RECREATION, PARKS, AND OPEN SPACE

Overview

This chapter contains a general overview of Wicomico County's (County) inventory for parks, recreation, and open space and assesses them based on current and future user demands. This assessment helps the County establish a road map for future parks and open space acquisition; facility maintenance; adaptive reuse and development; and capital programming considerations. The County's goals and priorities are based on:

- The County's Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism's (DRPT) mission, goals, and objectives;
- Needs assessment of recreational facilities and activities based on the existing inventory of amenities, and user demand input derived from stakeholders, staff, County and State surveys, and a geospatial analysis of facilities; and
- State of Maryland's goals for recreation, parks, and open space.

Mission

The mission of the Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism is "to enhance the quality of life for County residents through public recreation, safe and attractive parks, tourism-driven initiatives that increase economic activity in the County and a multi-purpose Civic Center."

Organization

The DRPT is a strong, vibrant arm of County government. The Department consists of 4 major divisions:

- Parks – manages the overall park system and facilities.

1. Parks – manages the overall park system and facilities.
2. Recreation – provides public recreation programming.
3. Tourism – attracts visitors through attractions, events, and promotional activities.
4. Civic Center – a major venue for high-quality entertainment, cultural, recreational, social and civic activities. The Department also has support divisions, such as Box Office, Marketing, Finance, and administrative staff who help support the critical functions of the 4 main divisions. The consolidated Department is able to effectively share resources

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across divisions, providing a seamless approach to sales, service, event support and project management.

5. Additionally, the County has the foresight to engage in continual planning efforts to help identify and meet future recreation needs. Program Open Space has been an important component of land acquisition and park development.

County residents enjoy a wide variety of leisure opportunities. Some of the opportunities are available through the DRPT in cooperation with a Recreation & Parks Commission, local recreation councils, municipalities, as well as other special interest groups and organizations. The wide variety of parks in the County, ranging from large natural areas to small neighborhood play areas, offers many additional activities.

While most recreation programs and facilities are available to the general public, some are restricted to members of a club or organization. Seven major types of agencies and groups provide leisure services in the County:

- Wicomico County;
- Municipalities;
- County Board of Education;
- State of Maryland;
- Maintaining Active Citizens, Inc. (MAC);
- Private clubs or businesses; and
- Quasi-public groups, such as churches, Salvation Army, VFW;

Recreation and Parks Services and Financials

Recreation Programs

The County has traditionally had a strong complement of recreation program offerings including sports leagues, childcare programs, summer camps, senior programs, instructional programs, special events and programs for targeted groups, such as at-risk youth. Participation in Department program offerings was compared between 2022 and 2025. See Table4.1.

Findings include:

- Overall participation in youth sports has increased by 31%, due in large part to new program offerings such as a new youth flag football league and new instructional programs and clinics.
- As part of the overall growth in youth sports participation, the Little League Challenger program, an adaptive baseball program, grew by 44% when comparing 2022 to 2025

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registration numbers. Since introducing the program in 2021, the program has grown by 282%.

- Adult sport participation has declined slightly in the last several years, most notably due to the sharp decline in the co-ed adult softball program.
- Summer camp participation remains strong, with 37% growth from 2022 to 2025. Some of this growth is attributable to new camp offerings while some growth likely represents continued bounce back from the COVID pandemic and recovery.
- The County enjoyed a sharp increase of 41% in environmental education and outdoor recreation participation numbers. Much of this growth can be attributed to the opening of a renovated Nature Center at Pemberton Park, which welcomes visitors on weekends and includes public programming.
- Harbor slip rentals declined by approximately 19% from 2022 to 2025. Boating activity, including slip rentals, is often indicative of other economic conditions and could be one reason for the slight decline in this area.

Table 4.1
Public Recreation Registration 2022, 2025

Activity Category	2022	2025	Change 2022 – 2025	
			Number	Percent
Adult Organized Sports	2,488	1,906	-582	-23%
Youth Organized Sports	2,279	2,993	+714	+31%
Summer Camps	825	1,128	+303	+37%
Special Events	39,494	39,689	+195	+0%
Environmental Education / Outdoor Recreation	1,571	2,216	+645	+41%
Harbor Slip Rentals	103	83	-20	-19%
Pavilion Rentals	173	172	-1	-1%
Totals	46,933	48,187	1,254	+3%

Source: Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

Tourism

The County's Tourism Department and the Youth & Civic Center were consolidated with the Department of Recreation and Parks in 1997. The combined Department has been able to leverage assets, and to streamline sales, marketing and support services to accommodate meetings, conferences, sports tournaments and other group businesses. Tourism's current book consists of events that are mostly multi-day and attract participants who require hotel room stays. In FY2025, the County hosted 46 events. This business infused approximately $65 million into the local and State economy. Just over 71% of the economic impact came from events staged in outdoor recreational facilities, accounting for over 109,000 attendees and an estimated economic impact of $over 46.1 million.

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The County benefits by receiving a hotel room tax, a portion of which is used to support its tourism budget. The State benefits by receiving sales, income, and corporate income tax, which ranges from 2% to 7% of the economic impact.

Most of Wicomico's Tourism bookings consist of regional & national amateur sports tournaments which are primarily held in its park system. Opportunity exists to significantly increase the current volume of tourism-associated business by:

- Continuing to modernize and expand the Wicomico Civic Center and other athletic facilities to retain, grow and develop sporting events, meetings and conferences.
- Continuing the partnership with Ocean City and Worcester County to promote a regional brand and combine inventory and marketing tactics to attract amateur sporting events to the
- Completing Phase II development of the Pirate's Wharf property, which consists of 340.7-acres of land along the Wicomico River into a heritage-tourism and recreational asset.
- Completing a master-planning process to evaluate and make plans for the best use for the Connelly Mill property, which is situated just north of the Henry S. Parker Athletic Complex.
- Supporting organizers and events that are launched by partner organizations, which draw visitors to the area.

Further discussion, including capital recommendations, is included later in this chapter. Additionally, a more detailed discussion on the economic impact of events held in the County parks system is included in Appendix _____

Heritage Tourism

The County is endowed with buildings, structures, and districts with recognized historic significance, including, but not limited to five locally designated historic districts, 23 sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places, 6 Maryland Historic Trust easement sites, and 675 sites on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties. The County is well recognized as a place of significant cultural and historic value in Maryland. Its strategic location on the Wicomico River resulted in early settlement and continued growth. The sites, structures, and artifacts of previous eras—from prehistoric times through the colonial era and into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—provide the backdrop for the landscape and culture that defines the County today.

Preserving these historic resources is a shared responsibility of volunteers, County government, heritage organizations, property owners, educational institutions, developers, and residents. Promoting these assets through walking tours and other cultural experiences is also a shared responsibility, supported in part by the County's Tourism Division.

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Pemberton Historical Park is the Department's premier heritage tourism site. The park includes approximately 253-acres, with roughly five miles of nature trails, and is home to Pemberton Hall, one of the earliest 18th-century homes constructed in the County which has been restored by the Pemberton Hall Foundation. The Department continues to support an ongoing capital program for improvements and preservation at the park.

Pirate's Wharf Park is another emerging heritage tourism destination in the western part of the County that combines outdoor recreation, environmental education, and historical interpretation. Situated along the Wicomico River in Quantico, the 340-acre park occupies land with a documented history dating back to the 1600s and reflects the agricultural, maritime, and cultural heritage of Maryland's Eastern Shore.

The County is also part of the Beach to Bay Heritage Area, a state-designated program that supports the preservation, interpretation, and promotion of historic, cultural, and natural resources through heritage tourism initiatives. Participation in the Heritage Area provides opportunities for grant funding, technical assistance, and regional coordination to support projects such as historic site improvements, interpretive programming, water trail development, and enhanced public access to cultural resources.

The Chesapeake Country Scenic Byway Alliance is a key regional partner in advancing heritage tourism across Maryland's Eastern Shore, including the County. The Alliance is a collaborative organization comprised of the nine Eastern Shore County tourism offices and three heritage areas. Together, these partners work to promote, preserve, and interpret the cultural, historical, natural, and scenic resources found along the 419-mile Chesapeake Country Scenic Byway, an officially designated All-American Road. Through coordinated marketing, visitor engagement, and resource stewardship efforts, the Alliance helps connect travelers to the unique stories, landscapes, and communities that define the Eastern Shore.

Financials

From a broader perspective, the tax appropriation for Recreation & Parks increased significantly from 2004 to 2027. However, as shown in Table 4.2, the Recreation & Parks tax obligation relative to the overall County budget has remained relatively consistent over time, particularly over the past 12 years. On a Departmental level, the County tax appropriation for Recreation & Parks represents 63% of the overall Recreation & Parks budget; the remaining portion must be supported by user fees, rentals, grants, and ancillary sources such as sponsorships, concessions sales, and other revenue streams. See Table 4.2b and charts below.

When considering combined financials of the entire Department (Recreation & Parks, Tourism, and Civic Center), the results are inverted: the combined FY27 budgets for the 4 divisions is $18.10M; of this amount, $6.45M (36%) is funded by County taxes which includes employee

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benefits; the remaining 64% must be supported in other ways. See Table 4.2b and charts below. As a result, the Department must continue to be creative with revenue generation and cost avoidance with its facilities, programs and events in order to support operations.

Additionally, it is critical for the County to maintain and incrementally increase funding levels in order for the Department to keep an aging parks system safe and functional, maintain a modernized vehicle fleet, retain and recruit high-quality staff members, preserve the system from environmental concerns (e.g. invasive species), and keep consistent levels of service while the cost of doing business increases. This will become increasingly important as expanded parks and potential new facilities come online and demand/public usage of public recreation facilities increases (Pirate's Wharf, the Mason Dixon Athletic Complex, and Harmon Field are examples of recently expanded facilities). Connelly Mill and development of a new indoor recreational space are examples of potential new facilities that could be developed in the lifetime of this Plan. Another factor to consider is the dramatic increase in amateur sports tournaments. Though an economic engine, these events require significant financial and human resources from the Department, which can detract from core services. The financial commitment of the County must remain vibrant in order to meet these maintenance challenges and promote the Department's directive to continue maintaining and expanding opportunities in recreation and tourism.

Table 4.2
Recreation and Parks Tax Appropriation vs Total County Budget, 2004-2027

Item	2004	2013	2016	2022	2027
County Taxes to Support R&P Operating Budget	$1,274,800	$1,098,878	$2,267,953	$2,714,401	$4,294,244
Percentage of Total County Budget	1.3%	0.9%	1.8%	1.7%	1.8%

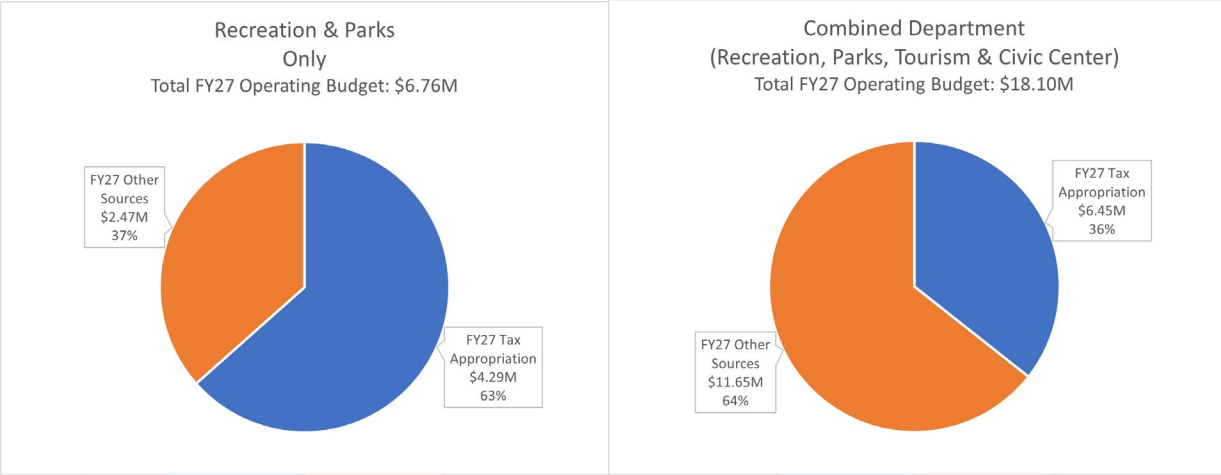
Source: Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

Table 4.2b
Department Financials – Tax Appropriation vs "Other" Revenues

Item	Recreation & Parks Budget Only	Percent	Combined Department (Rec & Parks / Tourism / Civic Center)	Percent
Total FY27 Operating Budget	$6,767,976	N/A	$18,108,494	N/A
Total FY27 Tax Appropriation	$4,294,244	63%	$6,451,529	36%
Total FY27 "Other" Sources	$2,473,732	37%	$11,656,965	64%

Source: Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

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County Recreation and Parks System

The County parks system includes six major types of parks. See Table 4.3. Parks are designed to serve geographic areas based on the size of the park and recreation facilities included in the park. The six park types work together to provide residents with a variety of recreation opportunities within a reasonable distance from home and are supplemented by private recreation facilities. The recreation sites in the County, presented in Appendix C, are identified by park type.

Table 4.3
Wicomico County Park Types

Park Type	Purpose	Size	Service Area
State and Nature Conservancy	State lands and/or nature conservancies with a primary function of natural resource preservation. Based on facility type, some public recreational opportunities may exist.	Varies	Varies
State Park	State lands that typically serves the entire County and would often include unique natural settings and/or recreational amenities.	Varies	Varies
County Park	Serve Growth Area or entire county and often include unique natural setting and/or specialized facilities, such as a harbor, zoo, stadium, heritage area, equestrian center, or athletic complex. Large areas may be preserved in a natural state.	10-100+ acres	Entire county
Community Park	Larger than a neighborhood park with a wider variety and greater number of recreation facilities. Often serves a municipality, or a group of subdivisions (approximately 4-10). – Sometimes located at a middle school or high school – Typical facilities include playground, hard surface courts, picnic facilities, and several athletic fields.	10-60 acres	Within 5 miles

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Neighborhood Park	Serve surrounding the neighborhood. Frequently located at or near elementary school – Typical facilities include playground, basketball courts, and tennis courts.	1-5 acres	Within 1 mile
Major Quasi-Public and Private	Recreation lands owned by major quasi-public and/or private entities with a primary function of providing recreational opportunities to the public or, sometimes, to private members. Recreational facilities may include a wide range of activities such as golf courses, campgrounds, sports complexes, and playgrounds.	Varies	Varies

Source: Adapted from National Recreation and Parks Association

Recreation System

The existing public recreation system within the County includes an extensive inventory of parks, recreation facilities, and other recreation sites, some of which are owned and/or operated by quasi-public and/or private entities. This system of 114 sites encompassing approximately 35,124-acres of land, is comprised of the following recreational amenities on county, municipal, Board of Education, quasi-public and private, state, and federal sites. See Map 4.1, Tables 4.4 through 4.10 and Appendix C for additional information.

Table 4.4
Wicomico County Recreation Sites, 2027
(Key for Map 4.1)

No.	Name of Area / Ownership	No.	Name of Area / Ownership	No.	Name of Area / Ownership	No.	Name of Area / Ownership
State of MD / Nature Conservancy		**Quasi-Public and Private**		**Local Public Recreation Areas**		**Local Public Rec. (cont'd.)**	
A	Upper Nanticoke Management Area	2	Beaver Run Elementary	34	Adkins Mill Park	67	West Core Metro property
B	Pocomoke River Heritage Cons. Fund	3	Bennett High School	35	Billy Gene Jackson Park	68	West Side Community Center
C	Plum Creek Cedar Swamp Preserve	4	Bennett Middle School	36	Bivalve Wharf	69	Wetipquin Boat Ramp
D	Chesapeake Forest	5	Chipman Elementary	37	Cedar Hill Park and Marina	70	Wicomico County Youth & Civic Center
E	Wicomico State Forest	6	Delmar Elementary	38	Cedarhurst Park	71	Winterplace Park
F	Plum Ck. Heritage Cons. Fund	7	East Salisbury Elementary School	39	Centennial Village Playground	72	Boundless Park and Playground
G	Powellville Forest	8	Fruitland Falcons Sports Complex	40	Clara Road Boat Ramp	73	Cherry Beach
H	Nassawango Creek Preserve	9	Fruitland Intermediate School	41	Connelly Mill Park	74	Comfort Safety Zone
I	Johnson Wildlife Management Area	10	Fruitland Primary School	42	Cope Bennett Park	75	Doverdale Playground
J	Ellis Bay Wildlife Management Area	11	Glen Ave Elementary	43	Coulbourne Mill Pond	76	Downtown Salisbury Bark Park
K	Nanticoke River Wildlife Mgt. Area	12	Hebron Fairground and Park	44	Cove Road Beach	77	Fruitland Recreation Park
L	Wetipquin Pond Management Area	13	Hebron Park	45	Crooked Oak Playground	78	Fruitland Tennis Courts
M	Wetipquin Wildlife Management Area	14	JCC Park	46	Douglas Nichols Park (Allen Park)	79	Gordy Park
N	U.S. Department of Interior	15	Mardela Middle/High School	47	East Side Youth Sports Complex	80	Johnson Lake Neighborhood Playground
O	Wetipquin Creek State Park	16	North Salisbury Elementary School	48	Edgewood Park	81	Lake Street Playground

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17	Northwestern Elementary School	49	Emerson Holloway Park	82	Mardela Springs Boat Ramp
19	Parkside High School	50	Gene Lowe Park	83	Mardela Springs Park
20	Pemberton Elementary School	51	Harmon Field	84	Naylor Mill Park Recreation Area
21	Pinehurst Elementary School	52	Henry S. Parker Athletic Complex	85	Newton-Camden Tot Lot & Playground
22	Pittsville Elementary & Middle School	53	Indian Village Playground	86	Newton Playground
23	Pittsville Playground	54	Kilburnie Playground	87	North Johnson Pond
24	Prince Street School	55	Leonards Mill Park	88	Riverwalk Park
25	Salisbury Middle School	56	Mason Dixon Sports Complex	89	Rose Street Boat Ramp
26	Salvation Army Boys and Girls Club	57	Nanticoke Park Recreation Area	90	Salisbury City Park and Zoo
27	Salvation Army West Salisbury Youth Club	58	Nick Meyer Park	91	Salisbury Marina
28	West Salisbury Elementary School	59	Pemberton Historical Park	92	Salisbury Pony League Park
29	Westside Intermediate School	60	Perdue Stadium	93	Salisbury Skate Park
30	Westside Primary School	61	Pirate's Wharf	94	Waterside Playground
31	Wicomico High School / County Stadium / Memorial Field	62	Riverside Boat Ramp	95	West Salisbury Little League
32	Wicomico Middle School	63	Roaring Point Park	96	Willards Recreation Area/Park
33	Willards Primary School	64	San Domingo Playground	97	Woodcock Playground
		65	Schumaker Park	100	Newton Street Community Center
		66	Tyaskin Recreation Area	101	North Prong Park
				102	Truitt Street Community Center

Source: Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

Table 4.5
Recreation and Resource Land by Owner (acres)

Owner	Recreation	Resource	Total
Wicomico County	1,839.1	0	1,839.1
City of Salisbury	275.7	0	275.7
City of Fruitland	42.7	0	42.7
Town of Delmar	5.0	0	5.0
Town of Sharptown	4.3	0	4.3
Town of Mardela Springs	4.7	0	4.7
Town of Hebron	0	0	0
Town of Pittsville	0	0	0
Town of	12.0	0	12.0

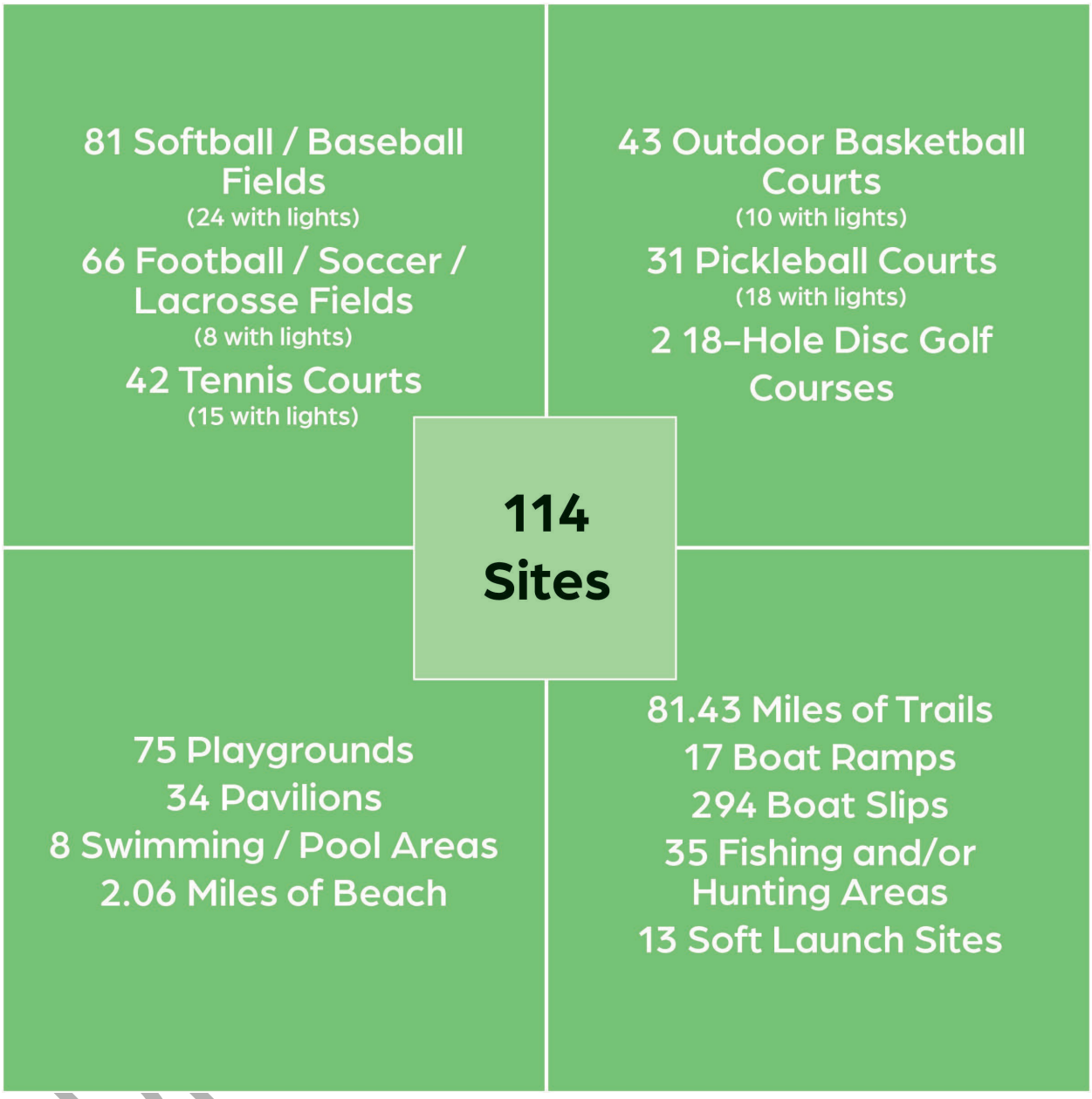
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Board of Education	175.6	0	175.6
Quasi-Public and Private	59.9	0	59.9
Subtotal, Local Land	*2,418.9*	*0*	*2,418.9*
State and Federal Recreation and Resource Land			
State of Maryland	445		26,496
Federal Government	0	725.3	725.3
Subtotal, Local Land	445	32,260.3	32,705.3
Total, Recreation and Resource Land	2,863.9	32,260.3	35,124.2

Source: Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

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County Recreation and Amenities



According to the "2026 National Recreation and Parks Association Agency Performance Review", the typical park and recreation agency manages 1- acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. For jurisdictions like the County, in the 100,000 to 249,999 population size, acres of parkland per 1,000 residents typically range from 4.3 to 15.1, with the median average being 8.6-acres per 1,000 residents. [*Source:* 2026-agency-performance-review.pdf]

The County Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism manages 38 sites with a wide range of recreational activities and supporting amenities for public use. These 38 sites, encompassing

1,839.1-acres, include athletic complexes, parks & playgrounds, boat ramps, marinas, a wharf, a minor league baseball stadium, community center and the Wicomico Civic Center. Based upon its existing population, the County manages approximately 17-acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, far exceeding the national average for jurisdictions of its size.

As demonstrated in Table 4.6, County-owned facilities account for over half of the recreation amenities in the County (54%).

County recreation sites serve various needs of its citizens depending on the size, location, and purpose of the facility. Of the 38 total sites, 13 sites are considered County-serving areas, 16-community serving areas, and 9 neighborhood serving areas.

Table 4.6
Wicomico County Recreation and Amenities

Recreation activity and amenities	Total	Percentage of Total Inventory
Softball / Baseball Fields	34	42%
Football / Soccer Fields	15	23%
Basketball Courts (outdoor)	18	42%
Tennis Courts (outdoor)	13	31%
Playgrounds	26	35%
Pickleball Courts (outdoor)	30	97%
Swimming Areas	6	75%
Pavilions	19	56%
Disc Golf Holes	18	%
Boat Ramps	9	53%
Boat Slips	208	71%
Total recreation activities and amenities	*396*	*54%*

Source: Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

Municipal Recreation and Amenities

There are 29 municipality-owned recreational sites located within the County. These sites encompass approximately 344-acres of land and offer citizens a diverse range of recreational activities including amenities not included in County-owned inventory such as a public zoo and skate park. Additional sites include parks and playgrounds, marina, boat ramps, and a dog park. As shown in Table 4.7, municipalities account for approximately 25% of the County's recreational amenities including: 27% of the existing softball/baseball field inventory, 23% of public playgrounds, and 29% of boat slips in the County.

Table 4.7

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Municipal Recreation and Amenities

Recreation activity and amenities	Total	Percentage of Total Inventory
Softball / Baseball Fields	22	27%
Football / Soccer Fields	5	8%
Basketball Courts (outdoor)	12	28%
Tennis Courts (outdoor)	6	14%
Playgrounds	17	23%
Pickleball Courts (outdoor)	1	3%
Swimming Areas	1	13%
Pavilions	9	26%
Disc Golf Holes	18	50%
Boat Ramps	3	18%
Boat Slips	86	29%
Total recreation activities and amenities	*180*	*25%*

Source: Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

State of Maryland and The Nature Conservancy Recreation and Amenities

The State of Maryland, the Nature Conservancy and the United States Department of the Interior have 15 sites encompassing 32,705-acres of land. This includes the addition of the Wetipquin Creek State Park, scheduled to open in 2027, which is the first State Park to be included in the County. The primary function of the majority of these lands is to meet the needs of wildlife and to protect and preserve land and the natural resources it protects. Though these sites do not provide recreational amenities to accommodate sports on fields or courts (Table 4.8), it does provide approximately 60- miles of nature trails and 5 boat ramps for water access available for public use.

Table 4.8
State of Maryland and The Nature Conservancy Recreation and Amenities

Recreation activity and amenities	Total	Percentage of County Inventory
Softball / Baseball Fields	0	N/A
Football / Soccer Fields	0	N/A
Basketball Courts (outdoor)	0	N/A
Tennis Courts (outdoor)	0	N/A
Playgrounds	0	N/A
Pickleball Courts (outdoor)	0	N/A
Swimming Areas	0	N/A

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Pavilions	0	N/A
Disc Golf Holes	0	N/A
Boat Ramps	5	29%
Boat Slips	0	N/A
Total recreation activities and amenities	*5*	*1%*

Source: Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

Major Quasi-Public and Private Recreation and Amenities

The major quasi-public or private recreation amenities shown below include facilities that have established agreements with County or municipal entities and provide programming that is regularly available to the general public. See Table 4.9. There are 6 sites owned by major quasi-public or private entities encompassing approximately 60-acres of land. These sites include a youth sports complex, local parks and fairgrounds, and the Salvation Army. These facilities account for approximately 3% of the County's recreational amenities, including: 15% of football/soccer fields in the County and 5% of softball/baseball fields, basketball courts and tennis courts. The County works closely with these entities to avoid, where possible, duplication of services and maximize recreational opportunities for citizens. Additionally, there are other private entities that provide recreational facilities and opportunities for County residents, such as the YMCA and Crown Sports Center, but these facilities are not included in the overall inventory since there are no direct agreements with County or municipal entities providing guaranteed public access or input. While these types of facilities can help meet existing and future recreational needs, they are not heavily weighted in the overall needs analysis but are factored into County decision-making as local conditions evolve over time

Table 4.9
Major Quasi-Public and Private Recreation and Amenities

Recreation activity and amenities	Total	Percentage of County Inventory
Softball / Baseball Fields	4	5%
Football / Soccer Fields	10	15%
Basketball Courts (outdoor)	2	5%
Tennis Courts (outdoor)	2	5%
Playgrounds	3	4%
Pickleball Courts (outdoor)	0	0%
Swimming Areas	1	13%
Pavilions	2	6%
Disc Golf Holes	0	0%
Boat Ramps	0	0%

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Boat Slips	0	0%
Total recreation activities and amenities	*24*	*3%*

Source: Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

Board of Education Recreation and Amenities

The County Board of Education inventory consists of 26 sites supporting recreational amenities available for public use, as well as indoor programs operated, supported, or coordinated by the DRPT. The geographic distribution of the sites covers an extensive area of the County, which enhances access to recreation opportunities within close proximity to the participants.

Collectively, the Board of Education inventory accounts for approximately 17% of the County's recreational amenities including: more than one half (55%) of the County's total inventory of football / soccer fields, 26% of outdoor basketball courts and softball/baseball fields, and 50% of outdoor tennis courts. Additionally, the Board of Education has 29 playground sites accounting for 39% of the County's total inventory. See Table 4.10.

Table 4.10
Board of Education Recreation and Amenities

Recreation activity and amenities	Total	Percentage of Total Inventory
Softball / Baseball Fields	21	26%
Football / Soccer Fields	36	55%
Basketball Courts (outdoor)	11	26%
Tennis Courts (outdoor)	21	50%
Playgrounds	29	39%
Pickleball Courts (outdoor)	0	0%
Swimming Areas	0	0%
Pavilions	4	12%
Disc Golf Holes	0	0%
Boat Ramps	0	0%
Boat Slips	0	0%
Total recreation activities and amenities	*122*	*17%*

Source: Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

Recreation, Parks, and Land – Trends and User Demand

The ability to assess need is a fundamental component of the comprehensive planning process. It is imperative to understand current conditions in order to develop recommendations and implementation strategies designed to meet the community's demand for recreation activities and

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amenities. For the purpose of this Plan update, demand for recreation and park activities is derived from a variety of sources, including, but not limited to the following: public engagement; Recreation and Parks Commission; Municipalities; County Public Schools; and staff observations. Another important component of identifying future demand for increased recreation and parks facilities and amenities is the ability to measure current supply. As part of this planning initiative and in accordance with the state's guidelines, the County utilized a proximity analysis approach, which is discussed in more detail later in this Chapter. Additional Park Equity analysis was performed, which is also discussed later in the Chapter.

County Trends and User Demand

Public Survey

As part of the public participation process implemented to encourage citizen involvement throughout the planning process, the DRPT launched an online survey to gauge end user interest in the recreation and parks system. The survey was initiated in November 2025 and concluded in March 2026. A total of 1,079 survey responses were received, which represents a 30% increase in public survey participation when compared to the 2022 Plan. In addition to the public survey, ongoing community engagement efforts will continue throughout the life of the Plan, including but not limited to: advertising surveys through email distribution lists and on social media outlets; administering surveys at programs and events; as well as regularly collaborating with the Board of Education and other partner organizations comprising a portion of the recreation and parks system in County.

Of the 1,079 responses, approximately 95% of the participants indicated a member of their household visited a County park in the past 12 months. About 71% visited a County park at least once a month or more.

Of those people visiting County parks, the top 5 activities people engage in include:

- Trail-based recreation (Walking, running/jogging, hiking, backpacking); (77%)
- Attending festivals or special events (57%) Visiting playgrounds; (44%)
- Outdoor sports (i.e., baseball, softball, soccer, etc.); (43%) and
- Bird watching, wildlife viewing. (42%)

Other important metrics for evaluating the current recreation and parks system include the County's ability to meet recreational needs and/or to address deficiencies in the system. Participants were asked: "How well are County parks / facilities meeting your needs for the following recreational activities?"
Noteworthy results of respondents include the following:

- Of the top 5 activities listed above:
    - Trail-based recreation – 70% were satisfied or very satisfied;

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  - Attending festivals or special events – 60% were satisfied or very satisfied;
  - Visiting playgrounds – 57% were satisfied or very satisfied;
  - Outdoor sports – 48% were satisfied or very satisfied;
  - Bird watching, wildlife viewing – 48% were satisfied or very satisfied;
- Activities with the lowest satisfaction rating included:
  - Swimming / aquatic activities – 24% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied;
  - Environmental education – 20% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied;
- The survey asked respondents to prioritize types of parks and facilities the County should consider for future upgrades and/or development. Respondents noted the following priorities:
  - Trail-based recreation (walking, running, hiking, biking) (57% listed in the top 3 priorities);
  - Outdoor recreation (baseball fields, soccer fields, outdoor courts, etc.) (29% listed in the top 3 priorities);
  - Playgrounds (21% listed in the top 3 priorities);
  - Swimming or aquatic areas (20% listed in the top 3 priorities); and
  - Indoor sports (18% listed in the top 3 priorities)
- About 8% of respondents indicated a need for ADA-accessible facilities for themselves or a member of their household. Of those with accessibility needs, the following facility development or program priorities were noted:
  - Biking (32% listed in the top 3 priorities);
  - Trail-based recreation (29% listed in the top 3 priorities);
  - Environmental education (29% listed in the top 3 priorities);
  - Adaptive rec programs (28% listed in the top 3 priorities);
  - Swimming (28% listed in the top 3 priorities);
- A total of 1,006 write-in comments or suggestions were included in addition to individual responses to survey questions. Similar to other findings, the most frequently mentioned write-in comments included:
- Develop the Connelly Mill property into a public park;
- Develop indoor public recreation space;
- Construct more trails (hiking / biking / walking);
- Construct more pickleball courts (or a dedicated pickleball facility);
- Provide more opportunities for public access to water (i.e. kayaking, boating, and public swimming pool).

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Survey respondents also strongly supported the County pursuing a "partnership park agreement" with the State of Maryland to jointly manage or maintain public parks. 83% responded favorably to the County pursuing this opportunity, while only 4% opposed (13% were not sure). 567 write-in responses were included in this question, with the Connelly Mill property being identified as an overwhelming priority to explore a partnership park arrangement. The County will explore various options for partnership parks during the lifetime of this Plan as part of its overall strategy to address recreational needs that are not being fully met.

In addition to the online survey, public meetings were held in the fall of 2026 through the County Recreation Parks Commission, allowing for additional public input. The draft Plan will also be published for public comment from September through November 2026. Public meetings will be scheduled with the Council in the spring of 2027 to gather final feedback from elected officials and the general public.

The aforementioned results of the survey and public comment will be used to help guide policy and capital programming considerations designed to maintain and enhance the recreation and parks system; expand access to programs and facilities; and identify changes or emerging trends in recreation activities and amenities. The complete results of the survey can be reviewed in Appendix A.

Recreation and Parks Commission

Local stakeholder feedback was also obtained, in part, through feedback received from the Recreation & Parks Commission. The Recreation and Parks Commission consists of 15 members, which includes representation from each planning area and whose members are appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. In addition to providing specific feedback on the LPPRP, the Recreation & Parks Commission also plays a key role in developing the Department's strategic operations plan identifying user needs and deficiencies on an annual basis.

The Commission noted the County has a well-maintained and robust parks system with adequate coverage to serve the general recreation needs of residents. While overall feedback remains positive, several themes emerged identifying potential deficiencies in County recreation facilities and programs to be considered for future planning. These observations include:

- Keep an emphasis on the maintenance of existing facilities to keep parks safe, functional, and attractive. This has become a theme in the last several Plan updates because many parks are showing signs of age, having been built in the 1980's and 1990's;
- Limited indoor recreational facilities. The Department utilizes the Wicomico Civic Center for a number of recreational activities, but available space and amenities are a limiting factor. In addition, the Department relies upon the Board of Education for indoor

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recreational space at Public School gymnasiums. While this provides some indoor options, availability is inconsistent, which limits programming opportunities.

- Limited public swimming pools and/or swimming areas. The Commission recognizes publicly owned and operated swimming pools may be cost-prohibitive for the County and public swimming needs may or are being addressed in other ways including:
    - Private pool access through the YMCA, Salvation Army, Civic Club pools;
    - Proximity of County residents to Ocean City and the beach;
    - Privately owned pools accessible to individuals, groups, and/or community developments; and
    - Access to rivers through boating or small watercraft;
- A need for enhancing the customer experience through technology. As more people rely on devices for everyday information, the County should consider upgrades to its technology (such as apps for trail maps, program and facility reservations, park guides, etc.) in order to better meet public needs.

Municipalities and Wicomico County Public Schools

The RPT Department maintains close relationships with local municipalities, active recreation councils, and the County Public Schools in order to effectively deliver programs and services. Beginning in October 2025, RPT staff began engagement processes with the County's 8 municipalities and the County Public Schools (WCPS) in preparation of the Plan update. Public survey links were distributed to municipal and educational leaders, and feedback was sought on specific projects or priorities important to each jurisdiction. Where requested, in-person meetings were held with leadership to discuss these concepts. Additional follow up efforts were initiated in July of 2026 and draft copies of the Plan were distributed for feedback in September 2026. Some suggestions for future projects were incorporated into the capital recommendations section and complete feedback gathered from individual municipalities is included in Appendix B.

General feedback received from Municipal partners included the following priorities and gaps noted:

- Both municipal and County priorities should aim to increase equitable access to public recreational facilities, particularly in the areas of greatest need. Examples include, but are not limited to, access to water and nature-based amenities, improved ADA access, and neighborhood access where there are gaps in service.

- Consideration should be given to maintenance capacity when considering facility upgrades or additions, particularly due to aging infrastructure throughout the County.

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General feedback received from the WCPS included the following observations:

- While WCPS facilities contribute to the County's overall recreation inventory, these facilities should be distinguished from public park and recreation facilities in the County. Examples of inherent programming limitations at Public Schools include scheduling challenges which often center around educational and interscholastic activities, security requirements of school buildings and campuses, insurance requirements for outside rental groups, among other factors that often limit availability of these spaces.

- RPT use of schools for public recreation programming "creates long-term maintenance, renovation and replacement demands on school system facilities." While WCPS is supportive of the County and its programming needs, it encourages the County to consider future strategies and funding partnerships that help sustain and enhance school-based recreation assets.

- A significant gap in the County's recreation system is the lack of a dedicated indoor public recreation space. A centrally located indoor facility with courts and flexible programming space would support youth programs, adult recreation, tournaments and year-round community activities.

- A need exists for additional rectangular and multi-use athletic fields to support activities such as soccer, football, lacrosse, rugby and other field sports.

- Consideration should be given to a public aquatics facility, which could provide public aquatics programming and allow WCPS to consider future interscholastic swimming opportunities, if feasible.

In addition to feedback sought for the Plan update, RPT engages these groups on a regular basis related to parks and recreation issues. For example, the Department:

- Includes municipalities in the County's annual Program Open Space process. Municipalities have the opportunity to submit project requests, and the County has a longstanding history of completing Open Space projects in all parts of the County;
- Encourages municipalities to leverage Community Parks and Playground (CPP) funding to complete priority projects. This funding is not available to Counties but is a no-match resource for municipalities;
- Remains engaged with active recreation councils in order to stay in tune with local needs and to communicate County priorities and objectives;
- Maintains a joint use agreement with the WCPS outlining cooperative efforts to support the use of school facilities for enrichment activities for the citizens of the County; and

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- Collaborates with WCPS on programming initiatives, where feasible. An example of this is the joint effort to expand intramural sports programs to elementary and middle school students in the County.

These efforts, by nature, are ongoing which allows the County to maintain a pulse on community needs and to adapt quickly to meet those needs.

Staff Observations

The Department of Recreation, Parks & Tourism includes 63 full-time staff members, as well as hundreds of part-time and seasonal staff members. Several in-person meetings were held with staff members, who were asked for their perspectives based on their observations and regular interactions with members of the community. Comments include observations on strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats facing the Department:

- Absence of a centrally located indoor recreational facility. For years, the County has utilized Board of Education facilities to provide indoor recreation programming. While this has provided some ability to offer indoor programs, it is not sustainable to meet the demand of existing and future end users of indoor recreation facilities.

- Difficulty in hiring and retaining staff. Changing economic realities has made it more difficult to fill critical positions required to deliver programs and services.
- Changes in recreation landscape. Public participation in community programs and activities continues to change. One example of this is youth sport participation. As more families participate in travel sports to meet their recreational needs, public recreational sports programs continue to decline. Not only does this impact participation levels, but it may require the County to re-evaluate its inventory of facilities to better match public demand.

- An aging park system combined with an increasing number of capital projects and events. The age of the park system and the coinciding volume of event support and capital projects surpasses staff resources. This affects the ability of staff to deliver core services and may impact facility safety, function, and appearance.

- Opportunity for facility development. Staff members expressed optimism over opportunities for new development projects at Connelly Mill and pursuit of a dedicated indoor public recreation space; additionally, staff noted opportunity as a result of ongoing development projects at the Mason Dixon Complex, Pirate's Wharf, the Wicomico Civic Center, among other facility improvement projects.

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- Opportunities for increased partnership with the state. The addition of the Wetipquin Creek State Park provides a new recreational amenity in the County and gives a larger County presence to the Department of Natural Resources and State Parks staff. This development, along with opportunities at Connelly Mill and other public recreation facilities, creates an opportunity for the County to explore a partnership park agreement with the state.

- Outside competition. For the past 15 years, the County has been active in hosting local, regional and national tournament events, generating millions of dollars annually in economic impact in the County and region. This multi-billion industry grows more competitive each year, forcing the County to compete with more wealthy jurisdictions to host events.

- Economic Uncertainty. Economic uncertainty at the federal, state and local levels may negatively impact funding sources that have been historically relied upon to complete capital projects. This uncertainty may also have an impact on operations, as operational costs continue to increase while limited disposable income puts a strain on the public to be able to afford programs and services.

- Low-lying areas susceptible to flooding. The County has many low-lying areas along waterfront properties, some of which are park properties. As flooding events increase in severity, this could threaten the future of these parks.

- Invasive species as a growing problem. The increasing prevalence of invasive species, particularly in public parks, could threaten natural areas and diminish the park system. The Department does not currently have the manpower, resources or expertise to be able to effectively handle this problem.

State Trends and User Demand

In addition to a local perspective about a community's preference for specific recreation and parks activities and amenities, it's equally important to understand regional trends. Often times, public services such as schools, water and sewer, fire, and EMS are limited or constrained to a jurisdiction; however, recreation and parks are utilized by both residents and visitors. As such, these activities and amenities serve as a vehicle of economic development, as well as an asset to promote public health and wellbeing.

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources utilized a multi-faceted public participation process to encourage citizen involvement during the update of Maryland's Land Preservation and Recreation Plan for 2027-2037.Outreach efforts included a variety of focus group meetings with stakeholders, community conversations at public events and festivals across the state, along with

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two community surveys. A total of 2,818 statistically valid survey respondents participated across the State.

Statewide, the respondents of each survey indicated the following most popular outdoor recreation activities:

- Walking (91%);
- Visiting Natural Areas (70%);
- Hiking/Backpacking (65%);
- Visiting Historical Sites (64%);
- Swimming Outdoors (49%);

- While access to nature was the top activity identified by State survey respondents, access to nature was also the number one priority identified by Marylanders for future investment. Generally speaking, these results are very similar to public survey responses collected in national surveys, as well as the County survey.

(Source: LPRP Draft For Public Comment
2024 Outdoor Participation Trends Report - Outdoor Industry Association

Recreation, Parks, and Land – Needs Assessment

Proximity Analysis

The methodology for completing the Proximity Analysis was based on Maryland's *Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan 2027 Guidelines* and information contained in the Appendix C. The recreational facilities available for public use in the County by type are listed in Table 4.4 and illustrated on Map 4.1a Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan. For the proximity analysis, private / membership facilities and facilities restricted to residency criteria have been omitted from the assessment.

The proximity analysis focuses on the following specific types of recreation amenities: picnic and pavilion areas; athletic fields, aquatic (pools and beach) facilities; water access areas and trails; and bikeways. Given the suburban / rural nature of the County, a five-mile radius for service areas was used for the rural areas and a half mile radius for service areas in the Salisbury/Fruitland metropolitan area for this analysis. The half mile radius is depicted on the Proximity Analysis Map 4.1ai and Maps 4.1a-e demonstrate that multiple facilities within the densely populated areas of the County are located within overlapping five-mile radius service areas. County residents have adequate and reasonable access to amenities as depicted in the Proximity Analysis.

It is important to note, there are other sites (private and membership restricted) not contained in the proximity analysis; however, these facilities also serve the recreation needs of County residents. These include facilities restricted to private membership fees or serving various

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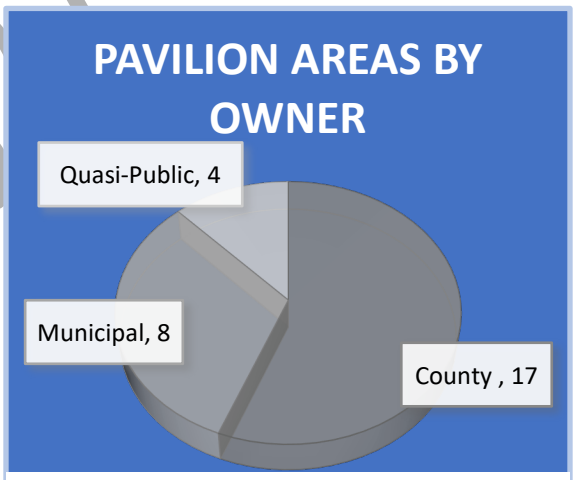
residential communities. Therefore, the proximity analysis uses and depicts only facilities open to the Public or having a daily user fee and does not represent the full inventory of recreation amenities serving County residents.

Wicomico County Parks and Recreation Areas

Map 4.1a, Wicomico County Recreation and Parks System 2027 / Proximity Analysis – All Parks, depicts the proximity coverage of the total existing parks and recreation facility system. The Growth Area region (Salisbury, Delmar, Fruitland, and portions of the intensely developed areas in the unincorporated portion of the County) includes extensive recreation opportunities within five-mile radius. The facilities include parks of all service area sizes (i.e., countywide, citywide, community, and neighborhood-serving), as well as community school recreation areas. Also, several recreation areas provide picnic and picnic pavilion facilities, numerous aquatic facilities and water access points, trails and pathways, parks, and other related recreation opportunities. In summary and as depicted on Map 4.1a, the proximity analysis resulted in the entire County area being served by the location of the existing parks and recreation system.

Picnic and Pavilion Amenities

Map 4.1b, Wicomico County Recreation and Parks System 2027 / Proximity Analysis - Picnic and Pavilion Amenities, depicts the proximity coverage of the existing system for pavilion areas that can accommodate groups of people. Users have access to 49 separate park and recreation areas with picnic and pavilion facilities. Overall, the recreation and park inventory consists of 34 pavilions available for public use without requiring membership and residency. The facilities serve all of the population of the County.



Source: Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

A small rural area along the Nanticoke River south of Mardela Springs and west of Quantico was identified as a gap in coverage of picnic facilities and / or pavilions within a five-mile radius; however, the area is comprised of tidal wetlands and does not have any residential structures.

Athletic Fields and Courts

Map 4.1c, Wicomico County Recreation & Parks System 2027 / Proximity Analysis – Athletic Fields & Courts illustrates the five-mile proximity analysis for athletic fields and courts for sports such as baseball, softball, soccer, basketball, tennis and pickleball. The athletic field and court system consists of over 260 amenities for residents throughout the County centered in more

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populated areas. The softball and baseball fields play host various regional tournaments throughout the year.

The gaps in the proximity analysis for athletic fields and courts are located in unpopulated or sparsely populated areas in the western, southwestern, and southeastern parts of the County. The western gap is a small marshy area located along the Nanticoke River and has a tiny population. The southwestern gap includes the rural village of Whitehaven and along Wicomico Creek bordering Somerset County. Finally, the southeastern gap is the largest relative to the other two, but this area is rural and sparsely populated with a majority of the land under preservation or conservation easements. Residents of the southwestern and southeastern gaps may also have reasonable access to athletic amenities in neighboring counties.

Water Access Areas

Map 4.1d, Wicomico County Recreation & Parks System 2027 / Proximity Analysis – Water Access, shows the five-mile proximity analysis of water access. There are 27 public access areas available to the population of the County, including the Salisbury metropolitan area and three State-operated water access areas. Aquatic facilities were not included in the proximity analysis due to there being only one located at the Salvation Army West Salisbury Youth Club.

There are three areas within the County that lack water access facilities within a five-mile radius of residents:

1) The area north of Pittsville and Willards;
2) A tiny rural area north of Hebron on the border with Delaware; and
3) An undeveloped tidal wetland area southwest of Mardela Springs along the Nanticoke River.

Given the lack of navigable water bodies in the eastern part of the county that includes the areas west of Snow Hill Road and north of Willards and Pittsville, there is limited opportunity to expand water access within these areas of the County. The area north of Hebron is barely outside the 5-mile radius. Lastly, the area southwest of Mardela Springs is largely undeveloped tidal wetlands. The proximity analysis gaps one through three listed above are located at the boundaries of the County limits and could potentially offer water access available in adjacent counties. Overall, residents enjoy an abundance of navigable waterways due to the numerous public access areas countywide. The County will continue to maintain existing access and explore opportunities to enhance water access as a function of development review or infrastructure adjacent to waterways.

Except for the gaps listed above, water access is plentiful in Wicomico County. The Nanticoke and Cedar Hill Harbors and Salisbury Marina provide access for boaters and 294 slips available for rent, most with water and electric hookups. Cedar Hill Marina is a modern, well equipped docking facility with slips ranging from 8 to 14 feet in length. Water access is also available at 17-boat ramps situated around the County including Cedar Hill Park, Johnson Pond, Mardela, Nanticoke Park, Nanticoke River Wildlife Management Area, Riverside Park, Sharptown,

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Tyaskin, and Wetipquin. Riverside Park boat ramp has been upgraded with a floating dock to accommodate residents with disabilities. A soft launch pier is a recent addition to Riverwalk Park allowing access to the East Prong of the Wicomico River. Swimming areas are accessible along the 2.06 miles of beachfronts at Cherry Beach, Roaring Point, Nanticoke Park, and Cove Road. See table 4.11.

Table 4.11
Aquatic and Water Access Service Areas, 2021

Park Type	Swimming Areas	Beach (Miles)	Boat Ramps	Boat Slips	Soft Launch Sites	Fishing
State and The Nature Conservancy	0	0	5	0	0	2
County	6	1.76	9	208	11	17
Municipal	1	0.30	3	86	2	6
Board of Education	0	0	0	0	0	0
Quasi-Public Area (Daily Fee) available)	1	0	0	0	0	0
Total Water Access Areas	*8*	*2.06*	*17*	*294*	*13*	*25*

Source: Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

Trails

Map 4.1e, Proximity Analysis – Bike, Water, and Walking Trails, shows the proximity coverage of the trails and bikeways. Trails and bikeways are found almost throughout the county as part of the regional road network and designated bikeways. Since cycling is permitted on roadways within incorporated jurisdictions, County, and the majority of State facilities, there are no gaps in coverage.

The County has a robust system of walking trails for pedestrian enjoyment. Pemberton Historical Park, Henry S. Parker Athletic Complex, City of Salisbury Park, Winterplace Park, Pirate's Wharf, Indian Village, Mason Dixon Complex, and a plethora of other regional and linear parks afford pedestrians an opportunity to hike in a safe, accessible and natural environment.

The Wicomico and Nanticoke watersheds provide residents with an abundance of water trail options on the many creeks and tributaries for activities like kayaking, paddleboarding and fishing. Many of these trails are not accessible by larger vessels providing a safe, low-wake environment for these activities. Wetipquin Creek, Mardela Boat Ramp, Riverwalk Park, and Riverside Boat Ramp are just a few of the locations in the County that provide access points for soft launch activities.

The County has a path and bikeway plan to serve as a guide for the designation of future paths and bikeways. To promote cycling opportunities countywide, the Department administers a website

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and brochure/handbook to guide cyclists to bike trails. The information, as well as links to other County and Lower Eastern Shore websites, is found at www.wicomicotourism.org.

The City of Salisbury has undertaken various planning efforts since the previous publication in 2022 to advance its Bicycle Network Plan. These efforts include extending proposed bike trails to areas within Worcester County, Delaware, Pittsville, and Hebron. By expanding its network to surrounding communities, the City of Salisbury is providing its citizens with access to more destinations beyond the city limits while also creating greater opportunities for regional connectivity and alternative transportation. This comes from an increase in the popularity of bicycling. The increased popularity of bicycling has established two distinct types of cycling:

- Recreational cycling, which is based on pleasure-based activity that does not necessarily adhere to an established schedule or frequency.
- Utility cycling, which is usually based on an established frequency, such as times involving the cyclist's employment.

Perhaps the most important consideration for both types of cycling activity is safety. Recreational cyclists can often choose areas that are not densely populated and have little automobile traffic to pose hazards. Utility cycling, on the other hand, requires the cyclist to travel into and around developed areas. Most of the time, roads must be shared with many cars, causing significant safety concerns for motorists and cyclists.

The Department should continue to work with stakeholder groups familiar with bicycling/hiking in the County, such as the Salisbury-Wicomico Metropolitan Planning Organization, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, and the Wicomico Trails Committee. These groups meet regularly to evaluate potential routes and to develop recommendations to ensure the safety of the routes. The stakeholders should work with the DRPT to move the recommendations to organizations with jurisdiction over roads throughout the County.

In addition to the study that focuses on the Salisbury/Wicomico area, much information is available from the League of American Bicyclists (LAB). The LAB provides a certification program to recognize areas for elements that foster safe bicycling.

Cities of Salisbury and Fruitland Parks and Recreation Service Areas

Map 4.1ai, Wicomico County Recreation and Parks System 2027 / Proximity Analysis – Salisbury/Fruitland Metropolitan Area, depicts the proximity coverage of the total existing parks and recreation facility system located within or adjacent to the corporate limits of the cities of Salisbury and Fruitland. These areas represent the most intensely developed and populated area within the County. As such, it is important to understand the extent of the parks and recreation amenities to identify any gaps in coverage and potential locations for future land acquisition in support of expanding the existing system.

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Consistent with the proximity analysis methodology used to conduct the overall countywide geospatial assessment, the evaluation for the City of Salisbury includes parks of all service area sizes and types (i.e. countywide, citywide, community, and neighborhood-serving), as well as community school recreation areas. The only differentiating factor was the radius / buffer distance for each location. Given the rural nature of the majority of the County a five-mile buffer around each park and recreation facility was utilized; whereas the proximity analysis buffer around each facility adjacent to or contained within the two cities was reduced to half mile.

As depicted on Map 4.1ai, the cities of Salisbury and Fruitland benefit from extensive coverage of the existing parks and recreation system. With exception of non-residentially zoned areas and a segment of undeveloped areas in the northeast sector of the corporate boundary, the coverage area demonstrates the continued investment and commitment to provide quality parks and recreational amenities for residents and visitors to the region.

Park Equity Tool Analysis

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) has developed MDEnviroScreen, an online mapping application that provides users with data to support informed decision-making. The application includes an Environmental Justice (EJ) Score, which provides an overall evaluation of environmental and environmental justice indicators as defined by MDE regulations. The EJ Score incorporates data related to pollution burden and exposure, pollution burden and environmental effects, and sensitive populations, including socioeconomic factors.

In addition to the EJ Score, MDE includes a Climate Vulnerability Score (CVS) within the MDEnviroScreen application. The CVS evaluates the susceptibility of communities to climate-related impacts at the census tract level. The score integrates the existing EJ Score with five additional climate-related variables: tree canopy coverage, urban heat island, drought, storm surge, and flooding. These indicators are used to evaluate climate vulnerability based on both climate exposure and community impacts. The resulting percentile scores classify census tracts' vulnerability categories: baseline, low, moderate, or high.

The CVS is calculated using two primary sub-indices: the Community Impact Sub-Index and the Climate Exposure Sub-Index. The Community Impact Sub-Index assesses a community's capacity to adapt to climate-related hazards by considering adaptive capacity and sensitivity. Adaptive capacity is measured using tree canopy coverage, while sensitivity is measured using the EJ Score. The Climate Exposure Sub-Index considers potential impacts from four climate hazards—flooding, storm surge, drought, and urban heat islands—and assesses the overall exposure of communities to these hazards.

The park equity analysis for the County considers the location and distribution of the county's park system in conjunction with environmental justice and climate vulnerability data from MDEnviroScreen. This analysis helps identify areas where environmental and climate-related

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conditions, combined with the availability and distribution of recreational resources, may indicate a need for additional consideration when planning future park and recreation facilities.

As shown in Map 4.2, much of Wicomico County falls within the mid-range EJ Score percentiles, with large portions of the county falling within the 25th–50th and 50th–75th percentile ranges. The southwestern portion of the county contains a greater concentration of areas within the 50th–75th percentile range. The EJ Score considers factors related to pollution burden and exposure, environmental effects, sensitive populations, and socioeconomic conditions.

The southwestern portion of the county is influenced by the Nanticoke and Wicomico Rivers and includes areas with increased exposure to flooding. Much of this area is zoned for agricultural use and includes the rural communities of Whitehaven, Allen, Quantico, Parsonsburg, Pittsville, and Willards.

Existing recreational facilities in the southwestern portion of the county are primarily focused on water-based activities, including boat ramps and fishing sites. These facilities provide important recreational access to the county's waterways. In addition to these parks, there are also parks like Pirate's Wharf and Pemberton Historical Park that hosts additional open space for playgrounds, trails, and picnic facilities.

The analysis indicates that environmental justice, climate vulnerability, and the availability and diversity of recreational opportunities should be considered together when evaluating future park and recreation needs. Areas with higher EJ and climate vulnerability indicators and fewer diverse recreational opportunities may warrant additional consideration when prioritizing future park acquisitions, facility improvements, or the development of new recreational opportunities.

Goals and Objectives

Progress Toward Meeting 2022 LPPRP Goals

From a planning and capital programming perspective, the LPPRP serves as a policy document directing County investment considerations for maintaining, enhancing, and development of park and recreational activities. Therefore, it is imperative to evaluate the progress of implementation to gauge the level of achievement, as well as guide the development of this update. The following implementation efforts are occurring or have been completed since the previous LPPRP update:

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Land Acquisition

Three potential acquisition projects were identified in the 2022 Plan and two of these acquisitions were successfully advanced to enhance the County's inventory of facilities:

- Approximately 30 acres were acquired at Cove Road Beach, an existing beach property on the west side of the County. Adjacent to the existing park, the acquired properties were purchased with FEMA and Program Open Space funds and included demolition of buildings and structures which were prone to flooding and posed an environmental hazard to the Nanticoke River. The County will seek to integrate the new acreage into the existing park design in order to increase overall public access and amenities.
- Approximately 5 acres were acquired by the City of Salisbury as part of the North Prong Acquisition project.
- In addition to the aforementioned targeted acquisitions, the State of Maryland also acquired 445 acres of land as part of the Wetipquin Creek State Park project, which is located in Tyaskin, MD. Similar in style to the County's Pemberton Park, this new park will include nature trails, the historic Long Hill plantation house which dates to the mid-18th century, and opportunities for leisure recreation, heritage tourism, eco-tourism, and educational programming. The park is the first State Park located in County and is expected to open in 2027.Appendix D, titled "Wicomico County Acquisition Goals", includes two tables that summarize the County's progress toward 2022 goals and also includes a listing of 2027 acquisition goals.

Facility Construction, Maintenance, and Expansion

- In the 2022 Plan, a total of 62 potential projects were identified, with 43 of these projects being targeted in the "Immediate" time range of the Plan's life (2022-2026). Of the 43 immediate projects specifically identified in the 2022 Plan, the County completed 35 projects (81% completion). Additionally, the County completed 13 other recreation-facility-based projects that were not listed in the 2022 Plan. The 48 completed projects totaled approximately $59.5M in capital expenditures since the 2022 Plan was adopted, which included federal, state, county, and private funding sources.
- Project highlights include:
    - A $28M+ improvement at Arthur W. Perdue Stadium, home to the Delmarva Shorebirds, a Single A affiliate of the Baltimore Orioles. The improvements were funded through the Maryland Stadium Authority and brought the facility into Professional Development League (PDL) compliance, which was required by Major League Baseball.

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- $15M+ improvements at the Wicomico Civic Center, which included public safety improvements, additional space, and aesthetic upgrades. The Civic Center is the County's largest indoor public facility and includes public recreation programming.
- $2M+ renovation of Harmon Field. Previously, an abandoned softball field, Harmon Field now includes 12 lighted pickleball courts, two lighted basketball courts, a new playground and is one of the heaviest used facilities in the entire park system.
- $3M+ Phase 1 development of Pirate's Wharf. Acquired in 1997, the Phase 1 project created public access through on-site parking, walking trails, a comfort station, pavilion, and other site amenities. Phase 2 development will take place during the life of the next Plan.
- Installation of breakwaters structures at Roaring Point and Cove Road Beach. Both properties were threatened by steady erosion and the effects of storms and other weather events. The breakwaters will help preserve these locations for public access.
- Construction of a new dog park and boat ramp at Leonard's Mill Park. The dog park was completed in 2025 and provides a new amenity for residents on the north side of the County.
- $2.8M+ Phase 1 development at the Mason Dixon Sports Complex. The project will create a safer public park that will aid the County's efforts in public recreation, tourism, and support the adjacent Elementary School.
- Nearly $1M of improvements at Billy Gene Jackson Park. The project included the addition of field lights, irrigation of a youth sports field, basketball court lights, parking lot improvements, among other amenities.

Programs

- As noted in the program statistics in Table 4.1, the County enjoyed significant participation growth in youth sports, summer camps and environmental education / outdoor recreation programming.
- The County continues to expand its offerings for the special needs population by expanding the Challenger Little League program and by providing additional opportunities for adaptive programming at County-operated facilities. Since introducing the Challenger Little League program in 2021, participation has grown by 282% from 2021 to 2026.

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- The County initiated a new youth flag football program in 2024 that included close to 200 participants and also added the "HoopHers" girls' basketball program that reached just under 100 participants in 2025.
- Through a grant-funded program, the County reached over 650 participants in the "Game Changers" program, a series of free sports and clinic-based programs offered to reach youths in at-risk neighborhoods.

  Based on available funding and resources, the County will continue to explore ways to expand County recreational program offerings and will seek to leverage strategic partnerships which can help deliver additional programming activity, particularly in the areas of highest need.

Recreational Land Analysis – Acreage Goal

For years, the County has utilized an established land goal of 30-acres of local recreation acreage for every 1,000 county residents (shown as "ac/000). While total Countywide acreage dedicated to recreation and parks is still part of the acreage goal (See Table 4.13 below), the County recognizes that this one metric may not fully capture the extent to which these facilities are meeting the needs of residents. To help determine a more accurate assessment, the following questions were considered:

- How are park properties and amenities distributed throughout the County in relation to population centers?
- How accessible are facilities and amenities?
- To what extent are needs being met or unmet?

The most useful tool currently available to analyze these questions is the aforementioned Proximity Analysis, outlined above and included in Maps 4.1a through 4.1e.

As noted in the Proximity Analysis section, Map 4.1.a shows the proximity coverage of the total existing parks and recreation facility system in the County. With a five-mile radius in the unincorporated portions of the County (see Maps 4.1.a through 4.1.e) and a 0.5-mile radius within incorporated areas (see Map 4-1a.i), the series of maps illustrate how residents throughout the County have reasonable drive or walking access to a variety of facility types and recreational activities.

As discussed, the small gaps that do exist are not in populated areas or portions of the County that can be developed at this time. Since the County meets both its total acreage goal and has adequate geographic distribution of facilities, the County maintains that it has met its established acreage goal.

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Therefore, though its acreage goal has been met, the County will continue to utilize public surveys and other stakeholder feedback and seek to increase access to park facilities and amenities for all residents of the County. These priorities will be further outlined in the implementation and capital programming sections later in this chapter.

Table 4.13
Recreation Land Classification and Need Analysis

Area	Size (Acres)	Eligible Acres per 000 (2026 population: 107,000)
	Eligible	
State Recreation Land (Appendix C) Wicomico State Forest	1,245	11.1
Chesapeake Forest	18,852	158.86
Subtotal, State Recreation Land	18,181.27	169.96 (use maximum 15.0)
County Parks	1,839.1	17.2
Municipal Parks	344.4	3.2
Quasi-Public / Board of Education Parks Quasi-Public Board of Education	 59.9 175.6	 0.6 1.6
Subtotal, Local Recreation Land	2,418.9	
Local Resource Land	0.0	0.0
TOTAL, Public Recreation Land	20,600.17	37.6

Source: Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

Furthermore, the County will continue to determine priorities for acquisition and/or development projects on a case-by-case basis as different lands become available and recreation facility needs evolve. The County intends to address immediate maintenance and parkland development needs but reserves the right to be flexible in using POS funding by applying all or part, of its annual appropriation for land acquisition in accordance with POS guidelines.

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Future Goals and Objectives

In addition to its acreage goal, the County has identified overall goals and objectives in this Plan in order to maintain the County's excellence in leisure services, which is a tradition upheld over the 80-year history of the Parks & Recreation Department. The five core goals and their associated objectives of the 2027 *Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan*, presented below, reflect the Department's emphasis on providing an outstanding and sustainable parks system which is comparable to any mid-size county in the country.

Goal 1: Increase investment in Recreation & Parks facilities to better fulfill the Department's mission of improving quality of life.

- Acquire land for park development where opportunities are available and which will enhance the overall recreational system.
- Pursue federal, state, and local funding opportunities to implement capital improvement considerations contained within this Plan (or future opportunities that may present themselves).
- Encourage municipalities to access funding sources to support their parks and recreation facilities. An example of this is the Community Parks and Playground grant program.
- Seek annual funding from the Maryland's Waterway Improvement Funds to address ongoing restoration of County marinas and boat ramps.
- As new facilities come on-line, continue annual investment necessary to support maintenance and operations of new and existing facilities/programs.

Goal 2: Perpetuate practices to make sure facilities within the Department remain safe, functional, accessible, and attractive.

- Continue to use various methods of fundraising, financing, and cost avoidance to support parks and recreation.
- Emphasize maintenance and improvement of existing parks and make maximum use of currently owned land and developed facilities.
- Work closely with other government agencies, such as the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and private, non-profit organizations, such as the Chesapeake Bay Trust and Lower Shore Land Trust, to preserve and protect the County's natural resources.
- Maintain and promote public access to waterways, including improvement of ADA accessibility at County boat ramps and marinas.
- Provide safe cycling and walking / hiking opportunities throughout the County and seek opportunities to increase trail connectivity where feasible (via land and water).

Goal 3: Provide a wide variety of public recreation programs which are inclusive to all members of the community and promote healthy, active lifestyles.

- Strive to make programs affordable for all potential participants. Continue to raise funds to grow the "Tomorrow Fund" to perpetuate scholarships for those who cannot afford program registration fees.
- Seek grants, local donors and/or other funding sources that can complement the scholarship program, further subsidizing programs for those who need it in order to encourage more participation across the community.

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- Leverage local partnerships (including public and private partnerships) in order to offer more consistent programming, especially for historically under-served segments of the population. A successful example of this is the partnership formed in 2024 with the West Side Neighborhood Alliance (WSNA), which revitalized programming efforts at the West Side Community Center.
- Continue to offer programs for those with physical or mental disabilities by leveraging County facilities designed for this purpose.
- Pursue partnerships with local universities, government agencies and/or environmental groups to provide more environmental/educational programming at County parks. An opportunity to increase partnership with the State will be available with the addition of Wetipquin Creek State Park, scheduled to open in 2027. Additional programming opportunities will be presented with ongoing development at Pirate's Wharf, among other facilities.
- Continue to develop and enhance youth recreational sports programs, focusing on the Department's youth sports core values of fun, community, sportsmanship, and skill development,
- Broaden program offerings for adult sport participants, including exploration of women's sports leagues.

Goal 4: Develop marketing vision and strategy for the Department to improve the County's overall image and to increase participation in programs and activities.

- Evaluate the Department's brand and image and consider ways to more effectively promote the Department and its activities.
- Continue to promote passive and active parks, the Wicomico Civic Center and tourism signature events to support the Department's mission of enhancing "quality of life" for residents. Utilize all available forms of advertising within budgeted means.
- Build on the County's location and natural assets and the Department's strong reputation to maintain County's status as the hub of the Lower Eastern Shore.
- Advance technology throughout County facilities in order to provide better delivery of services and awareness to all residents.

Goal 5: Perpetuate an overall culture that is customer-focused, mission-minded, and that values employees to best achieve the Department's mission.

- Continue to engage stakeholders and the general public about what facility or programming needs exist and work consistently to exceed expectations, always emphasizing the customer experience.
- In addition to promoting the County's own programs and activities, work directly with outside event organizers and promoters to host events that serve local residents and visitors.

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The "above and beyond" approach to event management has allowed the County to earn a reputation for hosting local, regional, national and international events.

- Perpetuate a work culture that values its employees and consistently recognizes efforts for advancing the Department's mission.

State of Maryland

The State of Maryland, through the Departments of Planning and Natural Resources, has developed its own Land Preservation and Recreation Plan (2027-2037), which established the State's overall vision for recreation and parks. The Plan identified the following "Guiding Principles", which are supported by stated priorities, goals and actions intended to help realize the overall vision.

- Principle One: Steward What's Already Protected. Priorities include natural resource stewardship, healthy forests, clean water and healthy waterways, agricultural land preservation, and historic and cultural resources.
- Principle Two: Grow, Together. Priorities include new open space and recreation, new preserved lands, coastal climate adaptation, and balanced development.
- Principle Three: Reinvest in Parks, Reinvest in People. Priorities include ongoing parks and open space care, capital projects, expanding access, interpretation and programs, and heat resilience.
- Principle Four: Blue and Green Connections. Priorities include expanded multi-use trail networks, trail experiences, water access, and more transportation options. All five County goals listed above, including the Department's overall mission of "enhancing the quality of life for County residents…" complement the State's "Guiding Principles" for recreation and parks. As the County continues to implement its strategic objectives over the next 5 years, State goals will be mutually advanced. For example:
- County goal 1 (increased park investment) is clearly reflected in the state's Principle Three: "Reinvest in Parks, Reinvest in People": This is accomplished, in part, through a number of state funding sources, most notably Program Open Space. State Program Open Space represents a significant percentage of the County's annual capital investment in parks and recreation and has been a lifeline to keep parks safe, functional, accessible and attractive over the years. As an example, the continued development at Pirate's Wharf is being funded through multiple federal, state and local sources (including Land-Water Conservation Fund, Program Open Space, Waterway Improvement, among other sources). In addition to providing needed funds for development projects, Program Open Space also helps accomplish Principle Two: "Grow, Together" through POS acquisition funds which provide permanent protection

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for recreation lands. As noted in the acreage goal section, the County will continue to seek opportunities for acquisitions which will complement the existing park system.

- County goals 2 and 3 (access to public facilities and programs) are clearly reflected in in the state's Principle One: "Steward What's Already Protected"; Principle Three: "Reinvest in Parks, Reinvest in People"; and Principle Four: "Blue and Green Connections." As noted, these state goals tie directly to the Department's mission of improving quality of life through expanded access to facilities, programs and services. To accomplish the mission, the County will continue to leverage public and private partnerships, including with the State of Maryland, in order to preserve and expand County natural resource areas and public parks. The County will also place an emphasis on inclusivity while planning for future facilities and programs.

- County goal 4 (marketing vision and strategy) is also supported by "Guiding Principle Three: "Reinvest in Parks, Reinvest in People.", Public outreach and marketing efforts serve as a complement to all of the Guiding Principles, in that more effective marketing promotes awareness and community involvement which creates more desirable places to live. Keeping the public informed about facilities and programs is paramount when it comes to increasing levels of participation and engagement, and the County will continue to assess best practices to reach the widest audience possible.
- Similar to County goal 4, County goal 5 (perpetuating a culture that values customers and employees) also complements the spirit of all four "Guiding Principles" outlined in the state plan, as the principles were derived primarily from stakeholder and public feedback. Staying connected to the community and public demand is an important part of executing the County's vision over the next five years.

Source: LPRP Draft For Public Comment

National

The DRPT and applicable partners will continue efforts to maintain and expand recreational activities and programs for people of all abilities and ages consistent with the following three pillars of the National Recreation and Parks Association:

- Pillar #1: "Health and Well-Being." NRPA supports community-driven solutions that address public health issues and improve the conditions where people live, learn, play, and grow. This can be done through strategic partnerships, resource development, policy change, and professional development, among other ways.

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- Pillar #2: "Equity". NPRA strives to provide access for all people to enjoy the benefits of quality parks and recreation facilities and programs. The national organization has a number of initiatives, to this effect, that foster social connection and belonging.
- Pillar #3: "Environmental Resilience". NRPA advocates for a stewardship approach to parks and recreation, expanding healthier parks and natural spaces for current and future generations. According to the NRPA, over 11 million-acres of parks and green spaces are managed by parks and recreation professionals across the United States. Stewardship practices should include initiatives such as land preservation, recycling, sustainable energy to power parks, climate resiliency, green stormwater infrastructure, among other tactics.

  Source: Our Three Pillars, Impacting Communities | National Recreation and Park Association

Implementing Programs

In order to fulfill its mission and to accomplish the aforementioned goals and objectives, the Department relies on a number of internal and external funding sources. The County tax appropriation is the most foundational funding source to assist with annual operating and overhead expenses. The Department also leverages, where appropriate, tourism reserve funds generated by hotel room taxes, in order to support facility improvement projects that will generate increased visitations to the County. Besides County funding, the County relies heavily on federal and state grants to support many of the capital projects required to update existing facilities and to develop new facilities. The two most consistent funding sources are State Program Open Space and State Waterway Improvement funds. Both of these sources are utilized on a regular basis by the County in order to advance capital priorities related to Recreation & Parks. Additionally, in recent years the County has received federal funds through the Land Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), Maryland Heritage Areas Authority Capital Grant (MHAA), Recreation Trails Grant, among other federal and state grant opportunities. The Pirate's Wharf park development is the most recent example of this, as funding was secured through LWCF, Program Open Space, Waterway Improvement, MHAA Capital Grant, among other local sources.

While these funding sources help advance capital priorities, the Department must also meet its annual operating responsibilities through creative revenue generation and cost avoidance with its facilities, programs and events. As noted in previous sections, leveraging partnerships with state and local organizations is one of the methods employed by the Department to assist in accomplishing its mission.

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In addition to funding considerations, the County has also included policy & program recommendations which pertain to all three areas of the plan: Parks/Recreation, Agricultural Preservation, and Natural Resources Conservation. Policy/program recommendations are actions that do not involve major capital expenses and do not pertain to a specific planning area.

Policy and Program Recommendations

Policy and program recommendations included in the Plan were derived from staff and stakeholder feedback and took a number of considerations into account. These considerations include:

1. Existing inventory of park facilities, amenities, programs and open space;
2. The County's needs as identified by user demand feedback and analysis; and
3. Evaluation of the County's current and anticipated resources to be able to maintain existing facilities and/or to possibly increase the number of facilities and programs to deliver services.

Recreation and Park System

RP-1: Work with DNR, MDP, MDOT, and local agencies/stakeholders to develop trail systems within the County and increase connectivity to points of interest throughout the County.

Examples of potential actions include:

- Connecting state-owned forested parcels to the County trail network, including walking and biking trails, and equestrian trails in the Chesapeake Forest
- Developing a countywide master plan to identify existing and potential new soft launch sites and determining how these locations can connect to one another;
- Connecting, by water and over land, interesting sites to one another and to major population and activity centers in the County;
- Using the new boat ramp/soft launch area at Pirate's Wharf as a hub to connect to various points on the west side of the Wicomico River;
- Coordinating with federal, state, and local government agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations to identify potential resources to plan and implement trail projects;
- In new developments with proposed pedestrian or bike paths, connections should be incorporated into the design to provide connections to existing or proposed facilities extending outside of the community or connecting neighborhoods; and

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- Developing a master plan at Connelly Mill that could include potential connectivity between the Connelly Mill property, the adjacent Naylor Mill Forest (owned by the City of Salisbury) and the adjacent Henry S. Parker Athletic Complex (owned by the County).

RP-2: Develop recreational programming and leisure opportunities for citizens and tourists to enjoy low impact eco-tourism activities such as hiking, biking, equestrian, and non-motorized water sports.

Examples of potential actions include:

- Developing trail guides and features that explore and enhance the natural and historic features of the County;
- Developing a variety of itineraries that could be utilized by residents, transient visitors or group tours. These could be developed by the County or in partnership with local outfitters.
- RP-3: Ensure County trails are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The ADA ensures public recreation facilities are accessible to those with physical disabilities. All new County trails should comply with the requirements of the ADA.

RP-4: Continue to evaluate older playgrounds to ensure compliance with the U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) guidelines.

Playground safety is paramount for any recreation and park system. The has always assessed playground equipment against CPSC guidelines. With the aging of County facilities and the rehabilitation theme of the last 3 Plans, playground safety issues have become even more important as the county works to make the best, continued use of many current facilities.

RP-5: Continue to enhance the comprehensive parks maintenance management program to ensure safe and attractive parks and to replace older equipment and vehicles.

Maintenance is the most important practice in prolonging the life of parks and recreation facilities. The County has adopted a comprehensive maintenance management program that is a major reason the County system has become a showcase for small counties nationwide. The Department should continue to enhance maintenance management practices, incorporating past experience and adapting practices to the needs of individual parks and facilities.

Replacement of vehicles and equipment based on life cycles is a crucial element of the program. Deferred replacement and maintenance practices inevitably lead to increased cost and unreliability. The Department should work closely with federal, state, and local governments to identify potential funding sources for capital programming expenses, including, but not limited to,

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replacement of vehicles and equipment. The County can also better utilize technology to track and manage maintenance issues within its system.

RP-6: Work collaboratively with the Wicomico County Public Schools (WCPS) to make public facilities reasonably available and affordable for programming needs.

The County Public Schools and the DRPT serve the same market: the citizens of the County. The general public will benefit from programs offered by either organization. Since the County does not operate an exclusive indoor recreation space, the two agencies should continue to work together to make facilities available for joint usage and to minimize the cost of hosting public programs at both Board of Education and County-owned facilities. This may include the trading of space at Board of Education facilities for recreation programs and Department facilities (including the Wicomico Civic Center) for Board of Education functions. The development of a County-operated indoor recreation space would only enhance the ability of the County and the school system to better deliver programs and services.

RP-7: Continue to bring visitors and dollars into the County by leveraging the County's outstanding recreation and parks system, Board of Education facilities, and facilities operated by private entities.

The County should continue to promote and leverage its parks and recreation facilities to support amateur sports tournaments and signature special events. Examples of specific potential actions include:

- The Henry S. Parker Athletic Complex, Perdue Stadium, and the Wicomico Civic Center should be maintained and marketed as the potential site for as many regional and national sporting and entertainment events as possible.
- Consider the development of a dedicated indoor public recreation space that could both meet local recreational needs and be leveraged to enhance the County's tourism efforts, especially during the shoulder season (November through March).
- The Department should continue to use Winterplace and Pemberton Park to stage the Beer Festival, County Fair and other tourism events.
- Invest additional resources into Winterplace Park and East Wicomico Little League, which are adjacent to one another, as the combined facilities could be attractive to outside organizers and complement efforts at the Henry S. Parker Athletic Complex.
- Expand the reach of tourism marketing to promote the as a base for amateur sports tournaments, signature special events, meeting & conventions and transient visits to those residing within a 6-hour drive. Market the County as a one-day or weekend destination. Highlight specific County attractions, in essence "sharing" local resources with tourists, including:
    - Scenic bike routes;

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- Outstanding fishing and boating opportunities;
- Water trails for non-motorized water sports such as kayaking and canoeing;
- Natural and heritage areas;
- Abundant flat land, particularly for low-impact outdoor fitness programs which appeal to the senior population;

  Additional analysis of the County's sports tourism efforts in the public parks system is included in Appendix _____.

RP-8 Continue to strengthen municipal, recreation council & stakeholder relationships to support programs and park operations.

Municipalities and local recreation councils are key contributors to leisure services in the County. They lift up their constituent's needs and undertake ways and means to reduce local tax subsidy for recreation programs and park operations. The County should continue to engage municipalities and active recreation councils, supporting and encouraging efforts to help meet leisure needs.

RP-9: Continue to review the County fee structure for possible modifications to increase participation.

The fiscal challenges caused by increasing costs to operate programs, including minimum wage increases, make it difficult to keep programs affordable. Many residents face hardship to afford the program fees. The recreation staff should continue to monitor the fee structure for all programs and seek creative means to maintain or lower them to gain participation.

RP-10: Continue to support the endowment to fund scholarships and programs for the County's at-risk populations.

One method of continuing to reach the County's at-risk populations, such as low-income youth and seniors, in the face of fiscal austerity is to provide scholarships and targeted programs funded through endowments—money set aside to draw interest and dividends, which are then used for a specific purpose. The Department has helped to establish a scholarship fund with the Community Foundation and hold events annually to grow the fund to perpetuate the award of scholarships to register in its programs. The earnings from the fund's $160,000 principal are awarded in scholarships annually.

RP-11In conjunction with local partners, consider developing recreation programs that address the leisure needs of the County's continually diversifying population.

The County has a relatively diverse population. Minorities and seniors represent growing segments of the population with unique leisure service needs. The Department should consider creative ways to meet the leisure service needs of various population segments with minimal increases in department costs.

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RP-12: Coordinate with State and local governments to identify alternative methods to quantify user demands, needs, and experiences.

The County has a wide range of recreational facility types, some of which are in rural locations and prove more difficult to track in terms of user demand. The County is actively engaged with public recreation councils, Board of Education, municipalities, and the Recreation Commission who provide valuable feedback on facilities and levels of service. The County will continue to explore industry practices and work with DNR, local governments, and non-governmental organizations to develop user metrics in order to enhance analysis specific to facility types and planning areas.

A-1: Evaluate the minimum acreage requirement for participation in the County easement program.

The requirement of a minimum 50-acres potentially excludes willing property owners from participation in the County agricultural easement program. The County has a goal of encouraging participation in the program, and smaller farms adjacent to current agricultural preservation districts would help the County's goal of assembling larger areas of land that are at least temporarily preserved. If desired, the County could make larger acreage parcels a higher priority for easement purchase.

A-2: Develop alternative methods of compensation for easements to meet a variety of financial needs of farm families.

The financial tools used and timing for disbursement of funds can have a significant effect on the attractiveness of preservation as an alternative to selling farmland for development. Each landowner has a unique set of financial circumstances and goals. A land preservation deal includes many other benefits than simply a single check at closing. The County should continue to assist landowners to help promote land preservation as a financially viable alternative to development.

A-3: Continue preservation efforts designed to achieve the preservation goals contained in this Plan.

The County continues to administer the Rural Legacy Program and the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) Program to support the County's long-term agricultural land preservation goals. These programs provide opportunities to preserve agricultural lands through the acquisition of conservation and agricultural preservation easements, helping to protect productive farmland from future development and maintain the County's rural character. The County's anticipated annual preservation goal is approximately 200-acres per year, with continued efforts focused on identifying eligible properties and pursuing available funding and easement opportunities to help achieve this goal.

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A-4: Obtain Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) certification for the County Land Preservation Program.

The County will continue to pursue certification under the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) program. Achieving MALPF certification would provide Wicomico County with a greater share of the Agricultural Transfer Tax (ATT) revenue generated within the County. Certified counties are permitted to retain 75% of ATT revenue for use in local agricultural land preservation efforts, including the purchase of agricultural preservation easements. Currently, because Wicomico County is not a certified county, the County retains only 33% of ATT revenue. Pursuing certification would therefore increase the amount of funding available locally to support the preservation of agricultural lands through the purchase of easements, while providing the County with greater flexibility to direct these resources toward local agricultural preservation priorities.

Natural Resource Conservation

N-1: Preserve open space and improve the quality of the Chesapeake Bay tributaries.

The County should continue efforts to preserve open space, as a function of subdivision regulations and purchase of conservation easements from voluntary landowners. Additionally, continue implementation of stormwater retrofit practices associated with the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Loads targets. To meet state-mandated nutrient goals for the Wicomico River, the County should continue to explore alternatives to connect existing residential areas with failing septic systems to waste water treatment plants.

N-2: Continue discussions between representatives of environmental organizations, and County officials to discuss and assess important environmental issues in the County.

As noted above, many environmental groups in the County work to preserve our natural resources. A working group of representatives from environmental organizations meets periodically with County representatives to establish communication and address important environmental issues.

N-3: Consider land banking and other voluntary mechanisms to preserve land along Wicomico County waterways.

The vast majority—some estimate as much as 95%—of the land along the Wicomico River is already developed. Wetlands surround much of the Nanticoke River. In situations where much land is simply undevelopable, for any number of reasons, land banking is an acceptable consideration. The County may wish to begin land banking—the practice of purchasing and holding land for future use (or preservation)—along County waterways. Many options are available to help structure acceptable arrangements between the County and a willing landowner, such as deferred compensation, life estate, bargain sale, and many others. The County should consider all opportunities to conserve land along the adjacent tidal waterways.

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N-4: Foster a strong working relationship between the County and the State in areas of mutual interest.

The County and the State of Maryland have many common land preservation goals and targets. The County—through the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism and the Wicomico Department of Planning, Zoning, and Community Development and the State of Maryland through the Maryland Departments of Planning and Natural Resources; should work closely to strengthen efforts in areas of mutual concern, such as:

- Rural Legacy;
- Sustainable forestry;
- State land acquisition;
- Forest protection and preservation;
- Conservation funds; and
- Wetland protection.

N-5: Consider coupling agricultural preservation easement purchases with initiatives to protect Green Infrastructure hubs and corridors.

Easement purchases have successfully preserved agricultural land throughout the County. Combining agricultural easement purchases with initiatives to protect GI hubs and corridors may benefit the preservation of both agricultural land and areas of Green Infrastructure (GI)

N-6: Research and identify viable alternative methods of compensation for easements; i.e., tax-free interest payments, tax donation deductions, property tax credit, etc.

Each landowner's financial circumstances are unique. The compensation arrangement structured for one owner might be detrimental to others. In order to appeal to the greatest number of landowners, the County should research potential compensation arrangements. Allowing flexibility in compensation will offer the best chance for the County to obtain each easement.

N-7: Seek statewide Program Open Space funding to acquire lands within targeted high-priority Green Infrastructure hubs and corridors.

The Plan identifies GI hubs and corridors throughout the County and establishes a priority ranking for these areas (Map 6.2). The Plan recognizes the highest-priority GI areas identified within each Maryland county as important areas for statewide consideration and preservation. The County should continue to coordinate with the State to pursue Program Open Space funding opportunities for the acquisition of properties, either through fee-simple purchase or conservation easements, within high-priority GI hubs and corridors. Prioritizing these areas for acquisition would help protect important natural resource areas, maintain connections between existing protected lands, and further the County's land preservation and GI objectives.

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County Priorities and Capital Improvement Plan

The 2027 *Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan* seeks to integrate the user demand analysis to translate into capital programming recommendations, which address needs where and when practicable and economically feasible. Capital recommendations are included in more detail below.

The County will continue to emphasize rehabilitation and maintenance of existing facilities in an effort to keep facilities safe, functional, accessible and attractive. As noted, the County will continue its longstanding practice of remaining opportunistic with acquisition and/or development projects which meet current needs or address emerging future needs and will need to balance its capacity to maintain such facilities with available resources.

Recreation, Parks, and Land – Plan

The 2027 *Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan* illustrates the strong link between: 1) the public need for parkland and other sites for leisure activity; and 2) the importance of preserving significant areas of land from development, specifically farmland and natural resources. The final section of the Plan provides guidance, in the form of capital improvements, to pursue the goals of increased land preservation and an enhanced recreation system in the County.

This final section is organized as follows:

- The *County Perspective* includes the Plan map, and a brief discussion of how the land preservation, parks, and recreation elements combine to form a tool to further the goals of land preservation and recreation services in the County;
- *Capital Recommendations and Planning Areas* involve capital expenses for parkland or open space acquisition and/or development at a specific site or within a specific planning area. The capital recommendations section is presented by the planning area, including a more focused discussion and plan map for each planning area. While the majority of projects included in the capital recommendations list are on County owned or operated facilities, additional projects on lands owned by local municipalities are also included and are denoted. A complete list of municipal priorities and projects, where provided, is included in Appendix ____

County Perspective

The 2027 *Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan* (Maps 4.1 and 5.1) illustrates the effects of recent land preservation and recreation efforts in the County and provides guidance for future initiatives. Recreation, agricultural heritage, and natural resource conservation

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all share the common characteristics of preserving land from development. Specific discussion of the Plan in each planning area is found in the Capital Recommendations section.

Capital Priorities

The 2027 *Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan* includes specific capital recommendations outlined by planning areas. Capital priorities are a result of feedback gleaned from stakeholder interviews and noted deficiencies identified earlier in this Chapter and are closely connected to policy recommendations included above.

The County strives to continue developing parklands to meet future needs of its citizens and will remain opportunistic and flexible to adapt to changing market conditions. Furthermore, the County is mindful that new capital improvements are subject to available local, state and federal funding and must also be balanced with the County's capacity to maintain such facilities at its current standards.

Top capital priorities are as follows:

1. Maintenance of existing facilities to keep parks safe, functional, accessible and attractive;
2. Complete Phase II development at Pirate's Wharf in order to provide public water access on the Wicomico River;
3. Explore feasibility of acquiring or developing a dedicated indoor recreation facility to meet a long-existing recreational need in the County and to support the County's tourism efforts.
4. Initiate a public master planning process for the Connelly Mill property and seek funding and partnership opportunities to provide public access to this space.
5. Complete renovations at the County's marina facilities including replacement of public boat ramps, dredging projects, and other facility upgrades.
6. Complete Phase II development at the Mason Dixon Complex in Delmar. Among other amenities, this phase will include a new parking lot, which will enhance public safety and support both the park and the adjacent elementary school.
7. Identify opportunities to improve access to facilities and programs in underserved areas of the community (as initially identified in the Park Equity Analysis). This could include opportunities for acquisition or development projects in underserved portions of the County, in addition to program development to increase overall access to residents.

Other Considerations

The County recognizes the need to address user demand deficiencies where feasible but is mindful that financial and human resources are, at times, a limiting factor in certain cases. Where these

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deficiencies cannot be met directly, the County will strive to maximize public and private partnerships in order to address local recreation needs. A prominent example of this is:

1. *Water Access*

   As noted in Map 4.1d, the County recognizes a public desire for swimming pools, which could be cost prohibitive and inefficient since swimming needs can be met in other ways (i.e. single-family and multifamily developments, private pool memberships, the beach, access to rivers through boating or small watercraft, etc.). While a public aquatics facility is not specifically recommended as a capital priority in the 2027 Plan, further exploration of public interest and feasibility for this type of facility is warranted.

Summary of Capital Recommendations

The County's priorities in recreation and parks are shown in a summary of the proposed capital improvements. The estimated costs of potential projects are subject to available funding, and, in most cases, funding sources have yet to be identified. The entire capital improvements program is summarized in Table 4.15 and detailed in Tables 4.16 through 4.21:

- Total projects: 56
- Total estimated cost: $79,450,000
- Acres to be acquired: 43
- Immediate (FY27-FY31): $53,300,000 (67%)
- Mid-Range (FY32-FY36): $,11,000,000 (14%)
- Long-Range (FY37-FY41): $15,150,000 (19%)
- Acquisition: $3,615,000 (5%)
- Development: $39,950,000 (50%)
- Rehabilitation: $35,885,000 (45%)

Table 4.15
Summary of Capital Recommendations

Planning Area	Number of Projects	Est. Total Cost ($000s)	Acres to be Acquired	Estimated Costs ($000s)								
				Immediate (FY27 – FY31)			Mid – Range (FY27 – FY31)			Long – Range (FY37- FY41)		
				Acq.	Dev.	Reh.	Acq.	Dev.	Reh.	Acq.	Dev.	Reh.
Tri - Town	5	$2,050	10.00	$100	$-	$950	$-	$1,000	$-	$-	$-	$-
West Side	12	$9,075	5.00	$75	$2,800	$3,750	$-	$300	$150	$-	$-	$2,000
North	10	$11,620	0.00	$-	$3,600	$820	$-	$5,000	$1,200	$-	$-	$1,000
Central	21	$54,890	24.00	$2,000	$21,050	$16,540	$1,400	$1,000	$750	$-	$5,000	$7,150
South	3	$550	0.00	$-	$-	$550	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
East	5	$1,265	4.00	$40	$-	$1,025	$-	$200	$-	$-	$-	$-
Total	***56***	***$79,450***	***43***	**$2,215**	**$27,450**	**$23,635**	**$1,400**	**$7,500**	**$2,100**	**$-**	**$5,000**	**$10,150**

Source: Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

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Capital Programming by Planning Areas

The capital recommendations of the 2027 *Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan* are presented by planning area. Each section includes a larger-scale version of the Plan map, and a discussion of the effect of the plan on the planning area. Planning area discussions are presented in the following order: Tri-Town; West Side; North; Central; South; and the East. Updates on progress from the 2022 Plan are also included in each planning area as a point of reference to track progress since the last adoption.

Tri-Town Planning Area

Projects completed from the 2022 Plan include: replacement of a playground module at Gene Lowe Park, along with multiple upgrades at San Domingo Park including basketball court replacement and installation of perimeter fencing at the facility. A master plan for the West Metro property was also developed that provides the County potential future development options, if warranted. A completed project that was not listed in the 2022 Plan includes the field lighting project at Gene Lowe Park in Sharptown, which will provide greater flexibility for night-time recreational activities in the Tri-Town Planning Area.

The 2027 *Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan* proposes 5 capital projects, estimated to cost $2.05 million in the Tri-Town Planning Area (Map 4.3, Table 4.16).

Consistent with the County's goal to emphasize rehabilitation with its aging park system, rehabilitation projects are included for Gene Lowe Park, Cherry Beach and the Hebron Lions Club facility in Hebron. New development includes a potential acquisition, master planning process and development of parkland in Hebron.

Table 4.16
Proposed Capital Improvements

Site	No. (Map 7.2)	Project Description	Est. Total Cost ($000s)	Acres to be Acquired	Estimated Costs ($000s)								
					Immediate (FY27-31)			Mid – Range (FY32 – FY36)			Long – Range (FY37-41)		
					Acq.	Dev.	Reh.	Acq.	Dev.	Reh.	Acq.	Dev.	Reh.
Gene Lowe Park		Rehabilitation of Gene Lowe Basketball Court	$100	0	$-	$-	$100	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
Hebron Acquisition		Parkland acquisition for Hebron - to expand parking & amenities	$100	10	$100	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-

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*Hebron Lions Club		Development of acquired property and rehab of existing park;	$1,500	0	$-	$-	$500	$-	$1,000	$-	$-	$-	$-
Sharptown – Cherry Beach		Replace bulkhead at Cherry Beach fishing pier	$250	0	$-	$-	$250	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
Sharptown – Cherry Beach		Rehabilitation of concession stand at Cherry Beach	$100	0	$-	$-	$100	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
TOTAL			***$2,050***	***10***	**$100**	**$-**	**$950**	**$-**	**$1,000**	**$-**	**$-**	**$-**	**$-**

Source: Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

West Planning Area

As part of the 2022 Plan, the County completed a total of 7 identified projects, including: Phase 1 development at Pirate's Wharf, Cedar Hill Marina bulkhead and playground replacement, Cove Road acquisition and installation of breakwaters, Roaring Point installation of breakwaters, and replacement of the West Side Community Center roof. In addition to the projects identified in the 2022 Plan, the County also installed a new fishing pier at the Wetipquin boat ramp, in response to public demand for a safer fishing location at the site.

The 2027 *Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan* proposes 12 projects estimated at $9.08 million in the West Side Planning Area (Map 4.4, Table 4.17), including Phase II development of Pirate's Wharf, completion of Cedar Hill and Nanticoke rehabilitation of the bulkhead, piles, and catwalks; boat ramp replacements, dredging of both harbors, and a potential acquisition at Nanticoke Harbor.

Table 4.17
Proposed Capital Improvements

Site	No. (Map 7.3)	Project Description	Est. Total Cost ($000s)	Acres to be Acquired	Estimated Costs ($000s)								
					Immediate (FY27-31)			Mid – Range (FY32 – FY36)			Long – Range (FY37-41)		
					Acq.	Dev.	Reh.	Acq.	Dev.	Reh.	Acq.	Dev.	Reh.
Cedar Hill Marina		Replace boat ramp	$500	0	$-	$-	$500	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
Cedar Hill Marina		Replace bulkhead, piles, catwalks	$250	0	$-	$-	$250	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
Cedar Hill Marina		Dredging of the marina	$2,000	0	$-	$-	$1,000	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$1,000

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Cedar Hill Marina		Parking lot restoration / resurfacing	$250	0	$-	$-	$250	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
Cove Road		Park expansion project - connecting new	$800	0	$-	$800	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
Nanticoke Harbor		Replace boat ramp	$500	0	$-	$-	$500	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
Nanticoke Harbor		Dredging of the harbor	$2,000	0	$-	$-	$1,000	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$1,000
Nanticoke Harbor		Parking lot restoration / resurfacing	$250	0	$-	$-	$250	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
Nanticoke Harbor		Acquisition for park expansion	$75	5	$75	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
Pirate's Wharf		Phase II Development: Boat ramp, fishing pier, observation decks	$2,000	0	$-	$2,000	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
Pirate's Wharf		Phase III Development: Trail system in wooded portion of park	$300	0	$-	$-	$-	$-	$300	$-	$-	$-	$-
Wetipquin Boat Ramp		Restoration of old piers	$150	0	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$150	$-	$-	$-
TOTAL			***$9,075***	***5***	**$75**	**$2,800**	**$3,750**	**$-**	**$300**	**$150**	**$-**	**$-**	**$2,000**

Source: Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

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North Planning Area

The County completed 8 projects identified in the 2022 Plan in the North Planning Area, including: Henry S. Parker Athletic Complex (HPAC) improvements including infield and dugout rehabilitation, field lighting improvements and playground replacement; boat ramp and bridge replacement at Leonard's Mill; dog park construction at Leonard's Mill; master planning and Phase 1 development at Mason Dixon; and replacement of playground and basketball court at Edgewood Park. In addition to the projects specifically identified in the 2022 Plan, the County also completed a long-term planning exercise for the concession stands at HPAC.

The 2027 *Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan* proposes 10 projects estimated at $11.62 million (Map 4.5, Table 4.18). The most notable projects include: a master plan and the phased development of Connelly Mill Park to make it accessible to the public; Phase

II development at the Mason Dixon Complex; rehabilitation of the skate park at Gordy Park, among other projects in the North Planning Area.

Table 4.18
Proposed Capital Improvements

Site	No. (Map 7.5)	Project Description	Est. Total Cost ($000s)	Acres to be Acquired	Estimated Costs ($000s)								
					Immediate (FY27-31)			Mid – Range (FY32 – FY36)			Long – Range (FY37-41)		
					Acq.	Dev.	Reh.	Acq.	Dev.	Reh.	Acq.	Dev.	Reh.
Connelly Mill		Master Plan Development	$100	0	$-	$100	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
Connelly Mill		Phase 1 Development ---	$1,000	0	$-	$1,000	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
Connelly Mill		Phase 2 Development --- pending results of	$5,000	0	$-	$-	$-	$-	$5,000	$-	$-	$-	$-
* Gordy Park		Rehabilitation of skateboard park	$100	0	$-	$-	$100	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
HPAC		Parking lot renovation project; re-stoning, bumpers	$400	0	$-	$-	$400	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
HPAC		Replace turf fields, fields 5-8	$1,200	0	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$1,200	$-	$-	$-
HPAC		Site, playing field renovation project	$1,000										$1,000
Leonard's Mill Park		Playground replacement project	$120	0	$-	$-	$120	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
Leonard's Mill Park		Parking lot rehabilitation including repaving	$200	0	$-	$-	$200	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-

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Mason Dixon Sports Complex		Phase II Development: construction of parking lot, restroom/concessions building; park amenities	$2,500	0	$-	$2,500	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
TOTAL			$11,620	$-	$-	$3,600	$820	$-	$5,000	$1,200	$-	$-	$1,000

Source: Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

Central Planning Area

A total of 14 projects listed in the 2022 Plan for the Central Planning Area were completed. Highlights include: a $2.1M improvement at Harmon field which converted an old softball field into a 12-court lighted pickleball and basketball complex; a $10.4M renovation to the Wicomico Civic Center; a $28.6M project at AWP Stadium that brings the facility into Professional Development League (PDL) compliance; field and irrigation improvements at Billy Gene Jackson Park; roadway and parking lot improvements at Pemberton Park, along with multiple playground and court renovations in the Central Planning Area. In addition, 9 other projects were completed in the Central Planning Area that were not on the 2022 list. Highlights of these projects include: addition of field lighting at Winterplace Park; replacement of the playing field at AWP Stadium; addition of field and court lighting at Billy Gene Jackson Park; replacement of the Civic Center roof; renovation of Indian Village Playground including playground` and other amenities; court renovations at Kilburnie and Nick Meyer parks; a master planning effort for future improvements at Emerson Holloway Park, among other projects.

The 2027 *Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan* proposes 21 capital improvements in the Central Planning Area, at a cost of$54.89 M (Map 4.6, Table 4.19). Notable projects include: acquisition and/or development of a dedicated indoor recreation space continued rehabilitation of AWP Stadium; acquisition and development of the North Prong properties located in the City of Salisbury rehabilitation of East Wicomico Little League; park improvements at Emerson Holloway Park; replacement of the Riverside Boat Ramp (west ramp), among other County and City of Salisbury proposed projects.

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Table 4.19
Proposed Capital Improvements

Site	No. (Map 7.5)	Project Description	Est. Total Cost ($000s)	Acres to be Acquired	Estimated Costs ($000s)								
					Immediate (FY27-31)			Mid – Range (FY32 – FY36)			Long – Range (FY37-41)		
					Acq.	Dev.	Reh.	Acq.	Dev.	Reh.	Acq.	Dev.	Reh.
Arthur W. Perdue Stadium		Professional Development League (PDL) Phase II Improvements	$15,000	0	$-	$-	$15,000	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
Billy Gene Jackson Park		Tennis court rehabilitation	$120	0	$-	$-	$120	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
Centennial Village Playground		Playground replacement	$100	0	$-	$-	$100	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
* City of Salisbury - Amphitheatre		Amphitheatre shade and restrooms	$150	0	$-	$150	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
* City of Salisbury - City Park		Pedestrian bridge restoration, light replacement, additional park amenities	$500	0	$-	$-	$-	$-	$500	$-	$-	$-	$-
* City of Salisbury - North Prong Park		Acquisition	$1,400	14	$-	$-	$-	$1,400	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
* City of Salisbury - North Prong Park		Development Project: open space / trailways and park amenities	$5,000	0	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$5,000	$-
* City of Salisbury - Salisbury Zoo		Education and Science center; exhibit upgrades	$5,000	0	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$5,000
East Wicomico Little League		Rehabilitation of Little League Complex	$500	0	$-	$500	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-

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Emerson Holloway		Park re-design, rehabilitation and development project	$500	0	$-	$400	$100	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
Courts at Harmon Field		Parking lot rehabilitation	$100	0	$-	$-	$-	$-	$100	$-	$-	$-
Indian Village Playground		Phase II development project	$200	0	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$200	$-	$-
Indoor Recreation Center		Acquisition of property for indoor rec center	$2,000	10	$2,000	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
Indoor Recreation Center		Development and build-out of indoor rec center	$20,000	0	$-	$20,000	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
Kilburnie Playground		Playground replacement	$100	0	$-	$-	$100	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
Pemberton Historical Park		Interpretive Signage Project	$120	0	$-	$-	$120	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
Pemberton Historical Park		Rehabilitation of the Nature Center / Visitor Center	$300	0	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$150	$-	$150
Riverside Boat Ramp		Boat ramp replacement on west side of facility	$400	0	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$400	$-	$-
Wicomico Civic Center		Midway Room modernization and	$1,000	0	$-	$-	$1,000	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
Winterplace Park		WEC & Carriage House water/sewer connection	$400	0	$-	$-	$-	$-	$400	$-	$-	$-
Winterplace Park		Carriage House interior renovation	$2,000	0	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$2,000
TOTAL			**$54,890**	**24**	**$2,000**	**$21,050**	**$16,540**	**$1,400**	**$1,000**	**$750**	**$-**	**$5,000**	**$7,150**

Source: Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

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South Planning Area

The only development project listed in the 2022 Plan for the South Planning Area (Douglas Nichols Playground replacement) was completed.

The 2027 *Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan* includes three capital projects estimated at $550,000 (Table 4.20). The projects include a number of rehabilitation projects at Fruitland Little League and the Fruitland Recreational Park and Annex. The City of Fruitland, along with private entities located in the South Planning Area, are currently meeting recreational needs for residents and hosting some tournament play. The County should continue to monitor growth in the South Planning Area and consider additional recreational parks/areas to accommodate anticipated long-term needs or address any deficiencies that may develop.

Table 4.20
Proposed Capital Improvements

Site	No. (Map 7.6)	Project Description	Est. Total Cost ($000s)	Acres to be Acquired	Estimated Costs ($000s)								
					Immediate (FY27-31)			Mid – Range (FY32 – FY36)			Long – Range (FY37-41)		
					Acq.	Dev.	Reh.	Acq.	Dev.	Reh.	Acq.	Dev.	Reh.
* Fruitland Little League Rehab		Ballfield fence replacements, site improvements	$300	0	$-	$-	$300	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
* Fruitland Recreational Park		Resurfacing basketball court, pavilion and trail rehabilitation	$150	0	$-	$-	$150	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
* Fruitland Recreational Park Annex		Pavilion and trail rehabilitation, signage updates	$100	0	$-	$-	$100	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
TOTAL			***$550***	***0***	**$-**	**$-**	**$550**	**$-**	**$-**	**$-**	**$-**	**$-**	**$-**

Source: Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

East Planning Area

The Town of Willards completed playground improvements, as identified in the 2022 Plan, as part of an initial effort to revitalize the park. In response to public feedback, the County also installed a new playground at Adkins Mill Park, which was not included in the 2022 list of projects.

The 2027 *Wicomico County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan* contains five proposed projects estimated at $1.27 million. Highlights include rehabilitation projects at the East Side Youth Sports Complex; Phase II Park improvements at Willards including walkways, parking lot upgrades and pickleball court construction; and possible acquisition and development of a nature park in the Town of Pittsville. (Map 4.8, Table 4.21)

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Table 4.21
Proposed Capital Improvements

Site	No. (Map 7.7)	Project Description	Est. Total Cost ($000s)	Acres to be Acquired	Estimated Costs ($000s)								
					Immediate (FY27-31)			Mid – Range (FY32 – FY36)			Long – Range (FY37-41)		
					Acq.	Dev.	Reh.	Acq.	Dev.	Reh.	Acq.	Dev.	Reh.
East Side Youth Sports Complex		Rehabilitation of Little League Complex	$600	0	$-	$-	$600	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
* Pittsville - Main Street		Acquisition of property and potential nature or walking park development	$240	4	$40	$-	$-	$-	$200	$-	$-	$-	$-
* Pittsville Playground		Basketball court renovation	$75	0	$-	$-	$75	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
* Willards Park		Phase II improvements including walkways, parking lot, bleachers;	$150	0	$-	$-	$150	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
* Willards Park		Pickleball court construction and parking lot improvements	$200	0	$-	$-	$200	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-	$-
TOTAL			***$1,265***	***4***	**$40**	**$-**	**$1,025**	**$-**	**$200**	**$-**	**$-**	**$-**	**$-**

Source: Wicomico County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

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Conclusion

The County has one of the premier parks and recreation systems in the country for its size, which allows residents to enjoy a wide variety of leisure opportunities and fulfill the Department's mission of improving "quality of life". Park facilities and amenities are geographically distributed throughout the County, providing reasonable drive or walking access to a variety of facility types and recreational activities. Though the County continues to meet its acreage goals, the County should remain flexible and opportunistic with future acquisition and development projects that help meet goals and objectives outlined in the Plan. As a small County facing uncertain economic times, the County must continue to balance emerging future needs with its capacity to maintain such facilities with available resources. Partnership opportunities should be pursued, where feasible and practical, to assist the County with meeting its overall goals for recreation, parks and tourism.