

MARION COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION STRATEGIC PLAN

2018-2022



IT STARTS IN PARKS!



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PARKS AND RECREATION



Explore



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Executive Summary

The Parks and Recreation Department is pleased to present the 2018-2022 Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan. This five-year guiding document highlights our successes, looks at our current conditions, where we want to go and recommendations on how we can achieve our goals. Like other departments, Parks and Recreation has an adopted Master Plan; ours is a 10-year vision adopted by the Board of County Commissioners on July 18, 2017.



Jim Couillard, PLA, ASLA
Director-Landscape Architect

A major component of this Strategic Plan is the discussion on funding, essentially implementing the Master Plan. With a \$31.2 million projected cost, the projects within the Master Plan are geared toward improving sports tourism opportunities, paved trail facilities, community park enhancements, safety improvements and recreation programming. Effective implementation of the Master Plan provides the department with consistent operational goals and capital improvement projects in support of the *Empowering Marion for Success* Administrative Strategic Plan.

The Parks and Recreation Department currently manages 50 unique sites, 2,476 acres of parkland and two community/activity centers with a staff consisting of 41 full time staff in three main groups: Administration, Operations and Recreation. Within the Operations Division, there are four Operational Areas: North, Central, South and Athletics.

The department continues to pursue methods of promoting economic development within the county park system and works with our local and state agencies to ensure public lands are acquired and operated to both protect our resources and provide excellent outdoor recreation opportunities. According to the National Recreation and Park Association, local and regional parks provide an estimated \$7 billion economic impact to Florida and with the amount of open space and highly desired locations in Marion County, we enjoy some of those impacts locally. However, we can do more.

Marion County is a one of a kind location with truly magnificent opportunities to Explore, Discover and Relax. The Parks and Recreation Department is proud of our successes we have achieved over the past years and look forward to meeting the needs of our citizens well into the future. Combined, the Strategic Plan and Master Plan provide the Board of County Commissioners and Administration with the tools needed to move the department forward while keeping pace with the needs of the growing community.



Strategic Planning Methodology

The creation of the 2018-2022 Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan is a process that is highlighted with substantial public involvement and input of the department's direction as provided by the County Commission, Administration, and department senior staff and through the guidance of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Council, or PRAC. During the 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan process, the department was provided with substantial data and input collected through stakeholder meetings, public workshops held throughout the county, online surveys and face-to-face meetings. The same data helps define the direction of the department with the intention of providing excellent customer service to the citizens and visitors of Marion County.

The results of our master planning efforts include:

- Feedback from the community on their needs from the department.
- A complete and thorough assessment of each of the parks owned and/or managed by Marion County.
- Recommendations on revising and/or adding recreation programs offered by the department.
- Recommendations for reclassifying the parks into more logical groupings.
- Identifying the department's role in the community in addressing such items as public health and welfare, tourism and economic development.

A review of the goals within the Master Plan and how the department is funded was also conducted. With a strong vision for making the park system better, the balance between capital improvements and the ability to feasibly staff and operate the existing park system is always considered.

An evaluation was also completed on existing marketing efforts and strategies on how to enhance those strategies, along with a few new ones, is also included in Master Plan. Community engagement and community building area inherit goals that the department has continued to make efforts to improvement these efforts.

Completion of assessments on the current conditions allowed the department to look forward. Parks and Recreation supports a large effort in the Empowering Marion for Success and views the implementation of this strategic plan as a key to our success.

Current Situation

Who We Are

The Parks and Recreation team currently consists of three teams: Administration, Operations and Recreation. A total of 41 full time staff and nine part time staff along with seasonal supporting staff provide services out of multiple locations across the county.

The **Administration Division** coordinates the administrative activities, priorities and direction of the Department. It provides leadership and assistance to the other divisions and their staff while organizing and establishing strong public relations with the citizens of Marion County. This division is located at the Main Office within the McPherson Governmental Campus.

The **Operations Division** is responsible for the day-to-day operation of 50 park sites that are owned and/or operated by the county ranging in size from 0.72 acres up to 684 acres. From inspecting the safety of all playgrounds to grooming of the infield clay at our sports complexes, operations staff provides frontline customer service support throughout each year.

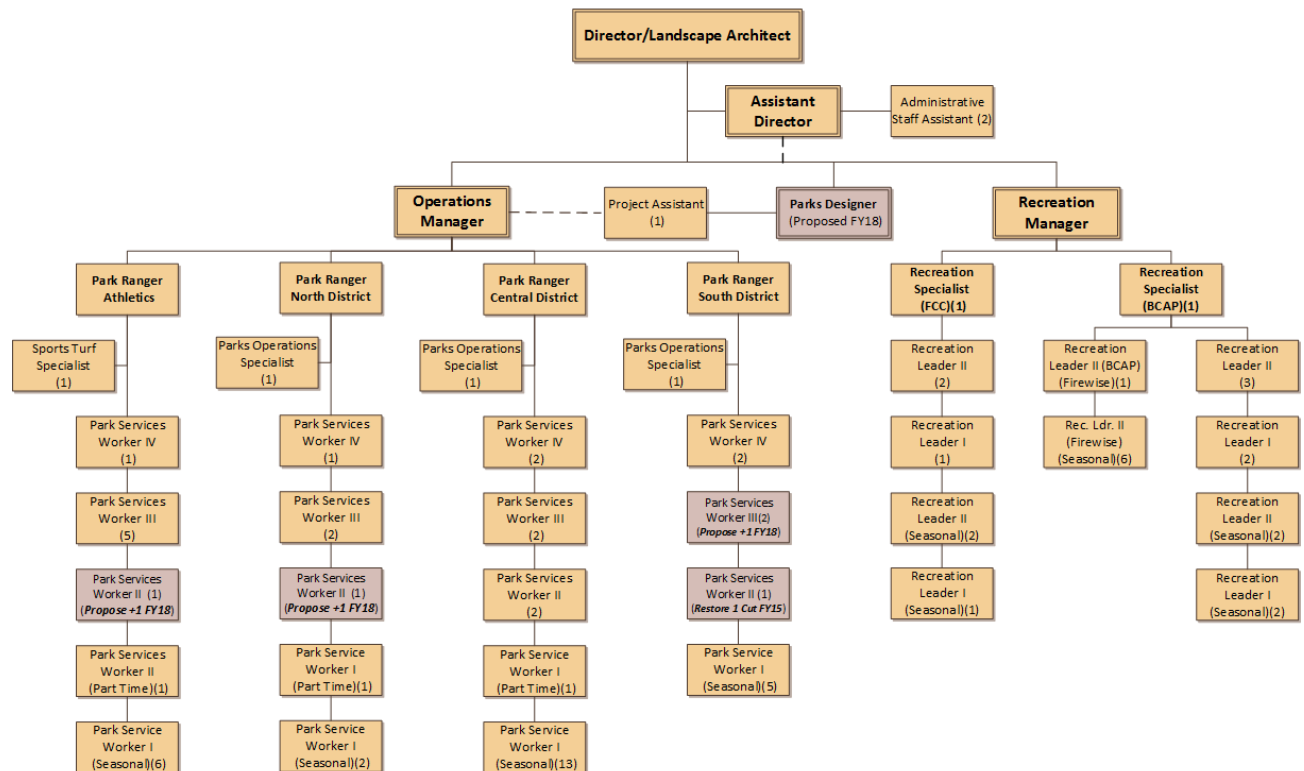
The **Recreation Division** is responsible for creating appropriate programming for our visitors and residents alike in a cost effective manner. Recreation staff operate out of Brick City Adventure Park and the Forest Community Center.

The **Design Division** will become staffed with a Parks Designer pending the adoption of the department's proposed budget. This small division is responsible for park planning, design and construction.



The current **Organizational Chart** with proposed changes for the FY2018 budget is shown below. Recent changes in job functions allowed the department to consolidate a few management positions and create savings in the General Fund. In 2015, the leadership of the Design Division was included in the Director/Landscape Architect's function. Earlier in 2011, the Natural Resources Manager and Operations Manager positions were consolidated into the current Operations Manager position.

The proposed organization chart includes the creation of the Parks Designer position, which will assume all Parks Design functions. Field staff is also being proposed including a Park Services Worker III for natural resource management. Other additions include Park Services Worker II for Athletics, North Area and South Area. In total the department is seeking five new positions for FY2018, one position supporting the workload at the lead end, and four positions in the field supporting maintenance and repairs.



Key Personnel

The department currently has a Senior Staff team consisting of the director and two managers. Recent changes in the department has allowed for the creation of the Assistant Director position (not filled at the time of this report), which replaced the Administrative Manager position. The department's proposed FY2018 budget includes the addition of the Parks Designer position which will supervise of the Design Division and serve a fourth member of the Senior Staff team.

Jim Couillard, PLA, ASLA

Director – Landscape Architect

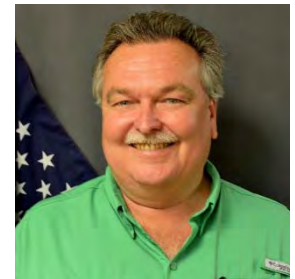
Jim Couillard is a Professional Landscape Architect licensed by the State of Florida and has been with Marion County for 11 years. He was hired as Parks Designer II in 2006, was promoted to Landscape Architect in 2008 and then promoted to Environmental Services Manager in 2014. In 2015, he became the Director-Landscape Architect. Jim served five years in the US Army as an Infantry Squad Leader before attending the University of Florida to earn a Bachelors of Landscape Architecture in 1997.



Greg Wiley

Operations Manager

Greg has been serving Marion County for 24 years, all within the department, and as the Operations Manager for the past six years responsible for the operation and maintenance of parks, athletic facilities and natural resources for the Department. Prior to working with Marion County, he led an outdoor self-awareness program for at risk youth for two years and spent 12 years in the construction trade. Some of his fondest accomplishments include having a great wife and children, promoting healthy ecosystems and assisting others. Greg likes to spend as much time possible with his family outdoors whether it is fishing, hunting, boating or just being out in nature.



Jason Maurer, CPRP

Recreation Manager

Jason has been with Marion County Parks and Recreation for nine years and is currently the Recreation Manager. Jason is responsible for managing staff and budgets to facilitate youth and adult recreation programming for the department. Previously Jason spent seven years with the Florida Parks Service as a Park Ranger, Assistant Park Manager and Park Manager. Some of Jason's achievements include becoming certified as a Certified Parks and Recreation Professional (CPRP), Certified Burn Manger and Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI). Jason enjoys spending time at the beach, fishing, and kayaking, playing golf and spending time with his children.



Core Services

The Parks and Recreation Department provides programs and facilities to support our citizens' diverse interests in recreation, park and our natural environment. The department's core services are applied throughout the county in an efficient and equitable manner. The department's core services are listed and discussed below.

Administrative Services – 10 percent

The tracking and monitoring of revenues and expenses is a critical component of the operation of the department. All supervisors are part of the administrative procedures, which are outlined in the departments Procedure Manual. The Assistant Director oversees the total administrative operation for the department.

Customer Service – 20 percent

Each staff member within the department provides direct customer service, whether it is a staff member helping park visitors, someone walking into the office to register for programs or a manager addressing a complaint. Each member is trained and expected to deliver exemplary customer service each day.

Cash Handling – 5 percent

Due to the fee structure within the department, over \$1.4 million in revenue is collected throughout each year. Time is set aside to check and double-check all funds and reporting of revenue on a daily basis. Cash handling procedures are reviewed by the Internal Auditor and are clearly outlined in the department's Procedures Manual.

Recreation Programs – 15 percent

The recreation division oversees all recreation programs including the actual programming, scheduling, booking and the actual execution of each program. All staff participate by proxy by maintaining park grounds and facilities where recreation programs take place.

Park Design/Project Management – 5 percent

The design division (see comments regarding the division in the opening of this plan) oversees all park planning and design projects, mapping, asset inventory and project management. Concepts for park projects are generated in-

house and, depending on the complexity of the project, designs are managed either with in-house staff or through consultants. Park projects, excluding vertical construction, are managed by the Parks Design team.

Park Management – 15 percent

Along with customer service, park management is one of the main services provided. Park management refers to the day-to-day operation of the parks and facilities from renting tubes to inspecting playgrounds.

Repair/Maintenance Building & Grounds – 15 percent

Another large component of the department's functions includes the routine repairs and maintenance of the park system. Staff routinely cleans bathrooms, removes trash, litter from parks, and completes maintenance related projects such as replacing fencing, painting park features and pressure cleaning monuments.

Athletic Field Maintenance – 10 percent

The maintenance of athletic fields has become a significant component of what the department does yet it is completed by a relatively small team of 10 staff members. The results of this team's work creates safe play environments at six sports complexes which host state, regional and national tournaments for baseball, softball, soccer and football.

Natural Resource Management – 5 percent

The management of over 1,800 acres of conservation lands is a key component of how the department protects the environment. Due to reductions in staff over the past several years, resource management has become a lower priority for the department yet must be addressed soon.

Accomplishments: A Five Year Look Back

2017

- Adopted 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- Acquired 465-acre Silver Springs Sandhill site through Florida Forever program.
- Hosted Cal Ripken State Rookie Qualifier and State Tee Ball Qualifier at Rotary Sportsplex.
- Renovated field facilities at Ralph Russell Memorial Park.
- Began operation of Kiwanis Beach at Albright Park on Lake Weir.
- Renovated field and track facilities at Brick City Adventure Park.
- Hosted the HITS Triathlon at Carney Island Recreation and Conservation Area.

2016

- Kicked off the 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- Became the owner of the Ma Barker House.
- Completed improvements at KP Hole Park.
- Hosted Cal Ripken World Series at Rotary Sportsplex.
- Hosted Cal Ripken State Rookie Qualifier and State Tee Ball Qualifier at Rotary Sportsplex.

2015

- Began the Annual Fishing with Veterans program at Horseshoe Lake Park & Retreat; now an annual event.
- Hosted Cal Ripken State Rookie Qualifier at Rotary Sportsplex.
- Completed trail connections and ADA access at Blue Run of Dunnellon Park

2014

- Hosted Cal Ripken State Rookie Qualifier at Rotary Sportsplex.
- Hosted Babe Ruth 14U World Series at Rotary Sportsplex.
- Completed improvements at Cougar Park.
- Received pledge of 104-acre Westbrook Park through a private estate.
- Completed improvements at Liberty Park including a paved trail, new playground and additional picnic pavilions.

2013

- Hosted Cal Ripken 10U World Series at Rotary Sportsplex.
- Completed Master Site Plan Updated for Carney Island Recreation and Conservation Area.
- Completed ADA improvements at Shocker Park.
- Dedicated the Wild Cat Play Area at Coehadjoe Park.
- Won National Recreation and Park Association photo contest showing our Firewise Nature Campers planting long-leaf pine trees at Carney Island.
- Celebrated KP Hole's 60th Anniversary.
- Opened the Forest Community Center at Sandhill Park.

Who We Serve

The department serves the recreational needs of our community by providing park facilities, recreation programs, park planning and protection of our natural resources. Interestingly, the department provides services not only to our citizens, but we also provide the same services to members of the visiting public. Facilities like Rotary Sportsplex and Carney Island Recreation and Conservation Area are routinely used by residents and at the same time host annual events bringing millions of dollars of direct economic impact to our community.



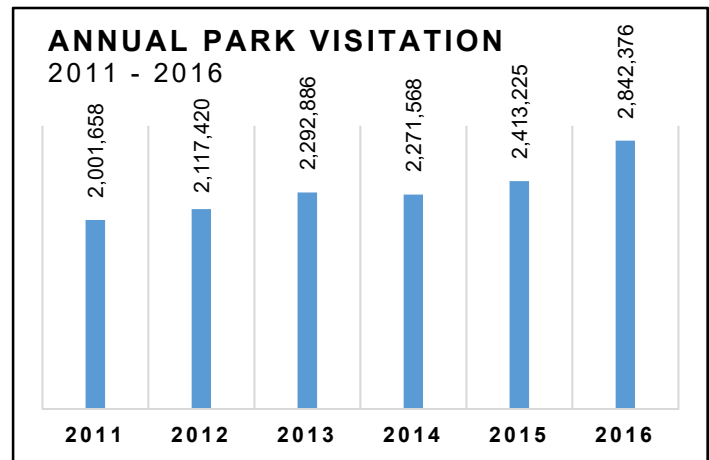
Explore

Balancing the mission between serving the constituents and creating destinations for visitors to enjoy is a challenge met by the department with excellence.

Quantity

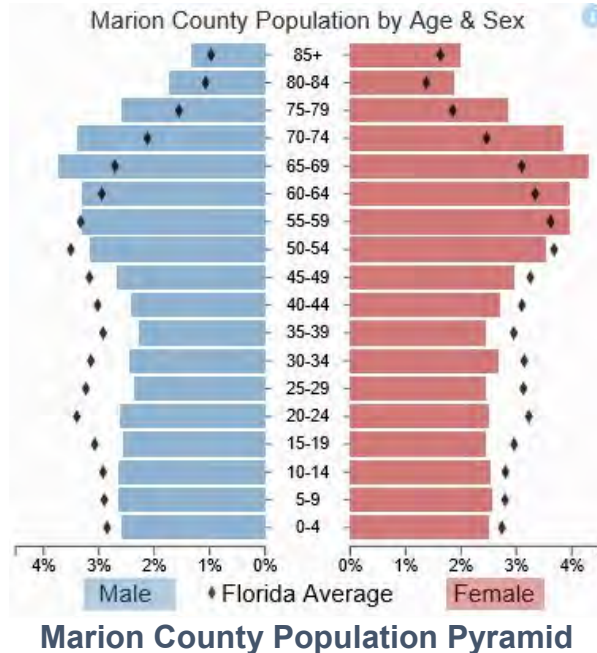
The Bureau of Economic Business Research indicated the population in Marion County 2016 to be 345,749 people. These are our primary clients. Park visitation and program registration are two important benchmarks for the department. There is a solid relationship between the number of visitors and the rate of wear and tear. The department uses visitation numbers, along with surveys and park assessments, to validate requests for park improvements, funding for repairs and maintenance and to target opportunities to enhance the visitor experience.

The department measures attendance at the parks by using vehicle counters installed at park entry/exit areas. Due to the type and location of certain parks, installation of traffic counters is not always feasible; 27 out of the 50 sites (54-percent) managed by the department have vehicle counters installed. Staff checks each counter on a monthly basis and visitation numbers are recorded by the Operations Manager. A nationally adopted multiplier of 2.3 visitors per vehicle is then applied to the vehicle count and translated into the annual park visitation rate.



Quality

The population that we serve can be group into various typical demographic groups including age, sex, ethnicity, etc. Out of all of the typical demographic groupings, the one congregate that has the most impact on current and future park planning is age.



The age of Marion County’s population is an important point to consider with the median age in the county at 47.8 years compared to Florida with a median age of 41.2 year. The national median age of 37.4 years. Our older population deserves specific consideration when it pertains to park amenities offered, the reduction and elimination of barriers to access and programming targeted at the older age groups. Our younger users also require specific attention including the provision of safe places to play where the threats of injuries are minimized while discovery and adventure is encouraged.

The age of Marion County as compared to the ages of the rest of the state can be seen clearly in the adjacent population pyramid. State demographers are referring to the bulge in the pyramid as the “silver tsunami” in recognition of retiring baby boomers. From a park planning and design perspective, the provision of multi-generational amenities, ones that people of all ages can enjoy, is an important consideration. The department can enhance the well-

being of our older population by providing facilities and parks that include features not typically included within retirement communities, such as accessible trail systems, sports fields and targeted recreational programming.

The department is very involved with sports tourism and offers several locations for local leagues to provide baseball, softball, soccer, football and pickleball (yes, pickleball leagues will be here soon). The majority of the participants in these sports leagues are 16 years of age and younger although the department does offer adult and senior sports.

Along with age, the department also keeps income and poverty levels into consideration, especially during the annual assessment of our fee structure. While in some communities the rental of an event hall may fetch \$100 per day or more, our rates are 50-percent or lower. Being mindful of our local income levels allows us to keep our programs and fees reasonable.

Race and ethnicity are additional traits taken into consideration during park planning and design efforts. The needs of each type of community are different and therefore must be addressed in a manner consistent of what the community is expecting.

For park planning purposes the department must continue to be flexible, to not plan each park site for maximum use and instead use a phased approach in park design and development to allow room for growth and shifting needs created by changes in demographics.

SWOT Analysis

Recently the director brought senior and middle management of the department to a leadership retreat to discuss the state of the department and the direction new leadership would be heading. A goal of the event was getting into the details that makes our department function and how relationships with staff can be enhanced to learn if our delivery of services was aligned with the needs of the community. Attendees were asked to participate in a SWOT Analysis to identify our **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities** and **Threats** which are listed below.

Internal	
<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great customer service Collaboration with other departments Teamwork with a family atmosphere Commitment to the profession Diversified knowledge/backgrounds of staff Guidance and leadership Efficient use of resources Parks appearance 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget; funding level and alignment Minimal marketing efforts Technology; insufficient use, old software Inadequate staffing Low wages The Whirlwind
External	
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve quality of life Economic development Increase health and well-being Building public and community relations Environmental stewardship Public/private partnerships External funding (grants, partnerships) Strengthening relations with Administration and the Commission 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outside demand on department Vandalism Disorderly users Invasive and noxious species Uninformed voters External funding (state and federal trends) Weather conditions – water levels Minimal media coverage

Much can be learned by building on Strengths and Opportunities, by addressing Weaknesses, and being prepared for Threats. The Strengths are those things that should be made priorities for continuing. The Opportunities afford ideas for new initiatives. The Weaknesses need to be considered in how they can be turned into Strengths, reduced or eliminated. Serious attention should be paid to those things identified as Threats, sorting out which things are imminent, which things are controllable, which things are somewhat improbable and which things can be turned into Strengths.

The department will continue to address the points discovered during the SWOT analysis and building upon each item appropriately. Members of senior staff are participating in county leadership development programs and are learning the right methods and tactics needed to address the challenges and celebrate the successes.

Mission, Vision and Goals

Mission Statement

To provide recreational opportunities at park facilities that are safe, fun and accessible while protecting and interpreting our natural resources.

Vision

Through provision of park and recreation services, we will enhance the quality of life and nurture the health and well-being of our citizens, our community and our economy.

Our Vision is multifaceted guiding future park improvements, operations and maintenance of the county park system.



Discover

- **Theme 1:** Increase natural resource stewardship through consistent with the *Empowering Marion for Success* plan.
- **Theme 2:** Provide recreation opportunities which inspire personal growth, healthy lifestyles and community building.
- **Theme 3:** Create dynamic parks that reflect our community's character and meet the needs of our diverse community.
- **Theme 4:** Provide safe places to explore, discover and relax.

Core Values

The department applies the core values as established in *Empowering Marion for Success* plan to all of our work. We take pride in our use of these values and hold them in high regard.

Humbleness
Respect
Commitment

Integrity
Accountability
Discipline

The department also follows these values to enhance delivery of our services to the public:

Sustainability – Meet current park and recreation needs without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs by balancing environmental and economic concerns.

Safety – Work safely to support a thriving work environment and an outstanding park experience for visitors. Eliminate preventable incidents.

Visionary Leadership – Respect the vision and leadership that built the park and recreation system and recognize the need for ongoing leadership in achieving excellence.

Responsiveness and Innovation – Anticipate and thoughtfully respond to the diverse needs of the county's communities, continually seeking ways to better deliver park and recreation services.

Guiding Principles

We use the same principles included in the *Empowering Marion for Success* plan as a base level set of principles and build upon them to build a great team to execute our mission.

Dedication to Serve Professional Operations Resource Stewardship

Additional principles contributing to the execution of our mission include:

Identified Community Need and Demographics – Emphasis will be placed on researching community needs and demographics when considering program and facility delivery.

Quality versus Quantity – The amenities provided to meet the park and recreation needs of communities will be high quality and provided at a sustainable level. Amenities that have completed their useful life cycle, especially those with a blighted appearance, will be removed and, as funding becomes available, replaced with new amenities.

Embracing Technology – Decision-making will embrace technology to serve the community, keep leadership informed and become better at forecasting budget needs.

Fostering New Partnerships – Non-traditional partners that provide new opportunities for residents and are consistent with the organization's mission will be encouraged.

Sustainable Rate – A sustainable park system will be supported by decisions that provide services at a sustainable rate, such as providing infrastructure that can be reasonably maintained, setting realistic program and service delivery targets, or modifying land management techniques to increase efficiency.



Goals

The department has developed a two set of goals which work together in fulfilling our mission by identifying the internal (Parks and Recreation) and external (Organizational) components of the department's Strategic Plan and the 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Strategic goals are specific components of the *Empowering Marion for Success* plan and are aimed at organizational excellence. By comparison, the Master Plan goals include similar strategic goals and additional specific needs gathered through the planning process with a focus on meeting the needs of the community.

Strategic Plan Goals

Goal A: Successful implementation of the 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Goal B: Position ourselves for success in the parks, recreation and tourism marketplace.

Goal C: Align our budget with spending needs and identify revenue sources.

Goal D: Improve messaging about our contribution to our community and the community benefits from investment in parks.

2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan Goals

Goal 1: Increase the utilization and recreation value of the properties current owned and managed by Marion County

Goal 2: Continue to meet and exceed the Parks and Recreation Department level of service standards set forth in the Marion County Comprehensive Plan.

Goal 3: Expand upon and improve the natural conservation and preservation areas throughout Marion County.

Goal 4: Develop funding strategies for the Marion County Parks and Recreation system for the 10-year planning period.

Goal 5: Develop varied programs and activities to benefit the residents and visitors of Marion County.

It is interesting to compare each set of goals to each other and recognize how closely aligned our Strategic Plan and Master Plan goals are. The risk of having too many goals can be addressed by merging and prioritizing goals appropriately.

Priority	Strategic Plan Goal	Master Plan Goal
1	A	1, 2
2	C	4
3	B, D	3, 5

Implementation Program

The department has ambitious goals and feels that having such ambition is what fuels the desire to go from good to great. There is no better feeling than being able and equipped to deliver our services with excellence and having the support needed to advance our delivery is essential for the entire organization.

Successful Implementation of the 2016 Parks and Recreation Master Plan

The main component of this plan is creating the process of for implementing the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, specifically the Recommended Park Improvements, as a means to meet the intention of the Master Plan and the *Empowering Marion for Success*. While the Master Plan itself includes prioritization of projects and recommendations for programming, the “how to” details of how to fund the plan is anchored in this plan.

Projects listed in the Master Plan include a range of tasks, from reconstructing an existing park to simple repairs and maintenance projects that can make a lasting impression. Consideration must be taken in deciding on how to program/schedule these improvements: should all of the projects for a listed park site be tackled at once or should smaller, individual projects within several park sites be bundled into broader tasks such as sign replacements or parking improvements. This decision must be made on a case-by-case, project-by-project basis to provide flexibility in assigning funding through the planning horizon.

Master Plan Projects

- 41 out of 50 sites have projects included
- 231 individually listed projects
- 163 projects are classified as capital improvements
- 57 project are classified as repairs/maintenance
- 1 project is an operational consideration (business model at KP Hole)

As part of the master plan process, each project was evaluated and given a score ranging from 1 to 21 points based on the community need and appropriateness of each project. Staff has simplified the priorities using the following approach:

1. Determine whether the projects are capital improvements, repairs/maintenance or operational considerations.
2. Prioritize each class of project based on the evaluation scores provided in the Master Plan.
3. Look for opportunities to complete project on a per park basis or bundle similar projects.
4. Assign funding.

The goal behind the prioritization of projects is to help provide the department with a linear “to do” list over the next 10 years while determining how and when each project is funded. Projects were put into timeframes ranging from 1 – 3 years, 3 – 5 years, 5 – 10 years and projects that can be completed over a 10-year period. The following tables shows cost per segment:

Completion Timeframe in Years	Total Estimated Cost
Complete in over 10 years	\$6,444,628
Complete within 5 – 10 years	\$11,116,503
Complete within 3 – 5 years	\$13,133,000
Complete within 1 – 3 years	\$520,500
Total:	\$31,214,631

Projects listed within the first chronological group, 1-3 years, are shown below:

Recommended Park Improvements			
Park	Recommendation	Evaluation Score	Cost Estimate
Baseline Road Trailhead	Replace safety surfacing	9	\$ 100,000
Carney Island Recreation and Conservation	Slope stabilization at Little Lake Weir	5	\$ 60,000
Cougar Community Park	ADA restriping and signage	20	\$ 8,000
Cougar Community Park	Replacement rule signage	15	\$ 500
Cougar Community Park	Repair/replace chainlink fencing at ballfield	11	\$ 8,500
Gores Landing	ADA parking signage	20	\$ 500
Hampton Beach	Accessible path to picnic tables (80 ft.)	14	\$ 10,000
Heagy-Burry Boat Ramp	Vegetation removal and dredging	11	\$ 15,000
Horseshoe Lake Park and Retreat	ADA path to daily public restrooms (25 ft.)	18	\$ 7,000
Horseshoe Lake Park and Retreat	Pave ADA parking	17	\$ 5,000
Orange Lake Community Park	Update park rules signage	12	\$ 750
Orange Springs Boat Ramp	Signage replacement	12	\$ 1,500
Orange Springs Boat Ramp	Foliage trim and maintenance	18	\$ 5,000
Ralph Russell Park	Parking lot improvements and extend to playground	19	\$ 70,000
Ray Wayside Park	Deck replacement	13	\$ 50,000
Ray Wayside Park	Add subsurface drainage to playground	7	\$ 7,500
Rotary Sportsplex	Add designated mountain biking trails Where?	12	\$ 50,000
Rotary Sportsplex	Grade and stabilize front field parking lot	14	\$ 50,000
Salt Springs Civic Park	Parking improvements - asphalt and reinforced grass parking	20	\$ 60,000
Shocker Park	Lightning warning system	11	\$ 9,000

The biggest challenge in implementing the Master Plan is the alignment of our budget and determining how to fund the improvements themselves. Ideas for funding the Master Plan include several methods that can be tailored specifically to meet the funding needs.

General Fund – County’s Overall Capital Improvement Program

Using General Fund dollars, projects within the Master Plan can be incorporated into the county’s overall CIP program, which could be problematic. There is a limited amount of funding available in the General Fund and many other departments, some of which do not have the same funding flexibility as Parks and Recreation, which rely on the General Fund to get projects completed. If there is no absolute need for Parks and Recreation capital projects to be included in the General Fund, then it is recommended that this option be one of the last ones considered.

Quality of Life Bond

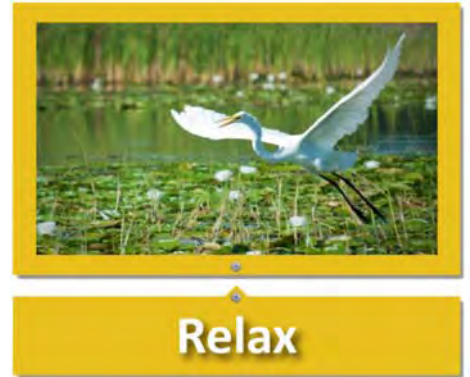
Seeking a voter-approved bond for Quality of Life projects is the most suitable option when faced with a large list of capital needs. Bundling Parks and Recreation projects with other projects such as expansion of or new Animal Services facilities, new libraries, and projects for Veterans can be a successful means of obtaining significantly large sums of money for capital needs. Bonds provide money on a relatively quick basis that can be used over a longer period. The 1988 Pennies for Parks bond provided over \$23,000,000 in funding which was essentially used over a 25-year period. Statewide there is a high voter approval rate for park and conservation finance bonding with municipal and county proposals receiving approximately 68-percent approval.

Parks and Recreation Impact Fee

In 2007 the department undertook a study to investigate the potential of implementing a Parks and Recreation Impact Fee as another means to supplement the expiration of the Pennies for Parks bond. It was determined that the most feasible rate for new residential construction was \$0.71 per square foot; a typical 2,000 home would generate nearly \$1,400 in revenue. It is believed impact fees, paid by new development, should be used for new projects and new parks that would be used to meet the need of the new development. With the majority of project in the Master Plan slated for exiting park sites, assigning impact fee revenue to existing sites is not ideal and therefore impact fees should be considered when new development creates the need for new parks and facilities.

Sixth Percent Bed Tax

Similar to the Impact Fee, implementing the sixth percent or “sixth penny” of the bed tax as a means to fund park projects makes sense for projects targeting tourism. According to the VCB, annual revenue generated by the sixth penny would be in the range of \$705,000 per year. Florida Statute 125.0104 states that the proceeds from this penny “are to pay the debt service on bonds issued to finance professional sports franchise facilities or retained spring training franchise facilities and to promote tourism.” There are several larger cost projects within the Master Plan list, which would promote tourism, specifically the renovation of Belleview Sportsplex with an estimate price of \$10,920,000.



Sales Tax

A county-wide \$0.01 sales tax generates approximately \$33,231,000 in annual revenue (half-cent tax generates \$19,000,000 per year). This substantial value may come with limitations due to the amount of funding generated and the ability to phase spending over a longer period. It may be ideal to work with other departments as mentioned in the Bond segment and work towards obtaining a “Quality of Life” sales tax which would benefit more than one department. Timing on the sales tax issue is important to consider as well. With the current sales tax increase dedicated to transportation and public safety expiring in 2020, waiting on the current sales tax to sunset, essentially delaying the implementation of projects in the Master Plan for two years, may not be the best option yet it is worthy of consideration as the sunset for the current tax draws closer.

Countywide Assessment

Much like the county-wide assessment in place to fund the Sheriff’s Office, a consistent funding source for the department includes creating a Parks and Recreation Assessment. Currently the Sheriff’s assessment at 3.47 mills generates \$38,795,877 in funding, or \$11,180,368 per mill, for the provision of law enforcement services in the unincorporated areas of the county. Determining how using a similar assessment would work for residents within the five municipalities and residents who already pay into a Recreation MSTU are two of the challenges with this method. All county residents enjoy county parks and recreation facilities with the same freedom of access; we do not limit access based on address within the county although using this method would provide the county with a means to “dissolve” the Recreation MSTUs and incorporate those services into the Parks and Recreation department.

Another consideration is that the current need for personnel and operating expenses in the department is \$4,400,000 per year which could be satisfied with a 0.3 mill dedicated to the department. While identifying funding for capital projects is important, finding enduring funding for personnel and operating expenses is just as much of a challenge.

Increase User Fees

The department reviews its fee structure on an annual basis, examining the rates we charge for park entry, facility rentals and recreation programming. As mentioned earlier regarding demographics, it is important that we keep our fees affordable for our citizens. We routinely find fees that are, in our minds, too low and should be raised yet we rarely raise prices more than 10 or 25 percent at any given time. Use of additional fees or increased fee rates to fund capital projects is a slow process and may not yield results for many, many years. Therefore, consideration of increasing fees for these reasons should be excluded. Instead, fees should continue to be used to offset impact on the General Fund.

Funding Recommendations

The department recommends the following strategies for funding the Master Plan and the daily operations:

1. Secure bond funding exceeding the value of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan to include land acquisition initiatives (future parks, environmental lands, recharge protection, etc.) and other quality of life projects.
2. Implement a countywide assessment similar to the Sheriff's Office Law Enforcement MSTU.

These two recommendations provide the following benefits:

1. Dedicates substantial funding for capital improvements over a long period.
2. Provides funding for the department outside of the General Fund.
3. Eliminates Recreation MSTUs and consolidates park and recreation services under one roof reducing the number of MSTU Advisory Boards, removes access issues for current non-MSTU residents and provides professional parks and recreation services across the county.

Positioning Ourselves in the Market

Fortunate for the department, the goal of positioning ourselves for success within the profession and tourism marketplaces can be achieved due to the significant assistance we will receive from other departments. The Visitors and Convention Bureau (VCB) has the talent and means to drive tourist to Marion County through their highly successful marketing and advertising campaigns. Increased interaction between the Parks and Recreation department and the VCB will help insure the park facilities we manage are included in overall marketing of what is available to our visitors.

While the VCB draws visitors and events to our community, the department contributes by creating and maintaining destinations for visitors to enjoy. We can promote visitation of our facilities through the Office of Public Information and internal marketing. Within the proposed FY2018 budget, the department has included funding for consulting services related to improving our website. Parks and recreation websites must be energetic and engaging while clearly providing the information web users are seeking. Our current website layout is very rigid and take a lot of time and attention to keep updated which requires a skill set that is not clearly defined.

Positioning ourselves includes

- Marketing what we do and what we have to offer to our targeted audiences
- Advertising our services locally to drive local involvement and participation in programs
- Improving the appearance of the parks to provide a strong sense of arrival
- Providing excellent customer service to encourage visitors to return
- Demonstrating the value of the parks system

The department must work continuously on developing and improving the marketing of our services and to communications of these same offerings. In 2013 the department drafted a "Marketing and Communications Plan" to outline department efforts and make recommendations. It is recommended that this plan be reviewed and updated on a frequent basis to maintain relevance.

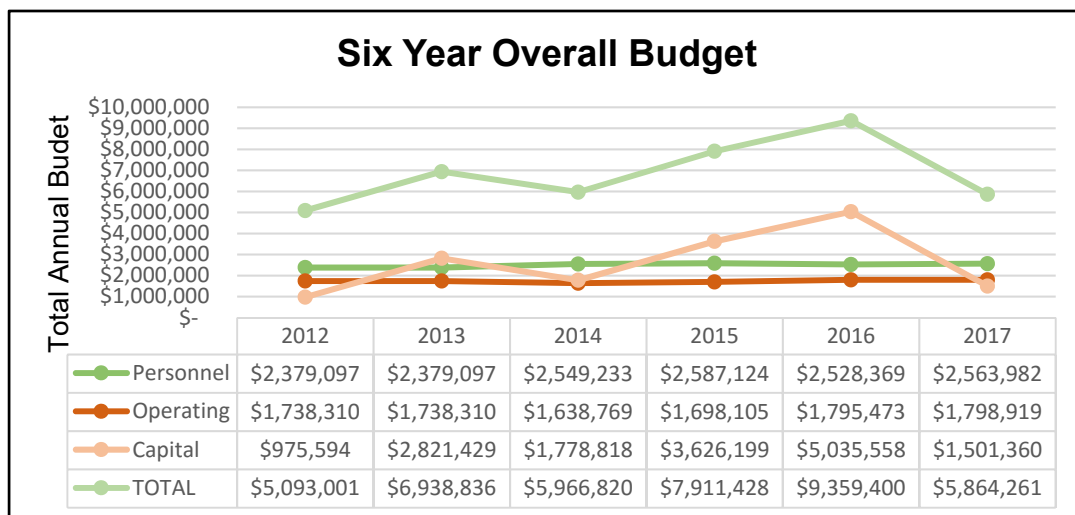
Aligning Budget with Needs

Over the past five years the department has gained only one full time position while experiencing higher park visitation and an increase in the number of acres managed all while holding the personnel and operating costs relatively flat each year. This has been the case for the department for many years: workload and responsibilities have increased while staffing and operational funding has not kept pace. While this trend may be viewed as being fiscally responsible, the increase demands and the no-to-low

increase in staffing is a threat to the success of the department. Staff has become increasingly worn out and is faced with ever-mounting challenges that can be a drain on our human resources.

Recent budgets also indicate substantial levels of capital improvement funding for various itemized capital projects and other park improvements. The selection of capital projects was previously determined using a “what do we need” approach towards addressing wear and tear and safety issues. With the 2016 Master Plan completed, a formal list of prioritized capital needs has been created which will help management create a focus on getting projects in the queue and appropriately funded.

In 2007, the department provided the Board with several options to replace the dwindling Pennies for Parks bond funds. One of the recommendations adopted by the Board was the creation of the Parks and Recreation Fees fund that allowed



for the collection and accrual of revenue collected by the department. Prior to this authorization, revenue was originally turned back to the General Fund. Since 2007 revenue created by the department has exceeded \$1,400,000 and is considered one of the department’s true success stories.

During the recent recession, the department made some changes to their budget structure in an effort to preserve full time and minimize the potential reduction in the level of services being provided to park visitors. The major shift consisted of shifting personnel and operating expenses from the General Fund accounts in the department’s budget and into the Fees fund. Currently of the \$1,400,000 in revenue being brought in, \$1,140,522 is assigned to personnel and operating costs (\$560,519 personnel, \$580,003 operating, respectively, FY2017 budget). With this rate of revenue generation and consumption of funds for personnel and operating, the remaining balance available for capital improvements is \$259,478.

The Parks and Recreation Fees fund

As the department works towards identifying funding sources for capital improvements, a few scenarios become major points to consider:

1. The original intent of the Fees fund was to provide means to cover the cost of capital projects.
2. The Fees fund has been effectively raided over the past years to reduce burden on the General Fun.
3. Current available funding for capital projects has been severely diminished.

There are two approaches to consider when re-aligning the Fees fund:

1. If another source of capital funding is identified, the Fees fund could be used to fund personnel and operating costs associated with the operation of facilities that generate revenue. For instance, KP Hole brought in over \$764,000 in revenue during the FY2016 budget cycle which could sustain the personnel (full time and seasonal staff) and operating costs need to keep the

KP Hole operation funded independently from the General Fund. Combined with other revenues, the Fees fund could support roughly \$1,400,000 in personnel and operating services.

2. If no capital funding is identified, personnel and operating costs should be removed from the Fees fund thus dedicating the total revenue generated to capital projects. This approach would include a \$1,200,000 impact to the General Fund.

Staffing Needs

As mentioned in the SWOT analysis, one of the department’s weaknesses is the current staffing levels. Over several years, several staff positions were eliminated as cost saving measures while the level of services did not fall below minimum standards. Workloads were redistributed with an understanding that tough times would eventually end and staffing levels would be returned to create a more proactive and productive workforce. Staff levels must be indicative towards the level of services being provided and the expectations of the Board, Administration and the citizens. A review of our current staffing reveals a need for several positions that can be added over the next few years. Recreation staffing will be sufficient based on the proposed FY18 budget.

- Administration Division: one Parks Designer (\$56,500 loaded); 2018
- South Area (Natural Resources): one Park Service Worker III (\$41,898); 2018
- South Area is understaffed by one Park Service Worker II (\$37,923 loaded); 2018
- Athletics is understaffed by one Park Service Worker II (\$37,923 loaded); 2018
- North Area: one Park Service Worker II (\$37,923 loaded); 2019
- Administration Division: one Staff Assistant (\$42,723 loaded); 2019
- Central Area: one Park Service Worker II (\$37,923 loaded); 2020

Improve Messaging

The value of public parks and recreation services to the community must be relayed to the public, the Board and Administration through advocacy and education. The department provides essential services while increasing the quality of life and wellbeing of the community.

Value of Parks and Recreation Services	
Community Revitalization	Economic Development
Create Safer Neighborhoods	Community Engagement
Green Infrastructure	Help Children Learn
Promote Public Health	Promote the Arts and Cultural Programs
Tourism	Smart Growth

For the department, internal advocacy with the Board and Administration is essential to gain the support needed during the execution of its mission. By strengthening relationships and working together on county initiatives, these values will become proven and confidence in the department will be gained.

Externally the department must continue marketing the services provided. A key value that has a quick return is Community Engagement. By getting out into the community and showing what services the department provides, other values will fall into place. If there is a goal to promote public health, the department can meet with community groups and highlight the local parks and recreation programming that offer opportunities for exercise and stress relief. Another example is by proving the success of creating economic development, the department can be seen as a fueling the local economy while engaging the local business community.

Performance Measures and Benchmarks

Performance measures for parks and recreation departments typically include the measure and analysis of data collected through user input, complaints and the tracking of particular facility use and program attendance. The department participates in the Florida Benchmark Consortium on an annual basis and compares the performance of previous year with other participating counties.

Jurisdiction	Acres Managed	FTEs for Park Maintenance	Park Maintenance Cost	FTEs for Recreation	Operating Cost for Recreation	Volunteer Hours	Percent of Operational Budget Supported by Fees	Population	Passive Park Acres per 1,000	Active Park Acres per 1,000	Maintenance Cost per Acre	Operating Expenditures per Capita
Alachua County	10,965	N/A	\$1,518,557	N/A	N/A	-	1.74%	254,893	42.16	0.86	\$138.49	N/A
Broward County	6,186	196	\$9,602,409	313	\$23,267,515	43,160	43.00%	1,827,367	1.63	1.85	\$1,552.29	\$17.99
Charlotte County	5,169	33	\$5,240,386	56	\$3,870,227	10,738	16.10%	167,141	25.53	5.40	\$1,013.90	\$54.51
Marion County	2,014	28	\$3,118,420	3	\$345,434	66,903	35.00%	339,167	5.04	0.89	\$1,654.45	\$10.21
Martin County	1,287	49	\$4,424,501	21	\$1,253,451	20,356	42.20%	156,283	145.05	10.16	\$3,437.01	\$36.33
Miami-Dade County	13,565	132	\$14,422,518	223	N/A	245,659	39.00%	2,653,934	1.01	4.10	\$1,063.22	N/A
Okaloosa County	449	5	\$1,018,845	0	\$0	-	65.00%	191,898	1.08	1.26	\$2,269.34	\$5.31
Orange County	14,608	131	N/A	153	N/A	N/A	6.00%	1,252,396	10.39	1.27	N/A	N/A
Pasco County	14,325	97	\$8,053,924	20	\$1,403,202	2,714	16.34%	487,588	0.47	1.68	\$562.22	\$19.40
Pinellas County	18,476	152	\$10,946,067	N/A	\$0	42,970	31.00%	944,971	19.55	N/A	\$592.44	\$11.58
Polk County	1,909	69	\$8,525,481	14	\$1,194	4,979	0.00%	633,052	2.67	2.67	\$4,465.85	\$13.47
St. Lucie County	11,113	110	\$5,088,184	119	\$4,331,220	2,080	72.00%	287,749	34.29	4.33	\$457.86	\$32.74

The based on the comparisons shown in the table above, the department:

- Has a low number of park staff for park management (72 acres/employee)
- Has a low number of recreation staff per capita
- Is above average (35%) of operating budget supported by fees (30%)
- Is below average (\$23.39) in operating cost per capita (\$10.21)

Park Visitation

As mentioned previously, park visitation is monitored on a monthly/annual basis to determine the level of use each facility experiences. With limited opportunities to track visitation at all parks, it is expected that the increase in visitation will slow over time and perhaps plateau at a certain level.

Acres Managed

The overall acres managed and then a look at the types of acres managed, passive versus active, resource-based versus user-based. Measuring this feature helps the department determine whether field staff levels are sufficient or insufficient. More parkland requiring management increases the need for additional staff.

Items Not Measured... But Should Be

As the department moves towards achieving the goals of the Empowering Marion for Success plan, this Strategic Plan and the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, performance measures will be reviewed and adjusted to address components of each goal.

Program Attendance

The number of attendees for all recreation programs is cataloged yet no specific targets are present. This can be a tricky task as the level of programming and the variety offered changes on a frequent basis. Programs tend to be trend-driven; pickleball programs, paddleboard programs and others become popular and then fade off over time. The department must continue to be proactive in program development and stay with the trends in order to drive more attendance.

Customer Satisfaction

Use of paper surveys, online surveys and most importantly, in-person surveys to collect input and to hear from our users about their experience. Customer service surveys are essential to the department and help improve the delivery of services and helps with community engagement.

Natural Resource Management

This is a thorough review of natural areas managed to include activities such as fire line maintained, acres burned, invasive species eradication, etc. In order for this measurement to take place, baseline measurements of these features must be taken. During the second quarter of the FY2018, the department will be conducting a comprehensive survey of county managed conservation lands and will collect the information needed in order to begin tracking resource management tasks.



Financial Projections

Financial data acquired through GovMax shows the projected revenues, personnel and operating expenditures and capital expenditures as currently entered. Revenue in the General Fund accounts (6110, 6111 and 6113) is typically gained through grants and user fees at two sports complexes. All other revenue is gained through rentals, program registration and user fees at other parks and is accounted for in the Fees fund (6118).

Revenues by account projected for five years

Revenue					
Row Labels	Sum of FY 2018 Adopted	Sum of FY 2019 Adopted	Sum of FY 2020 Adopted	Sum of FY 2021 Adopted	Sum of FY 2022 Adopted
6110	\$117,144	\$75,100	\$489,901	\$100	\$100
6111	\$67,000	\$67,680	\$68,387	\$69,122	\$69,887
6113	\$15,600	\$16,224	\$16,872	\$17,547	\$18,249
6118	\$1,447,000	\$1,504,600	\$1,564,504	\$1,626,804	\$1,691,596
Grand Total	\$1,646,744	\$1,663,604	\$2,139,664	\$1,713,573	\$1,779,832

Expenditures by account projected for five years

Expenditures (No CIP)					
Object Name	(Multiple Items)				
Department Code	Sum of FY 2018 Adopted	Sum of FY 2019 Adopted	Sum of FY 2020 Adopted	Sum of FY 2021 Adopted	Sum of FY 2022 Adopted
6110	\$117,144	\$317,020	\$118,144	\$119,380	\$120,489
6111	\$265,405	\$271,788	\$278,555	\$285,726	\$243,330
6118	\$1,863,549	\$1,558,989	\$1,592,595	\$1,628,079	\$1,665,572
6120	\$3,269,697	\$3,310,635	\$3,399,025	\$3,493,526	\$3,562,149
Grand Total	\$5,515,795	\$5,458,432	\$5,388,319	\$5,526,711	\$5,591,540

Capital Expenditures by account projected for five years

Expenditures (CIP Only)					
Object Name	(Multiple Items)				
Department Code	Sum of FY 2018 Adopted	Sum of FY 2019 Adopted	Sum of FY 2020 Adopted	Sum of FY 2021 Adopted	Sum of FY 2022 Adopted
6118	\$400,000	\$330,000	\$614,801	\$1,400,863	\$450,000
Grand Total	\$400,000	\$330,000	\$614,801	\$1,400,863	\$450,000

Appendices

- Map of Operational Areas
- Procedures Manual (cover only; Manual located at Marion on the Inside)
- Guide to Adventure (proof of Parks and Recreation brochure)
- It Starts in Parks
- Marketing and Communication Plan

Marion County Parks and Recreation

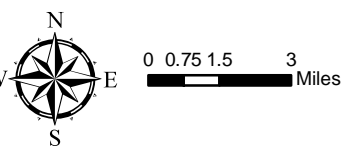
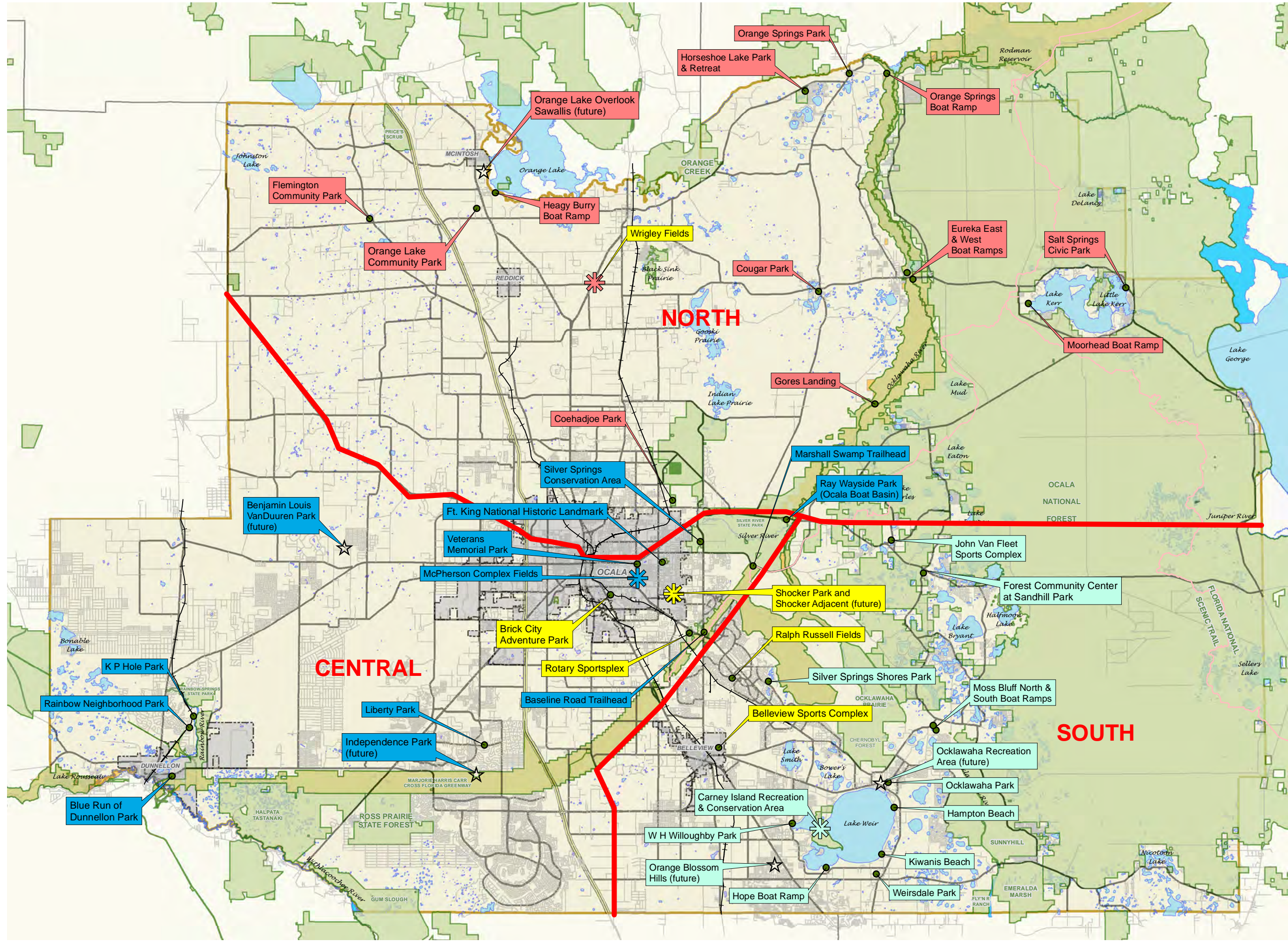
Operational Areas

Legend

- Marion County Parks
- ☆ Future Park; land acquired
- ✳ Operational Area Hub
- Conservation Land

Operational Areas

- North Area
- Central Area
- South Area
- Athletics



All provided GIS data is to be considered a generalized spatial representation which is subject to revisions. The feature boundaries are not to be used to establish legal boundaries. For specific information contact the appropriate county department or other agency.



Procedures Manual

June 2017



Marion County
Parks and Recreation

Marion
County
FLORIDA

PARKS AND RECREATION

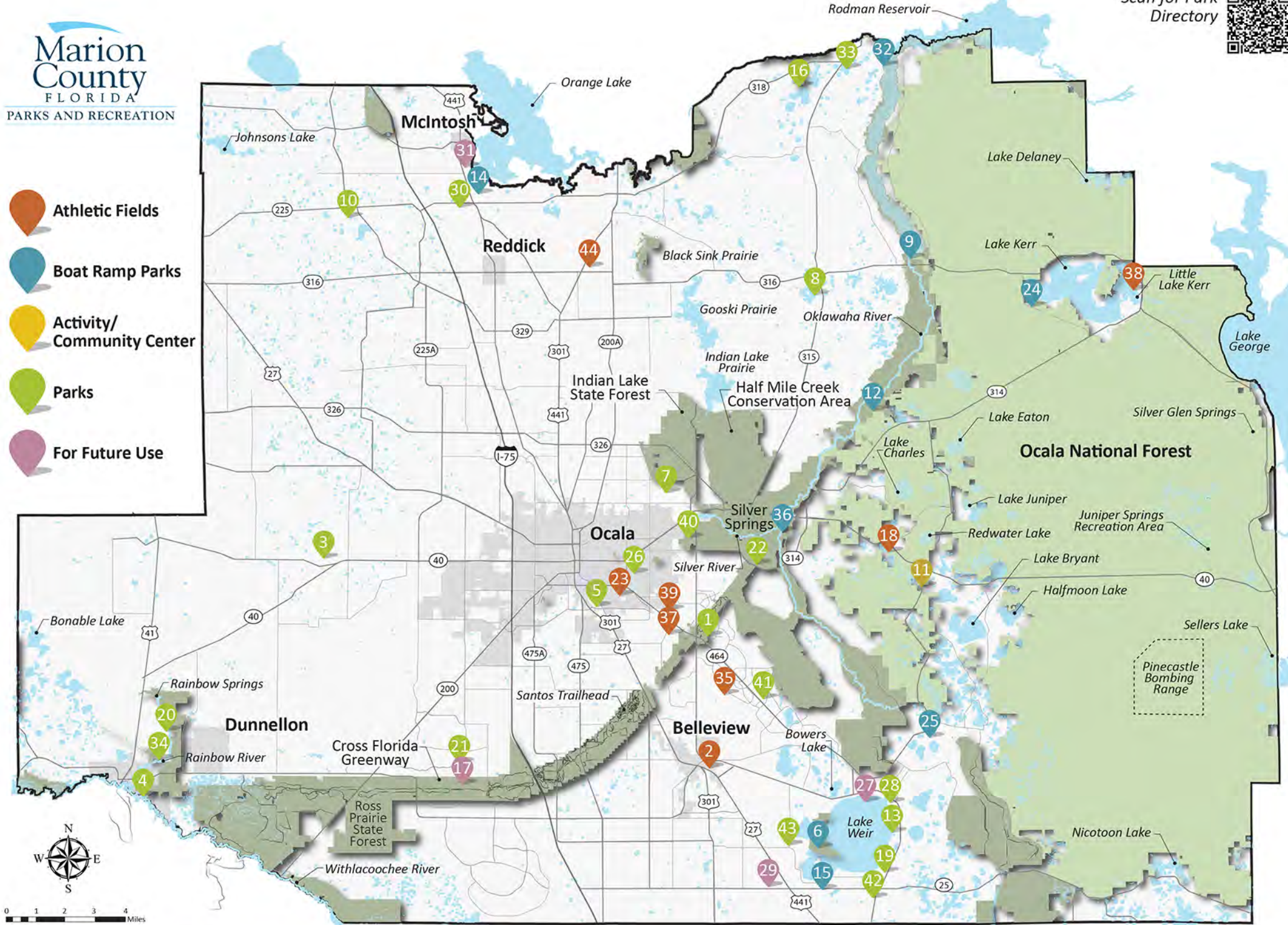
IT STARTS IN
PARKS

Coaching. Connecting. Community.





- Athletic Fields
- Boat Ramp Parks
- Activity/Community Center
- Parks
- For Future Use



- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>1 Baseline Road Trailhead
4255 SE 58th Ave., Ocala 34472
352-671-8560</p> <p>2 Belleview Sports Complex
6501 SE 107th St., Belleview 34420
352-691-8560</p> <p>3 Benjamin Louis VanDuuren Park
918 NW 120th Ave., Ocala 34482
352-671-8560</p> <p>4 Blue Run of Dunnellon (Tubers Exit)
19680 E. Pennsylvania Ave., Dunnellon 34432
352-671-8560</p> <p>5 Brick City Adventure Park
1211 SE 22nd Road, Ocala 34471
352-671-8560</p> <p>6 Carney Island Recreation & Conservation Area
14215 SE 115th Ave., Ocklawaha
32179; 352-432-2860</p> <p>7 Coehadjoe Park
4225 NE 35th St., Ocala 34479
352-671-8560</p> <p>8 Cougar Park
11430 NE 147th St., Fort McCoy 32134
352-671-8560</p> <p>9 Eureka Recreation Areas - East and West
East: 15698 NE 152nd St., Fort McCoy 32134
West: 15395 NE 154th St., Fort McCoy 32134
352-671-8560</p> <p>10 Flemington Community Park
18200 N. Highway 329, Flemington 32667
352-671-8560</p> <p>11 Forest Community Center at Sandhill Park
781 S. Highway 314A, Silver Springs 32179
352-438-2840</p> <p>12 Gores Landing Park
13800 NE 98th St., Fort McCoy 32134
352-671-8560</p> <p>13 Hampton Beach
14600 SE 134th St. Road, Ocklawaha 34491
352-671-8560</p> <p>14 Heagy-Burry Boat Ramp
5040 NW 191st St. Place, Orange Lake 32667
352-671-8560</p> <p>15 Hope Boat Ramp at Sam Phillips Park
(Park Pass Holders Only)
16050 SE 115th Ave., Weirsdale 32195
352-671-8560</p> <p>16 Horseshoe Lake Park & Retreat
23532 NE 110th Ave., Orange Springs
32113
352-671-8560</p> | <p>17 Independence Park
11699 SW 65th Ave. Road, Ocala 34476
352-671-8560</p> <p>18 John Van Fleet Sports Complex
(Operated by East Marion Athletics Association)
14445 NE 14th St. Road, Silver Springs 34488
352-353-5193</p> <p>19 Kiwanis Beach
(Operated by Kiwanis Club of Lake Weir)
15380 SE 140th Ave. Road, Lake Weir 32195
352-671-8560</p> <p>20 KP Hope Park
9435 SW 190th Ave. Road, Dunnellon
34432
352-489-3055</p> <p>21 Liberty Park
10575 SW 57th Terrace Road, Ocala 34476
352-671-8560</p> <p>22 Marshall Swamp Trailhead
8400 SE Highway 314, Ocala 34470
352-671-8560</p> <p>23 McCall Ball Field at McPherson Complex
523 SE 26th Court, Ocala 34471
352-671-8560</p> <p>24 Moorhead Park
20740 NE 140th Street, Fort McCoy 32134
352-671-8560</p> <p>25 Moss Bluff - North and South
North: 16298 SE 95th Place, Ocklawaha 32179
South: 16255 SE 96th Lane Road, Ocklawaha 32179
352-671-8560</p> <p>26 Ocala-Marion County Veterans Memorial Park
2601 E. Fort King St., Ocala 34471
352-671-8422</p> <p>27 Ocklawaha Recreational Area
12250 SE 139th Ave., Ocklawaha 32179
352-671-8560</p> <p>28 Ocklawaha Community Park
12264 SE 141st Ave., Ocklawaha 32179
352-671-8560</p> <p>29 Orange Blossom Hills Park
9150 SE 157th Place, Summerfield 34491
352-671-8560</p> <p>30 Orange Lake Community Park
(Operated by Orange Lake Community Club)
5920 NW 185th St., Orange Lake 32113
352-680-1605</p> <p>31 Orange Lake Overlook
20267 N. Highway 441, Reddick 32113
352-671-8560</p> <p>32 Orange Springs Boat Ramp
14525 NE 245th St. Road, Orange Springs 32113
352-671-8560</p> | <p>33 Orange Springs Park
24399 N. US Highway 21, Orange Springs 32113
352-671-8560</p> <p>34 Rainbow Neighborhood Park
(KP Hole overflow parking)
9941 190th Ave. Road, Dunnellon 34432
352-671-8560</p> <p>35 Ralph Russell Park
1690 Pine Road, Ocala 34472
352-671-8560</p> <p>36 Ray Wayside Park (Ocala Boat Basin)
9560 NE 28th Lane
(State Road 40), Silver Springs 34488
352-671-8560</p> <p>37 Rotary Sportsplex
5220 SE Maricamp Road, Ocala 34472
352-671-8560</p> <p>38 Salt Springs Civic Park
(Operated by Salt Springs Civic Association)
14691 NE 250th Ave., Fort McCoy 32134
352-685-3932</p> <p>39 Shocker Park
(Operated by Ocala Girls Softball)
2371 SE 44th Court, Ocala 34471
352-624-0458</p> <p>40 Silver Springs Conservation Area
5415 NE Seventh Street, Ocala 34470
352-671-8560</p> <p>41 Silver Springs Shores Park
642 Silver Pass, Ocala 34472
352-671-8560</p> <p>42 Weirsdale Park
16286 SE 137th Court, Weirsdale 32195
352-671-8560</p> <p>43 Willoughby Park
14005 SE 100th Ave., Summerfield 32195
352-671-8560</p> <p>44 Wrigley Fields
405 E. Highway 316, Citra 32113
352-671-8560</p> |
|---|--|--|

Frequently Requested Numbers

- City of Ocala Recreation & Parks: 352-368-5517
- Cross Florida Greenway: 352-236-7143
- Florida Fish and Wildlife, NE Region: 352-732-1225
- Marion County Sheriff's Office: 352-732-9111
- Ocala National Forest: 352-236-0288
- Rainbow Springs State Park: 352-465-8555
- Silver Springs State Park: 352-236-7148



It Starts in Parks Messages

The *It Starts in Parks* initiative supports three pillars of the value of parks and recreation. Each word can be expanded to include the plethora of benefits provided by parks and recreation agencies throughout the State of Florida. The graphic materials visually depict the many ways these pillars can be utilized to communicate the value of parks and recreation.

COACHING (for activities and for life)

Florida's parks encourage healthy, active lifestyles as well as social development. Sound bodies and sound minds require physical activity and the chance to experience personal growth. Parks offer a wide range of activities suitable for all ages to get outside and get active - teaching positive lifestyle habits in all areas from nutrition to physical activities to sports and life skills.

CONNECTING (to our environment and our history)

Florida's parks are key to connecting with our natural and historic treasures in order to preserve them. Connecting to everything around us and to each other, we learn to value our environment, our heritage, and our place in the world. We grow in awareness of our responsibility to protect and cherish these things through green practices and gentle use increasing our desire to conserve what we enjoy today for future generations.

COMMUNITY (investment and enrichment)

Florida's parks have become an integral component to economic development as well as an investment in the arts and cultural growth within our communities. Parks provide the setting for social events large and small where people can connect with each other, and participate in classes and group activities for personal enrichment. Parks also provide an investment in infrastructure needed to accommodate revenue generating sporting events and tourism, benefiting the local economy and community as a whole.

Marketing and Communications Plan 2013



Explore, Discover, Relax

This plan defines three major goals of the Department to help position us favorably against competitors, facilitate potential growth in existing programs and ensure our citizens are informed about the multiple recreation opportunities offered by the Department. The plan details the objectives and tactics necessary to achieve these goals.

Goal I: Increase the number of customers using Department programs through integrated marketing and communications.

Goal II: Deliver timely and accurate public information; facilitate and support community engagement initiatives.

Goal III: Support the Department's "escape, experience, explore" campaign.

Goal IV: Promote the Department's athletic fields and facilities to attract state and national tournaments.

Executive Summary

The purpose of the Marion County Parks and Recreation Department's Marketing and Communications Plan is to provide accurate and timely information to Marion County's citizens through delivery of integrated marketing and public relations activities that promote high quality parks, programs and services. As part of its marketing philosophy, the Department will implement key marketing strategies that are designed to:

- Communicate the unique attributes and benefits of the Marion County parks and recreation system
- Increase participation at parks and in programs
- Facilitate revenue generation
- Provide consistent messaging and visual identity
- Build strong community support by telling our story
- Engage community and stakeholders in planning and ongoing collaborative dialogue

Mission

The Marion County Parks and Recreation Department serves Marion County residents and visitors by providing park facilities, recreation services, park planning and protection of our natural resources.

Vision

Provide affordable, resource-based recreation opportunities to residents and visitors. Foster public/private partnerships to increase appreciation of our County’s natural resources and provide opportunities for capitalism. Continuously improve and maintain the facilities, amenities and programs that will keep visitors coming back time and again.

Public Service & Engagement

We will partner with appropriate private and public stakeholders to provide the most customer focused public relations and marketing materials possible.

Diversity & Inclusion

We recognize and respect a variety of perspectives, experiences, and approaches that will help us achieve our organizational goals.

Ethics & Integrity

Our actions will maintain the trust and confidence of the public, the Commission, Administration and the Department.

Overview

The Marion County Parks and Recreation Department system is comprised of over 2,400 acres of land (2,178 passive park acres and 284 active park acres) and 46 parks. The Department offers a variety of exceptional amenities, including:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Baseball/Softball Fields | Concessions | Racquetball Courts |
| Basketball Courts | Dog-Friendly Areas | Restrooms |
| Beaches | Fishing | Shuffleboard Courts |
| Bicycle Trails | Football Fields | Soccer Fields |
| Boat Ramps | Hiking/Walking Trails | Swimming |
| Cabins | Horseshoe Pits | Tennis Courts |
| Camping Areas | Multi-Purpose Fields | Tubing |
| Canoeing/Kayaking | Pickleball | Volleyball Courts |
| Caving | Picnic Pavilions | Wildlife Observation |
| Community Center | Playgrounds | |

The Department also provides a variety of nature-based recreational programs for youth, adults and families including:

Adult Co-Ed Softball	Home School PE	Pickleball
Basic Wild Caving	Kayak and Koffee	Recreation Outreach for
Brown Bag Bunny Brunch	Kayak Outings	Community Kids (ROCK)
Eco Tram Tours	Kayak/Paddleboard Mini-	Ropes Course
Extreme Adventure Camp	Camp and Workshop	SportsAbility
Family Overnight Campout	Outdoor Adventure for	Spring Break Nature Camp
Firewise Nature Camp	Home School	Summer Mini-Camps
Fish Camp Kayak 101	Paddleboard 101	Youth Tennis
Home School Art	Paddleboard Outings	

These amenities and programs must be marketed in such a way to reach various target markets. For example, adults may prefer hard copy notifications (including print brochures and flyers) while teens may prefer on-line and social media notifications. The Department employs a variety of communication vehicles to disseminate information in an accurate and timely manner. These vehicles provide excellent publicity opportunities to deliver information to a vast majority of Marion County residents, and include:

Print Media	The Forest FUN Times	Web Page
Brochures	The FUN Times	Other
County Connection	Social Media	Broadcast Media
Flyers	ActiveNet	Info Tables
Media Advisories	E-mail Blasts	Kiosks
Outdoor Times	Facebook	Signage (temporary and
Paid Advertisements	Intranet	permanent)
Presentations	Twitter	Speakers Bureau
Reports	Videos	

Marketing Philosophy

The purpose of the Department’s Marketing and Communications Plan is to provide accurate and timely information to the Marion County community through delivery of integrated marketing and public relations activities that promote high quality programs and services. As part of our marketing philosophy, the Department will implement key marketing strategies that are designed to:

- Communicate the unique attributes and benefits of the Marion County parks and recreation system
- Increase participation in programs and activities
- Facilitate revenue generation
- Provide consistent messaging and visual identity

- Educate the public by “Telling Our Story,” thereby building strong community support
- Engage community and stakeholders in planning and ongoing collaborative dialogue

Marketing and Communications Structure

To enhance the Department’s marketing and communications efforts, the expertise of the County’s Public Information Office is utilized to ensure information is disseminated in the most effective manner and that the County’s logo is used appropriately. Staff assigned to various departmental marketing activities is required to adhere to brand standards, communication guidelines and organizational messaging from Marion County.

Major focuses for the Marketing and Communications Plan include supporting marketing and community engagement initiatives through media relations, building social media platforms, utilizing ActiveNet more effectively for recreation management, enhanced customer data collection, and training staff on best practices in marketing communications. The Plan is aligned to these areas as follows:

The Parks Administrative Division coordinates training for staff to successfully accomplish the department’s marketing objectives. This is accomplished through direct small group sessions, webinars or other online training mediums, and periodic conferences. The division is also responsible to oversee the efficient and effective use of ActiveNet, a information management system and marketing tool that allows the Department to better define market segments and promotional outreach through enhanced data collection.

A County-wide roll-out of a new internet platform involves a major concentration of staff time, and requires the careful and thoughtful migration of all Department content onto the new platform. Trouble-shooting content and design issues will be addressed throughout the site roll-out. In addition, assigned Department employees are building the Department’s social media activities, in line with the County’s efforts.

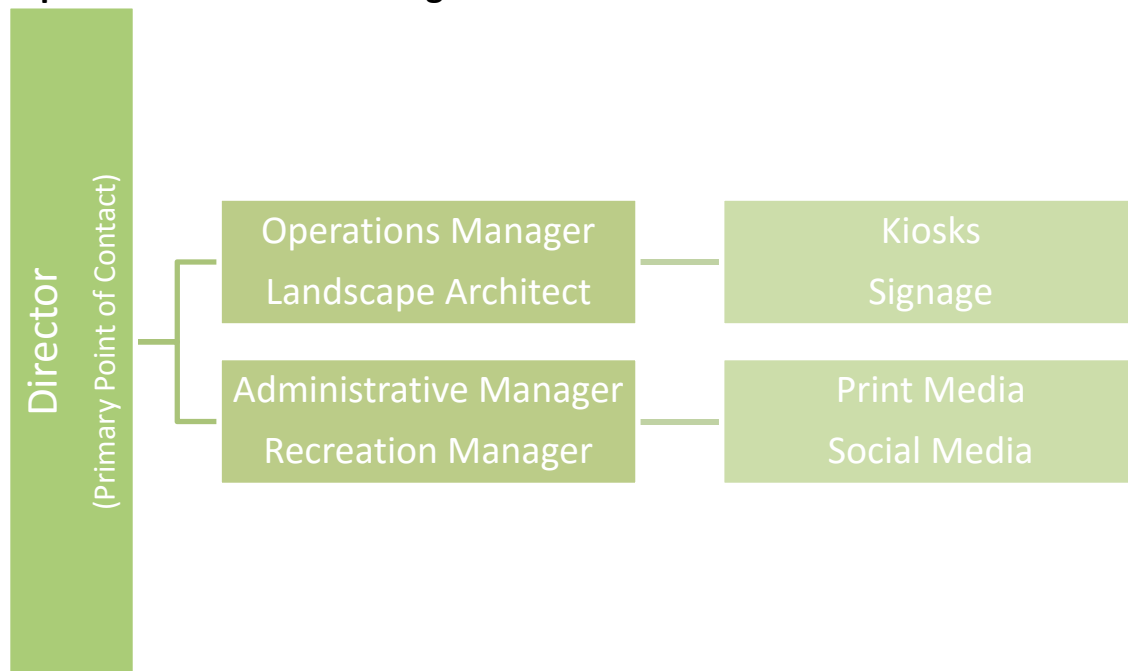
The Director will serve as the primary point of contact to the media in Department matters.

The Director will work with the appropriate manager and assigned PIO to develop, collaborate, and/or coordinate all public information regarding the park system, services, amenities, and resources.

The Marketing Resource Team is led by the Director and is comprised of managers from the department’s four divisions. The team meets weekly to share progress on marketing strategies and projects, share ideas for cross-promotion opportunities, and modify strategies as needed. The Marketing Resource Team also uses this time to identify and problem-solve unique marketing challenges.

Along with the Marketing Resource Team, employees from various divisions (who have been designated and trained) periodically take a lead role in marketing certain programs and events. These individuals serve as a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to the Plan on the delivery of individualized marketing programs such as web content, social media, graphic design and public information.

Department-wide Marketing Resource Team



Communication Vehicles & Marketing Tools

A variety of marketing tools are enlisted in the marketing and public information process, including issuing media advisories and other appropriate materials on Department initiatives or policy changes; managing the production of agency publications that feature programs, services, special events and park amenities; overseeing social media opportunities; coordinating media interviews and public information campaigns; and managing emergency public communications and other progressive measures.

Department Reputation and Branding

The Department enjoys a reputation of excellence, as evidenced by the awards and honors bestowed from local, state and national organizations.

The Department received national recognition from the National Recreation and Park Association winning the William Penn Mott, Jr. Award in 2006, 2007 and 2008. These awards confirm the Department as a leading agency that is committed to the delivery of high quality services and park amenities for its citizens.



In addition, the Department was awarded the Florida Recreation and Park Association (FRPA) Media Excellence Award in 2010 and 2011 for the Outdoor Times and the FUN Times.

Most recently, the Department was awarded an honorary membership to the Salt Springs Civic Association for our continued positive working relationship with the community for the maintenance of the park.



The Department includes the FRPA tagline (shown left) in promotional items, email signatures and marketing materials, as appropriate.

Customer Target Market

Current Customers: Customers who already participate in the Department's programs are key. Per the LERN model, it is six times more expensive to get a new customer than retain a past program participant. By requiring all program registrations, pavilion / cabin rentals and park pass sales be through ActiveNet, an impressive database of our customers exists and can be segmented by age, location, interests and more for the most effective target marketing.

Baby Boomers: Represent another fast-growing segment for the Department, especially since Marion County is a destination for retirees. Baby Boomers will use and enjoy the Department's various programs and services as they move into retirement in the coming years and have greater time for age appropriate recreation and leisure activities. Reaching this demographic now will ensure word-of-mouth referrals in the coming years.

Youth Sports Market:

Youth sports tournaments contribute millions of dollars in economic impact to Marion County businesses. For two recent tournaments, the Shocker Park State Championships and the Rotary Sportsplex Babe Ruth State Tournament, an estimated \$4.4 million was added to Marion County's local economy. In partnership with the Visitor and Convention Bureau, the Department can attract and retain youth sports tournaments to our athletic facilities including the Belleview Sportsplex, Brick City Adventure Park, Rotary Sportsplex, Shocker Park and Wrigley Fields.

Goals

The Plan will focus its efforts on four major goals as outlined below. Implementation of these goals will help position the Department favorably against its competitors, continue to grow program and event attendance, and ensure the community has multiple avenues to obtain information about the Department. The following goals outline the marketing and communications objectives, projected costs and strategies required for successful execution of the Marketing Plan.

Goal I: Increase the number of customers using Department programs through integrated marketing and communications.

- **Objective I:** Promote recreation opportunities through use of *social media and online communications*.
 - **Projected Costs:** No direct costs
 - **Strategies:** Implement e-mail marketing of selected programs through ActiveNet; Migrate Department web content to new “Marion County” platform; Increase the number of customers on Department social media pages; Increase the number of postings on social media sites by five percent; Increase video postings that market rentals, programs and services; Promote ActiveNet registration, rentals and park pass sales; Ensure accurate and current information on internet and social media sites
- **Objective II:** Promote recreation opportunities by creating and distributing *print materials*.
 - **Projected Costs:** \$23,880
 - **Strategies:** Produce professional quality print materials; monitor and approve print publications to ensure brand adherence and message consistency; produce department-wide publications (e.g. Annual Report, Outdoor Times, The FUN Times).
- **Objective III:** Track customer data and industry trends to effectively target customers to market and promote recreation opportunities.
 - **Projected Costs:** \$9,919
 - **Strategies:** Effectively and efficiently utilize ActiveNet software; Research and document customer utilization trends by program; Identify and select program with the greatest potential for higher customer use (e.g. waiting lists and under-used programs); Collect program usage data by facility annually .

Goal II: Deliver timely and accurate public information; facilitate and support community engagement initiatives.

- **Objective I:** Keep Marion County residents and media informed and involved through the delivery of timely and transparent information.
 - **Projected Costs:** No direct costs
 - **Strategies:** Produce accurate and timely media advisories and articles; Oversee policies and procedures for ensuring compliance with public information guidelines; Review Plan annually and update as needed
- **Objective II:** Develop a Department process and protocol for public engagement; support community engagement through media outreach
 - **Projected Costs:** No direct costs
 - **Strategies:** Pitch key public interest stories to the media; Coordinate public information activities with the Public Information Office.
- **Objective III:** Utilize the media to market and promote Department events, programs and services.
 - **Projected Costs:** No direct costs

- **Strategies:** Use media advisories and other appropriate sources to market events, programs and services; explore co-op advertising opportunities through stakeholder groups such as the Visitors and Convention Bureau.

Goal III: Support the Department’s “escape, experience, explore” campaign.

- **Objective I:** Support the Department’s “escape, experience, explore” campaign; leverage marketing opportunities.
 - **Projected Costs:** No additional costs
 - **Strategies:** Design promotional vehicles to market Department programs and services including the tagline, “escape, experience, explore;” Promote activities and events focused on “escape,” “experience” and / or “explore.”

Goal III: Promote the Department’s athletic fields and facilities to attract state and national tournaments.

- **Objective I:** Promote the Department’s athletic fields to attract state and national tournaments; leverage marketing opportunities.
 - **Projected Costs:** To be determined. To include operating, personnel and capital expenditures
 - **Strategies:** Design promotional vehicles to market athletic fields; Work closely with the Visitors and Convention Bureau to attract and retain youth sports tournaments; Invest in infrastructure required to attract national tournaments

SWOT Analysis

Funding issues are the primary concern for the Department. Funding for maintenance of facilities and amenities is suffering due to continued property value decreases and capital improvement projects continue to be delayed.

Staffing levels were at an all-time high in FY 00/01 with a total of 52 employees. In FY 04/05, that number was reduced to 28. Today, our staffing numbers are higher than in the recent past, due to additional maintenance responsibilities as relayed in Table 1.

The Department is looking at new avenues to bridge the gap for programs, services and maintenance through collaborations, partnerships and community involvement. The following is a high-level overview of the Department’s current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Table 1

FY 06/07 - Wrigley Fields and boat ramps at Carney Island were opened to the public.
 FY 07/08 - Department took over the operation of the Rotary Sportsplex and Coehadjoe Park and added the Recreation and the Parks & Natural Resources Divisions.
 FY 08/09 - Department took over the operation of Brick City Adventure Park and the Belleview Sportsplex.
 FY 10/11 - 1/2 Mile Creek Park and Rainbow Neighborhood Park opened to the public. Improvements to the Blue Run of Dunnellon, Hope Boat Ramp and Coehadjoe Park were made.
 FY 11/12 - The Forest Community Center at Sandhill Park opened to the public.
 FY 12/13 - Department took over the operation of Shocker Park, SSS MSTU, Ocklawaha Ballfield and the Fallen Officer Memorial. Improvements to Liberty Community Park and Coehadjoe Park were made. Donated Chatmire Park to Boys and Girls Club.

Department Strengths

- The Department offers affordable programs and services
- The Department offers accessible and inclusive programs and facilities
- The Department has some exceptional facilities / open spaces / natural resources
- The Department offers environmental programs and services

Department Weaknesses

- The Department's general fund budget continues to decrease
- Marketing for programs and services must be improved

Department Opportunities

- The Department has strong community support
- The Department has restructured to enhance delivery of services and programs
- The Department has the opportunity to enhance Department branding
- Increase private and public partnerships
- Interdepartmental collaborations
- Improve data collection through ActiveNet system
- Centralized marketing and communications function
- Use of parkland by local businesses

Department Threats

- Slow economic recovery
- Budget deficits
- Funding cuts
- Growth of the parks system without appropriate funding
- Uncertain environmental conditions (e.g. drought, water quality, etc.)
- Rising costs of doing business (e.g. utility costs, personnel)
- Unfunded mandate for Federally required ADA implementation
- Negative financial impact of required Florida Retirement System (FRS) contribution for part-time employees (fewer work hours available to remain "budget neutral")



The Forest Community Center at Sandhill Park is the department's first community center. Opened in 2011, the facility offers a variety of recreational programming, as well as room rentals for weddings, birthdays, family reunions and more. A pavilion, boardwalk and playground are also available.

Since 1953, KP Hole Park has been the year-round family destination for spending the day on the spring-fed Rainbow River. While on the 72-degree, crystal-clear river, you may encounter a variety of wildlife, including alligators, otters, birds, and fish.

Escape the everyday and connect with your family and neighbors through exciting sports programs, relaxing park venues, and open spaces. Experience something new through guided recreation and education programs. Explore the outdoors and swim, paddle, hike and bike your way through Marion County's unparalleled forests, trails, springs, and lakes.

Escape, Experience, Explore

www.marionparksrec.org
 www.facebook.com/MarionCountyParksandRec
 www.twitter.com/MarionParksRec
 parks@marioncountyfl.org
 352-671-8560

Keep in Touch!

For a fun experience, visit Brick City Adventure Park. Adventures happen at the interactive playground and picnic area. Guided quarry tours and low ropes course programs are available by calling the department at 352-671-8560. This park was selected as a "premier facility showcase" by the Florida Recreation and Park Association and featured in the FRPA Journal.

www.marionparksrec.org

Registrations, Reservations, and Passes

To register for upcoming programs, reserve pavilions or buy park passes, visit us online at

The Outdoor Times is a monthly e-newsletter spotlighting department happenings and programs, including a calendar of events. To sign up to receive the Outdoor Times, please contact us using one of the methods listed below.

Outdoor Times

Horseshoe Lake Park and Retreat offers a wide variety of outdoor activities including canoeing, swimming, fishing, and hiking, as well as a picnic area and playground. Rustic-style cabins nestled on the water banks are available for weekend or weekly rentals. Each furnished cabin includes a kitchenette with microwave, mini-fridge and four-burner gas stove, dining/living room, and screened-in porch offering delightful views of the lake. Cabins may sleep six to 10 people. Horseshoe Lake Park and Retreat is a great place for private and corporate events. The large dining room and mess hall make it ideal for family reunions, corporate functions, church outings, and weddings.

Contact us to host your next special event. From private group programs to fundraisers, we have a park or facility to accommodate you. A special event permit may be required, depending on the activity planned.

Special Events

The Area's Best Entertainment Value!

Park Pass Information

Marion County Parks and Recreation sells annual park passes.

Your park pass is valid for day use at:

- Carney Island.
- Gores Landing.
- Hampton Beach.
- Hope Boat Ramp (Park Pass Holders Only).
- Horseshoe Lake Park and Retreat.
- Moss Bluff : North and South.
- Ray Wayside Park (Ocala Boat Basin).

*KP Hole Park offers individual and family passes to Marion County residents, sold exclusively at KP Hole Park.

Friends of Marion County Parks and Recreation

The Friends of Marion County Parks and Recreation, Inc. works in partnership with Marion County Parks and Recreation to provide volunteer and financial support for the preservation and improvement of Marion County's parks and recreation programs. The membership is open to individuals, families, and businesses.

Please call 352-671-8560 for more information

Marion County Parks and Recreation Guide to Adventure

**Escape, Experience, Explore
It Starts in Parks!**

Marion County
FLORIDA
PARKS AND RECREATION

IT STARTS IN
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Coaching. Connecting. Community.



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