

East Goshen Township  
Department of Parks and Recreation

2018 Park Usage Report

December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018



**Report Overview:**

When it comes to understanding parks – some long standing questions have always been:

*Exactly how many people are using it? What are they doing?*

*What park facilities get the most usage? How about the least?*

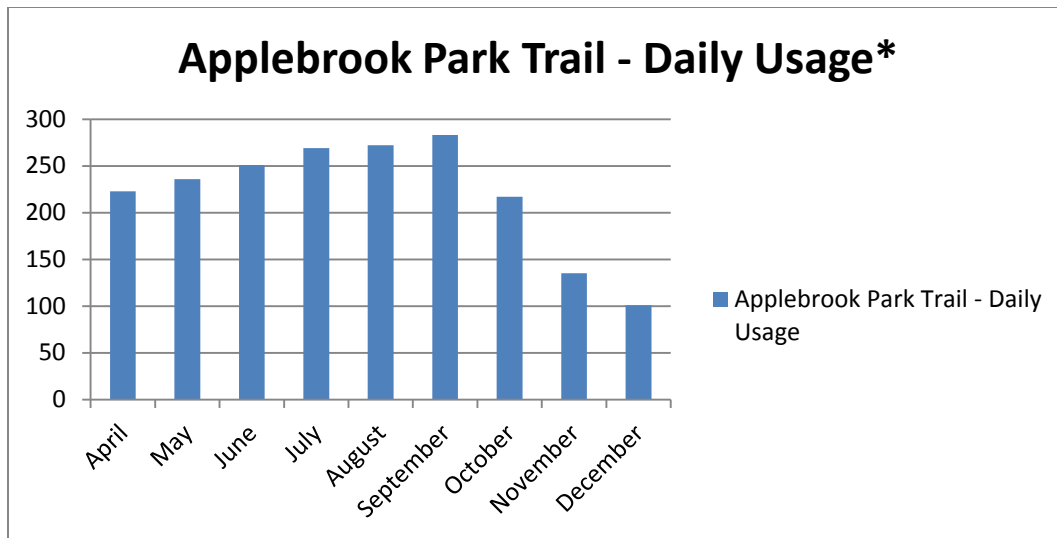
This report serves to begin answering these questions utilizing the SOPARC (System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities) method. This system was developed by Texas A & M University in the early 2000s and has since become the standard for valid, reliable and applicable park and recreation data collection. Utilizing an iPad, the Parks and Recreation Director and volunteers took park user counts during the months of April through December. Per the SOPARC standard, counts were taken on four separate days within one week’s time for a given month. Within each day, four counts were taken: early morning, late morning, early afternoon and evening before dusk. Counts included collection of exercise intensity (sedentary, walking, and vigorous).

Example:

<u>Location:</u> Applebrook Park	<u>Monday</u> 8:30am 11am	<u>Wednesday</u> 8:30am 11am	<u>Thursday</u> 8:30am 11am	<u>Saturday</u> 8:30am 11am
<u>Dates:</u> Week of April 14th	2pm 6:30pm	2pm 6:30pm	2pm 6:30pm	2pm 6:30pm

Exact locations were identified in East Goshen and Applebrook Parks for assessment and utilized for each counting period. In 2018, as with 2017, these locations were:

- Applebrook Park trail (west of the first bridge)
- East Goshen Park trail (at the base of the football field)
- Playground in East Goshen Park



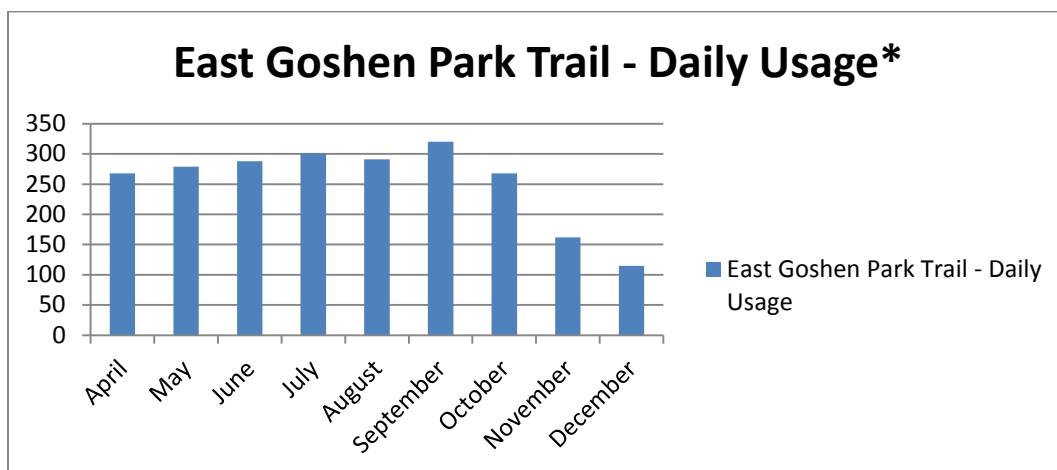
\* Daily usage for the year can be estimated at 59,600 participants on the Applebrook trail.

\* This is a 3.9% decrease from 2017 (62,000) figures. This is most likely attributable to record setting rain experienced throughout 2018.

\* Male = 47% / Female = 53%

\* Sedentary/Sitting at bench = 14%; Walking = 70%; Vigorous/Running = 16%

\* Metabolic Equivalent / Health Care Savings = 190,720 METs / \$2.4M



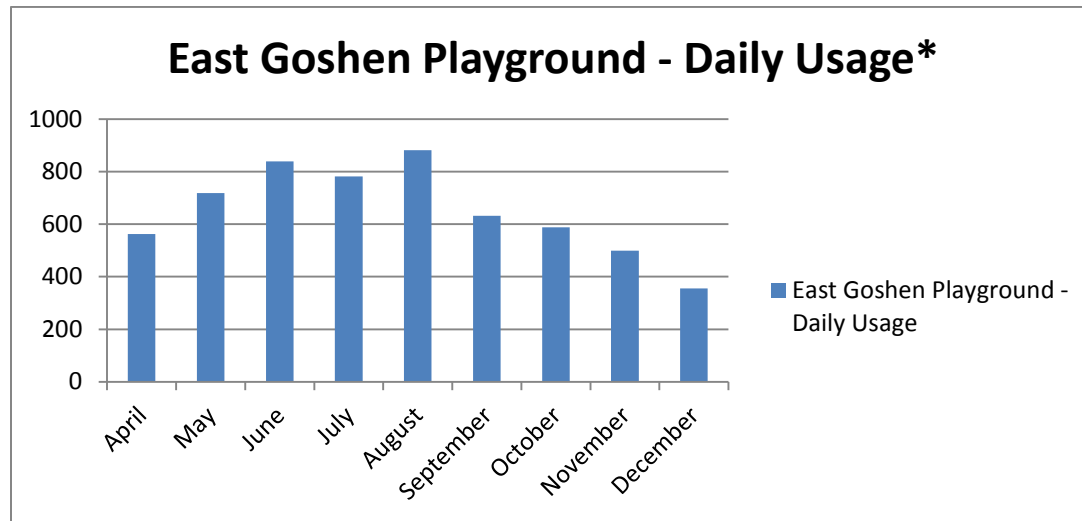
\* Daily usage for the year can be estimated at 68,760 participants on the Applebrook trail.

\* This is a 1.8% decrease from 2017 (70,000) figure most likely attributable to record setting rain experienced throughout 2018.

\* Male = 49% / Female = 51%

\* Sedentary/Sitting at bench = 19%; Walking = 73%; Vigorous/Running = 8%

\* Metabolic Equivalent / Health Care Savings = 196,652 METs / \$2.47M



\* Daily usage for the year can be estimated at 175,860 participants on the old playground. This number includes estimation for April-June based on other month usage.

\* The playground renovation has been an overwhelming success. Now known as “Disney North” to local residents, 2018’s annual participation is 418% higher than last year’s use of the old playground. The highest recorded use was Saturday, August 24<sup>th</sup> with 1311 kids throughout the day. To highlight the public’s enthusiasm for the playground, one week of 2018 August use (6,167) is nearly equivalent to the entire month of 2017 July (6,960) use.

\* Male 41% / Female 59%

\* Sedentary = 26%; Walking = 7%; Vigorous/Running = 67%

### **MET Equivalent Analysis:**

Metabolic equivalent (MET) is a widely used method for calculating energy/calorie expenditure in health and wellness settings, where one MET equals a person at rest. All physical activities are assigned a MET value based on how they affect energy/calorie expenditure in comparison to a person at rest (one MET). Walking has a MET value of three (3) and Vigorous/Walking six (6) METs. Park usage totals can then be used through MET values to ascertain various metrics.

There has been a lot of research into how to calculate a reduction in health care costs in relation to MET values. Aoyagi and Shephard found for every ten (10) METS of exercise per week, a \$126 reduction in associated health care costs, or 3.7% could be anticipated per person. For the

purposes of this report, this study informs MET Equivalent/Health Care Savings listed above. Let's reasonably assume that each participant listed above is actually coming to the park three times per week. This means instead of 59,600 unique individuals coming to Applebrook Park trail; it's actually 19,866 unique individuals. If we then divide Applebrook Park trails MET value among those 19,866 for a total of 9.6 METs per person, per week. If we then use the above study, we can quantify that public health care costs are reduced cumulatively by \$2.4M just for those using Applebrook Trail. When taking this one measure into account, the positive impact of the East Goshen Township park system is clearly evident.

### **Conclusions:**

The East Goshen Township park system directly reduces park user's public health care costs by \$4.87M for those using the trails. This figure does not include those playing basketball, tennis, volleyball or the fitness station and ultimately could be much higher.

Trail usage was heaviest during the early morning hours and evenings, with seniors the majority of early morning users and adults the majority of evening users. Early morning trail users tended to walk in small groups of regulars, while evening trail users tended to be in pairs or alone.

Playground usage was heaviest during the mid-morning and early afternoon count. There was almost no usage during the early morning count. This figure includes parent/caretakers who typically register as sedentary. In addition, not only did playground use increase dramatically, but length of play increased as well. This report does not include related quantitative data, but from numerous conversations with new playground users, the average length of play was at least 45 minutes. The old playground could hold one's attention for 15 minutes at best, therefore not only are more people coming to the playground, but they are being physically active for three times the amount of time.

### **Future reporting/uses for SOPARC:**

- SOPARC reporting will become more applicable to Township planning as we build a more robust collection of data showing park usage trends. Some future applications include:
  - Use in capital project grant applications
  - Support for/against future park development projects
  - Evidence that park projects are increasing park usage/residential quality of life (for example when the new playground and Paoli Pike Trail open)
  - Potential synthesis with future updates to Township planning documents
  - Increase Township's ability to quantify and communicate its role in health and wellness to the public, elected officials and other governing bodies
  - Supports potential partnerships with hospital/health care organizations (Park prescription programs)

## **References:**

Aoyagi Y., Shephard RJ *A model to estimate the potential for a physical activity-induced reduction in healthcare costs for the elderly* Journal of Sports Medicine; 2011 Sep 1;41(9):695-708

Jonathan Myers, PhD, Rachelle Doom, MD, Robert King, MS, Holly Fonda, MS, Khin Chan, MD, Peter Kokkinos, PhD, David H. Rehkopf, MPH, ScD *Association Between Cardiorespiratory Fitness and Health Care Costs: The Veterans Exercise Testing Study* Mayo Clinic Proceedings, 2017, September

J. Peter Weiss, MD, MSc; Victor F. Froelicher, MD; Jonathan N. Myers, PhD; & Paul A. Heidenreich, MD *Health-Care Costs and Exercise* Chest Journal; 2004; Vol. 126, Pgs. 608 – 613

Thomas L. McKenzie, Deborah A. Cohen, Amber Sehgal, Stephanie Williamson, and Daniela Golinelli *System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities (SOPARC): Reliability and Feasibility Measures* J Phys Act Health. 2006 Feb; 3 Suppl 1: S208–S222