WOLF’S HOLLOW PARK CONCEPTS
DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Protect
The primary goal of the Wolf’s Hollow Master Plan is to protect the existing natural and cultural assets that contribute substantially to the park’s character. With this in mind, the plan seeks to identify easily achievable and implementable strategies to ensure the continued ability of the landscape to be enjoyable for visitors and desirable to wildlife. This goal also intends to create a maintenance regime that is able to function with minimal investment and protect against issues like excessive erosion, invasive species, and deer overpopulation.

Enhance
Next, the Master Plan seeks to enhance these protected features, by implementing steps that either provide new ways of access or new means of exploring and understanding. This goal attempts to create ways for visitors to interact with the park’s features in more meaningful ways, through new habitats and ecotones, and through educational opportunities. Offering interpretive signs and exhibits, constructing trails that give new perspective, and providing comforts that make the Park slightly less rustic are all interventions that would enhance the visitor experience.

Grow
In the future, Wolf’s Hollow may find itself in the position to provide a more intensive community purpose, in terms of increased programming and structure. The Master Plan looks to identify larger interventions that may be constructed to perform this more intense function in ways that do not degenerate or diminish the inherent value of the park landscape. The idea of growth is also important from a property management perspective, as the plan identifies neighboring parcels that may be purchased or consolidated to strengthen the park’s resources.
Habitat Types
Wolf’s Hollow currently has a number of different habitat zones, but three of these play key roles in establishing the park’s identity. The dominant feature of the Park is its mature forest, which covers most of the park’s property that is not flat. The forest is encroaching on areas at its periphery, slowly reclaiming open meadows in some areas. The hayfields are the next most important zone, taking up most spaces not claimed by the forest. These areas are maintained as hayfields by the bi-annual harvest and replanting cycle. The riparian habitat of the Octoraro Creek and its tributary stream are another key habitat zone for the Park. It is an attraction for both animals and park visitors, and contributes greatly to the experience of Wolf’s Hollow. In addition to these three main zones, there are also some significant pieces of land that are maintained as mowed lawn, others that are allowed to grow into rough grasses and brush, and some open meadows. Invasive species need to be monitored and controlled throughout the Park, as they threaten to create a monoculture that inhibits biodiversity.

The Creek
The Octoraro Creek on the northern and western boundary of the Park is a key component of the habitat of Wolf’s Hollow. The creek attracts many species of animals and birds, in addition to aquatic life. While the far side of the creek is outside park property, and part of Lancaster County, the Park should do what it can to maintain the water quality and health of the stream, through controlling excessive runoff and managing the forest that buffers the creek. The Octoraro is part of the much larger Susquehanna River watershed, which empties into the Chesapeake Bay, making this creek an important contributor to the larger mid-Atlantic ecosystem.

The Forest
The forest of Wolf’s Hollow is the dominant feature, and is never far from the visitor’s sight. The forest is old, and the variety of trees is a testament to its health. The enclosure of the forest gives a very different experience than the other areas of the Park, and in here the only sounds are the wind, the creek, and the birds. On hot days, the forest offers a welcome respite of shade, and the picnic areas found at the lookouts offer visitors a chance to rest and enjoy the woods. In winter, these lookouts become much more dramatic, as the forest canopy disappears and the views are revealed, including a unique view to the north of the nearby covered bridge.

The Edge
This zone is highlighted in the Master Plan for its ability to have a major impact on the habitat creation capabilities of the Park. Where the forest meets the fields is currently a clean cut, sharp line transition that leaves little room for cover and no variety of condition. While the experience of passing between these zones in quick transition is an enjoyable aspect of the park experience, other zones can be introduced that form a transect of habitat, multiplying the ability of the edge zone to provide desirable habitat for more species. In the same way it will attract more animals, it will also attract more visitors, as they learn about these zones of transition and are aware of the new birds that can be seen and plant species that can grow.

The Fields
The fields in all areas of the Park are currently very monocultural, growing hay that is harvested twice a year by a local farmer who has an agricultural lease with the County. Two important steps should occur to increase the habitat value of these areas while maintaining their agricultural use. First, the introduction of more grass species and a mixture of forbs will create biodiversity sought by many animals, while still providing a healthy crop for livestock. Secondly, the harvest schedule should be adjusted to allow nesting birds the time to fledge their young, getting them out of the nest before the mowing machine makes its pass. With proper consideration, the fields can still be mowed twice a year, and this will help maintain the meadow habitat, but it can be done in a way that contributes to the health of the park’s ecosystem. To this end, the first mow of the season should occur after July 15th, with a second mow in late September.

The Dam Area
The wet meadow floodplain to be created behind the Dam will be a vital new habitat zone for Wolf’s Hollow. Currently the stream is cutting a deep trench through the alluvial soil that was once a lake, and this flume of water travels quickly past the Dam and towards the forest, where it causes further erosion downstream, and enters the Octoraro. Sediment that has been collected from the farm fields and Moccasin Run Golf Course immediately adjacent to the Park has no chance to settle out and is thus carried through the Park and further down the watershed. By creating a meandering stream bed, with well planted banks and overflow areas, the floodplain will act as a large settling area, and will also increase capacity of the stream during storm events. The new habitat will be attractive to many species of birds, amphibians, and other animals attracted to the water’s edge.
INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION (CULTURAL RESOURCES)

Historic Ruins
Traces of former generations are found in a number of areas of the Park. In the north a series of stone walls and the remains of a foundation can be seen just off the Creakside Trail. Currently, this area is overgrown with vegetation and easy to miss. Along the creek, mill ruins and forges can be spotted, though some are completely gone, reclaimed by the woods and the water. There is a concentration of forge sites in the southwest corner of the Park near the River House and just beyond park property. This is one reason to consider the River House as a potential interpretation center for visitors interested in the Park’s industrial history. While the house itself is not historic, the location and setting, tucked away from the rest of the Park, make it feel as though it belongs to a former era.

The Dam is of significant interpretive and educational importance. As a ruin it commands the attention of the visitor when they set out from the parking lot. The stream now winds its way through the Dam, and understanding that is used to hold a large lake will give visitors a real sense of the passage of time. The boathouse ruin on the north side of the stream adds to this feeling. By recapturing the landscape of the Dam, as a lookout point and environmental education hub, the Park’s many layers can come together. While the plan does not intend to recreate the pleasure lake that once existed behind the Dam, it does call for the reconnection of the stream with the floodplain, to create a wet meadow habitat and important ecological interpretation site.

Another important structure in the Park includes the Orchard House, located along Wolf’s Hollow Drive in a large clearing. This building dates from the first half of the 19th century, with extensive remodeling done sometime in the early to mid-20th century. Its appearance, character and sense of mystery add to the sense of place for the landscape of the Park. For a full report on the Orchard House, see Appendix B.

The Master Plan seeks to call out these important pieces of the Park’s cultural heritage, as they contribute to the overall visitor experience in the Park. How they are re-purposed and reimagined is up to Chester County, but simple steps can begin to inform the visitor of the layers of history that appear in this park. Signage and exhibits can tell the story of the structures, and explain a narrative that encourages visitation to other areas linked by the same period of history. One can imagine different walks around the Park that highlight its role in the industrial revolution, its transition to an agrarian existence, and finally its phase as a gentleman’s country estate.

Traces in the Landscape
Along these paths of interpretation, there are many indications in the landscape that enhance and reinforce the themes. First and foremost is the mature forest, which is part of the cultural resources of the Park due to the size and number of its trees. These are old trees, many of which may have never been cut, but many more that have been growing for 100 years or more. The steep slopes would have made cutting many of the trees difficult, especially if they were to be harvested for timber, but the dominant use for these trees on the hillside was the creation of charcoal to heat the iron furnaces of the region. Using the slope, the trees would be felled to fall down towards the burn pits, where they would be processed into charcoal and sent up or downstream to the many forges in the area. As soon as the forges vanished, this forest was allowed to recover and thrive, never being considered for agricultural use due to the severity of slope.

The fields and meadows of the Park speak to this cultural heritage, and the rich soils of the region. Three areas of the Park are still farmed for hay – the large southern field at the Park entrance, a smaller field near the Orchard House, and about 50 acres that surround the Barn Complex. These fields, and their timber fences, are representative of the cultural landscape of Chester County. They connect the Park with surrounding farms, both visually and literally, and they provide a reading of the topography and sense of place for visitors walking along the paths. It becomes quickly apparent that the wooded trails are steep and challenging, and the paths around the fields are more forgiving. Emerging from the woods to the fields of the Barn Complex is an invigorating and exhilarating experience, and most visitors will pause just before ducking back into the forest.

Environmental Education
Opportunities abound for environmental education in Wolf’s Hollow. The Master Plan seeks to call these out and make them more accessible and informative, through enhancements to the landscape and the public’s ability to enjoy it. There are many different ecosystems in the Park, and a full day could be spent by a school group visiting and understanding the various roles they play. Besides the miles of trails crisscrossing the woods and fields, of particular importance will be the Dam area, where a wet meadow floodplain is intended to create an extremely valuable habitat zone, and showcase stream processes like erosion and deposition. At the edge of the woods, in the fields surrounding the barn complex, the Master Plan has called for an intervention that breaks the currently dominant edge condition where mature forest meets farm field. This is only one edge of potentially many, as the plan calls for the creation of reforestation areas, managed meadows, and timber stand improvement areas. Together these habitat zones create a series of edge conditions that showcase diverse wildlife, and promote a healthy ecosystem and landscape. They also provide many opportunities for visitors to learn, understand, and see new birds or species that otherwise would not have been attracted to the Park.
Guiding Principles

The stormwater management program for Wolf's Hollow takes a scattered approach in a number of different upstream locations, to have cumulative impact downstream where erosion has the most negative impact. The techniques deployed intend to slow runoff captured in the Park, and disperse the water so that fast-flowing flumes do not continue to wash out trails and dump sediment in Octoraro Creek. The main goals are to improve water quality and reduce water quantity in the form of runoff. A universal component to each technique is to vegetate the land where possible, either by allowing grasses to grow or physically replanting streambanks and bordering buffer zones. Care should also be taken to not drive machinery in these areas, so as to not compact the soil.

This component of the Master Plan is intended to be both hidden from view in some areas and exposed for demonstration in others. Stormwater management will be addressed in upstream locations in order to have greater impact downstream in the core of the Park. The techniques deployed are intended to be part of the landscape, instead of building structures that hide the problem. Detention basins, level spreaders, and riparian edge reconstruction will all help prevent erosion and washout, as they intend to slow down the outfall of water as it enters the Park from neighboring property, and runs off paved areas into culverts and drainage systems.
Trails
The focus on trails for the Master Plan first emphasizes creating conditions for users to explore all Wolf's Hollow has to offer. Currently the only level paved walking surface is Wolf's Hollow Drive, but its significant changes in grade make it difficult for some, while others may find that they would rather walk a loop instead of going out and back.

Other considerations for trails in the Park come from the need to complete some missing connections, and to remove some problematic areas prone to erosion. Significantly, there is no full-length trail along Octoraro Creek. A new trail is proposed to link into the existing trail system and offer visitors the chance to travel along the banks of the creek for almost its entire length of park property. A hurdle to this trail is the parcel of private Stoltzfus property in the northwest corner of the Park, abutting the creek. If no future opportunity is identified to purchase this property, negotiations with the landowner for a trail easement should be considered. The property is inaccessible to vehicles and has no residential structures, so it should be investigated whether the landowner may be amenable to allowing visitors to pass through.

Different types of trails
Key to the success of Wolf's Hollow as a regional destination is the creation and management of a system of trails that offer different experiences to the user. The Master Plan seeks to create a system that gives users more choice, not only in terms of length, but also in terms of trail width and surface material. The plan will complement the smooth walking surface of Wolf's Hollow Drive with the new Core Loop Trail, but will also create new linkages between trails and seek to protect existing trails from erosion. Trails will continue to be ranked in terms of difficulty, but they will be accessible from new launch points, allowing more visitors to reach a trail that perhaps before was beyond their comfort level.

Surface Materials
Trail materials will vary according to expected intensity and intended use. Wolf’s Hollow Drive will remain a paved road, but will have a new paved trail parallel to it to allow cars to drive through portions of the Park and walkers/runners to still be able to enjoy this route. The Core Loop Trail will also be paved, though initially it may just be graded level and surfaced with gravel. Over time, as funding permits and as visitors have shown their support for the trail it can be paved with asphalt or perhaps a resilient permeable safety surface. Some trails in Chester County currently use a mix called 2BC, which is an aggregate base resistant to erosion and more comfortable to walk on than 1 inch gravel. The more secondary and tertiary trails will be surfaced with mulch or other natural material, where there is limited chance of the material washing away. Steep sections of trails should be paved with asphalt where necessary, as indicated in the adjacent map. In the fields, trails can simply be mown grass, which is allowed to periodically recover so as to not compact the soil.

Repair/Removal of hazardous conditions
Part of this strategy is to repair trails that are showing signs of erosion or overuse. While some trails should remain rough and rugged dirt paths, others will need attention to make sure they are graded correctly, covered with an appropriate material, and free from obstruction. Some of the trails in the Park should be allowed to disappear back into the woods, as they cut too steeply down hillsides or are too prone to washout. New trails may take their place that utilize a gentler slope or are out of the floodplain. The maintenance regime going forward will have to have a hierarchy of care, that keeps the level, paved walking areas clear of leaves, snow, and debris, while allowing the forest trails to feel more wild.

Something new each time
The overall theme for visitor enjoyment in the Park is to provide a reason to come back. Trails reveal new features with each passing season, and visitors should feel just as encouraged to take a winter hike as they would a summer stroll. Knowing that the facilities are well-maintained is key to this willingness, but also it will be important for the Park to be able to show that there are many options to explore depending on the visitor’s level of comfort. For example, a trail runner may enjoy a cold run in the woods after the first snow of the season, while an elderly couple would rather stick to the Core Loop knowing it will be enjoyable to get outside but still be safe.

Expected Uses
Throughout the development of the Master Plan, discussions were held as to the appropriateness of various uses in the Park. Mountain biking and horseback riding were brought up as uses that could potentially expand the user base of the Park, but ultimately the public and steering committee do not want to hamper the user experience for pedestrians. To this point, the facilities of the Park do not lend themselves to be the best mountain biking destination, as the trail lengths are not significantly long and the ability to navigate them safely in the presence of hikers would be difficult.

In addition, there are other, better prepared mountain biking and equestrian destinations to be found in the region. Regional Trails are planned to converge in the borough of Atglen, and accommodations could be made for long-distance cyclists to use Wolf’s Hollow as a destination along a much longer journey, or as a base to leave a vehicle and ride county roads and designated trails in the region around the Park.

It is important to note, however, that many of the neighbors in West Fallowfield Township are Amish who travel to the Park principally by horse and buggy. Accommodations including hitching posts and water troughs should be made at the Schoff Road parking area and potentially at the Barn Complex.
**Gateways**
Currently there is only one public entrance to the Park as per the Special Exception Agreement. The entrance is from Schoff Road, and consists of a sign with planting around a gate. The driveway leads to a small parking lot for about 20 vehicles.

**Roads**
The main road through the Park, Wolf's Hollow Drive, runs generally on a north-south axis from the southern entrance to the northern end. The Master Plan intends to keep this infrastructural resource and reinforce its function as the spine of the Park. While currently public vehicles are contained in the southern end, the Master Plan intends to rethink vehicular traffic and access in the Park. Paired with a new entrance on Glen Run Road, an option to provide an accessible two-way Wolf's Hollow Drive through part of the Park would significantly increase the accessibility and ease of circulation in the Park. Visitors would be much better able to reach the northern half of the Park, and the barn complex would be able to assume a central position in the typical park-goers visit.

Segments of the road could be controlled with gates, such as permitting only group buses into the northern end when necessary, or for maintenance vehicles or to speed event set up. As well, if the Glen Run Road entrance is not immediately implemented, Wolf’s Hollow Drive can be improved to handle the flow of vehicles from the southern entrance to the barn complex, with some necessary widening and vehicle pullover locations. If this road is widened, care should be taken to not inflict damage on the allee of maple trees that line the drive.

Currently General Steele Drive exists in the southwest corner of the Park and provides private access to the River House. This road is narrow and steep, and crosses a neighbor's property. The Master Plan does not intend to make this road public, as it is difficult to maintain and does not deliver visitors to a parking area. In addition, the River House is planned to be sold after the current tenant leaves, ending the current lease agreement.

**Parking**
The existing parking lot, found near the southern entrance from Schoff Road, accommodates about 20 vehicles. Beyond this point, public vehicles are prevented from driving further into the Park. Service vehicles and park rangers use a gated system to access the other roads of the Park. The Master Plan has called for increasing parking areas, both at the existing lot and in new places such as the Barn Complex. This is intended to become a new trailhead for the Core Loop Trail, as well as a parking facility for the barn complex itself, if it is re-purposed to be used as an indoor event space. This central location in the Park will become a desirable location for many visitors, especially if it is able to be accessed from the new park entrance on Glen Run Road.

The northern end of the Park is intended to be welcoming to groups of outdoor education guests, with accommodations for group camping, bus loading and unloading, and comfort facilities. The existing Visionary Center structure is obsolete, and is planned to be demolished in Phase I, but its foundation and utilities could be re-purposed for a park information center and Day Lodge anchoring the north end of the Park, which will require a small parking lot.

**Hubs**
The Master Plan seeks to establish new anchor points that help visitors plan and enjoy their visit. Right now the only trailhead in the Park is at the existing parking lot. By establishing more points in the Park, visitors can aim for a destination, knowing they will find a map, park information, restrooms, and shelter. The hubs can act as meeting points for groups or educational tours, provide seating areas, and perhaps a place to have lunch. They will be identifiable by their information kiosk and will highlight certain habitat or stormwater management features, or provide a view. As the points where many trails come together, they will help create the impression that the trails are an interconnected network that provides many options for all ages and abilities.