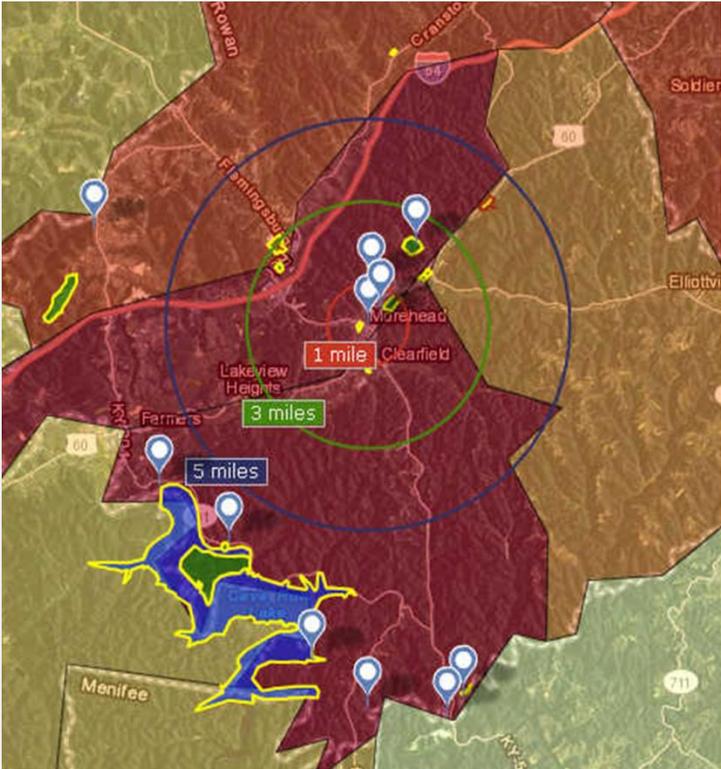


Summary of 2013 RAPP 300: Seminar in Regional Issues' Project

“Supporting Rowan County’s Long-term Planning Process in the Areas of Human Health, Economy, and Environment”



Submitted May 2014

Project Focus

The focus of this year’s project was *community health*. The diverse community groups we interviewed and/or attended meetings included NewCity Morehead, City of Morehead, Morehead Tourism, Northeast Kentucky Area Health Education, and Rowan County Health Coalition are concerned with community health – and health-related issues and concerns are a key focus of the city-county comprehensive planning process that is currently underway.

Of the many health-related indicators found in the literature and used in real-world community programs, we decided to focus on the ‘physical activity’ indicator in our research. We made this decision based three factors: the health-related priorities of our local partners, the community’s ongoing comprehensive planning process (which includes a focus on outdoor activities), and because research results demonstrate the many health benefits related to the use of parks and outdoor recreation facilities.

While our community suffers from a wide range of health problems (see table below), studies suggest that many of these problems can be improved through increased outdoor recreational activity.

Table 1. Summary of health problems in Kentucky and Rowan County.

Indicator		Rowan County	Kentucky
In less than good health	(% adults)	27%	23%
Mentally unhealthy days	(per month)	5 days	4 days
All cancers	(age adjusted per 100,000 pop.)	223	212
Infant mortality	(per 1,000 live births)	8.3	6.7
Uninsured population	(% adults < age 65)	20%	18%
Childhood obesity	(2-4 years old)	18.3%	15.6%
Physically unhealthy days	(per month)	4 days	5 days
Prevalence of diabetes	(% adults)	7%	8%
Heart disease deaths	(per 100,000 pop.)	222 days	224 days

Our Research Question

What opportunities currently exist in Rowan County for outdoor physical activity, and do they meet the current and expected future needs of the community?

We investigated our research question by completing the following three tasks:

- (1) Collecting demographic information
- (2) Performing an asset inventory
- (3) Conducting a pilot survey

Summary of Literature Review

Literature reviews for RAPP 300's fall 2013 project focusing on parks and recreation ranged from the overall health benefits of parks and recreation, to the various health problems in Eastern Kentucky, and even the demographics of Rowan County, Kentucky. Parks offer a number of health benefits, including a lower Body Mass Index, lower blood pressure, and lower rates of depression compared to passive park users (Godbey, 1998). Some benefits of parks were also linked to older park users. "Among four ethnic groups, (African Americans, Caucasians, Hispanics, and Asians), the most salient psychological benefits were immediate pleasure seeking, and the chance to interact with other people while experiencing non - challenging activities (Tinsley, 2002).

In Appalachia, there is a high risk for colon cancer, which is heightened by old age, being African American, family history, low fiber high fat diet, having a sedentary lifestyle, obesity, smoking, and drinking alcohol (Mayo Clinic 2013). Among those at risk, elderly white men have the most risk in Appalachia (Appalachian Regional Commission, n.d). It is troubling that 60 percent of colon cancer deaths are preventable, as there is a low mortality rate (Lexington Clinic, 2013). Appalachia has a low level of health care and screening, which is why Dialogue for Action, a state level program that aims to develop a working consensus to increase colorectal cancer screening rates (Prevent Cancer Organization, 2009). Other barriers that cause low screening rates include, old age, minorities, low socioeconomic status (Kentucky Cancer Coalition, 2010).

Other health indicators show how very bad the health situation in Kentucky are the 8th highest obesity rate in the nation at 16.6 percent of the population (Center for Disease Control, 2010). Another reason is the vigorous amount of work schedules in America which gives people the excuses to often say that they don't have time to be physically active because of long work hours and time spent commuting (Moss, 2013).

It seems that the problems that plague the Rowan County is that there is not enough land available to use for parks, as most flat land in the county is currently being used for various reasons. Other factors that take change the uses of land are changes in land value, real estate agencies, appraisals and marketing. All contribute to who can build what on land. There are many factors that need to be considered when speaking of a new amenity or recreational facility: importance of the economy in relation to local characteristics ranging from tax burdens to income distribution, results suggest that predictable relationships are present between amenities, quality of life, and local economic performance exist (Ullman, 1954).

Key Facts:

- Rural residence is associated with higher poverty and higher cancer mortality rates (Behringer & Zheng, 2012).
- Colon cancer accounts for 12% of cancer deaths in Kentucky (Kentucky Cancer Coalition, 2010).
- Higher rates of colon cancer in northeastern Appalachia (National Cancer Institute, 2012).
- At least 60% of colon cancer deaths could be prevented (Kentucky Cancer Coalition, 2013).
- Lower Body Mass Indexes, lower blood pressures, and higher self-perceptions of own health among active park users in comparison to passive park users (Godbey, 1998).
- Among older park users (greater than 50), main benefits reported were immediate pleasure seeking, being around others, and being able to engage in non-challenging activities. (Tinsley, 2002).
- Positive connection between time stayed in park and lower stress levels felt when users left (Godbey, 1998).
- Prolonged park usage results in less physician visits (Godbey, 1998).
- Lifestyle choices (lack of exercise, low fiber diet) increase risk (Kentucky Cancer Coalition, 2012).
- Adult obesity rates increased in 16 states in the past year and did not decline in any state. Twelve states including Kentucky now have obesity rates over 30 percent. Four years ago, only one state was above 30 percent. Obesity rates exceed 25 percent in more than two-thirds of states (Center for Diseases Control, 2012).
- Kentucky had an obesity rate of 16.6 percent and was ranked eighth most obese state in the nation. The obesity rate in Kentucky increased 90 percent over the last 15 years (Center for Diseases Control, 2012).

Outdoor Recreation Asset Inventory

The students conducted an inventory of outdoor recreation assets within Rowan County, Kentucky. The information below was gathered from reviewing local websites, interviewing David Morris and Professor Haight. The assets are summarized below in a table and graph form.

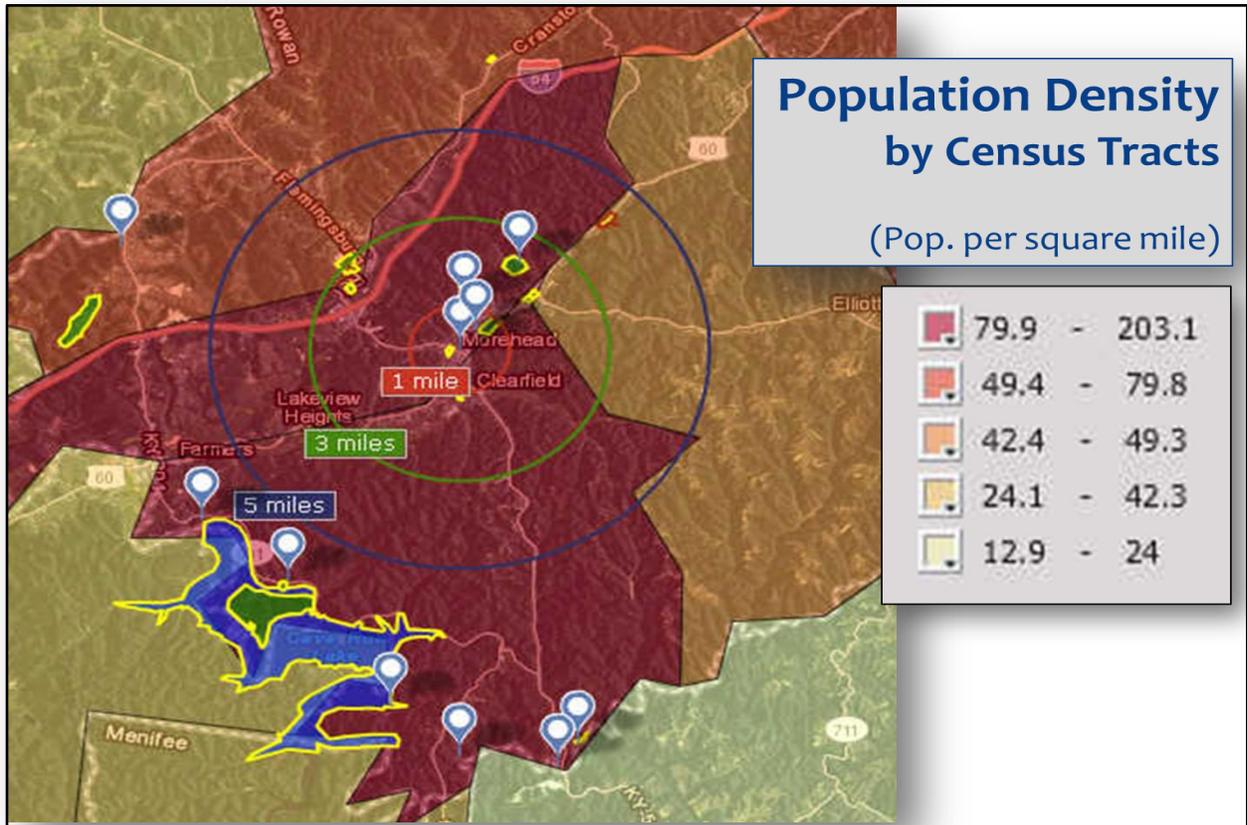


Figure 1. Map of existing parks and recreational assets over a population density layer. The blue symbols mark trailheads while the parks are depicted in green with yellow outlines. The trailhead symbols represent both water trails and foot/bicycle paths.

Table 2. Summary of Outdoor Recreation Assets.

Recreation Facility	Pools	Athletic Fields	Skate Park	Basketball Park	Shelter Areas	Walking Paths	Trial head	Connector Trails	Number and miles of Trails	Play-ground	Horseshoe Pits	Other (e.g. Parking)
Don Greenhill City Park	50 meter pool	5	1	1	2	1 sixth-tenth	X	X	1: 1.5 miles	1	X	1
Greenhill Soccer Complex	X	2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	1	X	X
Zane Collins Community Park	X	4	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Rodburn Park	X	Volleyball net	X	X	X	X	1	1.5 miles to Sheltoewe	2: .5 mile; .75 miles	1	X	2
Cave Run Lake Campgrounds	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	5: 2.5 miles; 1.25 miles; 2 miles; 1.25 miles; 1 mile	X	2	X
Rowan County School System	X	2	X	X	X	1: High school track	X	X	X	Yes	X	X
Eagle Trace Golf Course	X	18-hole course	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	2
Clyde A. Thomas Airport	X	X	X	X	X	1: 0.6 miles	1	X	X	X	X	1
Water Trails	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	3: 8 miles; 5 miles; 16 miles	X	X	3
Bike Route Info	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	13: range from 8 to 80 miles	X	X	X
Daniel Boone National Forest*	X	X	X	X	X	X	1	X	4: 18 miles; 6 miles; .20 miles; 1.5 miles	X	1	X
Corp of Engineers Office	X	X	X	X	X	X	1	X	.75 mile	X	X	X
Eagle Lake	X	X	X	X	X	X	1	2 - 1 mile to Sheltoewe	5: 1.7 miles; 1 mile; 1 mile; .5 mile; 0.25 mile	X	X	X
Memorial Tree Walk	X	X	X	X	X	X	1	X	1: 1.25 miles	X	2	X

*Does not include the campground Twin Knobs and Boat Gunnel or Martin Branch Trail.

Table 2. Summary of Outdoor Recreation Assets (continued).

Recreation Facility	Additional Notes	Target Audience
Don Greenhill City Park	Main city park/pool is outdated	150 children per day/attendance measures thousands/5-13 year olds
Greenhill Soccer Complex	City of Morehead	Ages 5-13
Zane Collins Community Park	Built on a flood zone/school system	Information not provided
Rodburn Park	Most underutilized park	Information not provided
Cave Run Lake Camgrounds	Daniel Boone National Forest	Information not provided
Rowan County School System	Managed by the school system	Utilized by the City of Morehead and open to the public
Eagle Trace Golf Course	Managed by Morehead State University	Information not provided
Clyde A. Thomas Airport	No information provided	Information not provided
Water Trails	Approved by American Canoe Association	Information not provided

Pilot Survey

This task was completed by piloting the freely available ‘community parks and recreation’ survey we obtained from the Active Living Research website. We decided that it would be wise to pilot the survey first to determine if it would provide useful information for our community. We piloted the survey in two stages, with two different community groups – the executive committees of the NewCity Morehead and Sustainable Morehead organizations.

The *first pilot stage* brought to our attention some problems with the survey, at least for our purposes, including ambiguous instructions and insufficient answer choices. This led us to modify the survey for the second stage by adding more detailed instructions, revising question wording, and including more recreation facility answer choices. Results from the *second pilot survey* gave us more useful information than the first survey. However, we believe that some survey statements and questions will require additional revision in order to ensure more accurate and targeted information for our community.

Preliminary Findings

Overall, the results from our two small samples suggest that local parks are safe, clean, and well-lit, but also that some equipment may be in poor condition and that people would like more options and amenities. Survey results also indicated that some people did not know about all of the amenities available in a particular facility.

Future Work

As we have built on past ATP student work, it is our hope that future student projects will expand on our research and continue making useful contributions that help improve community quality of life in Morehead-Rowan County. Specifically, we recommend:

- Continuing to work with community organizations to more effectively promote and market opportunities for outdoor physical activities.
- Revising the pilot survey based on our recommendations.
- Investigating alternative ways to distribute the survey to a larger audience.
- Identifying good examples of parks and recreational facilities in other communities to use as models for our community.
- Examining additional indicators of community health for a group of communities with varying levels of health disparities in order to be able to compare our community with others.

Acknowledgements

The Appalachian Regional Commission and Appalachian Teaching Project for helping to sponsor our project.

Community Partners

- City of Morehead
- Gateway Wellness Coalition
- Northeast Kentucky Area Health Education
- Morehead Tourism Commission
- NewCity Morehead
- Sustainable Morehead