

4. Master Plan

This master plan is an update of the 1998 Fischer's Park Master Plan with a vision to, *"To preserve and enhance the natural and cultural resources of Fischer's Park for the enjoyment by future generations"*. The 1998 Plan set a clear direction for use of the park. Some elements were fully realized, including the development of the trail system; some were partially realized, including the commons area off of the main parking lot; and some elements were not achieved, such as the reuse of the Arneith Farmstead.

This update carries forward the ideas and designs developed in the 1998 plan through the four conceptual elements described in section 3. These conceptual elements, Connectivity, Natural Area Enhancements, Access and Mainstreaming, and Active Elements, have been organized into 11 specific design elements, which are described in detail below.

The Fischer's Park Master Plan includes 11 design elements that will provide Towamencin Township with a set of improvements to achieve the overall goals and vision of the Master Plan. The Design Elements are listed below and identified on the Master Plan. Each element is described in the following sections:

1. Inclusive Design Enhancement
2. Arneith Farmstead / Kriebel Road Improvements
3. Woodland Sensory Garden
4. Resource Restoration
5. Entry Plaza and Inclusive Play Areas
6. Evansburg Trail Connector
7. Game Pavilion Area
8. Pedestrian Bridge
9. Universal Softball Field
10. Dam Improvements
11. Metz Road Parking

Implementation of the recommended improvements to Fischer's Park will occur over a period of years. The timing of various improvements will be determined by the Township based on funding opportunities and current priorities. The Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee purposely

decided against a specific schedule to allow the Township as much flexibility as possible in implementing improvements. However, the committee certainly recommends that the Township continue to pursue funds and grants aggressively to continue to improve this valued community facility.

4.1 Inclusive Design Enhancement

Fischer's Park will be used by every township resident, regardless of ability, age, or physical or mental impairment. This does not mean that facilities will be exclusively for those with disabilities, but that they will be sensibly and attractively designed to permit access by those with and without disabilities. The following improvements will make Fischer's Park current and planned amenities more accessible to all users.

a. Arneith Seating Area and Path

An asphalt seating area will be located in front of the stage of the Arneith Entertainment Center. The area will be 10 by 20 feet to accommodate park users in wheel chairs, strollers, or those who do not want to sit in the grass. The seating area will be accessed by a five-foot-wide asphalt path that will connect the existing trails on either side of the green.

b. Fishing Area

A paved fishing area will be constructed at the creeks edge to enable those with limited mobility to go fishing. The area will be located at the end of the paved path that northeast from the parking area. This location creates a visual destination down this path. The area will be roughly 30 feet long and have a railing for safety.

c. Fishing Area & Access Area at Dam

Another creek access point will be created at the end of the other main paved trail that extends from the parking area. This area is adjacent to the dam and is a visual focal point of Fischer's Park. A unit paver path will connect to this access area. A bench with extended pad area for universal access will also be installed to allow park users to comfortably observe the dam.

Short Term

- 1** Entry / Play Plaza
 - a. Spray Fountain
 - b. New Pavilion/Restroom
 - c. Play areas
- 2** Accessibility Enhancements
 - a. Stage Seating Area and Path
 - b. Fishing Area
 - c. Fishing Area & Bench at Dam
 - d. Other Enhanced Access Improvements
- 3** Kriebel Road/Arneht Improvements
 - a. Gates and Closure Signage
 - b. Parking Lot and Turn Around
 - c. Dog Park
- 4** Dumpster Enclosure
- 5** Park Sign
- 6** Dam Improvements

Mid Term

- 7** Woodland Sensory Garden
- 8** Pedestrian Bridge
- 9** Game Pavilion Area
 - a. Bocce courts
 - b. Improvements to Stable Pavilion

Long Term

- 10** Resource Restoration
 - a. Riparian
 - b. Woodland
 - c. Meadow restoration / farming
- 11** Evansburg Trail Connector
- 12** Universal Softball Field
 - a. Ball Field
 - b. Loop Trail
 - c. Restroom
- 13** Metz Road Parking
- 14** Farm Field Trail
- 15** Picnic Grove



FISCHER'S PARK

Master Plan Update
Towamencin Township, Montgomery County

"Maintain and enhance the aesthetic, natural and heritage elements of Fischer's Park through a measured improvement program that includes enhanced accessibility, protection and restoration of natural resources blended with a program of primarily passive recreational activities".



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d. Other Access Improvements

The existing trail system that surrounds the field in front of the Arneth Entertainment Center is generally flat and well-suited to park users that cannot navigate soft surfaces or steep slopes. As such, this area is an ideal universal access loop for people in wheelchairs, the elderly, and others that are looking for low impact exercise opportunities. Four signs will be installed at the heads of these paths to inform users that the trails have inclusive accessibility.

Sections of the trail that are not ADA compliant because of steep slopes will be relocated to create lesser grades or resting areas. These are generally short sections of trail. The trail will also be enhanced by installing ADA compliant paving under existing benches. Two ADA picnic tables will added to the Bull Pen, Becks, Creek Side, and Stable Pavilions. All play areas will have an accessible pathways to them.

Pedestrian level lighting is recommended around the inclusive access loop to provide safety during nighttime park events and to extend use of the park during winter months when night comes earlier. This will have minimal impact on adjacent neighbors as the lighting is away from residences and is low level.

4.2 Kriebel Road / Arneth Improvements

Development of the Arneth Tract will extend existing park amenities, provide a connection to Evansburg State Park, and attract new park users. The key to opening this part of the park will be closing Kriebel Road to through traffic. While unpopular with commuters who use the roadway, Kriebel Road does not lend itself to pedestrians sharing the road with cars. The road must be closed to ensure the safety of park users.

a. Gates and Closure Signage

The road surface itself will remain as asphalt. No changes to the surface are proposed. Gates will be installed to close it to cars. The western gate will be adjacent to the upper barn but before the Hanks house. The roadway is relatively flat

adjacent to the barn and a turnaround area will be installed.

The eastern road closure gate will be installed approximately 380 feet from the intersection of Bustard Road, on the other side of the only private drive on this section of Kriebel Road. The terrain slopes steeply toward the creek in this area. A road closure sign will be installed at Bustard Road to discourage vehicular access. The road will remain open the residents of private dwelling on the north side of Kriebel Road.

b. Parking Lot and Turnaround

A 40-car parking lot will be installed behind, north of, the upper barn on the Hanks property. The lot will have porous paving in keeping with the park's objective to be environmentally sensitive.

c. Dog Park

The dog park will be roughly one acre in size and fenced in with a four foot chain link fence. There should be one fenced area for small dogs and one area for large dogs if the Township wants to separate sizes. There should also be a fenced entry area for transitioning dogs into the park. It will be located at the end of the new parking area partially in an area that is currently farmed and partially in a wooded area to provide shade. A water fountain for humans and dogs and two benches will be provided for additional comfort. Water will be provided from the well used by the Hanks house. The dog park is located away from residential areas adjacent to the park. Maintenance and upkeep of the dog park will come from registration fees charged to users and from donations. The dog owners are extremely community minded and it is anticipated that users will make donations to keep the dog area maintained. Maintenance includes trash pickup from provided receptacles and periodic addition of woodchips. There should be a doggie bag dispenser station and all trash cans in the dog park must have covers.

Registration will be maintained by the Township and will require a fee. Detailed information about the dog and the owner will be collected to ensure that non-registered users are discouraged. An electronic pass or key system can also be used.

d. Picnic Grove

A small picnic grove will be installed to the south of the dog park where visitors can enjoy views over the road to the creek and main part of the park.

e. Farm Field Trail

Access to the picnic area, including ADA access, will be via the proposed Farm Field Trail that will navigate the perimeter of the large farm field.

4.3 Woodland Sensory Garden

The woodland sensory garden will provide opportunities to learn about the natural environment and touch, smell, and see different types of native vegetation. It is located in an existing wooded area to the northeast of the parking lot. Invasive species will be removed and new native plants, shrubs and trees will be planted. The area is also the location of the stormwater outfall for the parking lot. Educational signage will be installed explaining how stormwater is infiltrated in the ground via bioswales to reduce flooding and improve water quality.

Simple improvements, such as a field of 1000 daffodils and a sundial whose ground plane is made up of ground covers and low plants can be undertaken.

A small trail loop will provide access to the woodlands. The area has some wetlands requiring an elevated boardwalk for roughly 250 feet of trail. Fibar, an ADA compliant surface, will be used for another 250 feet of trail.

4.4 Resource Restoration

Fisher's Park provides habitat for a number of native and migratory species via riparian and wetlands, woodlands, and open meadows. See Table 6 for species know to occur in the area. These habitat areas will be enhanced by removing invasive species and planting indigenous species. Non-native invasives such as Multiflora rose, Autumn olive, and Amur honeysuckle have formed dense thickets that retard the development of a tree species.

a. Riparian

Towamencin Creek travels for approximately 2,400 linear feet through Fischer's Park. An area 20 feet upland of either bank will be targeted for riparian restoration. Approximately 20% of this area will need to be planted with species that will help stabilize the bank.

b. Woodland

There are approximately 25 acres of woodlands in Fischer's Park. Stands of invasive *Acer platanoides* will be replaced with native *Acer* species and invasives such as Multiflora rose will be removed.

c. Meadow restoration

The farm field on the Arneht Tract is currently leased by the Township and to a farmer. If public use of this area increases, the Township will consider converting the field to a native grass meadow. This will include planting native grasses and wildflower species. The Farm Field Trail can circle this in either scenario.

Table 6 Local Bird Species

Acadian Flycatcher	Great Blue Heron
American Crow	Great Crested Flycatcher
American Goldfinch	Hairy Woodpecker
American Robin	Indigo Bunting
American Woodcock	Killdeer
Baltimore Oriole	Louisiana Waterthrush
Barn Swallow	Mallard
Barred Owl	Mourning Dove
Belted Kingfisher	Northern Cardinal
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Northern Flicker Northern Parula
Blue-winged Warbler	Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Brown Thrasher	Osprey
Brown-headed	Red-bellied Woodpecker
Canada Goose	Red-tailed Hawk
Carolina Wren	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Cedar Waxwing	Scarlet Tanager
Common Yellowthroat	Tree Swallow
Cooper's Hawk	Tufted Titmouse
Cowbird	Turkey Vulture
Downy Woodpecker	Warbling Vireo
Eastern Bluebird	White-breasted Nuthatch
Eastern Kingbird	Wild Turkey
Eastern Phoebe	Wood Duck
Eastern Towhee	Wood Thrush
European Starling	Yellow Warbler
Field Sparrow	Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Gray Catbird	Yellow-throated Vireo

Source: 2004-2008 data for the Skippack Creek Conservation Landscape from the Breeding Bird Atlas

Table 7 Local Reptiles and Amphibians

Salamanders

Northern redback salamander
 Northern two-lined salamander
 Spotted salamander

Frogs and Toads

Green frog
 Spring peeper
 American toad

Turtles

Eastern painted turtle
 Common snapping turtle
 Redbelly turtle

Snakes

Northern black racer
 Eastern garter snake
 Northern ringneck snake
 Northern water snake

4.5 Entry Plaza and Inclusive Play Areas

The Fischer's Park Entry Plaza will be a focal point of the park and will take its design direction from the history of Kookers Mill that was located on the site. The design will be circular and include an at-grade spray fountain surrounded by benches, game tables, and ornamental trees. A larger and improved restroom and pavilion will be adjacent to the plaza and new inclusive play areas will be immediately beyond that.

a. Spray Fountain

A spray fountain will be located where the current restroom facility exists to provide easy utility access. The fountain will be an at-grade zero-depth model, designed to resemble a millstone from Kookers Mill. A drain system, designed to resemble a water wheel, will encircle the fountain. The fountain will be surrounded by six benches and four game tables. Ornamental trees will provide shade to the area.

b. Pavilion/Restroom

A new combined restroom pavilion will be constructed adjacent to the entrance plaza. It will also be adjacent and convenient to the new play areas described below. The facility will be a Cedar Forests Products model in the same style as the Bull Pen, Beck's Pavilions and the Arneith stage. The facilities will be larger than the existing restroom with an additional toilet in both the men's and women's rooms. There will also be a family changing area. The pavilion will be similar in size to the existing Beck's Pavilion.

c. Play Areas

Three new play areas will be added to replace the existing playgrounds. The play areas will be contiguous, arching around the path and will take advantage of the sloping topography, which drops approximately five feet. The play area closest to the new pavilion will be a tot lot. Immediately adjacent to the tot lot will be a play hill with a built in slide. Last in the line, and furthest from the restroom pavilion will be a 5 – 12 year old play area. Play areas will include rubber surfaces, accessible sand or water tables, "soft areas," tether ball, multi-kid structures (fire truck, bus, etc), rock wall, swings for people with disabilities, and a shade structure.

4.6 Evansburg Trail Connector

Evansburg State Park is approximately 1,200 feet away from the western edge of Fischer's Park. An off-road woodchip trail will be constructed parallel to Towamencin Creek within the park boundaries. This trail will be 1,050 feet long and will require a small wooden bridge across a perennial tributary to Towamencin Creek. From the end of this wood chip trail an on-road path will be created via lane stripping on Kriebel Road.

The on-road path will meet with an off-road trail under development by Evansburg State Park. Construction of the Evansburg Trail segment is estimated within five-years.

4.7 Game Pavilion Area

The existing Stable Pavilion will be improved and provided with game tables. The pavilion will be an ideal location for those who are looking for outdoor activities where they can enjoy the beauty of Fischer's Park. A bocce ball court is located adjacent to the pavilion to further serve its users.

a. Bocce Courts

Two bocce ball courts will be installed adjacent to the stable pavilion. These courts will be roughly 16 by 90 feet, have treated lumber bumper boards, and have an appropriate surface. Benches will be installed adjacent to the courts. Players will be expected to bring their own bocce balls.

b. Improvements to Stable Pavilion

The roof of the Stable Pavilion will be raised so that the eaves do not present a hazard and a new asphalt paving surface will be installed.

c. Dumpster Enclosure

A dumpster is currently located in the parking lot. A wooden enclosure will be installed to screen it from sight.

4.8 Pedestrian Bridge

A pedestrian bridge will be installed over Towamencin Creek just below the dam. The bridge is critical to linking both parts of Fischer's park. It is envisioned as a suspension structure and will not be ADA compliant as both sides of the park will have accessible parking. The approach from the southern section of the park will come off of the existing trail system. Some trail realignments will be necessary. On the northern side, the bridge will lead to the Arneith structures and to the Evansburg State Park Connector.

4.9 Universal Softball Field

The universal softball field is intended for all park users. Groups can informally use the field for pickup softball games or other games. It will have a rubberized surface so that park users with physical disabilities can also use the field.

a. Ball Field

The current baseball field will be converted into a universal softball field. The orientation will be switched to north northeast to reduce the impacts of sun glare for batters. The infield and batting areas will be an ADA compliant rubberized surface. The outfield will be stone dust and will also be ADA compliant.

b. Loop Trail

A five foot wide asphalt path will be installed from the new parking area to the new field to provide ADA access.

c. Restroom

A restroom will be installed to the southwest of the ball field. This is for the convenience of players using the ball field, especially those with disabilities.

4.10 Dam Improvements

Vegetation will be cleared from the dam area and rip rap installed to help stabilize the dam.

Accent lighting will be installed around the dam emphasize the dam and help create a visual focus. The dam will be visible from the field and parking area and will be lit during movie nights, concerts, and special occasions.

4.11 Fry Road Parking

A 40-car parking area will be installed at the Fry Road service entrance to the park. The parking area will constructed of porous paving to help reduce storm water runoff and to protect water quality. Towamencin Township should evaluate the need for additional parking in the park and develop the Fry Road parking area in response to need.

4.12 Phasing

Priorities for implementation are as follows:

Short Term 0 to 2 years

Entry Play Plaza

Accessibility Enhancements

Kriebel Road / Arneith Improvements

Dumpster Enclosure

Park Sign (at Kriebel & Bustard)

Dam Improvements

Mid Term 2 to 5 years

Woodland Sensory Garden

Pedestrian Bridge

Game Pavilion Area

Long Term 5 to 10 years

Resource Restoration

Evansburg Trail Connector

Universal Softball Field

Metz Road Parking

Farm Field Trail

Picnic Grove