
The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a federal program that compensates farmers who retire marginal farmland to restore native vegetation and riparian habitats. Through coordination with the Schuylkill County Conservation District, Schuylkill County has purchased approximately 70 acres on the north side of Sweet Arrow Lake Road. Of the 70 acres of land along the Upper Little Swatara Creek, approximately 20 acres have been enrolled in the CREP program. Schuylkill County intends to sell portions of this land to adjacent farm owners with the County maintaining a public access easement on these lands. The remaining lands held by the County are considered as County park property in preparation of the Sweet Arrow Lake County Park Master Plan.

Section 206 Preliminary Restoration Plan

The US Army Corps of Engineers is in the process of preparing a Section 206 Preliminary Restoration Plan to restore the aquatic habitat of Sweet Arrow Lake. In an effort to remove years of sediment that has accumulated within the lake and to restore fishery habitats, the Army Corps intends to dredge portions of the lake.

Dredged material will be repositioned within and around the lake to modify the subsurface structure and to enhance the aquatic habitat. Approximately 6-10 acres of new wetlands will be created and 10-30 acres of existing wetlands will be enhanced.

Introduction



US Army Corps of Engineers DRAFT Preliminary Restoration Plan.

In addition to enhancing the aquatic habitat, the Army Corps will modify the lake bottom in certain areas to facilitate recreational use, and use dredged material to create additional land areas for recreational amenities. A maximum of ten percent of the Army Corps Restoration Project budget can be used to construct recreational facilities. The coordination of the Army Corps Restoration Plan with the Sweet Arrow Lake Master Plan will ensure that environmental, recreational, and economic benefits are achieved.

Schuylkill County Community Population, Size, and Character

Schuylkill County is located in east central Pennsylvania and is situated west of the Pocono Mountains on the northern edge of the Pennsylvania Dutch Country. The County contains a land area of 778 square miles, 70% of which is forested land. The County is characterized by rural farming communities and small towns that grew around the anthracite coal industry. The Borough of Pottsville became Schuylkill County's seat in 1851 and Pottsville officially became a third class city in 1911.

Schuylkill County is blessed with outdoor beauty and significant amounts of publicly owned land including state parks, state forests, and state game lands that draw many visitors to the area every year.

Schuylkill County US Census data population figures and growth percentages are as follows based on the 2000 Census and latest population estimates for Pennsylvania Counties:

Land area (square miles)	778
Persons per square mile (Year 2000)	193
Schuylkill County Population, 1990	152,585
Schuylkill County Population, 2000	150,336
Schuylkill County Population, 2001	149,270 (Estimated)
Schuylkill County Population, 2002	148,785 (Estimated)

These figures indicate that there has been a slight population decline (-1.5%) in Schuylkill County over the last ten years.

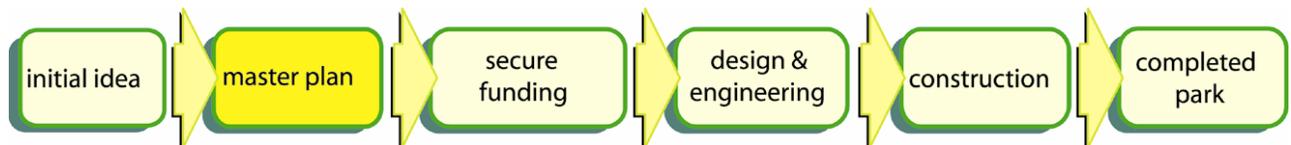
The following data is based upon the 2002 American Community Survey Profile conducted by the US Census Bureau which estimates a 2002 Schuylkill County population of 141,055:

Persons under 5 years old, 2002	4.8%
Persons under 19 years old, 2002	23.2%
Persons 20 to 64 years old, 2002	53%
Persons 65 years old and over, 2002	19.0%
Median Age	41.7 years

Note: The 2002 American Community Survey Profile population estimate is lower than the latest population estimate for Pennsylvania Counties provided by the US Census.

Public Participation Process

Public participation is a key ingredient in the success of any community project. Public meetings are designed to not only inform the public of the project status, but also to receive input as to the desired facilities and address any questions, comments, or concerns relative to the development of the first County park.



As shown in the graphic above, the completion of the Master Plan is an early stage in the development of facilities at Sweet Arrow Lake County Park. The goal of the Master Plan study is to develop a general consensus for what facilities should be constructed at the park and to establish an estimate of probable construction costs that can be used for developing an implementation strategy.

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The Master Plan forms the basis of the design and engineering phases of the project where detailed design decisions are documented through the completion of construction drawings. Upon completion of construction documents, the project can then be bid and constructed. It is important to consider that the entire park development process will likely take place over many years with construction of park facilities completed in phases as funding becomes available.

During the eleven-month master planning process, three public meetings were held. The first Public Meeting was held on February 4, 2004 at the Schuylkill County Agricultural Center. The focus of this meeting was park programming and attendees were encouraged to provide input relative to the facilities that they would like to see constructed at Sweet Arrow Lake County Park. Public Meeting #2 was held on June 2, 2004 at the Sweet Arrow Lake Clubhouse. This meeting featured the presentation of the DRAFT Sweet Arrow Lake Master Plan Report and also included an “open house” that provided the public an opportunity to observe the completed clubhouse renovations. The third Public Meeting was held at a Schuylkill County Commissioner’s Meeting and included a final presentation of the Sweet Arrow Lake County Park Master Plan.

A total of five (5) Steering Committee meetings were held throughout the Master Plan process. Additionally, two (2) joint meetings were held with Schuylkill County Park and Recreation Commission and the Sweet Arrow Lake Commission. The first joint commission meeting was held on March 17, 2004 and included a review of conceptual park improvement plans. Similar to the final Steering Committee meeting, the second joint commission meeting was held following the two-month DRAFT plan public review period.

In order to coordinate the Sweet Arrow Lake County Park Master Plan and the US Army Corps Lake Restoration Plan, a meeting with the US Army Corps of Engineers was held at the Baltimore District Office. Attendance records and notes from all meetings are included in the appendix of this report.