



BRPC
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

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New Outdoor Recreation Website Launched

www.berkshiresoutside.org will inspire visitors and residents to get out and explore all the region has to offer in all seasons

Berkshire County, MA – Anyone with a resolution to get outside more this year – or explore more of what the Berkshires has to offer - now has a great tool to help make it happen. A new website, www.berkshiresoutside.org, provides a centralized, comprehensive catalog of over 550 access points to outdoor recreation in the region.

This online portal to all things outdoors invites residents and visitors to discover over 400 parks owned and managed by nearly 100 different organizations, all within Berkshire County. The site will serve as a companion to www.berkshires.org, the region's official tourism website operated by 1Berkshire. "The Berkshires welcome more and more visitors each year," said Lindsey Schmid, Senior Vice President of Tourism and Marketing for 1Berkshire, the state-designated Regional Tourism Council for Berkshire County. "This project dramatically expands the suite of online tools we offer to help plan a full Berkshires experience, including cultural pursuits, dining options, and lodging plans."

The new site, coordinated by Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) and built by Gemini Creative of Stockbridge, contains a clearinghouse of trailheads, boat launches, and other access points, and users can narrow their search with filters for whether the location is dog-friendly, family-friendly, or has restroom or picnic facilities. There's also a filter for 'scenic view' to help you home in on the best payoff for your outdoor recreation efforts. Assistant Director Laura Brennan and Mark Maloy, BRPC's GIS, Data & IT Manager, led the project. "In this region, outdoor recreation is a key component of our quality of life," said Brennan. "Increasingly, it is recognized as a factor for economic development, especially as a way to appeal to potential new residents."

BRPC created the site with input from several outdoor recreation stakeholders, including 1Berkshire, along with Berkshire Natural Resources Council and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Paul Jahnige, Director of the newly formed Massachusetts Office of Outdoor Recreation, shared his enthusiasm for the project. "Promotion of outdoor recreation in the Commonwealth, especially in ways that support rural and community development and provide welcoming, inclusive, and accessible ways to enjoy the outdoors, is what our work is all about," said Jahnige. "The Berkshires Outside website delivers on all of those themes beautifully." Another priority of the state's Office of Outdoor Recreation is transit access to outdoor spaces. Berkshiresoutside.org offers a filter to identify sites within a quarter mile of BRTA routes throughout the county.

The website is a major step toward realizing key goals of the [2020 Outdoor Recreation Plan for Berkshire County](#), created by Berkshire Regional Planning Commission in partnership with Mill Town Foundation. "Getting all this information into one place was the most

common thread in all the conversations, interviews, and public input sessions we held,” said Brennan. “It’s not just about encouraging people to explore the outdoors. It’s also going to help reduce the impact on delicate landscapes and habitats by sending foot traffic to less traveled but just as amazing locations.” Another primary theme of the 2020 Plan is to protect the region’s natural resources by better disbursing users to lesser-known locations. With 875 miles of marked and mapped trails in the county, hidden gems will no longer be hard to find.

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About Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

BRPC is the regional planning agency for Berkshire County, Massachusetts. BRPC assists the thirty-two Berkshire cities and towns in a diverse set of topics, including community and economic development, community planning, data and information services, emergency preparedness, environmental and energy planning, public health, and transportation planning.

About Gemini Creative

Gemini Creative, a website design and development business, started in the Berkshires of Western Massachusetts in 2010 as Geiger Computers. Today, they help Berkshire businesses grow their awareness through a process of discovery, professional photography, website design and development, and digital marketing strategy. Their capabilities include strategy, branding, design, and development.