

**APPENDIX 5**

**LONG RANGE PLAN  
FOR  
NEVERSINK MOUNTAIN**

## LONG-RANGE PLAN

### Overall Development

It is proposed that the plan for the Neversink Mountain Park, as shown on the accompanying map, incorporate many of its unique features and environments. The park would provide opportunities for passive recreation, nature study, wildlife sanctuary, and a variety of historic features. Recreation facilities would include hiking and biking trails, scenic overlooks, some areas for family picnicking and play. Supporting facilities would include access lanes, parking areas, service roads, maintenance facilities, a visitors' center and exhibit area, and rest facilities.

The park would include all three zones of the mountain - the crest with its peaks and ridges, the steep, mid-level slopes, and the mountain foothills. The park would extend to all sides of Neversink Mountain, and from its highest peak to its lowest point on the Schuylkill River. Park lands would approximate 950 acres. Within the park, about 87 acres would remain under private control, and nearly 185 acres of park land would share use with various utilities, access lanes, and service roads.

There are more than 30 miles of existing trails on Neversink Mountain. It is proposed that nearly half of the trail mileage be closed and that closed trails be allowed to revert to areas of natural vegetation. Closing trails would leave a more simplified trail system but still provide adequate access to all important areas. Closing trails will also create larger, uninterrupted tracts for wildlife sanctuary.

Much of the proposed trail system would utilize the existing bed of the former Neversink Mountain Railroad and many of the already established access lanes and woodland trails. It may be necessary to reestablish sections of the railroad bed that have been obliterated over more recent years, so as to complete the system of trails.

A few new sections of trails would provide linkages to various features and points of access and would provide short-cut connections between the major trails. Most all trails would be improved to allow for comfortable use and for the use of lightweight maintenance and security vehicles. The majority of the trail system will accommodate the handicapped.

Hiking trails that have been used for many years to connect local neighborhoods to Neversink Mountain would be incorporated into the plan for the park. Trails from Reading, Mount Penn, and Reiffon are important social as well as physical linkages to the community.

The ultimate development of park facilities would provide about 11.5 miles of trails and lanes for biking or hiking and about 5 miles of trails to be exclusively used for hiking; or, a total of 16.5 miles of trails.

Some trails would also be used as access lanes for utility maintenance or access to a few residences. These trails would be of heavier construction to accommodate heavier vehicles.

It is proposed that there be seven points of access for the motoring public; four points of access from regional hiking/biking trails; and three accesses for hiking only. The points of access are from all directions and every community.

The plan envisions that vehicular access to Neversink Mountain would be limited to the perimeter of the mountain and to the 20th Street road that leads to the top of the mountain. Vehicular accesses would be accompanied by small but adequate areas for parking. Parking areas would be fully landscaped. Access points to the park would be gated so that the general vehicular traffic would be controlled and limited to the hours of operation. Some private access lanes and public ways would be eliminated or converted to park roads or trails.

It is proposed that the centrally located Mount Penn Access (20th Street) provide convenience to a cluster of park features, including the historic McIlvain Pavilion, the proposed visitors' center, picnic area, the promenade (scenic walk), and the spectacular panorama at the quarry overlook. This would allow many who do not wish to hike or who are limited in their physical activities to also enjoy much of the park.

In addition to scenic trails, overlooks, and nature areas, it is proposed that there be several areas developed for family recreation. These would include facilities for picnicking and general play areas for romping, frisbee toss, softball, volleyball, etc. Seasonal rest facilities would be provided. Family recreation areas would be located near the Reading Access at 10th Street and the Exeter Access on reclaimed quarry land. In the distant future, a third family recreation area could be provided at the South Meadow on the southwestern foothills.

It is proposed that many of the remaining historic features of Neversink Mountain be preserved, restored, and enhanced. The most obvious historic feature to preserve and restore is the Neversink Mountain Railroad. The railroad bed would be used as a major part of the trail system. Preservation of the railroad way could include reconstruction of the wooden trestle that crossed the Klappertal Creek ravine (at the throat) and reconstruction of a small, wooden bridge that carried the Neversink Mountain Railroad over the inclined railway that provided access to the Highland House hotel (near 13th Street). The way could be enhanced by the addition of story board signs that relate historic information about the railroad and Neversink Mountain.

The parklike area at Klapperthal Creek (in the throat) could be restored by thinning some of the vegetation, restoring the pond and stone dam at Klapperthal Pond, and reconstructing a hillside gazebo.

Within the Cove, the ice pond could be restored. The outline of the foundations of the Glen Hotel could be made more evident, and the stone-lined spring hole could be restored. Further up the Cove, the cold cellar and foundations of the former farm house could be stabilized. On the north rim, the wine cellar and foundation structure of the Greaff Hotel/Berks County Tuberculosis Sanitarium could be cleared of brush, stabilized, and made safe for exploration.

At the eastern peak, it is proposed that maintenance of the McIlvain Pavilion be continued and that the half-mile loop of the scenic promenade walk be restored.

At the west end of the mountain, the ruins of the Whitehouse Hotel could be cleared of vegetation and stabilized. At river level, the towpath of the Schuylkill Canal could be cleared and restored to function as a continuation of the River Trail in Reading.

The plan suggests that many areas that are now cleared of natural vegetation be reclaimed by planting indigenous trees and plants and be allowed to return to a naturalized state. It is further suggested that owners of private lands within and surrounding the park be encouraged to develop landscaping sympathetic to the natural environment. Less than 1% of the park land would be landscaped. The landscaped areas would be at the visitors' center, as well as picnic and family recreation areas.

Some wooded areas would be selectively thinned and pruned so as to open scenic overlooks. At other overlook locations, decks or towers would be constructed so that important vegetation would be preserved.

### **Ridge Top Development**

Development at the crest would consist of a hiking/biking trail that would run the length of the mountain ridge with loops at the eastern ridge and the western peak. Access to the crest would be via existing 20th Street (Neversink Road). Some portions of the ridge top trail system would share use as access lanes to private properties. An area at the top of 20th Street would provide parking for the mountain pavilion, quarry overlook, and a picnic area and visitors' center.

Hiking trails at the eastern peak would provide access from the parking area to the pavilion and to the rim of the quarry. There are outstanding panoramic views from the pavilion and quarry rim. An existing overgrown trail that encircles the eastern peak at the level of the pavilion would be cleared to function as a promenade with many vistas. The

Gibraltar Overlook Trail gives access to a panoramic view of Gibraltar Hill to the south. Observation towers would be provided at the end of the eastern ridge and at the site of the former Highland House hotel on the Reading side of the western peak. At "Lookout Point," the highest point on the Neversink Mountain Railroad (on the south side of the central peak), an observation deck would provide a panoramic vista of the Schuylkill Valley.

### **Mid-Slope Development**

Development on the mid-level slopes would feature a hiking/biking trail (Neversink Trail) that would begin at the eastern peak, loop to the west, encircle most of the mountain, and return to the peak via the north rim of the Cove. This trail would also be accessed by a number of feeder trails from the base of the mountain.

Looping to the west, Neversink Trail would afford overlooks and places to enjoy at: the underground reservoir at 10th Street; the panoramic viewing area above Whitehouse Road; the very scenic rocky cliffs on the south slope at the river loop; the rock garden-like area of the throat; the trestle over the ravine; a deep woods trail through a forest of mountain laurel; the rocky cliffs of the abandoned quarry at the Exeter Access; a panorama of the hills to the south from the top of the cliffs in the quarry; and the ruins of the sanitarium at the northwest rim of the Cove. From there, the trail would return to the eastern peak.

The Neversink Trail would afford views of Mount Penn, Reading, Wyomissing Hills, Angelica Lake, the Schuylkill River, Flying Hill, Gibraltar Hill, and Klapperthal Creek and would pass through a wide variety of habitation.

A hiking trail through the Cove on the Glen Trail would provide a nature walk through wetlands, along branches of Klapperthal Creek, through the quietness of the tall trees, and past the historic remnants of the Glen Hotel and a farm house. The Glen Trail would cross the Neversink Trail and continue northeasterly to connect with the Reiffton Trail, another hiking trail. The Reiffton Trail would begin at the Reiffton Access (at the end of Reservoir Road) and head northerly toward the base of the eastern ridge, where it would connect with the Glen Trail. The Reiffton Trail would then head northeasterly along the base of the ridge to a scenic environment of large boulders, then descend a steep slope to Neversink Road in Reiffton.

The Huffing and Puffing Trail provides a connection between the Glen Trail at the base of the eastern ridge to the Ridge Top Trail. It is a short but rigorous climb.

On the north side of the eastern ridge, the St. Lawrence Trail would provide a hiking/biking trail from the St. Lawrence Access (27th Street) to the west end of the eastern ridge. The trail would follow the service lane for the electric transmission lines. The trail would pass along open field habitat and the edge of a mature woods. Bird watchers and students of nature will find many things of interest.

A hiking trail, the Northeast Trail, would provide a quick way to reach the observation tower at the end of the eastern ridge from the St. Lawrence Trail, near the point of access. The trail would pass through mature woodlands and an area of mountain laurel. From the trail, there are glimpses of Mount Penn, St. Lawrence, and Guldin Hill.

Near the intersection of the Ridge Top Trail and the St. Lawrence Trail, the Laurel Trail, a hiking trail would connect with 23rd Street and the local neighborhoods in Mount Penn Borough and Lower alsace Township. The trail passes through a mature woodland with a dense understory of mountain laurel.

Near the Mount Penn Access, a short but important hiking/biking trail would connect between a curve on 20th Street and the end of 19th Street. This trail, the Mineral Spring Trail, would provide a link to a system of trails in the Mount Penn Reserve. Upon leaving the Neversink Mountain Park, it is proposed that an urban trail would follow along the east side of 19th Street, cross Perkiomen Avenue at the traffic signal, and enter Pendora Park. From there, an existing trail could be followed through historic Mineral Spring Park and Egelman's Park and enter the 1,500 acres of the Mount Penn Reserve, where there are many other features and areas to enjoy.

Hiking up slope from the East Reading Access (18th Street), the Quarry Crest Trail provides a link between the Neversink Trail and the Ridge Top Trail. The Quarry Crest Trail passes among rock formations to the rim of the abandoned quarry, where there is a panoramic view of Reading and views of Mount Penn. Above the quarry, the trail passes through dense patches of mountain laurel and blueberry.

Hiking down slope from the East Reading Access, the Neversink Playground Trail provides a connection between the playground and the Neversink Trail. The Neversink Playground Trail and the paralleling 13th Street Trail are hiking trails that are used by neighborhood residents. The trails pass through mature, open woodland.

The Reading Trail provides an arduous climb from the 10th Street Access and Reading Recreation Area to the observation tower and Ridge Top Trail on the western peak. It functions as a short cut trail and as a traditional link to a City neighborhood. The trail passes through a burned area that is now returning to forest. There are a variety of plants and flowers to be seen. Further up slope, there are views of the City.

A hiking/biking trail, the West End Trail, follows the railroad bed and provides an important connection between the Ridge Top Trail and the Neversink Trail on the south side. The trail passes through hardwood forest. There are many views to the west and south to be enjoyed.

A spur hiking/biking trail links the Whitehouse Access with the Neversink Trail. There are pleasant views of the Schuylkill River from this short trail.

At the South Access, a hiking trail would provide a short cut between the South Access and the West End Trail. There are fine views to the southwest from here.

### **Foothills Development**

Development at the mountain base would feature the Schuylkill River environment and points of access from the surrounding communities.

A hiking/biking trail, Klapperthal Trail, would connect with the Neversink Trail at the trestle; double back through the throat and pass beneath the trestle; connect with the Klapperthal Access; and, continue to the Schuylkill River. The Klapperthal Trail would follow Klapperthal Creek along the floor of the throat, along the shaded western edge of the Forest Hills Memorial Gardens, and through a wildflower area to the river. At the river, a hiking trail would lead upstream to a rock cut on the river loop. A downstream hiking/biking trail would link to the historic site of the Lewis Dam and the ruins of the power station. Along the way, many wildflowers and views of the river rapids may be enjoyed. It is proposed that the trail be continued downstream as part of a regional Schuylkill Valley trail system.

The Klapperthal Trail would be accessed by a short hiking/biking trail that extends from the parking area at the Klapperthal Access along the bed of Klapperthal Road. Another short hiking trail would link the parking area to the Neversink Trail, east of the trestle.

The Exeter Access leads from Klapperthal Road to the mid-slope area where there would be a family recreation area. The lower level of an abandoned quarry would be for parking and a shaded picnic area. The upper level would be developed as a scenic overlook and would have a turfed area for various play activities.

From Reservoir Road in Reiffton, a park road would lead to the Gechter Access. A small parking area would be developed on a level area on the eastern rim of the Cove. From there, there would be easy access to the Neversink Trail and the Glen Trail.

The Reiffton Access would be located at the end of Reservoir Road. A small parking area would give access to the hiking trails along the eastern ridge, including the Reiffton Trail, the Huffing and Puffing Trail, and the Glen Trail. The access road would also continue as a private lane for maintaining the Citizens Water Company reservoir site.

The St. Lawrence Access would utilize an existing lane extended from Fairview Avenue. From a small, shaded parking area, connections may be made to the St. Lawrence Trail and the Northeast Trail.

The 10th Street Access leads to the Reading Recreation Area and connections to the Neversink Trail and the Reading Trail to the western peak. A parking area and picnic grove would be on a wooded level area, just down slope from the underground reservoir, located there. A turfed play area would be developed over the reservoir. Because of the steady breezes that blow over the west end of the mountain, this site traditionally has been a site for flying kites and for viewing the City below.

Whitehouse Road has always provided access along the western end of the mountain and to the meadows south of the western peak. It is proposed, for the purposes of park security and maintenance, that Whitehouse Road be terminated somewhere near the Reading/Cumru municipal boundary. A cul-de-sac turnaround and a gate would be provided at that point. It is proposed that the section of Whitehouse Road south of the proposed cul-de-sac be made a park road that would lead to a small parking area near the historic remnants of the Whitehouse Hotel and the Whitehouse Access Trail; the South Access parking area at the edge of an existing quarry; and the South Meadow Recreation Area.

From the South Access, there would be linkages to the Neversink Trail and a shortcut to the West End Trail. The access lane would also allow service to electric utility lines. A parking area located near the South Meadow would service the South Meadow Recreation Area and would be a trail head for the Meadow Edge Trail. This hiking trail skirts the base of a steep slope along the edge of open fields. As the trail nears the railroad junction, it dips down to cross a small stream. There is a small wetland on the upstream side. The trail enters a mature woodland, then turns northward, climbing a steep slope to reach the Neversink Trail.

From the South Meadow parking area, the bed of Whitehouse Road would be developed as the Whitehouse Trail. The Whitehouse Trail would cross over the Conrail tracks, pass through a broad, open field, and connect with the regional Ferdinand K. Thun Trail that now runs from Reading to the Village of Gibraltar.

Along the west end of the mountain, the River Trail in Reading's Riverfront Park and Heritage Park would be extended downstream, along the former towpath of the Schuylkill Canal. After passing beneath the West Shore Bypass, it would connect with the Ferdinand K. Thun Trail. The Thun Trail would also provide access to a hiking trail downstream from the Titus Power Station. The Titus Trail would be a path along the river plain, where many wildflowers and flowering trees can be found. There are also excellent views of the river bend and of Neversink Mountain from here.



## **Long-Range Coordinated Development**

In the long run, Neversink Mountain Park could become an integral part of other open space areas and recreation facilities.

By creating an urban trail from the Mineral Spring Trail at 19th Street, the wilderness trail system could be continued through Pendora Park and Mineral Spring Park to the 1500-acre Mount Penn Reserve and Antietam Lake, and the many trails of the Reserve.

By extending a trail along the abandoned section of Whitehouse Road and rebuilding a bridge over the Conrail tracks, Neversink Park could be linked with the existing Ferdinand K. Thun Trail. From Thun Trail, there could be connections with a river trail that would extend from the River Park in Reading to Cumru Township Park at Titus, to the Girard Canal at Poplar Neck and to Allegheny Aqueduct at Gibraltar; or, connect with Angelica Park on the west side of the river. The Thun Trail would also provide access to Schlegel Park in the City of Reading.

By extending Klapperthal Trail down river, Neversink Mountain Park could be linked with the Exeter Township Park system and with other downstream communities.

Connections with existing trails in Reading provide access to Berks County's Stonecliff Park, Tulpehocken Creek Park, Gring's Mill, the Berks County Heritage Center, and to the Blue Marsh Lake and Recreation Area.