

Section 9

Recommendations and Action Plan

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are the by-product of analysis, public input and compatibility with the standards for Carteret County. The following list of unranked priorities is an outline of more specific information that follows later in this section.

1. MAXIMIZE UTILIZATION OF EXISTING RESOURCES AND MASTER PLAN FACILITIES:

- Establish Partnerships with Schools to Co-Develop Parks
- Master Plan Existing Facilities
- County-owned Facilities and other Partnerships

2. PROVIDE FACILITY NEEDS THROUGH A COMPREHENSIVE PHASING PLAN:

- Develop a comprehensive plan indicating all pending and needed improvements
- Maintenance, Administration, and Programming
- Include grant applications and grant funding strategies and funding options
- Coordinate with other County Departments to identify potential shared projects
- Develop athletics/multi-sports complex through County or other partnerships

3. CONTINUE TO IMPROVE AND EXPAND BEACH AND WATER ACCESS FACILITIES

- Aggressively seek additional beach and water access facilities within the County
- Work closely with individual municipalities to maximize opportunities
- Expand and increase number, variety and distribution of water access facilities in the County
- Include beach access, deep water, as well as kayak and canoe launches

4. ADDRESS UNMET NEEDS FROM COUNTY NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND 1999 MASTER PLAN UPDATE

- Continue to implement improvements identified in County Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment
- Establish a strategy to develop a community park to address unmet needs within the County

- Continue to encourage municipalities to address their own needs and provide support
- Assist municipalities with programming and facilitate with the coordination of complimentary programs
- Continue to explore partnerships with County Schools and other private sector partners

5. SECURE ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS AND PRESERVE NATURAL RESOURCES

- Identify environmental constraints of existing and potential recreation facilities
- Coordinate land use potential with County Planning
- Preserve and protect environmentally sensitive areas and maximize benefits
- Maximize the potential of educational opportunities and environmental awareness

6. IDENTIFY AND PLAN FOR GREENWAYS AND OPEN SPACE:

- Continue to identify and preserve natural areas and open space
- Implement planning strategies to identify trail corridors and greenway links throughout Carteret County
- Establish a strategic greenway planning team

7. CONTINUE TO EXPAND THE VARIETY OF PROGRAM OFFERINGS TO BROADEN TARGET MARKETS:

- Expand types to include greater cultural education, adventure based, hobby development, etc.
- Expand formats to provide greater self-directed opportunities
- Expand population served to include “hard-to-reach” youth and intergenerational opportunities
- Expand scheduling during evenings, weekdays and weekends
- Expand communications/publicity to include multimedia strategy and identified target markets

8. ADOPT PARK AND RECREATION STANDARDS AND PLANNING GUIDELINES (SEE SECTION 7 FOR STANDARDS AND PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS)

- Modify Ordinance by adding new park classifications including Special Use Parks, Historic/Cultural Areas and School Parks
- Establish a Design Review Committee for project oversight and applicability of park and recreational projects to the Master Plan
- Update payment of a fee in lieu schedule as it relates to development types and ratios

- Adopt standards to develop park and recreation facilities to coincide with County growth
- Approach park planning from a holistic perspective, all ages, all ADA accessible.

9. CARTERET COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE AND STAFFING

- Organizational Chart
- Maintenance and Personnel Overview and Recommendations
- Programming Overview and Recommendations

10. ACTION PLAN PRIORITIES AND TIMELINE

1. MAXIMIZE UTILIZATION OF EXISTING RESOURCES AND MASTER PLAN FACILITIES:

Establish Partnerships with Schools to Co-Develop Parks

With the year-round residential and tourist population in and around Carteret County continuing to expand, as well as the interest in programs and activities within the Parks and Recreation of Carteret County, so will the need for more recreational parks, athletic fields, and beach and water access. Land development within the area has become a very expensive process, starting from the development of a program and site selection, to the purchase of new property, to the actual construction costs. More and more, counties and municipalities are finding that attempting to develop these resources single handedly is quite difficult and that finding partners for this process can greatly aid in the development of new parks and facilities. School parks offer that opportunity for partnerships.

Both existing and proposed schools have the potential to offer some level of participation in the cross-use of facilities and resources. Whether it is a multipurpose gymnasium or an athletic field, the opportunity exists for a relationship.

The following list of goals offers some strategies for developing partnerships with schools:

- Specify need areas, either identified by this master plan or by others, that the school partnership will interest both parties. (Athletic fields, practice fields, gymnasium space, class room space, etc).
- Create win-win situations for both the school and the Parks and Recreation Department.
- Consider existing and future opportunities with private schools
- Become involved early on in the planning process by approaching County and State planning agencies with desire to create partnerships.
- Establish a programming plan that identifies a framework for usage by both parties but also allows flexibility.
- Raise funds through the creation of a bond referendum that would identify construction of new schools and facilities along with the construction of multi-use facilities for parks and recreation.

- Provide or contribute to the maintenance of the facilities after construction in order to reduce the cost by the school system.
- Create a concept plan for future facilities to include neighborhood or community park elements that could better serve the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Stay open minded- the partnership opportunity may not be the most obvious plan.

The current policy of each school's Principal setting the programming is not acceptable and creates the potential for inconsistent or unfair treatment in some areas. A more regulated, more consistent policy should be adopted by the County to direct the shared use by Schools and Parks and Recreation. With the support of the Board of Commissioners, a Committee or Commission should be established to include the Chairman of the School Board, County Commissioner, Parks and Recreation, and Planning Departments, as well as Town Managers or administrators from individual municipalities within the County. Without support and dedication to the success of this effort, it is unlikely that County-wide comprehensive shared use policy could be implemented. The formulation of this committee and a strategy for implementation should be a priority to capitalize on the planning of future school projects.

The focused efforts of this committee could greatly benefit the County in implementing and furthering the principles and goals for creating Active Community Environments and encouraging a better quality of life for all citizens. One suggestion from a committee member was to establish a structured policy for cooperation with the schools by appointing an upper level member of the Board of Education (such as an Assistant Superintendent) on the County Parks and Recreation Board. Another suggestion was to include the Chairman of the County Board of Commissioners and Chair of the Board to Education in an effort to set policy that would establish procedures that would maximize the utilization of school facilities.

Master Plan Existing Facilities

Carteret County has excellent resources for resident and non resident participation in athletics, passive recreation, senior activities as well as many programs and activities. By reorganizing many of the existing facilities and park sites as well as extending program services, hours of operation, the existing parks and facilities have great potential to have a higher utilization rate.

Results from the data collected during the master plan inventory, analysis and public participation workshops indicated that there was a need to change, expand or reorganize the existing facilities. The following goals outline some steps to utilize existing facilities:

- Master plan existing parklands or facilities that currently have no master plan established.
- Update individual site master plans every 2-5 years to keep planning information current and applicable.
- Identify property adjacent to existing parklands appropriate for park expansion.
- Incorporate new programs with existing facilities to maximize utilization of existing facilities.

During the initial inventory and evaluation of existing recreation and park sites all existing sites were evaluated in several ways. One level of evaluation was to observe any apparent expansion potential, either within the site or land adjacent to the property that could be a potential for expansion. The following list of park sites and water access areas have been identified as having potential for expansion either through the use of adjacent properties or by the re-adaptive use or development of the existing land

- Eastern Park
- Western Park

- Swinson Park
- West Beaufort Water Access
- Straits Fishing Pier
- South River Park
- Freedom Park
- Mariners Park

Another need identified in the master planning process could also be planned in conjunction with a new athletics or multi-sports complex to create a more effective facility. A dog park was the fifth most requested change to the existing County facilities and the most frequent participation of any activity listed in the public survey. With open space in some areas becoming more limited and leash laws becoming stricter, the Department should address this unmet need as a priority. Including a designated area adjacent to existing or proposed facilities would provide this resource and allow multiple options for visitors.

Each specific park project will require a site specific cost estimate. Some things to consider in this cost development are:

- Planning or engineering services
- Equipment and parks facility up-grades
- Maintenance costs
- New construction and associated costs
- Permitting and fees
- Purchase of additional or adjacent land

County-owned Facilities and other Partnerships

Carteret County has in place a variety of excellent parks and facilities that contribute to the overall quality of life of the citizens. Two of these facilities, the **Mann Enrichment Center** and the **Western Park Community Center** are fine examples of how a community can create resources for specific needs and manage them effectively. During this master plan process, several observations were made regarding these facilities, as well as other facilities and parks and their usage and greater usage potentials.

The top consideration or issues for both facilities is how can these facilities be fully maximized to get the most usage by specific and diverse user groups?

First and foremost, scheduling these and other facilities can be an incredibly complicated task, especially when dealing with all types of user groups. The following is a list of suggestions that can positively contribute to **scheduling, and activities and events planning** for all types of facilities and parks:

- Create or utilize an existing planning group of in-house staff that uses an effective management/scheduling program or spreadsheet.
- Create a conflicts resolution policy that handles individual and group overlaps and planning errors.
- Identify key events and plan around them.
- Consider flextime policy for certain programs that do not have space. This will allow more facilities to be utilized by groups during down times.
- Extend hours of operation for facilities for groups that desire evening meetings.
- Allow weekend usage of facilities for groups who desire these meeting times.
- Work directly with user groups during the initial scheduling/planning process to create the most effective and efficient system.
- Promote the “sharing” of facilities with other activities groups as well as independently run or sponsored activities.

As growth continues and facility space becomes less and less available, to both established and new programs and

activities, other resources or partnerships may be necessary. Ultimately, new facilities and resources will provide the needed space. However, in order to bridge the time period between the development and construction of facilities to the time when these facilities can be used, the following list of opportunities should be considered for finding space or creating partnerships:

- Area schools
- Local civic clubs
- Churches in the area
- County facilities
- Library
- Commercial and industrial facilities

The Parks and Recreation Staff has established and maintained partnerships with schools and other organizations and this should be continued. Continuing to explore these and other possible partnerships with public and private organizations will alleviate the immediate need to build such facilities.

The need for additional community centers and/or gym space was a concern shared by the staff. Dependency on the school system for gym time, especially during basketball season, was described as “definitely becoming compromised, especially in Western Carteret County”. Program growth and servicing participants from White Oak, Cape Carteret, and Emerald Isle, as well as “staff logistics” were cited as the main reasons for this situation.

During this master planning process representatives of the County Schools indicated their desire to work with the Parks and Recreation Department and identified a new 17 acre site that is owned by the County in the Newport area. Plans to build a new school on this site and a willingness to discuss shared facilities could greatly benefit the citizens of Newport and surrounding areas of the County.

Carteret County Parks and Recreation Department and Port Authority and volunteers recently constructed an ADA accessible wooden boardwalk at the Radio Island Water Access. The County purchased the materials while the Port Authority and volunteers provided the labor for construction.

The pending purchase of the Bogue Inlet pier by the Town of Emerald Isle in partnership with the N.C. Aquarium at Pine Knolls Shores is another example of a creative and financially beneficial partnership. According to a recent New Times article, the “Town will submit a grant application to the NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund to help acquire property, remove stormwater outfalls and construct an environmentally friendly parking lot.” If successful, this project will provide much needed access and address stormwater management issues.

2. PROVIDE FACILITY NEEDS THROUGH A COMPREHENSIVE PHASING PLAN:

Develop a comprehensive plan indicating all pending and needed improvements

The Parks and Recreation Department needs to develop a comprehensive phasing plan as a supplement to this master plan. This plan should include the action plan, but also take into consideration other known projects in the individual municipalities, proposed or pending projects in the County and any other requested or anticipated community projects that may require funding. The additional effort required to research and document this type of comprehensive list will benefit the Department in both the short and long term by eliminating duplication and thoroughly understanding the financial needs for recreation throughout the County.

The Parks and Recreation Department should establish a structured plan to address funding requests from municipalities, individual communities, and other organizations that seek financial assistance. A Community Grant was used in the past to supplement unincorporated areas of the County with recreational opportunities. \$25,000 was used as

maximum for funding assistance of recreational facilities administered by the County's Parks and Recreation Department.

The Department needs to identify actual expenditures because assistance is also provided in the maintenance of several parks and ball fields. Newport ball field and Harkers Island Elementary School are examples. Sharing of facilities also includes basketball, which relies heavily on the school gymnasiums and creative programming. Additional indoor facilities will certainly be needed as the population grows.

The Department and Advisory Board may choose to re-institute the Community Grant type fund that was used in the past. This master plan should be used as a guide, and the unmet needs, facility distribution, and growth trends should be scrutinized before any funds are distributed. This will help assure the most cost effective and appropriate funding is applied to the areas of the County with the greatest needs.

Include grant applications and funding strategies and funding options

A formal grants process for municipalities and non-profits should be developed to ensure that it relates to the needs in this master plan. The Department should also coordinate and provide assistance in the application of grants and developing funding strategies and identifying funding options. As recreation providers for the entire County, this should be a key component in developing and updating the comprehensive phasing plan. The Department should be intricately involved in overseeing the process from when the grant applications are submitted and follow the process through the implementation to assure compliance.

The Department and Advisory Board may choose to review and modify the existing capital program for parks and recreation. If it is determined that a opportunities exist for improvement, a strategy should be developed to coincide with creating a comprehensive phasing plan to maximize funding opportunities.

Funding for most parks and recreation services are funded though tax dollars, fees and charges. Based on responses from the public survey, the support for additional funding will challenge the acquisition of new properties, construction new facilities and improvements to existing facilities. Although 76 % of respondents did not feel the current funding for the park and recreation activities is adequate, only 26 % of the participants supported a state bond as a means of support for the County's facilities.

Another area of funding that should be considered is a gift or donation program. Only 26 % of the survey respondents supported donations as a means of support for the County's Parks and Recreation facilities. If one third of the citizens of the County would contribute donations, this could provide the Department with much needed funding. The Parks and Recreation Department should develop a list of amenities needed at the existing facilities and establish a donation program and brochure. This effort could be incorporated with other marketing publications to identify the needs and provide potential donors with a defined program to honor loved ones and contribute to the improvement of County parks. Donor options should also be displayed on the Department's website to gain additional exposure, especially to part time residents. This type of gift program has been used successfully by other county recreation departments to purchase benches, picnic tables, swings and even amphitheaters.

Land acquisition will be essential to obtain the land necessary to implement the parks and recreation and water access facilities that will be needed in the future and are identified in this master plan. Several options exist and strategies to identify and maximize the funding opportunities should be determined. Any proposed land purchases should include careful consideration and analysis of the facilities which could be accommodated on the property. These initial evaluations combined with the unmet needs and action plan within this master plan will help ensure that funding is optimized. In addition to the review process listed above, master plans or site master plan updates should be prepared for any major improvements or renovations and the public should be involved in the planning process.

Other funding strategies for land acquisition could also include long or short term leases, deed transfer, land banking and joint use agreements. Low cost, long term leases could greatly benefit the development of future facilities as land costs would be kept to a minimum. Similar benefits could be gained through obtaining easements from developers and property owners and should be encouraged to provide trails and connectivity in new developments.

Coordinate with other County Departments to identify potential shared projects

Other funding strategies should be reviewed and coordinated with other County Departments and should include the Planning Department and School Board. Creating stronger and more beneficial relationships within the County government has been thoroughly discussed during the development of this master plan and should be a priority for implementation. Identifying the potential of shared projects early in the re-structuring and development process will be essential. With a cooperative spirit and shared determination and commitment to maximize the effectiveness of public funding, this strategy could greatly benefit the implementation of much needed facilities.

Develop athletics / multi-sports complex through County or other partnerships

The need for additional indoor athletic facilities and gymnasiums was identified in Section 7 of the master plan in the projected needs for new facilities based on the County Standards. The need for 11 indoor basketball courts by the year 2010 and 3 swimming pools were included in these projections. These needs and the current demand were also expressed by programming staff. The County needs to develop athletics and multi-sports complexes if these facilities are to become a reality. The potential for developing these facilities with the County School Board has been discussed, but other partnerships should be explored to increase the funding options and timeframe in which these facilities can be constructed. Although these same projections do not indicate a need for community centers, the changing demographics and anticipated shift in the senior population should be considered and the trends monitored for applicability.

3. CONTINUE TO IMPROVE AND EXPAND BEACH AND WATER ACCESS FACILITIES

The need for additional beach and water access areas throughout the County is without question one of the most debated topics of this master planning process and should be one of the top priorities that will be addressed in the implementation of the master plan. From the public survey three of the five most requested changes to the existing County Facilities are water access related. In fact, the most requested response was to provide more or improved water and beach access. More parking and more or improved boat ramps were the third and fourth most requested changes. It should be noted that the second most requested change overall was new facilities for Newport. Mapping comments and citizen comments at the public meetings included the need for water and boat access for the Newport area.

Aggressively seek additional beach and water access facilities within the County

Providing additional beach and water access areas throughout the County should be pursued aggressively in the next five years to address the identified needs and ensure adequate distribution of facilities for the future. New growth areas will shift the need for facilities to new areas and include the need for various types of facilities.

Beach access was voiced as a concern by committee members, survey respondents, mapping workshop participants and citizens at public meetings. Beach access is hindered by availability of parking facilities and the swelling population during peak season. Existing facilities should also be master planned to maximize their utilization and capacity.

The need for providing additional beach access must also include provision of adequate parking and accessibility. The possibility of connecting the existing beach access sites by some means of mass transit was also discussed. This concept could also involve partnerships and possibly a source of revenue for the Department. The recent Pepsi sponsored America's Sail was a tremendous undertaking and only made possible through an extensive transportation planning

effort and use of tour buses and remote lots to shuttle the visitors.

Work closely with individual municipalities to maximize opportunities

The County needs to work closely with the individual municipalities to better understand their plans and maximize the opportunities that may exist for shared use. This may include a joint venture or shared construction and maintenance efforts. Identifying grants and other funding opportunities and strategically planning for new facilities in coordination with the municipalities could increase effectiveness by eliminating competition of available funds and increase success rates of obtaining funding by demonstrating regional planning efforts.

Expand and increase number, variety and distribution of water access facilities in the County

The County should use the Water Access Action Plan as a guide to research and strategically plan for the development of new water access facilities. This plan identifies potential areas that would expand, increase the number and variety, and improve the distribution of the water access facilities in the County. This plan should be used to identify the desired location of facilities in the unincorporated areas of the County. Opportunities for land acquisition could benefit if the plan is widely distributed and the areas of interest understood by the citizens and development community.

Include beach access, deep water, as well as kayak and canoe launches

The County should plan for deep water boat launches for power and sailboats, but also provide adequate numbers of kayak and canoe launches which do not require the greater water depths. The addition of more passive recreation areas and smaller launch sites could also address the need for more wildlife viewing opportunities. Wetlands and drainage ways that connect to larger bodies of water should also be considered. Land costs for kayak and canoe launches could be lower in some areas and provide more cost effective facilities. Maximizing the potential of existing sites has been discussed and the possibility of adding new access points at existing facilities could be the most cost effective improvements. Close coordination and communication with Federal, State and Government agencies should be a priority to capitalize on funding opportunities and planning for new facilities.

4. ADDRESS UNMET NEEDS FROM COUNTY NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND 1999 MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Address unmet needs identified by the Carteret County Parks and Recreation Department

The unmet needs determined by the Department were provided to the design team and included in the analysis of the existing facilities. This information was included in the determination of the Park Potential descriptions for each facility in Section 4 of this master plan. Addressing the unmet needs that have been identified should be included in the financial planning efforts of the Department and become part of the comprehensive phasing plan that has been recommended.

Address unmet needs of the 1999 Master Plan Update

The unmet needs determined by the 1999 Master Plan Update should be addressed in connection with this master plan and become part of the comprehensive phasing plan discussed earlier. A summary of the needs determined in the previous plan update are as follows:

- Develop a Community Park.
- Upgrade and expand District Parks.

- Continue to work with municipalities in their efforts to develop local facilities.

Community Park

- Consider a 75-100 acre site.
- Address deficiencies in existing facilities.
- “Could place a much needed park in the Newport area”.
- This would provide a Community or District Park in an area of the County not currently serviced.

Study District Parks: Swinson, Freedom, and Eastern.

- Continue to implement improvements identified in County Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment
- Establish a strategy to develop a community park to address unmet needs within the County
- Continue to encourage municipalities to address their own needs and provide support
- Assist municipalities with programming and facilitate with the coordination of complimentary programs
- Continue to explore partnerships with County Schools and other private sector partners

Community District Park in Newport area

One of the unaddressed needs determined in the 1999 Master Plan Update was the development of a community park that could be placed in the Newport area to address the tremendous demand for facilities. This need was echoed throughout this master planning process at the public meetings, mapping workshops, public survey and public comments. The need for facilities in this area was also well publicized in the press and on local television news stories. In response to this unmet need and the resounding public outcry from residents in this region of the County, the Carteret County Board of Commissioners recently voted unanimously to set aside \$500,000 capital improvement fund in the proposed budget to fund the park needs in the Newport area. The money will be taken from projected revenue growth in the coming year.

By definition, as described in Section 7 a district park usually comprises 40 to 200 acres serving residents within one or more suburban or rural communities. These parks primarily service a twenty mile radius. These areas offer intensive recreational activities and or more natural environmental areas. The key text that follows bears repeating: “partnerships are often created to handle the operations, maintenance, programming, development and planning of the facility.” The commitment of the Board of Commissioners is a start, but the construction of a district park will require additional funding and this type of cooperative effort to become a reality in the near future.

In developing this park the projected future demand for facilities based on the County Standards and this master plan should be cross referenced to maximize the effectiveness of any proposed facilities. A complete listing of these projected needs can be found in Section 7 of this master plan, but providing as many of the projected facility needs in this district park would be tremendous cost benefit for the County.

The proposed district park could also include an indoor recreation facility. The need for more gymnasium access was expressed in the surveys, mapping comments, and public comments. Plans for proposed schools in the County should be coordinated with Parks and Recreation Department to determine how the facility could be expanded to include more public use. This type of access could be facilitated by a more detailed joint use agreement, but structure and support must be provided by Carteret County Board of Commissioners.

Additional considerations

Each of the other items listed above have been addressed in other recommendations within this section of the master plan. Shifting the responsibility of implementing and maintaining mini parks, neighborhood parks and other smaller facilities has been expressed as a goal by the Department and also follows national and state trends. The individual municipalities should be encouraged to address their own needs, yet the Department should continue to provide

assistance, especially in coordination efforts. Planning and assistance should also be included through the implementation of the comprehensive phasing plan that has been described previously. Helping the municipalities establish complementary programs to those offered by the County will certainly provide a more diverse and successful system of recreational opportunities to the citizens of Carteret County.

5. SECURE ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS AND PRESERVE NATURAL RESOURCES

The County is blessed with an abundance of large open spaces which are owned by the Federal and State governments and provide citizens and visitors a wealth of environmental recreation opportunities. The County should be aware of the need to secure environmentally sensitive areas and preserve the natural resources. The Parks and Recreation Department should become more involved with the County Planning efforts to better understand these areas and identify opportunities that may exist.

Identify environmental constraints of existing and potential recreation facilities

The CAMA Land Use Plan and the current planning efforts to update the land use plan are two instrumental tools that can be used in identifying the environmental constraints of existing and potential recreation facilities. Coordination efforts should be included in this analysis and the specialized expertise of a professional engineering firm may offer the most cost effective services. Identifying the constraints will benefit the Department in creating updated master plans for individual facilities and help determine the suitability of any proposed land that is being considered for development. The cost of performing initial environmental assessments of any new facilities could result in significant savings in comparison to purchasing land that cannot be developed in a cost effective manner.

Coordinate land use potential with County Planning

The need for developing shared facilities has been presented thoroughly in this master plan, but coordination with the County Planning Department should include evaluating and identifying land use potential. The Planning Department will be involved in establishing and revising land use policy for the entire County and if coordinated, could also identify suitable land for parks and recreation as growth continues.

Preserve and protect environmentally sensitive areas and maximize benefits

Many of the parks and recreation facilities within the County include areas that are environmentally sensitive, especially around the water and beach access sites. The protection of these sites is important so that the natural resources are preserved for the public's use today and into the future. Several of the existing facilities offer wildlife viewing and observation around the outer perimeter and amongst existing stands of vegetation. Low cost improvements could be made to these areas to improve the habitat and attract wildlife. As mentioned in Section 7, many of the constraints listed for the existing facilities deal with CAMA regulations and setback requirements. Careful analysis of each property, initial environmental assessments and conceptual master plans should be developed before implementing any improvements.

Maximize the potential of educational opportunities and environmental awareness

These areas also provide passive recreation and environmental education opportunities which should be maximized. Careful planning and educational efforts should be included in the Departments programming and advertising and marketing efforts. The provision of educational awareness information on the website, on future trail guides, and posted on kiosks could help educate users about the environmentally sensitive areas and the need for protecting them. An

extension of the existing programs could include visiting lecturers from other area parks, museums and organizations.

6. IDENTIFY AND PLAN FOR GREENWAYS AND OPEN SPACE:

Continue to identify and preserve natural areas and open space

During the master plan process, the need for opportunities to enjoy nature, walk and hike along trails and have places for passive recreation and wildlife viewing opportunities within Carteret County became clearly evident. The initial step to providing these opportunities and places for the citizens of Carteret County is to **identify and then protect or preserve areas for use as passive recreation or greenway areas**. The benefits of preserving, restoring, maintaining and utilizing natural areas and open spaces as well as all other greenway area potentials for recreation purposes is an exciting and challenging concept.

As the population in this region of the United States continues to grow, individual recreation in non-traditional parks and spaces are increasing dramatically. Other local municipalities that have constructed a system of greenways have recently found that one of its greatest resources to its citizens is the greenways trails and the spaces that are connected to them.

There are many obvious benefits for having these types of spaces, some of which include:

- Preservation of vital habitat
- Promotion of plant and animal species diversity
- Creation of maintaining a filtering zone through wetlands which can absorb contaminants
- Projection of cultural heritage areas
- Reduction of air pollution by creating a transportation alternative
- Preservation of rural character and visual interest
- Enhances the quality of life

The previous list identifies positive attributes that contribute greatly too many different issues within society. There are also many recreational opportunities within greenways, natural areas and open space. The following list identifies some of the activities or program potentials that may occur within these areas:

- Jogging, walking, running and biking on greenway trails and corridors
- Fishing and canoeing on streams, rivers, ponds and lakes
- Observation of plants and animals
- Walking pets
- Picnicking and gathering with friends and families
- Hunting and archery
- Camping and hiking
- Alternative transportation

The Carteret County Land Use Plan (Draft) and Carteret County A Comprehensive Plan, the County Boundaries, and the CAMA Land Use Plan Update are established resources to utilize in order to identify open space, natural areas or greenways throughout the County. These plans currently identify land areas by use category and identify areas of suitable development based on flood and storm surge potential. These plans can also be used to identify potential areas that can be utilized as open space corridors and greenways. It is important to have an **updated Greenways and Open Space Plan** that **identifies the highest priorities as well locates all current and projected usable land areas**. Other important features found on these and similar maps, such as Utilities Map, are very important in locating other connections or linkages that can be very useful in making a cohesive system. Sanitary sewer easements, electrical or power line right of ways and abandoned rail road corridors have all proven to be very useful land uses that can also serve as trail and greenway or open space linkages.

As the individual municipalities continue to expand their corporate limits and growth in new areas in and around

Carteret County continue to develop open space and undeveloped lands, careful consideration for these open spaces and their potential as resources for parks and recreation should be considered. More specifically, as new communities are developed and planned on open spaces the potentials for these areas to have open spaces and greenways will be less secure unless specific steps are taken to identify and prioritize what is left (see Appendix E for additional information concerning greenways and trails).

Planning strategies to create a comprehensive trail system and identify trail corridors and greenway links throughout Carteret County

Developing a multi-use trail system satisfies many objectives: interconnects various parts of the County with Neighborhoods schools and parks; preserves green space; provides a linear park and recreation destination; offers an alternative to driving a car to park destinations.

To accomplish this type of trail system the following items will need to be addressed:

- Coordinate trail with Department of Transportation (DOT) Thoroughfare Plan and the DOT Office of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation.
- Work closely with the individual municipalities to connect trails and walkways to the larger system of existing and future trails.
- Coordinate with national, state and local interest groups and organizations and plan regional interconnectivity.
- Verify trail location feasibility along public streets.
- Verify trail location feasibility along sanitary sewer easements, storm water drainage easements and other public lands (not every easement should be a greenway easement).
- Verify trail location feasibility and obtain access easements for individual property owners or through purchase or other methods.
- Seek alternative funding opportunities such as Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) funds, Safe Walk to School Program, Park and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF), Adopt-a-Trail Grant Program and National Recreational Trails Fund Program.

Carteret County has an excellent opportunity to establish a comprehensive and intricate trails system. This is only the first step in the creation of multi-modal trail system in Carteret County. **A master plan for trails should be the next step within this process, to approve the most appropriate alignment as well as more closely identify the feasibility of trail corridors through public and private lands.**

This broad view concept is important to address and to begin the detailed planning as soon as possible in order to start the efforts and initial dialogue with all involved parties. A trail system of this nature could combine the use of many different trail types, from multi-use trails in more urban areas to board walk trails in wet areas to nature trails around sensitive areas of the marshes (see Section 10 - Appendix E for trail type information). Finding ways to partnership with the individual municipalities and private land owners will be essential. The proposed boardwalk project along Turner Street in Beaufort will essentially connect historic downtown to the West Beaufort Water Access and Town Creek. Another project, an accessible boardwalk and wildlife observation platform at the Rachel Carson Reserve will provide another opportunity for citizens and tourists to observe wildlife. Connecting these new facilities with other existing and proposed trails will provide numerous other recreational opportunities.

The County should pursue support for the multi-use trail system from local cycling clubs. The clubs could embrace the multi-use trail as a “pet project” and assist in construction, maintenance and policing of the trail. The clubs could also lead efforts in establishing a County-wide trail identification system.

Establish A Strategic Greenway Planning Team:

As identified earlier, the benefits of having greenways and trails within the community are numerous. By taking the right steps in planning for greenways, citizens of Carteret County will be able to enjoy these facilities as open spaces for many years to come. **By establishing a strategic greenway planning team, the dream of greenways in Carteret County will be guided through from conceptual planning, to selling the idea, to finding resources to fund the project construction.**

Some of the tasks that this group might take on may include the following:

- Research land ownership
- Promote the trails concept through public awareness and marketing of the trails program
- Participate in trail alignment feasibility studies
- Generate activism and volunteerism by participation in trail construction
- Develop fund raising tactics
- Create greenway programming and trail events and activities
- Participate in greenway management and maintenance
- Coordinate with project consultants, volunteer organizations, neighborhood groups and State and local agencies
- Meet with trail and greenway opponents to discuss concerns and fears; education of the values of trails within the County

As the process of developing the greenway and trail begins, project complexity will inevitably occur. Therefore, it is essential that a core group of trail and greenway advocates and participants be formed. The following list outlines a group profile that could be very successful in developing greenways and trails:

- Group leader (department staff member or consultant)
- Support group of volunteers---such as neighborhood associations, civic club members, or other volunteer groups
- Consultants - such as landscape architects, urban planners, engineers, recreational programmers, real estate appraisers
- Other support professionals - accountants, lawyers, graphic artists
- Public sector - including state and local planners, N.C. DOT, County and municipal engineers, etc.
- Public support---through County Commissioners, Town Managers, County representatives, decisions makers, etc.

Building greenways will require a great deal of time and will rely on qualified individuals and project team members. As described in the resource book *Greenways, A Guide To Planning, Design and Development*—By Chuck Flink and Robert Searns. Four alternatives exist in gaining the participation of qualified people.

1. *Board hires an executive director and support staff*
This will require major funding as well as additional employees, office space, and all associated expenses.
2. *Board Contracts with a Consultant*
This idea suggests using a professional fund raiser or project coordinator who works on a contract basis. Contracts may be created for all aspects of the project or for only specific items. Consultants will be able to supply his or her own office and support services.
3. *Project Staffed by the Existing Staff of a Local entity.*
Sharing existing staff with local groups such as a local land trust, nature center, or other organization can be cost effective and productive. However, consideration for the other demands on these staff individuals should be accounted for.

4. Project Staffed by Participating Government

7. CONTINUE TO EXPAND THE VARIETY OF PROGRAM OFFERINGS TO BROADEN TARGET MARKETS:

Programs represent the “heart” of a communities Parks and Recreation Department. It is the positive experience within a program which improves the quality of life for participants, residents and nonresidents, alike. Value is added to these programs when they are efficiently and effectively delivered, attractive, convenient and appropriately designed and marketed. Programs are initiated as a result of the identification of community needs or as a result of community demand. Program offerings are dependent upon the availability of the County’s resources: physical (facilities), human (staff, volunteers, participants and other interested parties), financial (revenue sources), technological (information systems) and natural. Because programs are delivered to participants at specific sites, they are very dependent upon the provision of appropriate facilities for optimal utilization. So, while programs represent the “heart”, an adequate array of facilities and natural settings must provide the “circulatory system” necessary to connect these programs to the County’s various communities.

Because programming is based on the needs and demands of the population to be served, it is very time-specific, in nature. Therefore, almost all of the program recommendations are considered to be in the “high” range of priority, to be provided as soon as necessary resources (facilities, staff, finance, etc.) are made available. Quantitative and qualitative data were compiled and analyzed from survey responses, focus group discussions, map workshop responses and impromptu on-site interviews with staff and participants. There was also a review of Parks and Recreation Department documents and selected municipal planning documents. Analyses of these data sources focused on the variety of program offerings and within specific offerings, access to constituents, and variety of program scheduling and coordination of programs for comprehensiveness. Major objectives which should be met to achieve the recommendations of expanded program variety and increased awareness of residents are as follows:

Expand Types To Include Greater Cultural Education, Adventure-Based, Hobby Development, Etc.

Carteret County has a diverse population, but the participants in many recreation programs are a somewhat homogeneous group. Recreation programs can bring diverse groups together in non-threatening environments that encourage positive interactions which may extend beyond the program experience. The County should develop partnerships with local Arts programs, Regional Libraries and local community organizations to provide visual and performing arts programs (dance, music, drama, and storytelling). These groups can be instrumental in providing cultural arts programs which promote greater understanding among diverse groups through cultural education.

Through various sources of community input, the most desired programs by respondents were swimming, outdoor activities (passive and highly active), instructional classes for adults between 18 and 65, skill development for youth, cultural arts and something for children and youth. Based on analyses of data sources provided, the following recommendations are made:

- Provide year-round special events which promote and support additional funding efforts.
- Build on partnerships with private visual and performing arts groups to provide programs designed to educate participants and observers about diverse cultural groups in community.
- Provide strong support for the development and expansion of Community Theater and children’s theater.
- Develop creative ways to bring water-related activities to various County sites.
- Develop partnerships which will allow opportunities to provide aquatic programs to meet community needs: full range of swimming lessons, water-based safety, recreational swimming, and competitive swimming, canoeing and kayaking.
- Provide alternative and emerging sport facilities such as a Skate Park, Mountain Bike Trails, Disc Golf, etc.

- Develop adventure-based programming opportunities (low ropes course, wilderness experiential initiatives, disc golf, climbing and rappelling, etc.) in natural environments.
- Expand nature study opportunities and environmental interpretation program sites.
- Provide increased opportunities for fundamental skill development for young children in multiple sports.
- Provide instructional classes which provide lifelong leisure skill development opportunities (gardening, floral arrangement, cake decorating, model car building, calligraphy, stain glass design, card games, board games, quilting, etc.).
- Offer one-day or one-week specialty camps (clinics, how-to classes) for children and youth at various times during the year (teacher's workdays, school holidays), not just summer.
- Provide for a continuum of skill development in instructional or athletic programs (beginners, intermediate, advanced, etc.).
- Provide wellness classes to general population (nutrition, tai chi, yoga, massage therapy, stress management, etc.).
- Provide life-skills training classes to general population (first aid, CPR, childcare for siblings, computer skills, literacy programs, etc.).
- Provide instructional dance classes to include couples dancing.
-

Expand Formats To Provide Greater Self-Directed Opportunities

There is a desire for activities that can be done at the user's convenience, close to home or work. Most recreational users tend to drive to the source of the recreational activity. After work activities that do not require a lot of structure and have a social component are important to working adults. Programming for specific groups (disabled, young children, seniors, and underprivileged) who might have difficulties with transportation or discretionary income must be considered.

Based on analyses of the data sources provided, the following recommendations are made:

- Introduce a concert series to include "after five" concerts in various sites (public or private) in locales where people frequently visit (shopping centers, auditorium, industrial parks, school sites, parks, etc).
- Implement 'concerts in the park' series to include a wider variety of music such as reggae, rhythm and blues, top 40, progressive jazz and beach music (1960's music) to attract a wider variety of County participants.
- Provide greater emphasis on fitness activities in natural environments and develop opportunities (multiple-use trails and greenways).
- Develop outreach programs which provide access within targeted neighborhoods.
- Develop program adaptations which will allow persons with disabilities to engage in recreation participation close to/or within their homes.
- Create opportunities for volunteer participation by individuals and groups (adopt-a-park groups, using park and recreation advisory committee members as liaisons).
-
- Provide a more varied schedule of indoor and outdoor programs at a wider variety of County sites (public or private).

Expand Population Served To Include "Hard-To-Reach" Youth And Intergenerational Opportunities

There is a desire for increased programming, especially programs that would provide them increased interaction with other age groups. Most users perceived that public parks and recreation programs should provide fun, enjoyment of nature and quality family time. Programs should also improve physical and mental well being, structure and supervision for children, increase in community pride and positive alternatives to anti-social behavior by providing for safe but stimulating, creative activities for youth who might get into trouble when left unsupervised. Nationally and statewide,

there is an increased concern about providing positive recreational opportunities for children and teenagers.

The following recommendations are made:

- Develop partnerships with other youth-serving public entities (social services, juvenile justice agencies, school resource officers, etc) to identify and gain programming access to under-served youth.
- Develop and promote physically active programs for females, with emphasis on skill development for young girls and teens.
- Develop recreation skill development programs which match pairs of participants by different age groups (young children/young adults, young children/seniors, young children/older teens, teens/young adults, teens/seniors) and promote mutual learning processes.
- Build upon partnerships which provide access to artworks by developing interpretive programs targeted at under-served youth (i.e., the art exhibits, co-sponsored with the Library and United Arts provide wonderful opportunities to design programs to bring in youth who might not otherwise be exposed to these types of art forms).
- Promote 'inclusiveness' in all programming, giving consideration to recreational opportunities for persons with physical or mental disabilities, especially, youth.
- Develop partnerships with youth serving agencies (public and private) to identify youth with leadership potential

Expand Scheduling During Evenings, Weekdays And Weekends

There will be a continued need for increased programming during evenings, weekdays and weekends, depending on the characteristics (age, family status, work schedule, etc.). The survey and group discussions and staff discussions indicate that this is the perception.

Based on analyses of the data sources provided, the following recommendations are made:

- Increase program offerings to youth during weekday school holidays, teacher's workdays or during track-out periods for year-round schools.
- Increase non-athletic program offerings for adults during the weekday evenings.
- Increase program offerings to seniors during weekday evenings and weekends.
- Periodically (once each quarter) provide late evening social or interactive special events for older teens on weekends.

Expand Communications/Publicity To Include Multi-Media Strategy And Identified Target Markets

The County needs to improve its communication and publicity efforts to constituents. The additional comment section of the survey indicated that some residents may not be aware of the Parks and Recreation Department's link on the County's Web page on the internet. Increased publicity about Parks and Recreation activities should be published in local newspapers. In Parks and Recreation brochures and publicity documents, however, there needs to be a strong marketing strategy in place to identify target groups and design marketing products, specific to those groups.

Based on analyses of the data sources provided, the following recommendations are made:

- Continue utilizing the principles and strategies of the National Recreation and Parks Association's "The Benefits are Endless" program to increase marketability of programs
- Utilize the free national newsletter, "Lifestyles", published by NRPA to educate key officials and citizen advocates on the important benefits of recreation
- Develop specific outcomes for all programs which can be articulated and proven through evaluation
- Develop opportunities to communicate to participants, residents and other interested parties the benefits of recreation programs which go beyond divers ional to preventive, interventive, rehabilitative and empowering

- Develop a television program or advertisements for public access station which showcases the variety of programs, facilities and partnerships
- Develop and continually update linkages to the County's homepage on the internet
- Develop multiple media formats to reach different target markets for County-wide special events

It has already been stated that effective programming is dependent on garnering the resources necessary for their implementation. The following are areas for consideration by Parks and Recreation staff which could enhance the development of recreation programming for the County:

- Annual completion of program audits to evaluate effectiveness (necessitates the development of a standardized form to be completed on a regular basis by staff to readily provide program statistics for planning, implementation, evaluation and budgeting)
- Active participation by parks and recreation director in County's major social and infrastructure planning efforts to inform and be informed of possible impacts on programs
- Support professional development opportunities for staff:
 - NRPA annual conference in fall
 - NRPA southern regional conference in spring
 - NCRPS annual conference in fall
 - NC Prevention Association conference in fall
 - APRS youth-at-risk conference in fall
 - ASLA conferences and workshops
 - NRPA National Playground Safety Inspector Certification Course
- Perform a cost analysis on each program and develop a strategy for revenue generation
- Develop compensation policies to increase access to programs by all residents (i.e., sliding fee scale, fee waivers, scholarships, extended or deferred payment plans or sweat equity")

8. ADOPT PARK AND RECREATION STANDARDS AND PLANNING GUIDELINES (SEE SECTION 7 FOR STANDARDS AND PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS)

Modify Ordinance by adding new park classifications including special use parks, historic /cultural areas and school parks

The County should review, analyze and consider modifications to the existing ordinance and to include new park types. The need for more passive recreation and environmental areas has been presented and the projected changes in population, especially for the senior segment, should be taken into consideration in this determination. The need for shared use facilities and the cooperative partnerships that have been proposed could benefit from the modifications to the ordinance by dovetailing the intent for the specific park categories. School parks should be the primary focus as they could potentially provide the most facilities in the shortest timeframe and address both the distribution of facilities and growth areas simultaneously.

Establish a design review committee for project oversight and applicability of park and recreation projects to the master plan

The County should consider the establishment of a review committee for project oversight and to assist in the strategic planning of improvements and the development of future facilities. This committee could be formed in conjunction with the comprehensive phasing plan that has been proposed and would be responsible for determining the applicability of parks and recreation and water access facilities as they relate to this master plan. Ideally this committee would be made up of a diverse and representative cross section of the Country, much like the one assembled to participate in this

master plan.

Update payment of a fee in lieu schedule as it relates to development types and ratios

The County Parks and Recreation Department and Planning Department should include a review and analysis of the current policy in which new development is required to dedicate a portion of the development to parks and recreation or payment of a fee in lieu of this dedication. This policy should be evaluated for applicability and effectiveness based on historical data and anticipated growth projections. In an effort to adequately fund needed improvements as well as finance future developments, the department must determine if the current rate is adequate and if not, what the threshold could be and the measures that must be taken to modify the policy.

Adopt standards to develop parka and recreation facilities to coincide with growth

In all likelihood the payment of a fee will be the most beneficial arrangement for the County Parks and Recreation Department, but it should consider reserving these funds for projects that are located in the same geographic regions as the new development to fairly distribute the funding. It would be beneficial for the County Parks and Recreation Department to adopt standards that would guide the development of parks, recreation and water access facilities to coincide with growth. The demographic and socioeconomic information included in this master plan should be used as a point of reference for establishing these standards and for comparison of the actual population versus the growth projections.

Approach park planning from a holistic perspective; all ages, all ADA accessible

As new standards are created the Parks and Recreation Department should approach planning from a holistic perspective and provide for all the citizens equally. This strategy would include addressing the entire population and include all ages, interests and abilities. The Department has done a good job of providing ADA accessibility in the existing facilities through the placement of parking areas and the updating of restroom facilities. Most parking areas are well marked, have appropriate signage and are in close proximity to the restrooms. The addition of ADA accessible water fountains, hard surfaced walkways that are logically placed and maintained and additional wooden boardwalks are examples of improvements that should be included in all planning. If the population projections and shift in the makeup of the age distributions are accurate, providing safe and accessible facilities should become more of a priority.

9. CARTERET COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE AND STAFFING

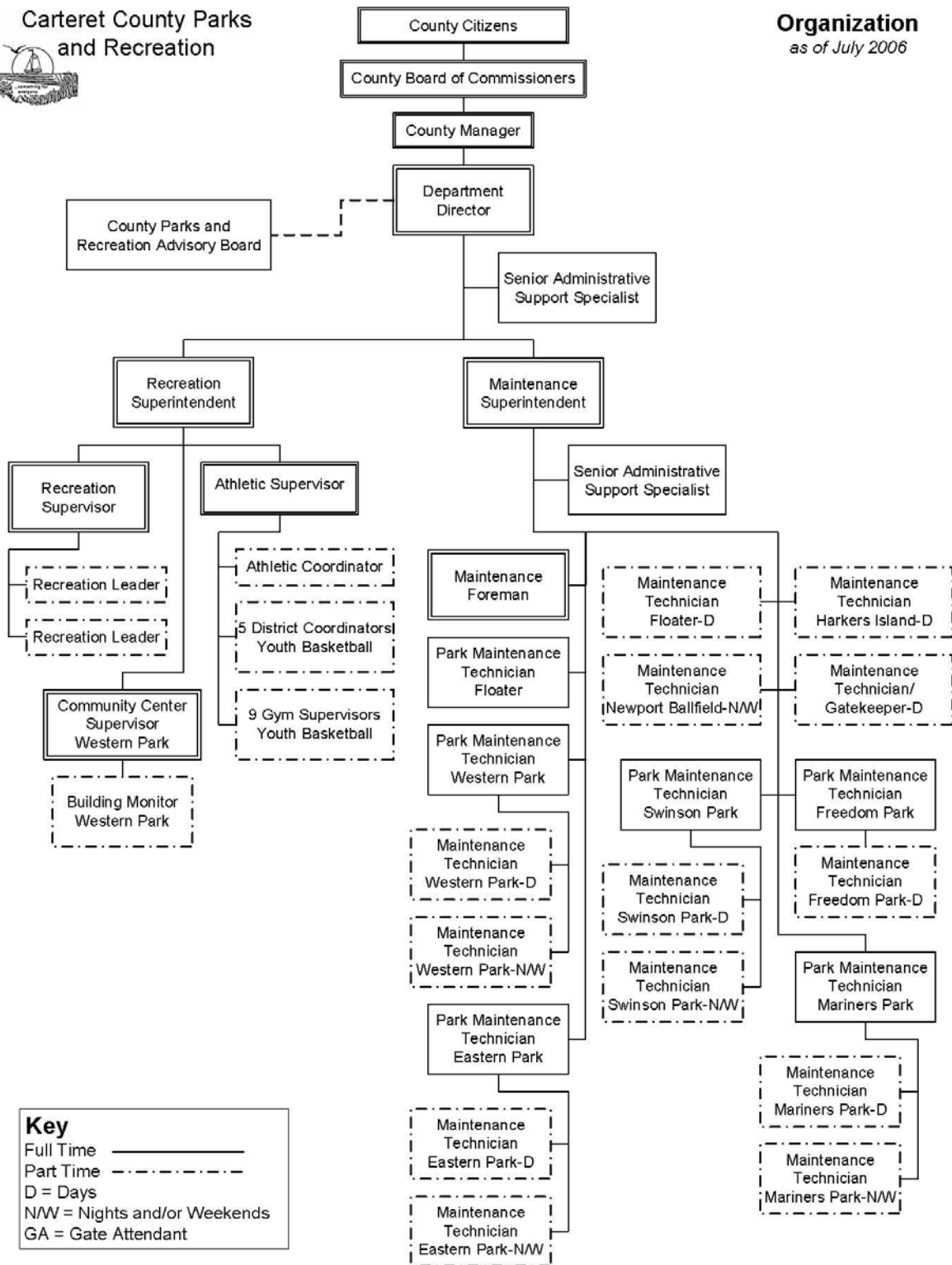
- Organizational Chart
- Maintenance and Personnel Overview and Recommendations
- Programming Overview and Recommendations
- Recommendations

The following organization chart was provided by the Carteret County Parks and Recreation Department to identify the operating structure and staffing.



Carteret County Parks and Recreation

Organization
as of July 2006



Key
 Full Time _____
 Part Time - - - - -
 D = Days
 NW = Nights and/or Weekends
 GA = Gate Attendant

Maintenance and Personnel Overview and Recommendations

The Department also provided an overview of the labor expenditures for the previous year for both the grass cutting season, trash pickup, minor repairs, moving bleachers, and performing other athletic field maintenance.

One of the goals expressed by the Parks and Recreation Department is to develop maintenance cost projections for material, equipment, and staff for all existing and future park developments. Detailed records and establishing an understanding of the requirements for each facility will benefit the establishment of this type of forecasting. The grass cutting records are a key component for the yearly maintenance costs, but this data provided for the previous year included the period of March 2004 through October 2005. Although this provided a historical perspective for each park, efficiencies gained through new equipment purchases will make comparisons difficult this year. In September 2005, the Department purchased a new commercial zero turn mowers that will drastically cut the time required to mow existing facilities. With these new efficient mowers, actual mowing times for the grass cutting season, which runs from March through November, could be reduced from 50% to 75% based on equipment ratings.

The Department is somewhat hindered by the lack of a set maintenance schedule, and the number of variables was described as the main reason for not having one. Moving bleachers is one example of the Department providing services to the community at a loss. The Department received 61 requests for moving bleachers from October 2004 to October 2005. This translated into an estimated labor cost of \$1700.00 in staff hours and approximately \$800.00 in fuel costs, for a total estimated cost of \$2500.00 or \$41.00 to move each bleacher. Since bleachers are rented to non-profit groups for \$5.00 each and \$10.00 for private groups, the Department places a financial strain on the labor budget, as well as adding to the wear and tear of the vehicles. The practice of moving bleachers should be discontinued, unless a more lucrative pricing structure is established. The ongoing loss and burden that is created should be offset by raising the fees to at least cover actual costs.

The Department has requested four new trucks in this year's proposed budget and some of the existing vehicles have been retained longer than the preferred ten year service period and have more than 200,000 miles. Continued maintenance and minimizing the operating costs of these older vehicles should be examined and used to establish a more reasonable replacement program.

Current staffing includes both full time and part time personnel, as well as administrative staff. One additional full time maintenance employee has been requested in the budget this year. The use of a "floater" or employee that travels to various sites to provide needed maintenance is responsible for mowing, clean-up and doing minor repairs such as irrigation and plumbing. The maintenance staff is challenged with fulfilling general maintenance and must provide needs on a daily basis. Staff members shared their frustrations of having to consistently put out fires and seemingly never reaching a status quo for facilities. This reality was not perceived by the public participants in the survey, as 88% of the respondents consider the facilities that they visited to be well maintained.

One key point that must be reiterated, and has been shared by several members of the staff, is that any new facilities or expansion of existing parks will require additional staff to maintain the high level of service and well kept properties that the Department is known for. Projecting staffing needs will be critical in the formulation of detailed budgets for new facilities and the ongoing maintenance and improvement of existing facilities.

Additional maintenance costs are incurred by the Department in providing assistance on other recreation facilities which it does not own. Although these services contribute to the quality of the recreational facilities for the residents of the County, it strains the maintenance of existing facilities and adds to the financial burden. Maintenance expenditures and possible efficiencies should be included in discussions and development of a more beneficial partnering relationship with the County schools. Cost effective design of new facilities, combined with shared maintenance operations could greatly benefit the County and the quality of the facilities that it provides. This is the type of win-win situation that has been discussed and should be a goal in establishing any new organizational structure.

Based on data provided, full time employees work 2,080 hours per year, while part time employees are limited to working 999 or less hours per year. Additional maintenance staff is hired to work nights and weekends and to open and close park gates on a seasonal basis. Approximately 46 staff hours per week are spent on picking up trash, cleaning and making minor repairs in smaller facilities including Marshallberg Park, Salter Path Park, South River Park, Salter Path Beach Access, West Beaufort Water Access, Radio Island Beach Access, and Harkers Island Water Access. Carteret County Parks and Recreation also regularly maintains Newport Elementary and Harkers Island Elementary School's ball fields to accommodate the sports leagues in those areas.

Based on the approximate 187 acres of Parks the County maintains, the total number of employees, and the annual cost of maintenance, total man hours per acre is 152.50 annually, and the total labor costs, including personnel and operations, per acre is \$2,738.46 annually. Of the total man hours of County maintenance, 5% of that time is also contracted out annually.

Adding and maintaining additional staff as additional park and athletic facilities are built was a concern expressed by programming and maintenance staff in the Parks and Recreation Department. Without question, providing adequate staff to operate and maintain any new facilities will be essential. It is important to note that the perceptions of the public regarding the maintenance of County owned facilities are very favorable. From the survey participants, 88% of respondents consider the facilities they visit are well maintained. The role that maintenance plays in the Department should not be overlooked when planning additional facilities.

Each of the existing parks and water access facilities should be studied to see what improvements could be made to increase their recreation potential. Detailed planning is not in the scope of this master plan, but the following improvements should be considered:

Structures

- Replace existing restroom facilities with ADA compliant and/or prefabricated structures.
- Picnic Shelters: Move to prefabricated pressure treated structures.
- Shade Structures: Consider new fabric structures to shade bleacher areas and playgrounds.
- Incorporate shade tree plantings in master planning efforts.

Storage Buildings

- Secure metal structures with concrete slab, electricity, and water.
- Provide maintenance area with adequate parking and circulation in master planning facilities.
- Provide larger facilities to accommodate floating crews and consolidate maintenance personnel.

Irrigation

- Continue to maintain and improve irrigation systems to optimal performance and minimize operating costs.
- Implement drip irrigation and low cost systems to benefit establishment period of new plantings.
- Invest in portable watering bags to provide necessary care during establishment period of new plantings.
- Consider water harvesting and other low impact design options for new facilities.

KEEP DETAILED LOGS USING NEW EQUIPMENT THIS AND NEXT YEAR TO BETTER UNDERSTAND LABOR COSTS.

- Create actual hours expended and area calculations for all parks and water access areas.
- Include floating hours, additional clean-up requirements and associate equipment maintenance costs for comparison and analysis.
- Establish a maintenance schedule for each park following year end analysis and to help establish budgetary

needs.

- Updating equipment on an established schedule will provide more cost effective maintenance operations.
- Budget estimates should include operating hours and number of miles on a pre-determined/allocated basis.
- Routine maintenance, material costs, and specialty services should be tracked to benefit cost analysis.
- The Department should continue to sub contract specialty services as required by staff and equipment limitations.

Programming Overview and Recommendations

Existing programs offered by the Department have served the County well, but the staffing is only able to accommodate current offerings. Suggested expansion of programs and diversification will require additional programming staff. In determining future programming needs, the Department should analyze existing programs and establish a schedule of anticipated staffing requirements and weigh this against contracted services. Although contracting is an option to provide some programming, the cost benefit may not warrant the additional management and coordination that is necessary.

In developing new programs, staff appeared to be interested in trying new things and shared that this is the only true way to determine if something is feasible. Careful consideration and cost analyses should be included in establishing any new programs and dovetailed with staffing and budgeting forecasting.

The Special Olympics and Senior Games have been extremely popular and should continue to be supported and expanded. Art classes and environmental education opportunities, such as the Barrier Island Ecology summer program should be expanded, as should other passive recreation programs to address the anticipated shifts in the adult and senior populations.

The desire to provide creative programs, while producing the desired results was shared by Staff. This positive and responsible approach should definitely produce some positive outcomes.

The Department offers a host of sponsored leagues that include youth basketball, adult men's basketball, women's softball, men's softball, co-ed softball, and co-ed kickball. Adult volleyball and adult soccer are also being implemented for the first time this year. The Beach Run series, which includes seven races from April to August, is very popular with an average of 136 runners participating in each race in 2005.

The possibility of expanding and promoting programs was well received by the staff and some marketing strategies have already been incorporated over the past year. Determining the most productive and cost effective marketing should be an ongoing process, with numerous avenues being explored.

Ball field usage and the reservations for the last year were provided by the Department for the period of October 2004 to October 2005. This date provides an overview of the programming for athletic fields and picnic areas, but can not be used to determine the actual numbers of users of the County's facilities. The information reflects the number of recorded individuals, but does not include walk-on users of fields, basketball, tennis, and volleyball courts, nor does it include walk-on users of picnic shelters, tables, and grills. Spectators at ball games, children and parents on playgrounds, community center meeting rooms at Western Park are not recorded. Likewise, the number of users of parks with piers, docks, boat ramps, and/or beach water access facilities is not reflected in the data. Use is heaviest from September to October and March through June. The lightest use occurs in December and January.

Reservations are only made for fields and picnic shelters/tables with individuals filling out a form which includes the number of participants. The intent is that ball fields are reserved before being used, but that is not always the case. Based on the data provided by the Parks and Recreation Department, the following reservations were logged in the last year:

RESERVATIONS 10/04-10/05

PARK/AREA	FIELDS	PICNIC
Eastern Park	20,135	8
Freedom Park	24,498	1,291
Mariners Park	3,056	-----
Swinson Park	57,045	1,782
Western Park	54,228	1,071
Harkers Island School	9,213	-----
Newport Elementary School	23,585	-----

The data provided above indicates an interesting similarity with the Top Five County Parks visited in 2005, as presented in Section 5 Master Plan and Shoreline Access Plan Update Survey. Swinson Park, Freedom Park, and Western Park are included in the list of most visited County Parks and had the greatest number of reservations for athletic fields and picnic facilities. As described previously, records are not kept for the other two most frequented facilities identified in the survey which are Radio Island Water Access and West Beaufort Water Access. It should be noted that there are no picnic facilities available at Mariners Park, Harkers Island School, and Newport Elementary School and therefore are not represented in the list above.

The recommendation of maximizing the existing facilities and master planning these particular parks should be carefully examined, as the high level of participation and number of visitors reinforces this need. Additionally, new facilities should be added where possible to provide more diverse activities. Eight of the top ten activities survey respondents participated in during 2005 could be accommodated on these same sites through improvement of the existing facilities and possibly adding activity areas where available space exists. These activities include walking pets, skateboarding, and bicycling, bird-watching, viewing wildlife, watching sports events, walking natural areas, and jogging. Creating additional recreational opportunities on existing facilities should be thoroughly evaluated as the cost of implementation will be considerably less due to land and development expenses. Self directed activities/facilities could reduce the need for staffing, but the addition of any new facilities will incur cost and additional maintenance burden on the Department.

10 ACTION PLAN PRIORITIES AND TIMELINE

These recommendations are the by-product of analysis, public input and the development of the standards for future Carteret County Parks and Recreation.

Within each section, topics such as the benefits of providing specific recreational resources; strategies for planning and implementing each recommendation are discussed. Each recommendation has been given a timeline for implementation within the Priorities and Timeline based upon its level of need and the overall cost implications. The following time frame need groupings, with symbols, have been used throughout the Action Plan.

- I** ■ Immediate 1-5 years – project is of immediate or priority need and most of the recommendations should be addressed or accomplished within the time frame allowed.
- F** ■ Future 5-10 years – project is of importance and should be addressed within the time frame suggested, however could be addressed earlier if necessary.
- L** ■ Long Range 10 years and above – project is either a long range project to receive planning immediately and it is to receive further project development as the time frame progresses, or the project is not needed until this time period.

Table 12.1 Action Plan Priorities and Timeline

Priority	Programs
I	Broaden target markets reached by offering creative programs at desired times
I	Expand communications/publicity to increase visibility of what the County provides
I	Expand outdoor and environmental education and awareness programs
I	Continue to expand and diversify senior activities to address projected growth
	Facilities
I	Continue to address identified un-met needs of County Parks and Recreation & 1999 Master Plan
I	Master plan all parks to maximize utilization and implement current unmet needs
I-F	Land Acquisitions & Expansion (community park/district park) in Newport/28570 zip code
I-F	Land Acquisitions & Expansion (greenways, trails and open spaces)
I-F	Land Acquisitions & Expansion (canoe, kayak) Newport area, rivers, marshes
I-F	Land Acquisitions & Expansion (boat ramps) Newport area, Down East
I-F	Land Acquisitions & Expansion (parking and alternative transportation)
I-F	Land Acquisitions & Expansion (beach access, additional parking, and ADA accessibility)
I-F-L	Continue working with schools system in the development of school parks
I-F	Bolster tourist activities and coordinate
F-L	Development of an environmental learning center and other environmental awareness programs
I	Development of an amphitheater on County land for events
I-F-L	Continued expansion of countywide trails and greenways master plan- Create connectivity to municipal trails to broaden network
	Administrative Policies and Organization Development
I	Adoption of Standards proposed in Parks and Recreation Master Plan
I	Allocate resources for professional training and development of staff
I	Encourage active coordination with individual municipalities
I	Expand funding mechanisms for facilities and program development and land acquisition for Parks and Recreation Services
I	Create Greenway Commission or Greenway Planning Committee within County
I-L	Coordination of Greenways and Open Space Ordinances and inter-cooperation
I	Re-assess and modify recreational funding, ordinances and policies