

CHAPTER 7 – RECREATION AND TOURISM

Introduction

As the metropolitan areas to the north, south and east continue to become more heavily populated, Morgan County will feel the pressure of overflow residents. At the same time, the county's recreational, cultural and tourism features will continue to attract a growing number of seasonal and transient users. It is important that such growth be guided in recognition of how these amenities support a high quality of life for existing residents.

Adequate parks and recreation areas and abundant cultural activities serve as successful tools for marketing the county's rich tourism heritage. It is crucial to both identify our recreational and cultural resources and to strive to maintain a balance among the needs of residents, businesses and visitors.

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. A number of local groups are actively involved in preserving, protecting and promoting the value of such spaces to both residents and visitors.

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 historic 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 the Potomac River in Maryland, 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 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 of West Virginia, county residents and businesses enjoy both the local use and commercial value that these natural areas offer.

The Berkeley Springs State Park is the current incarnation of what has traditionally been considered to be public ground surrounding the warm springs. It was formalized as public ground in 1776 when the Virginia House of Burgesses established a town around the springs on land that formerly belonged to Lord Fairfax. Designated in the 1776 law as Bath Square, the public space over the years was also known as The Grove. Governed for more than a century by state-appointed Bath Trustees, it eventually became state-run property in the early 1920s. In 1970, it was integrated into the state park system.

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. It is a popular location for various community activities. Unusual among the mineral springs of the Blue Ridge are the expansive open pools and channels of the spring water. The Museum of the Berkeley Springs, 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’s spa activities include both the Historic Roman Bath House dating to 1815 and still used for daily baths, the main bathhouse with Roman Baths, steams and massage treatments and an outdoor swimming pool. Visitors to the baths have continued to increase and in 2015, 128,963 people were counted. In addition, a public pump is available 24/7 for people to come and take the spring water without charge.

Cacapon State Park is the largest in the county, covering a long narrow preserve of approximately 6,115 acres and extending 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 six-acre lake with a sand beach, a small second lake and reservoir, an 18-hole golf course, a guest lodge, cabins and facilities for picnicking, tennis, fishing, boating and swimming. It also is home to a volunteer-built Nature Center which houses exhibits and education 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 237,146 in 2015.

The Sleepy Creek Public Hunting and Fishing Area is a diverse 23,000 acre state preserve, of which approximately 5,000 acres are located in eastern Morgan County, the remainder in Berkeley County. There is a 205-acre lake, camping sites and other rustic outdoor amenities.

Sideling Hill Wildlife Management area (2,507 acres) is located near Largent in Morgan County. Prior to acquisition by the state, the land had previously been leased to a well-established hunting club with three generations of hunters who had been stewards of the tract for many years. The WMA can be accessed from Milo School Road (CR 9/14), Magnolia Road (CR 18), and State Route 9.

Although not considered a State Park, West Virginia owns a second hunting ground -- the 400-acre Widmyer Public Hunting Area just west of Berkeley Springs.

County Parks

There are four county parks that total 43 acres. These parks include space for both passive and active recreational activities and serve to supplement larger state recreational areas.

The largest county owned park is the Morgan County Recreation Area located along US 522 south of Berkeley Springs. It consists of 16 developed acres that encompass several baseball fields, a concession structure, 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. Across US 522 is the Alex Rickli Memorial Park which encompasses a 9.92-acre lot that is currently being developed as a soccer field complex.

The county also owns three smaller parks that provide active recreational value. The first is the David Henry Memorial Park, which is a one acre park with basketball, volleyball and tennis courts within the Town of Bath. The second, also about an acre and also in town, is Harmison Field, currently developed and used as a skateboard park. The third, North Berkeley Park, is owned and maintained by Parks and Recreation. It has a playground and walking trail.

Other Parks

The town of Paw Paw owns and operates a seven-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 festival ground and a small recreation area along the Potomac River that provides a boat launch as well as serving as a location for occasional community festivals. Both areas are administered by Paw Paw Town Council committees.

The Spruce Pine Hollow Park, a roadside park with a pavilion along WV 9 is owned by the Sons of the Revolution and maintained by Morgan County. It provides access to the Tuscarora Trail which connects to the Appalachian Trail. 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 Bath, another 12 miles west. Today's WV 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. Spruce Pine Hollow is a site on the Washington Heritage Trail National Scenic Byway.

Eidolon Nature Preserve is a 354-acre track along Sideling Hill west of Berkeley Springs. It is owned by the Nature Conservancy and co-managed by the Potomac Valley Audubon Society. It offers developed trails and has been open to the public since 2007.

Board of Education Property

Given that many of the Morgan County schools are located both 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.

Commercial Activities

Although it is state-owned, the public golf course located in Cacapon State Park is included in this category. It 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 region's most popular public courses open for year-round play. It includes carts, driving range, picturesque putting green, pro-shop, clubhouse and challenging play which has deer as obstacles, all part of the course appeal.

The outdoor Triple B Arena, located just west of Berkeley Springs, is available for various public events. It hosts a Haunted Hay Ride attraction during the month of October.

Park Organizations

The Morgan County Parks and Recreation Commission was formed in 1973. The Commission consists of 11 members 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.

Three important civic organization which volunteer efforts to maintain various park and recreational amenities are Friends of the Cacapon River, Sleepy Creek Watershed Association and Warm Springs Watershed Association. All three groups were formed to 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.

The Warm Springs Watershed Association was formed by citizens in 2008. It works to protect, preserve and educate about Warm Springs Run which empties into the Potomac River and, after passing through Berkeley Springs State Park, includes overflow from the springs. Regular stream monitoring has revealed steadily worsening conditions in the Run. WSWA is focused on installing green stormwater best management practices.

Other local parks and recreation organizations include the Berkeley Springs State Park Foundation, Cacapon State Park Foundation and Potomac Trails Association, all of which focus on 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
Alex Rickli Memorial Park	future soccer	Morgan County	Timber Ridge	9.92
David Henry Mem. Park	Tennis, volleyball, basketball	Morgan County	Bath	1
Harmison Field	skateboard	Morgan County	Bath	1
North Berkeley Recreation	hiking, playground	MC Parks	Bath	1
Spruce Pine Hollow Park	pavilion, picnics, hiking	Private	Sleepy Creek	2
Paw Paw Municipal Park	ball fields, picnics	Paw Paw	Cacapon	7
Paw Paw Festival Grounds	boat launch, events	Paw Paw	Cacapon	2
Sidling Hill WMA	hunting	West Virginia	Cacapon	2,507

Total 15 Parks**14,437 acres**

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

Park facilities range from one acre to more than 6,000 acres, with ownership at all levels of government. They provide 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 nearly 12,000 acres in 10 parks, not including other open space such as schools, the C&O Canal National Park, or private recreational locations, the amount of park space per 1,000 residents is adequate in meeting current and future demands.

Recreational Activities

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

Hunting & Fishing

There are three state-owned locations which offer hunting and fishing on more than 22,000 acres in three 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, Sidling Hill Wildlife Management 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.

The Cacapon River provides 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, within the Bath Historic District.

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 sand beaches. There are boat launches to the Potomac River and Sleepy Creek Lake in the wildlife management area and canoeing, kayaking and tubing on the Cacapon River. 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 which provides easy hiking as well as biking.

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 in Maryland 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.

There are shooting range activities available at three 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. The Sleepy Creek Wildlife Area, which is a state-owned facility, has an unattended shooting range. Cacapon State Park has a sporting clay shooting range.

Recreation Organizations

The Morgan County Master Gardeners is a group of volunteers who 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 seasonally on Sundays and Thursday afternoons 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 independently of the county but utilize many of the county's fields and spaces for recreational sports activities.

Cultural Activities and Facilities

Community cultural groups include a history museum, active historical society, public library, quilt group and several community performance organizations including a concert band, quilters guild, choir and theater group. History-related activities and organizations are detailed in the Historic Preservation chapter. All of this rich cultural infrastructure, impressive for a small, rural area, is an important draw for the tourism industry.

Due to substantial arts activities instigated by the community-based Morgan Arts Council, founded in 1977, Berkeley Springs was named West Virginia's first certified arts community and has received abundant state, regional and national recognition as an art town. This reputation has in turn acted as a magnet for artists to relocate to the county and retirees and second home owners to choose Morgan County because of its "art scene". Nearly 1% of the population is made up of working artists, musicians, dancers and writers showcasing their talents in county-wide studio tours, gallery shows, music venues and an annual book festival.

The award-winning Morgan Arts Council (MAC) currently has nearly 500 members and since its founding has delivered nearly 600,00 direct arts experiences including concerts, classes, gallery shows, community theater performances, public art projects, digital media broadcasts, literary events and youth art programs in and out of the schools. Consistent with increased participation and expansion of programs, the organization has added full- and part-time professional staff and maintained an operational budget of nearly \$250,000.

MAC owns and is renovating the Ice House arts and community center, a four-story, former storage building constructed in 1911 and located in downtown Berkeley Springs that was gifted to the council by US Silica in 1996. The currently renovated floors of the building provide a Great Hall, classrooms, dance studio, office, kitchen, media center and gallery. The building is located at the corner of Independence and Mercer Streets.

The Granary is a non-profit arts venue providing opportunities primarily for local musicians.

The Morgan County Public Library is open daily except for Sundays and Wednesdays. It has a computer center, weekly and summer children's programs and houses the Morgan County Historical and Genealogical Center. There is also a public library in Paw Paw.

Commercial Arts Facilities

The active local music scene has a number of commercial venues including The Country Inn, Black Cat Music, Hillbilly Heaven, Bath Brewpub and The Troubadour Lounge which is also home to the West Virginia Country Music Hall of Fame.

The Star Theatre is an operating vintage movie house listed on the West Virginia Historic Theater Tour.

There are several galleries and shops exhibiting and selling local, regional and American art. Twice a year there are Art Studio Tours. Monthly in summer, Art in the Park features a selection of regional artists with booths set up in the park in Berkeley Springs.

Tourism

For nearly 300 years, visitors have come to Berkeley Springs for the healing waters of the famed warm mineral springs. Beginning in the 20th century, other tourism-related activities have developed, including golf.

As noted by the Travel Berkeley Springs annual economic impact statement of FY15, tourism is a more than \$47 million industry in Morgan County, consisting of more than 100 businesses that employ more than 500 people including working owners. Travel Berkeley Springs (TBS) is the official convention and visitors bureau, with its main office located in downtown Berkeley Springs and having nearly 100 members. By law, TBS receives half the hotel/motel tax revenues collected by the county and town. Since its inception in 1989, TBS has consistently maintained 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”.

Marketed as Berkeley Springs, although the area includes the entire county, attractions are numerous including the unique appeal of the local spa industry built around the warm springs, Berkeley Springs State Park, local spas and individual practitioners of healing arts. As noted above, cultural attraction and Berkeley Springs’ national reputation as an art town are important draws. The historic town is an attraction with distinctive shops and notable restaurants while the surrounding countryside and wilderness add appeal to increasingly popular outdoor adventure travelers. Location has been and remains the prime attraction with major metropolitan areas ranging from 90 minutes to 2.5 hours away. 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 heavily promoted through the Travel Berkeley Springs website and joint Visitors Center and Chamber of Commerce office.

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 and 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 a boating and a 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.

The appeal of a small, historic, culture-rich town with vast amounts of acreage either preserved in public parks or promoted through private recreational venture plus the county’s relatively rural character and scenic view, makes it popular with weekend travelers from nearby cities as well as those looking to build or purchase a weekend home with potential for eventual retirement

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 Widmyer 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;
- Supporting further development of the Ice House as a site for cultural activities;
- Supporting completion of the Paw Paw 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;
- Increase pedestrian opportunities throughout Morgan County;
- Protecting open lands, forests and rivers as wildlife habitats for hunting and fishing;
- Recognizing the concept of viewsheds as a consideration in development regulations;
- Encouraging buffer areas and limits on riverside development to protect purity of Potomac River, the Cacapon River and streams in the Sleepy Creek system; and
- Encouraging best practices "green" stormwater management.

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 Paw Paw Tunnel