

CHAPTER 7 – RECREATION AND TOURISM

Introduction

As the metropolitan areas to the north, south, and east continue to become more heavily populated, pressure of additional population growth will continue to increase in Morgan County. At the same time, the County's recreational and tourism features will continue to attract a growing number of seasonal and transient users. It is important that such growth be guided in concert with maintaining the quality of life such tangible and intangible amenities offer its existing residents.

These qualities are most apparent in the provision of adequate parks and recreation areas, which in turn serve as part of the successful tools of marketing the County's rich tourism heritage. In order to maintain this balance and promote a positive experience by residents, businesses, and visitors, it is important to identify the resources that make up these often interchangeable amenities.

Parks

Morgan County is fortunate to have an abundance of natural, scenic, and historic resources which make it an ideal setting for outdoor recreational activities. With a relatively small and concentrated population, local and State parks and recreation facilities comprise a large part of the County land mass, with a number of local groups actively involved in preserving, protecting, and promoting the values of such spaces both residents and visitors come to appreciate.

Federal Parks

The most important federal facility in the area is the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historic Park, a part of which parallels the Potomac River across from Morgan County on the Maryland side. Although the National Park Service owns a few acres in Morgan County along the abandoned B & O Railroad right of way, the C & O Canal recreational historical attractions are all located in Maryland. Recreation opportunities along this section of the Canal include camping, hiking, biking, and boating. Boat ramps are located at Hancock, Maryland and at Fifteen Mile Creek, located across from Orleans Cross Roads.

One of the most significant attractions of the C & O Canal is the Paw Paw Tunnel, a 3,118 foot brick-lined excavation located across from the Potomac River, just north of the Town of Paw Paw. The Tunnel was constructed from 1828 to 1850 to provide passage for the Canal through a six-mile set of river bends. The National Park Service estimates national visitation of the Tunnel has continued to increase from 10,000 in 1980. There are continuing efforts at the local level to support extending the rail trail efforts of the National Park Service from Pearre to Cumberland, which would include numerous crossings into Morgan County, for increased recreational use.

State Parks

There are three State parks within Morgan County that total 11,120 acres. Although these parks are owned, operated, and maintained by the State, the County residents and businesses enjoy local ownership of the recreational value that these natural areas offer.

The Berkeley Springs State Park is said to be the oldest State recreational facility in the nation, dating from 1776 when Lord Fairfax conveyed it to the colony of Virginia. Originally used as public green space prior to 1776, when the Town was established and the park was set aside as Bath Square, eventually becoming State property in the 1920s. The small 4.5 acre park, still serves as “village green” in the center of the Town of Bath, and is the site of a series of natural warm springs which have been used since pre-colonial times as a health spa. The Museum, established and operated as a membership organization by volunteers, is located on the second floor of the 1815 Roman Bath House and features exhibits explaining the hydraulics and geology of the famous springs as well as the culture of more than two centuries of bathing. Today the park features 14 Roman baths, a number of conventional tubs, various forms of physiotherapy, and an outdoor swimming pool. Visitors to the baths have increased from nearly 80,000 in the early 1980’s to more than 95,000 in fiscal year 2006.

Cacapon State Park is the largest in the County, covering a long narrow preserve of approximately 6,115 acres, which extends from Virginia north almost to the Potomac River. The park centers around the Cacapon Mountain on which hiking and bridle trails climb 1,400 feet from the activities center to the summit. The Park includes a large 6 acre lake with sand beach, small second lake and reservoir, an 18 hole golf course, a guest lodge, and facilities for picnicking, tennis, fishing, boating, and swimming. It also is home to a volunteer-built Nature Center which houses exhibits and educational activities on the geology, flora, and fauna of the area. Local sandstone boulders and blocks were used in many of the buildings, walls, and gateposts, some of which were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. The total number of annual users has decreased from 350,000 in 1980 to less than 270,000 in fiscal year 2006.

The Sleepy Creek Public Hunting Area is a 23,000 acre State preserve, of which approximately 5,000 acres are located in eastern Morgan County. The Hunting Area includes a 205 acre lake, camping sites, and other rustic outdoor amenities. Use of the various activities has increased from nearly 15,000 hunters, fishers and campers since 1980.

Although not considered a State park, the State also owns the 400 acre Widmyer Public Hunting Area just west of Berkeley Springs.

County Parks

There are three County parks within Morgan County that total 34 acres. These parks include space for both passive and active recreational activities, which serve to supplement larger State recreational areas.

The largest County owned park is the Morgan County Recreation Area located along US Rt. 522 south of Berkeley Springs. This park consists of 16 developed acres, that encompass several baseball fields, a concession, parking area, pavilion and playground. It also includes 16 undeveloped acres that are currently under review by the Parks and Recreation Commission for future proposed uses.

The County also owns two smaller parks that provide active recreational value. The first is the David Henry Memorial Park, which is a one acre park with basketball and tennis courts. The second, Harmison Field, is also about one acre in size, and offers a baseball field for little league use.

Local Parks

The Town of Paw Paw owns and operates a 7 acre municipal park which provides a pavilion, baseball field and playground area. There are plans to expand the uses in this park, as funding is made available. It also owns a small recreation area along the Potomac River that provides a boat launch for non-motorized craft into the Potomac River.

There are three small recreation areas in the Town of Bath, which are not maintained by the Town. This includes: a one acre facility on Biser Street which includes two tennis courts and a basketball court, a small baseball field behind the Senior Center on Green Street, and a skateboard park located on the Morgan County Board of Education property behind the old North Berkeley Elementary school.

The Spruce Pine Hollow Park, a roadside park with a pavilion along WV Rt. 9 is owned by the Sons of the Revolution and maintained by Morgan County. The Meadow Branch of Sleepy Creek, which runs along the property boundary shows archeological remains of a mill run. James Rumsey's brother Edward owned this land and legend has it that this is the site of a bloomery and sawmill where James Rumsey may have sawed boards for the summer home Washington contracted with him to build in 1784 on lots Washington owned in Bath. About a year later, Rumsey reported to Washington that his mill burned and the boards for the house along with it. Washington would have ridden past here traveling to Berkeley Springs, another 12 miles west. Today's WV Rt. 9 is the modern version of the noted 18th century Warm Springs Road which went from Alexandria, Virginia to the country's first spa in Bath.

Park Organizations

The Morgan County Parks and Recreation Commission was formed in 1973. The Commission consists of 11 members, which are appointed by the County Commissioners to oversee all of the County parks.

The Paw Paw Parks and Recreation Board is an appointed board created to oversee the operations of the Paw Paw municipal parks. The Board consists of 9 members.

Two important civic organizations, which volunteer efforts to maintain various park and recreational amenities, include the Friends of the Cacapon River and the Sleepy Creek

Watershed Association. Both groups were formed to actively serve to protect their respective rivers and streams which empty into the Potomac and form part of the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

The Friends of the Cacapon River is a grassroots environmental group whose mission is to preserve, protect and promote the Cacapon River, a major feeder of the Potomac River. In addition to monitoring activities, it sponsors an environmental camp for kids, educational seminars and tours.

The Sleepy Creek Watershed Association works to protect and preserve Sleepy Creek and to educate the community about the value of the precious natural resources that abound around the Creek. Sleepy Creek, a meandering tributary of the Potomac river, is host to a federally listed endangered plant called Harperella.

Several other local parks and recreation organizations include the Berkeley Springs State Park Foundation, Cacapon State Park Foundation and Potomac Trails Association all of which are made of volunteer efforts to protect and promote the County’s recreational amenities.

Table 7-1 Parks and Recreation Sites

<u>Park</u>	<u>Activities</u>	<u>Owner</u>	<u>District</u>	<u>Acres</u>
C&O National Historic Park	hiking/biking, camping boating, fishing	US Park Service	Numerous	N/A
Cacapon State Park	basketball, cross country skiing, golf, hiking, tennis, picnics, volleyball, lake, swimming, playground	West Virginia	Numerous	6,115
Berkeley Springs State Park	spa, tubs, bath house, spring house, outdoor pool	West Virginia	Bath	5
Sleepy Creek Hunting Area	hiking, fishing, camping, hunting, boating	West Virginia	Sleepy Creek	5,000
Widmeyer Hunting Area	hunting	West Virginia	Bath	400
Morgan County Rec. Area	ball fields, playground	Morgan County	Timber Ridge	32
David Henry Mem. Park	ball fields	Morgan County	Bath	1
Harmison Field	baseball field	Morgan County	Bath	1
Spruce Pine Hollow Park	pavilion, picnics	Private	Sleepy Creek	2
Paw Paw Municipal Park	ball fields, picnics	Paw Paw	Cacapon	7
Total	10 parks			11,562 acres

Source: National Park Service, WV Department of Natural Resources, Morgan County Government

The park facilities range from 1 acre to more than 6,000 acres, with ownership at all levels of government, and providing activities that are both passive and active for residents and visitors. The park areas are widely spread throughout the County providing the opportunity for a healthy mixture of recreational activities that are within reasonable distance of existing and proposed development. National Parks Association standards suggest there should be 10 acres of park land for every 1,000 residents. However, there are many factors to consider in developing this ratio which should account for the type of park amenities being provided. At more than 11,000 acres in 10 parks, not including other open space such as schools, the C&O National Park, or private recreational locations, the amount of park space per 1,000 residents is adequate in meeting current and future demands.

Board of Education Property

Given that many of the schools within Morgan County are both located within close proximity to a majority of the population and include a large amount of field and active open space which is available for public use, it is important to include this acreage within the overall parks and recreation system. These facilities are outlined in Chapter 5 of this Plan and include a total of 150 acres spread throughout the County.

The most heavily utilized area within the Board of Education as it relates to active recreational park value to the local residents is the walking track located at the Widmeyer Elementary School.

Recreation

The County includes a number of community based organizations and commercial entities that provide recreational activities to serve the growing population. These activities include a variety of active, passive, and resort style settings.

Commercial Activities

The largest commercial recreation facility in Morgan County is the private property of the former Coolfont Resort and Conference Center. It consists of 1,800 acres of fields and forests located in the valley between Cacapon Mountain and Warm Springs Ridge near Berkeley Springs. Coolfont includes two spring fed lakes, a restaurant, conference center, cabins, hiking and riding trails, and facilities for tennis, fishing, ice skating, boating, and cross-country skiing. It also features an award-winning solar-purified swimming pool. Coolfont has gone through numerous owners and iterations as a recreational retreat, and was most recently closed and sold for private development investment.

The golf course located in Cacapon State Park is an 18-hole, 72-par championship golf course designed by Robert Trent Jones in the mid 1960s. The course is meticulously maintained, and is one of the regions most popular public courses open for year 'round play. It includes carts, driving range, picturesque putting green, pro-shop, clubhouse and challenging play which includes deer as obstacles and are all part of the course appeal.

There is also offered for rodeo fans sanctioned events at the outdoor Triple B Arena located along Sir Johns Run. These commercial events include activities such as team sorting, barrel racing and team roping.

There is a mini-golf and driving range located on WV Rt. 9 east of Berkeley Springs.

Cultural Recreation Facilities

The Ice House, which serves as the center for the Morgan Arts Council is a four-story storage building built in 1910, located in downtown Bath that was gifted to the Council in 1996. The building provides a Great Hall, one classroom, office, darkroom and gallery. The building was called by the name of a similar building in Denver that had also been transformed into an art center -- the Ice House. It is located at the corner of Independence and Mercer Street and is in the process of being renovated to include classrooms, a theater, and dance studios. The Council was created in 1977. Participation has increased from 11,600 participants in activities in 2001 to more than 16,000 in 2005. Consistent with this increased participation and expansion of programs, the operational budget has also increased from \$58,000 to nearly \$110,000 during that same period.

The Morgan County Observatory houses a rare Cassegrain telescope, in a cedar-sided observatory with rotating dome that is open for education programs, public viewing and star shows. This unique structure, which was built in 2001, is located on a ridge about 10 miles south of Berkeley Springs on Winchester Grade Road.

The Ridge Fish Hatchery is only one of seven in the State, producing both cold and warm water fish including trout and muskies. The Hatchery is owned and operated by the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources, and has been in existence since 1929. It is located about 12 miles south of Berkeley Springs on US Rt. 522, and is fed by the Breakneck Run Springs.

The Sidling Hill Mountain and Visitor Center is located on US I-68 just west of Berkeley Springs, and was created when a cut was blasted through the mountain in order to make way for I-68. The cut reveals an impressive cross-section of geosyncline-concave layers of sedimentary rock at various layers of the earth's crust. Interpretive exhibits are available free at the visitor's center.

There are shooting range activities available at two locations in the County. This includes sporting clays and trap shooting at Sleepy Creek Sports, which is a National Sporting Clays Association member. This wooded range is located near Berkeley Springs and is fully equipped and staffed. Also, the Sleepy Creek Wildlife Area, which is a State owned facility, has an unattended shooting range.

Public Activities

The Sleepy Creek Hunting and Fishing Area is one of the most diverse natural preserves within the State. It is part of the State owned park, which includes more than 22,000 acres straddling both Morgan and Berkeley counties, with approximately 5,000 acres consisting of more passive recreational activities located on the Morgan County side.

There are two State owned locations which offer hunting and fishing on more than 20,000 acres in two wildlife management areas providing opportunities for hunting everything from white-tailed deer to roaming flocks of wild turkey. There are both spring and fall seasons for various game. These areas include Sleepy Creek Hunting and Fishing Area and Widmeyer Hunting Area. Fishing locations are even more varied with settings for canoeing, fishing and boating found on the Potomac and Cacapon rivers, on area streams and on lakes at Cacapon State Park and Sleepy Creek Hunting and Fishing Area, some stocked by the Ridge Fish Hatchery.

Cacapon River provides for one public river access site. A self-guided boating tour extends from Largent to Great Cacapon where the Cacapon joins the Potomac River. This tour passes many natural and man-made features including historic bridges and unique rock outcrops. This tour is administered by the Friends of Cacapon River, a local nonprofit group that works to preserve, protect, and promote the Cacapon River watershed.

Berkeley Springs includes two pedestrian scenic byways for those who choose to walk to see the sites of this historic area. These walking tours include the Treasure Tour of Berkeley Springs State Park, which features 16 points of interest centered around the nearly five acre park that houses the original Berkeley springs, and the Walking Tour of Berkeley Springs, which includes the sites and structures of 28 locally historic landmarks, most within several blocks of downtown Bath.

Morgan County also provides numerous mountain trail rides originating from Cacapon State Park and the former Coolfont Resort. One of the most popular rides starts in the State park and crosses along the top of Cacapon Mountain for 10 miles to the historically and geologically prominent Cacapon Rocks. This ride offers spectacular views of the Cacapon River Valley.

Swimming and other water recreation include the lake at Cacapon State park, which offers paddle boating and beaches. There are boat launches on to the Potomac River and Sleepy Creek Lake in the wildlife management area and canoeing, kayaking and tubing on the Cacapon River. Also, the public swimming pool in Berkeley Springs State Park is open from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

Other major recreational activities spread throughout the County include hiking and biking trails along Cacapon Mountain accessible from both Cacapon State Park and the former Coolfont Resort. Other trails include the Tuscarora Trail, which connects to the Appalachian Trail and the C & O Canal provides easy hiking as well as biking.

Recreation Organizations

The Morgan County Master Gardeners is a group of volunteers that serve to beautify and enhance the area with butterfly gardens and other plantings. The West Virginia University Extension Service sponsors this group.

Berkeley Springs Farmers Market operates seasonably on Sundays in the center of the Town of Bath.

The Potomac Valley Audubon Society is a civic organization that serves Morgan County and other nearby areas. Services include sponsoring area children to summer camps for environmental education and establishing local nature preserves.

Throughout the County, there are numerous youth and adult athletic organizations that operate independent of the County, but utilize many of the County's fields and spaces for recreational sports activities.

Tourism

As noted by the Travel Berkeley Springs report submitted to the Morgan County Planning Commission in 2005, tourism is a more than \$42 million industry in Morgan County, consisting of more than 100 businesses that employ more than 650 people. Travel Berkeley Springs is the convention and visitors bureau for the County, with its main office located in Berkeley Springs, and having nearly 100 members. Half of its budget is funded through hotel/motel tax revenues. From the 2004 report committee members developed several goals and strategies centered around two distinct objectives; protecting the historic character of Berkeley Springs and preserving the scenic wilderness throughout the County by promoting the tourism ambience of a place "caught in time".

Noted as one of America's "top 100 small arts towns" by the 4 editions of John Villani's book of that name, the most attractive tourism location in Morgan County are the unique features of the local spas, massage, and warm springs of Berkeley Springs. This location draws a high proportion of couples seeking weekend getaways. There are three full service health and spa centers offered in addition the Berkeley Springs State Park facilities. There are nearly a dozen bed and breakfasts and inns as well as cabins, vacation homes, suites and lodges offering more than 100 lodging choices from elegant rooms to rustic cabins. These and all other tourism related activities are promoted heavily through the Travel Berkeley Springs website and Chamber of Commerce offices.

The Washington Heritage Trail was developed in 1998, and includes a tour of the many locations throughout Morgan County which are associated with the rich historical link it shares with George Washington. The tour covers at least 15 points of interest within the County, from the Town of Paw Paw to a small park in the Sleepy Creek region. The tour is defined as "following his footsteps on the Washington Heritage Trail National Scenic Byway takes you on a tour of the county's most historic locations" associated with George Washington, who "from the time he was sixteen through the reading of his will in 1799, ate, slept, owned land, and bathed in and around Berkeley Springs". The tour follows closely along WV Rt. 9, and includes some locations along the southern portion of US Rt. 522.

Also associated with the George Washington Heritage Trail is both a boating and driving tour of the Cacapon River. The boating tour extends from the small hamlet of Largent, located off of WV Rt. 9, east of Paw Paw, and ends at Great Cacapon, where the Cacapon joins the Potomac River. This tour passes many natural and man-made features including historic bridges and

unique rock outcrops. The self-guided driving tour follows much the same route, traveling in either direction along WV Rt. 9, which hugs and crosses the river for its entirety through the County. Both tours are administered by the Friends of Cacapon River, which is a local nonprofit group that works to preserve, protect, and promote the Cacapon River watershed.

Given the vast amount of acreage either preserved in public parks or promoted through private recreational ventures, coupled with the County's relatively rural character and scenic views, a significant amount of tourism activity is also generated for the enjoyment of people from more urban metro areas to the east. This is evident by the continued strong interest in construction and purchase of recreational homes scattered throughout the County.

Goals and Objectives

Goals

Morgan County's special topography with its mountains, rivers, forests, parks and open land offers appealing recreational options that attract significant numbers of tourists. Goals to help maximize recreational opportunities include

- Preserving the county's beauty for the benefit of residents as well as tourists;
- Promoting the creation and protection of parks, open and natural spaces, and a variety of recreational and cultural facilities concomitant with new development; and
- Encouraging and providing opportunities for active recreation to enhance physical fitness and enable more people to enjoy what Morgan County has to offer.

Objectives

These goals will be advanced by achieving the following objectives:

- Encouraging the creation of neighborhood parks within developments, and the linking of open spaces among residential developments to create larger, contiguous undeveloped areas;
- Supporting acquisition of additional park land as well as rights of way for hiking and biking trails;
- Protecting existing sites and facilities such as the Widmeyer Running and Walking Track, the Observatory, and the Rt. 522 Ball Complex;
- Encouraging development of a countywide parks and recreation plan to assess future demand for various types of recreation (e.g. golf, swimming, bowling, a community recreation center with an indoor pool, and a separate, safe trail system for recreational ATV's) and prioritize the identified needs;
- Supporting expansion of recreational activities along the county's waterways;
- Encouraging local governments and the school system to coordinate sports activities to ensure efficient use of field space;
- Promoting the Ice House as a site for enrichment classes;

- Evaluating and considering implementation of the goals of the 2005 Morgan County Youth and Families Summit;
- Supporting completion of the community park and consideration of the creation of an interpretive center and trail system in Paw Paw;
- Supporting the Travel Berkeley Springs Convention and Visitors' Bureau as a means of advancing tourism;
- Promoting the George Washington Heritage Trail through the Corridor Management Plan;
- Continuing to work with the National Park Service on completion of the C&O Canal trail; and
- Developing regulations governing the protection of the community's character, specifically to address issues relating to billboards and signs.

Recreation and Tourism Map Identification List

The following list corresponds to those parks and recreation locations identified on the Recreation and Tourism Map, Map RT-A, included in the following attachment in this Chapter.

<u>Parks</u>	<u>Recreation</u>
1 C&O Canal	11 Cacapon State Park Golf Course
2 Paw Paw Municipal Park	12 The Ice House
3 Berkeley Springs State Park	13 Morgan County Observatory
4 Cacapon State Park	14 Ridge Fish Hatchery
5 Sleepy Creek Hunting Area	15 Sidling Hill Mountain Pass
6 Widmyer Wildlife Mngt. Area	16 Sleepy Creek Shooting Range
7 Morgan County Recreation	17 Cacapon River Access
8 David Henry Park	18 Sleepy Creek Sports
9 Harmison Field	19 Washington Heritage Trail
10 Spruce Pine Hollow Park	20 Cacapon Driving Tour