

SCORP TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

April 19, 2023

10:00 a.m.

Virtual Meeting via WebEx

ATTENDANCE

Committee Members:

Tricia Arndt

Brad Dennehy

Anthony Gonzon

Joe Spadafino

Robin Eaton

Brie Tulowitzky

Joseph Smack

Shebra Hall

Linda Parkowski

Jon Wickert

Kelly Valencik

Katie Hickey

Thomas Kneavel

Marilyn Smith

Philip McBride

DL Wilson

Tonya Mead

Britt Salen

Heather Dunigan

KC Community Services

Jeremy Sheppard

Jamie Whitehouse

Ebony Mapp

Staff:

Michael Tholstrup, DNREC, Parks and Recreation

Bob Ehemann, DNREC, Parks and Recreation

Megan Ramsey, DNREC, Parks and Recreation

Michael Krumrine, DNREC, Parks and Recreation

Mike Tholstrup called the meeting to order at 10:07 a.m.

Mr. Tholstrup reviewed the agenda and provided introductions as well as a history of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) survey.

In response to a question from DL Wilson, Mr. Tholstrup and Mr. Bob Ehemann explained the basics of pickleball and its growing popularity over the past few years.

Mr. Tholstrup opened the floor to committee members to discuss what they wanted to see in the upcoming SCORP survey.

Ms. Tonya Mead stated that access for getting to a recreation area can prohibit people from enjoying outdoor recreation and asked if staff had given any thought to transportation. In response, Mr. Tholstrup stated that this question had come up in previous surveys and questions surrounding this topic were currently in the survey with open-ended responses.

Ms. Tricia Arndt stated that she appreciated that staff was matching the survey to census data to be representative of Delaware's population and asked how staff was able to do that and how staff was ensuring outreach was getting to underserved, non-English speaking or minority populations. Responding, Mr. Tholstrup stated that in the past staff had worked with consultants who would go through and track as much demographic data as possible to decide if they needed to continue conducting surveys until all populations had been reached. Mr. Ehemann added that once the consultants start to get to the end of the needed 2,000 surveys they start to target whatever demographic that is still needed. He noted that with the difficulty of getting people to answer their phones now it was becoming a bias that needs to be worked through and this topic would likely come up at a future meeting to discuss other avenues to access these communities and get their input which may not be gathered by phone or internet. Mr. Tholstrup stated that those strategies would be discussed at the May meeting.

Responding to Ms. Katie Hickey, Mr. Ehemann stated that he believed Spanish was offered in addition to English. He noted that staff could look into adding other languages, but the most difficult thing was just getting people to answer the phone.

Ms. Hickey stated that there was a large Haitian population in her area so Creole would be an important addition.

Ms. Heather Dunigan stated that Wilmington Area Planning Council's (WILMAPCO) last phone-based public opinion survey took many months to conduct because it was challenging to meet the demographic targets.

Responding to Ms. Arndt, Mr. Ehemann and Mr. Tholstrup stated that they would look into if all of the questions had to be asked every five years or if some could be tabled and asked every 10 years. They also proposed looking into whether or not the questions could be broken up, asking several on the phone, several via online survey, etc. to not overwhelm participants.

Responding to Mr. Anthony Gonzon, Mr. Tholstrup stated that it had not yet been discussed if COVID-19 would be mentioned in the survey but it was something worth thinking through and deciding if it should be called out as a separate item in the survey.

Ms. Marilyn Smith stated that there was a big uptick in people wanting to be out of the house during COVID-19 and they could safely be outside, so it was an important question to ask if this was a short-term behavior change or did the pandemic initiate a long-term permanent behavior change. She noted this information would be important to plan for the future and find out if people will continue to use outdoor recreation or if they'll return to pre-COVID habits.

Mr. Ehemann stated that Parks staff tracks participation numbers so behavioral changes should be able to be seen in the data over the next 12 months.

Responding to Ms. Arndt, Mr. Ehemann stated that question 3 regarding activities for the household was worded particularly since minors cannot be interviewed and that question gets at asking what children in the household use parks for without asking them directly.

Ms. Smith suggested making a sub-question asking directly about outdoor activities participated in by children in the household where applicable, so it was two distinct questions and gathered information on both adults and children.

Responding to Ms. Smith, Mr. Ehemann confirmed that there was a question regarding what would encourage users to participate in more outdoor recreation.

Responding to Ms. Smith, Mr. Ehemann stated that he did not think the survey discussed expenses as it mostly focused on publicly accessible recreation, however, if someone had brought up expense in their response it would have been captured.

Responding to Ms. Arndt, Mr. Michael Krumrine stated that division maps and data pertaining to accessibility to parks was not cross checked with responses received because the survey does not ask for address or location information.

Mr. Ehemann stated that division maps were based off walking and safe routes to the parks, the division does not account for routes that are not safe or accessible.

Mr. Krumrine stated that the information was not available on the First Map system, but he was willing to work with communities individually to help them identify areas that have impediments to access and other ways to access parks beyond just cars.

Responding to Ms. Kelly Valencik, Mr. Ehemann stated that things like push buttons for safe crossing were covered in question 18 of the survey.

Ms. Arndt stated that one of the most important questions should be what people want to see in the parks and what they want to do, she suggested focusing on that type of information.

Ms. Britt Salen stated that safety was a huge factor for engaging the community she represented, she suggested that questions that could lead to improvements around things like lighting would be very useful.

Ms. Arndt stated that she thought it would be important to keep questions 24 and 25 if looking for funding from state legislators since the data would be needed to back up the request.

Regarding Priorities for Funding, Ms. Smith stated that priorities for capital investment and priorities for programming were very different questions, so it was important to include both.

Ms. Ebony Mapp suggested asking participants to rank their priorities for funding rather than asking them to list them.

Responding to Ms. Mapp, Mr. Ehemann stated that he believed the only safety questions in the survey were regarding accessing parks. Ms. Mapp stated that a lot of communities say safety is an important factor in whether or not they can use parks, several populations do not like to access certain recreation because they do not feel safe. Mr. Ehemann stated that perhaps there needs to be a question about safety in the park nearest their home and whether or not that is the reason they don't utilize their nearest park.

Ms. Britt Salen requested gathering data about lighting and transportation leading up to a park, not just what is available within the park.

Responding to Ms. Smith, Mr. Tholstrup stated that the group would discuss the outdoor recreation inventory at the next meeting as a part of the methods of outreach conversation.

Mr. Tholstrup discussed the next steps for the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) focus group meetings and stated that he would be in touch with information regarding the next meeting scheduled for May 10, 2023.

The meeting adjourned at 11:18 a.m.