# RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

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Recreation and Open Space
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INTRODUCTION

Since 1995, when the previous Technical Support Document for the Recreation and Open Space Element of the Pasco County Comprehensive Plan was prepared, the County has aggressively pursued improvement and expansion of the parks and recreation system. Some significant projects and enhancements to the County’s parks and recreation system include:

A. Parks and Recreation Master Plan
   In response to the mounting pressure on the County’s park and recreation facilities by the growing number of new residents, the Pasco County Board of County Commissioners set out to prepare a ten-year Parks and Recreation Master Plan in 2000. The Master Plan was completed and accepted by the Board of County Commissioners in April 2001. The Master Plan seeks to anticipate and respond to the current and projected park and recreation needs in Pasco County in an intelligent and equitable manner. This master planning process was guided primarily through public participation with the use of a Steering Committee, workshops, and survey.

   The work completed in the Parks and Recreation Plan provides much of the data and information required to update the Technical Support Document for recreation and open space. The Master Plan inventories all County park facilities, publicly owned lands, recommended new level of service standards to meet park demands, and providing funding alternatives for the implementation of the Master Plan.

   Currently, the County is in the process of acquiring land and planning for the implementation of several park and recreation projects identified within the Master Plan. These projects include the expansion of the Land O’ Lakes Recreation Complex and the Land O’ Lakes Community Center, a new park in Wesley Chapel, a new park in Odessa, and a new coastal park in Holiday.

B. Parks and Recreation Impact Fee
   In January 2002, Pasco County adopted a parks and recreation impact fee. The purpose of the fee is to mitigate the impact of new development on the County’s parks and recreational facilities. The fee currently $892 per single-family dwelling unit and $627 per multi-family dwelling unit. According to the Pasco County Adopted Fiscal Year 2004/05 Budget, the impact fee was estimated to generate over $4.97 million in Fiscal Year 2004 and is estimated to generate over $5.76 million in Fiscal Year 2005.

C. Neighborhood Park Requirement for New Development
   In October 2002, Pasco County adopted and amendment to the Land Development Regulations that requires developers of a subdivision with more than 25 dwelling units to construct and maintain neighborhood parks. For developments with 25 to 100 dwelling units, developers are required to provide one acre of neighborhood
parks. For each dwelling unit over 100 dwelling units, developers are required to provide an additional 1/100th of an acre for neighborhood parks. This requirement provides the County a proactive tool to meet the local park and recreational needs in a cost effective manner.

D. Suncoast Trail
In 2001, the Suncoast Trail opened. The Suncoast Trail travels through Pasco County for 21 miles and parallels the Suncoast Parkway. The trail is comprised of a paved multi-purpose non-motorized trail. Trailheads in Pasco County are located at S.R. 54, S.R. 52, and Crews Lake Park. The trail is officially designated as part of Florida’s Statewide Greenways and Trails System. The trail stretches from Hillsborough County, through Pasco, and into Hernando County. One of the trail’s primary highlights is the segment adjacent to the Starkey Wilderness Preserve where it crosses the Anclote and Pithlachascotee rivers and the link to the J.B. Starkey Wilderness Park. The Suncoast Trail will eventually link to other trails in the region such as the Upper Tampa Bay Trail and the Pinellas Trail.

E. Werner-Boyce Salt Springs State Park
The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) recently opened the Werner-Boyce Salt Springs State Park. According to FDEP, a small portion of the park was opened March 2001. The approximately 3,500 acre State Park is located along the coast north of the City of Port Richey. The majority of the State Park is comprised of submerged lands. Facilities at the park are currently limited and consist of a small self-composting restroom, small picnic shelter, information kiosk, and one half mile of nature trail.

F. Park and School Co-Location
In 2003, the County completed a study of potential co-location opportunities for schools, libraries, and parks. The primary purposes of the study were to identify criteria and guidelines to enable and encourage appropriate school, park, library co-location and to provide recommendations for potential co-location opportunities based on existing and planned school, park, and library construction. The study provided the following recommendations regarding co-location:

- The County and District School Board of Pasco County should begin discussions regarding the co-location of schools and parks and libraries for the Wesley Chapel area, the Odessa/Trinity area, the Connerton area, the San Antonio/Saint Leo area, the Dade City area and the Moon Lake area. Immediate emphasis should be placed on the Wesley Chapel and Odessa/Trinity area.
- The County should pursue the use of existing and planned elementary schools for neighborhood parks.
- Shared or joint use of facilities should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Agreements for shared or joint use for each location should be developed to address the issues specific to each location.

Also in 2003, the County, municipalities, and District School Board of Pasco
County entered into an interlocal agreement that included the potential for the co-location and shared use of parks and schools.

G. Penny for Pasco Referendum
On March 9, 2004, Pasco County voters approved a $0.01 sales tax increase, effective January 1, 2005, to help pay for school renovation and construction, transportation needs, improving public safety, infrastructure needs, and acquisition of environmentally sensitive lands.

These new programs and activities have set the stage for continual improvement in the County’s parks and recreation system over the next 20 years.

CLASSIFICATION AND INVENTORY OF EXISTING PARKS AND RECREATION SYSTEM

Pasco County Park Classifications

Parks in Pasco County are classified according to a five tier functional hierarchy. Each classification describes characteristics that are common to each park type and specify siting criteria that should be applied in park development. The classifications are derived largely from site guidelines presented in the Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

Regional Parks

Typically, regional parks are large resource based parks of 100 acres in size or greater. Each regional park is intended to serve a population of 100,000 residents. The recreation use is primarily passive and includes activities such as water-based recreation, camping, fishing, trails, nature study and education, gardens, and play areas. The location of a regional park is dependent on the availability of high quality natural resources capable of being developed and used for outdoor recreation according to the SCORP.

District Parks

District Parks are also large parks that are typically 80 acres in size or larger and serve a population of 50,000 residents. It is important to note that existing District Parks in Pasco County are less than 80 acres, typically 40 acres. The distinction between District Parks and Regional Parks is that the District Parks are primarily active use parks. A District Park is designed to serve several communities and may contain large athletic complexes, recreation centers, and a diverse range of intensive recreational facilities such as gymnasiums, aquatic/swimming facilities, skateboard courts, playgrounds, and other facilities as appropriate. The District Park can also offer natural resource based uses such as nature trails, fishing, and boating. District Parks are generally located closer to urban areas than Regional Parks and are located near major arterial roads within 30 minutes driving time from population centers.
Community Parks

A Community Park is described in the SCORP as a “drive to park”. These parks are 5 acres or larger in size and serve a population of 25,000 residents. The Community Park is designed to serve the recreation needs of several neighborhoods. The Community Park has a variety of active recreational uses such as community centers, ball fields, outdoor courts, trails, boat ramps, beaches, boardwalks, fishing and swim areas, and is often a gathering place for area residents.

Neighborhood Parks

The Neighborhood Park is described in the SCORP as a “walk to park”. These parks are typically less than 5 acres in size. The neighborhood park is designed to serve a neighborhood population of 5,000 residents. It is desirable to locate a neighborhood park adjacent to an elementary school because both serve the same population, share compatible land uses and contain recreation facilities that are of mutual benefit according to the SCORP. Facilities located within a neighborhood park are limited and may include playgrounds, open play areas, picnic areas, and outdoor courts.

Boat Access Parks

The Boast Access Park classification was developed specifically for Pasco County in response to the need to provide points of access to the Gulf of Mexico and lakes or rivers for boating and fishing. These parks are located within the coastal areas and on lakes or rivers in Pasco County and are intended to provide facilities for launching boats to the lakes, rivers, or into channels that lead to open water of the Gulf of Mexico. These parks may stand alone or integrated with the other park types described above. The integration of boat launching facilities with other park types requires astute sensitivity to assure that adequate parking and other support facilities are available without adversely impacting other park functions. These parks are generally intended to serve a population of 75,000 residents and may contain boat ramps or launching points, docks, boat trailer parking, and restrooms. Optionally these parks may have picnic areas, beach areas, and playgrounds.

Park County Park Inventory

Table 5-1 is the inventory for the existing Pasco County owned and operated parks. In addition, Map 5-1 provides information as to the location of the existing County parks. The data in Table 5-1 and Map 5-1 are primarily from the Pasco County Parks and Recreation Master Plan completed by the County in 2001 with updates provided by the Pasco County Parks and Recreation Department in January 2005.

The following text provides a narrative description of each County park.

Regional Parks

There are four regional parks serving the recreational needs of Pasco County. An emphasis is placed on function (resource based facilities) versus size assigning the Regional Park classification.
Crews Lake Park (113 Acres)

Crews Lake Park is a predominately resource based recreation facility. The park contains 13,200 feet of hiking and biking trails, a 415 foot pier, boat ramp, canoe launch, and observation tower. Support facilities include 81 picnic tables, six benches, two large shelters, four small shelters, and two playgrounds. Athletic facilities are limited to one multi-purpose field and court, two basketball hoops, and four horseshoe courts. Primitive camping is provided in 0.5 acres of the park.

J.B. Starkey Wilderness Park (8.069 Acres)

J.B. Starkey Wilderness Park offers passive recreation opportunities for those utilizing its extensive trail system, which provides 142,560 feet for hiking/nature walks, 18,480 feet for bicycle riding, and 47,520 feet for horseback riding. The park also provides a link to the Suncoast Trail. There are eight cabins and tent camping areas at the park that are available for overnight camping. A day use area provides picnic shelters and a playground.

Key Vista Nature Park (103 Acres)

Key Vista Nature Park is characterized by its scenic beauty that can be observed along its 4,000 feet of hiking/nature trail. Support facilities include 15 picnic tables, eight benches, a boardwalk, and observation tower. A trail is planned to be constructed to link Key Vista Nature Park to Anclote Gulf Park.

Withlacoochee River Park (408 Acres)

Withlacoochee River Park offers a canoe launch facility, fishing dock, and a 70 foot observation tower. The park has an extensive trail system that includes 87,120 feet for hiking and observing nature. Other recreation facilities include a multi-purpose field, a playground, a large picnic pavilion, four shelters, and a primitive camping area. There are also 80 picnic tables on site and nine benches. A 1.7 mile paved trail and restroom/bathhouse is currently under design.

District Parks

Three District Parks are found in Pasco County. Like the Regional Park designation, an emphasis was placed on function (large athletic based facilities) in assigning the District Park classification.

Holiday Recreation Complex (38 Acres)

Holiday Recreation Complex contains an array of athletic facilities that include six baseball fields, four soccer fields, four basketball hoops, four tennis courts, and two racquetball courts. It also contains a recreation center with gym and activity rooms, playground area, a large group shelter, 22 picnic tables, and 13 benches.
Land O’ Lakes Recreation Complex (80 Acres)

Land O’ Lakes Recreation Complex currently contains the following athletic fields: four baseball fields, one softball, one football, and three soccer. It is also equipped with four basketball hoops, four tennis courts, one swimming pool, and an equipped playground. Support facilities include 15 picnic tables and seven benches. A recreation center with a gym and activity rooms is also provided at the park. Adjacent to the park is the Land O’ Lakes Library.

The County recently acquired lands to expand the park to 80 acres. On December 7, 2004, the Board of County Commissioners approved a conceptual design for the expansion. This conceptual design includes, but is not limited to, four baseball and softball fields, two football/soccer fields, two soccer only fields, four basketball courts, and dog park. A skate park is proposed on the existing basketball courts. These improvements will double the number of facilities currently available at the park. Construction is anticipated to begin in the Fall of 2005 and conclude in the Summer of 2006.

Veterans Memorial Park (49 Acres)

Veterans Memorial Park offers an array of athletic facilities that include three softball fields, three soccer fields, one multi-purpose field, ten basketball hoops, four tennis courts, two racquetball courts, one horseshoe court, and one outdoor volleyball court. In addition, the site contains a swimming pool, playground, and a one-mile multi-purpose trail. A recreation center with a gym and activity rooms, small group shelter, 31 picnic tables, and 16 benches are also provided.

Community Parks

There are more Community Parks offered than any other park type in the County. Presently, there are 19 parks classified as Community Park.

Anclote Gulf Park (23 Acres)

Anclote Gulf Park contains a 300 foot pier, a canoe launch facility, a playground, three small shelters, and 18 picnic tables.

Anclote River Park (29 Acres)

Anclote River Park offers a beach area along 300 feet of shoreline, six boat ramp lanes, a 136 foot dock, and boaters’ assistance. The park also contains 64 picnic tables, 25 benches, and two large group shelters. Other amenities include a horseshoe court and playground.

Arthur F. Engle Memorial Park (40 Acres)

Arthur F. Engle Memorial Park is known for its athletic facilities that include three baseball fields, four soccer fields, a softball field, and a football field. The park is also equipped with 16 picnic tables, two benches, and has a playground.
Cypress Lake Park (15 Acres)
Cypress Lake Park is a conservation area that currently has no recreation facilities.

Hercules Aquatic Center (15 Acres)
Hercules Aquatic Center is a swim and fitness facility that includes a pool and 1,584 feet of fitness trail. Support facilities include 11 picnic tables and a playground area.

James Irvin Civic Center (1 Acre)
James Irvin Civic Center is intensively developed with active recreation facilities that include a recreation building, multi-purpose field, two playground areas, four basketball hoops, and a volleyball and shuffleboard court. The site also contains two picnic tables and three benches.

John S. Burks Memorial Park (67 Acres)
John S. Burks Memorial Park is equipped with six baseball, two softball, three soccer, and one multi-purpose filed. In addition, there are four basketball hoops, and a volleyball court. There are 10 picnic tables and one playground.

Land O' Lakes Community Center (21 Acres)
Land O’ Lakes Community Center contains one softball, football, and multi-purpose field, one basketball hoop, two community centers, and one playground. In addition, there are 11 picnic tables and four benches. The County recently acquired land adjacent to the park form the District School Board of Pasco County.

Moon Lake Park (7 Acres)
Moon Lake Park has 500 feet of freshwater lake beach, a boat ramp, and canoe launch area. The park is equipped with 31 picnic tables, two small shelters, and five benches. There is also a horseshoe court and playground area.

Oakridge Park (12 Acres)
Oakridge Park contains two softball fields and an equipped playground area. In addition, there are 13 picnic tables on site.

Odessa Park (29 Acres)
Odessa Park contains one softball contains one softball field, two basketball hoops, two tennis courts, two shuffleboard courts, a boardwalk, and a small community center. It also has one large group picnic shelter, 10 picnic tables, 10 benches, and a playground area.

Pinehill Recreation Complex (10 Acres)
Pinehill Recreation Complex contains five baseball fields and six picnic tables.
Robert K. Rees Park (45 Acres)

Robert K. Rees Park is primarily a water-based recreation facility that contains 920 feet of saltwater beach and a canoe launch. Picnic and gathering facilities include two large group shelters, 33 picnic tables, three benches, and a playground area.

Shady Hills Community Center (19 Acres)

Shady Hills Community Center contains four baseball fields, a football field, two basketball hoops, and a volleyball court. Support facilities include a small group shelter, a playground, a covered stage, and 19 picnic tables.

Samuel W. Pasco Park

Samuel W. Pasco Park contains three baseball fields, two softball fields, four soccer fields, and four basketball hoops. Other facilities include an equipped playground area, a small group shelter, 24 picnic tables, and three benches.

San Antonio Athletic Complex (13 Acres)

San Antonio Athletic Complex contains four baseball fields and 2,640 feet of walking trail. In addition, there is one equipped playground area, one small group shelter, two picnic tables, and two benches.

Stanley Park (33 Acres)

Stanley Park includes one softball, one football, and one multi-purpose field, four basketball hoops, one tennis court, and one volleyball court. Stanley Park also has an equipped playground, small group shelter, 13 picnic tables, and six benches.

Robert J. Strickland Memorial Park (6 Acres)

Robert J. Strickland Memorial Park is principally a water-based facility that includes 590 feet of saltwater shoreline/beach, a boat ramp, a canoe launch, a 220 foot dock, and extensive boardwalks. The site also provides a playground area, a large pavilion, four small shelters, 36 picnic tables, picnic shelter, and six benches.

W.H. Jack Mitchell Park (52 Acres)

W.H. Jack Mitchell Park contains three softball fields, four soccer fields, two multi-purpose fields, two basketball hoops, and a playground. Support facilities include 12 picnic tables and 22 benches.

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood Parks are primarily found in the more urbanized areas of the County, typically as an ancillary component to intensive residential subdivision development.
There are seven neighborhood parks located in the County. Neighborhood parks are generally five acres or less in size.

*Aloha Gardens Park (3 Acres)*

Aloha Gardens Park provides one multi-purpose field, one picnic table, and two benches.

*Beacon Square Park (5 Acres)*

Beacon Square Park contains one basketball hoop, a multi-purpose field, two horseshoe courts, and benches.

*Darby Park (1 Acre)*

Darby Park provides two basketball hoops, a multi-purpose court, a playground area, two picnic tables, and a small community center.

*Grove Park (1 Acre)*

The main attraction at Grove Park is its pool and community center. Other amenities include a small playground and two picnic tables.

*Middle Lake (4 Acres)*

Middle Lake is a water-based facility that provides a boat ramp, canoe launch, and fishing dock. The park also contains one picnic table.

*Trilby Park and Civic Center (2Acres)*

Trilby Park has one multi-purpose field, one ball field, two basketball hoops, a playground area, and picnic table.

*Turtle Lakes (4 Acres)*

Turtle Lakes contains one basketball hoop, two tennis courts, and two picnic tables.
<p>| Park Facility Name | Address | City/County | Location | Acres | Classification | Baseball - Adult 200' Lighted # of Fields | Baseball - Adult 200' Unlit # of Fields | Baseball - Youth 200' Lighted # of Fields | Baseball - Youth 200' Unlit # of Fields | Softball - Adult 300' Lighted # of Fields | Softball - Adult 300' Unlit # of Fields | Softball - Youth 200' Lighted # of Fields | Softball - Youth 200' Unlit # of Fields | Football Lighted # of Fields | Football Unlit # of Fields | Soccer Lighted # of Fields | Soccer Unlit # of Fields | Multipurpose Field Lighted # of Fields | Multipurpose Field Unlit # of Fields | Basketball Lighted # of Fields | Basketball Unlit # of Fields | Lacrosse # of Hoops | Racquetball Lighted # of Courts | Racquetball Unlit # of Courts | Multipurpose Court Lighted # of Courts | Multipurpose Court Unlit # of Courts | Swimming Pools # of Pools | Beach Linear Feet of Shoreline | Boat Ramp # of Lanes | Canoe Launch # of Launch Sites | Dock # of Feet | Pier Linear Feet | Fishing Yes/No | Source: Pasco County Parks and Recreation Master Plan, April 2001. Updates from Parks and Recreation Department, January 2005. |</p>
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<td>NARREDAKE PARK</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 1 0 0 13 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ODESSA PARK</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 1 1 0 10 5 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PINEHILL RECREATION CENTER</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0 0 6 0</td>
<td>SITE HAS (1) CONCESSION/RESTROOM BLDGS. &amp; (2) BATTING CAGES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROBERT K. REES PARK</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 1 2 0 33 3 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAMUEL W. PASCO PARK</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 1 0 1 24 3 0</td>
<td>Site Has (3) CONCESSION/RESTROOM PRESS BOX BLDGS.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAN ANTONIO ATHLETIC COMPLEX</td>
<td>0 2640 0 0 1 0 1 9 2</td>
<td>Site Has (1) CONCESSION/RESTROOM BLDG.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHADY HILLS COMMUNITY CENTER</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 1 0 1 19 0</td>
<td>SITE Has (2) CONCESSION/RESTROOM BLDGS. &amp; COMMUNITY CENTER</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STANLEY PARK</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 1 0 1 13 6 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRICKLAND MEMORIAL PARK</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 1 1 4 36 8 0</td>
<td>SITE HAS 18 CAR, 31 BOAT TRAILER</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRELLEY PARK</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TURTLE LAKES</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0 0 2 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK</td>
<td>0 5280 0 0 0 0 1 31 16 0</td>
<td>SITE HAS REC. CENTER/POOL BLDG. (2) CONCESSION/RESTROOM/PRESS BOX BLDGS.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. H. JACK MITCHELL PARK</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 1 0 0 12 22 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WITHlacoochee RIVER PARK</td>
<td>8720 0 0 0 1 1 4 80 9</td>
<td>210 CAR, 8 BOAT TRAILER</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTALS**

| 249520 | 5504 | 31680 | 47520 | 28 | 12 | 27 | 733 | 166 | 9.5 |

Chapter 5: Recreation & Open Space

Publicly Owned Open Space

Numerous governmental and quasi-public agencies hold title to well over 100,000 acres of land in Pasco County. These public and quasi-public agencies include Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD), State of Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), Florida Division of Forestry, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. In addition to the state agencies, Pinellas County and the City of St. Petersburg have potable water well fields in Pasco County to serve the water demands of their citizens through the facilities of Tampa Bay Water. Quasi-public agencies owning land in Pasco County include, but are not limited to, the Audubon Society and Nature Conservancy.

The Southwest Florida Water Management District is the largest public landowner in Pasco County. Significant SWFWMD sites include Cypress Creek, Green Swamp West, Upper Hillsborough, Withlacoochee River Park, Starkey Wilderness Park, Serenova, and Conner Preserve.

The Cypress Creek Wellfield is part of the tributary system to the Hillsborough River. The Cypress Creek Wellfield serves as an important source of water for the surrounding region. Recreational opportunities include bicycling, camping, equestrian, fishing, hiking, inline skating, and nature study.

The Green Swamp West is located in the northeast corner of Pasco County. This area preserves much of the Withlacoochee State Forest. It is an integral part of SWFWMD’s plan to protect the Green Swamp and the headwaters of the Withlacoochee River. Recreational opportunities include bicycling, camping, hiking, hunting, horseback riding, and nature study.

The Upper Hillsborough Tract serves to protect and enhance natural detention and storage of floodwaters of the Hillsborough River. The floodplain also acts as a filtration system for surface water run-off that flows or seeps into the Hillsborough River. Recreational opportunities include bicycling, camping, equestrian, fishing, hiking, and hunting.

Withlacoochee River Park lies in eastern Pasco County, north of U.S. 98. Access to this park is by River Road, four miles east of Dade City. In 1987, SWFWMD provided the County with the use of 146 acres to accommodate river-front access for the canoe launch, dock and 1.5 miles of hiking trails. The Withlacoochee River Park recreational opportunities include an Indian Village, bicycling, picnicking, camping, hiking, canoeing, and nature study.

In 1975, SWFWMD received several hundred acres of what is known as Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park as a donation from Jay B. Starkey, Sr., who purchased the land in 1937 to use as a cattle ranch and timber operation. The remaining land in the park was subsequently purchased from the Starkey family and was entered into an agreement with the County to develop recreation facilities. The tract encompasses a portion of the headwaters of the Anclote river and the Pithlachascotee River flows through the extreme northwestern corner of the property. Recreational opportunities include bicycling, cabin camping, equestrian, fishing, hiking, picnicking, playground, and nature study.
The Serenova Tract, approximately 8,000 acres adjacent to the J.B. Starkey Wilderness Park, was acquired by FDOT as mitigation for the Suncoast Parkway. Currently, SWFWMD is the owner and manager of the property. Limited access to the area is available from the north.

Conner Preserve is the most recent land acquisition by SWFWMD in Pasco County. In February 2003, SWFWMD purchased approximately 2,980 acres from Connerton, L.L.C. along S.R. 52 to the east of U.S. 41. An additional 515 acres of land was also donated as a conservation easement by Connerton, L.L.C. On May 22, 2004, a dedication ceremony for the Preserve was held by SWFWMD. The Preserve will provide for the preservation or restoration of natural ecosystems as well as passive recreational opportunities.

In addition to the lands owned by the Southwest Florida Water Management District, the Florida Department of transportation and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection own other large public open space areas that include the Suncoast Parkway Recreational Trail, Werner-Boyce Salt Springs State Park, and Anclote Key State Preserve.

The Suncoast Parkway recreational trail provides recreational opportunities to the citizens of Pasco County as well as the entire region. This multi-use trial runs along the Suncoast Parkway stretching from Hillsborough County through Pasco and Hernando Counties. The paved trail is 12 feet wide and provides a great wealth of recreational opportunities as well as an alternative mode of transportation. Trailheads in Pasco County are located at S.R. 54, S.R. 52, and Crews Lake Park. Twenty-one miles of the trail are located within Pasco County.

The Boyce/Wetstone Tract contains 1,685 acres and the Berkovitz/Pines tract contains 1,709 acres (total of 3,394 acres) located north of Port Richey along the Pasco County coast and is currently owned by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. The tracts were originally acquired by Pasco County through the Conservation and Recreational Lands (CARL) program and were subsequently donated to the State for the State Park. These tracts have recently opened as the Werner-Boyce Salt Springs State Park. The development of this State Park is a great benefit to Pasco County as it will preserve and provide access to Pasco County’s coastline as well as protect unique and highly sensitive coastal wetlands and marshes.

Anclote Key State Preserve is a State Park located off the coasts of Pasco and Pinellas Counties. This park is only accessible by private boat. Beaches, primitive camping, picnicking, and fishing are the primary recreational opportunities within the park. The southern end of the park contains a restored 19th century lighthouse.

In October 2004, the Florida Department of Community Affairs commented to provide a grant through the Florida Communities Trust Florida Forever Program to assist the County in the acquisition of 716 acres of coastal land on the east and west sides of Strauber Memorial Highway in Holiday. The acquisition of this property is a key to protecting the few remaining undeveloped coastal areas for conservation and passive recreational uses.
The coastal area of Pasco County is both unique and sensitive and provides opportunity for recreation and education. Currently, there are approximately 5 miles of coastline available for public access through Pasco Country and an additional 7 miles through the Werner-Boyce salt Springs State Park. Map 5-2 displays the current and proposed coastal access areas provided within unincorporated Pasco County and the primary amenities associated with each park facility. Map 5-3 displays the location of the three artificial reef sites.

There is an interest in expanding access to coastal areas. However, due to the fact that the coastline is characterized by coastal wetlands and marshes, which are strictly protected, the provision of new sandy beaches is neither practical nor feasible. Consequently, coastal access is focused on areas that are left in its natural state with public access via trails/boardwalks. These areas maintain the integrity and functionality of the coastal wetlands/marshes as well as providing access for the public to observe the wide variety of wildlife and fish that utilize these coastal habitats. The primary opportunity to enhance coastal access is through coordination with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the ongoing development of the Werner-Boyce Salt Springs State Park, enhanced access to Anclote Key State Preserve, and the potential acquisition of the property in Holiday through Florida Communities Trust Florida Forever Program.
Adopted Level of Service Standards for Parks

The adopted level of service (LOS) for park types are as follows:

- Community: 0.50 acre/1,000 population
- District: 0.50 acre/1,000 population
- Regional Park: 11.00 acres/1,000 population
- Total: 12.00 acres/1,000 population

Table 5-2 provides an analysis of the adopted level of service standards (LOS) for Community, District, and Regional Parks in the years 2005, 2010, and 2025.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park Type</th>
<th>LOS (Acres Per 1,000 Persons)</th>
<th>Current Acreage</th>
<th>Acreage Needed</th>
<th>Surplus/Deficiency</th>
<th>Acreage Needed</th>
<th>Surplus/Deficiency</th>
<th>Acreage Needed</th>
<th>Surplus/Deficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>(17)</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>(59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>8,693</td>
<td>3,728</td>
<td>4,965</td>
<td>4,053</td>
<td>4,640</td>
<td>4,969</td>
<td>3,724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Park</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>9,399</td>
<td>4,067</td>
<td>5,332</td>
<td>4,421</td>
<td>4,978</td>
<td>4,978</td>
<td>3,978</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Based on the adopted LOS, the current inventory of County parks, and the projected growth in Pasco County’s unincorporated population, the County has an adequate total supply of Community and Regional Parks to meet the adopted LOS needs through the year 2025. However, there is a deficiency in District Park types throughout the planning horizon. This deficiency is currently addressed by Pasco County in the following manner:

District Parks: Pursuit of development of new District Parks in the Odessa, Wesley Chapel, and Dade City areas of Pasco County and the implementation of the Parks and Recreation Impact Fee.

There are seven neighborhood parks, encompassing a total of 20 acres, in the County’s park and recreation system. The neighborhood park demand is recommended in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan to be addressed through coordination between the County, municipalities, schools, private development, and potential municipal taxing districts or community development districts. In addition, the County has implemented a program requiring new development in excess of 25 dwelling units to construct and maintain neighborhood parks. The County should concentrate its resources for the development of large-scale District and other resource based parks (natural lands, boat access, etc.) as opposed to the development of small-scale neighborhood parks. Therefore, a level of service standard for neighborhood parks is not provided.
2010 Level of Service Standards for Parks

A significant recommendation of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a re-evaluation of level of service standards for parks and recreation in Pasco County. The adopted level of service standards for parks is a total of 12 acres per 1,000 residents. This acreage based level of service standard, while a common practice, does not necessarily assure that the County is fully serving the parks and recreational needs of the community. An acreage based level of service is simply achieved by the gross accumulation of park land without consideration for the location or degree of service provided by the land. As an example, an acreage based standard of one acre of community park per 2,000 residents with a population of 50,000 would require 25 acres of community parks. This level of service would be met if one community park of 25 acres was provided. Although the level of service may be met by this one park, which may be located far from potential users. Consequently, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan takes a facility based approach to parks and recreation level of service. The facility level of service based on the service characteristics of specific park types and facilities. Using the previous example with a facility based standard of one community park per 25,000 residents a total of two community parks are required, as opposed to the one park using the acreage based level of service. The facility based level of service standard is intended to not only provide for park acreage but also relates to facility function, location, and service area.

The application of this facility based LOS is recognized through the application of a 2010 level of service. This 2010 level of service is non-regulatory but provides a guide and is advisory to the County on the actual park facility needs over time as opposed to just total acres. The 2010 level of service is consistent with the recommendations of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Table 5-3 illustrates the identified parks and recreation needs in Pasco County through the year 2025 based on the 2010 level of service.

Table 5-3
2010 Level of Service Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park Type</th>
<th>Population Served/Park</th>
<th>Current Park Supply*</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2025</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>19 14 5 15 4 18 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>85,000/50,000</td>
<td>3 4 (1) 7 (4) 9 (6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>4 3 1 4 0 5 (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Unincorporated Population* | 338,901 | 368,428 | 451,710 |

* Population taken from Section 2.2 of the Supporting Documentation of the Pasco County Evaluation and Appraisal Report.
* “sliding” 2010 LOS increase from 1 per 85,000 to 1 per 50,000 by 2010.

The District Parks identified as needed are generally located in Wesley Chapel, Odessa/Trinity, Dade City, Ridge Road, and Connerton areas of the County. Of the five parks needed, the development of three of the parks were determined to be cost feasible for development though 2010; Odessa/Trinity, Wesley Chapel, and Dade City. The
remaining two parks are to be developed sometime after 2010. Map 5-1 identifies the location of the five proposed District Parks from the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Neighborhood park demand is recommended in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan to be addressed through coordination between the County, municipalities, schools, private development, and potential municipal taxing districts or community development districts. The County should concentrate its resources for the development of large-scale District and other resource based parks (natural lands, boat access, etc.) as opposed to the development of small-scale neighborhood parks.

Current and Projected Facility Needs

Table 5-4 provides and analysis of current and projected facility needs based on standards developed within the Pasco County Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The deficiencies identified in this table are an indication of the need to enhance and expand the recreational opportunities within Pasco County. The information is to be used in an advisory capacity to assist in the consideration of development of new recreational facilities.

Golf course facilities were removed from the facility demand table. The 2000 Pasco County Comprehensive Plan contained a standard for golf courses of 9 holes/25,000 population. The provision of golf courses in Pasco County is solely by the private sector and there is no intention of the County to develop a gold course. In addition, there are over 500 holes of golf available in more than 30 golf courses throughout the County. The standard of 9 holes/25,000 population projects a demand of approximately 160 holes by 2025. In 2005, there is over three times that number of holes currently available. Because golf courses are a privately provided recreational facility and there is a significant surplus of golf holes there is no need for a standard within the Comprehensive Plan.
Table 5-4
Recreational Facilities Demand 2005 to 2025

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park Type</th>
<th>Population Served/Park</th>
<th>Current Supply*</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2025</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2025</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Picnic Tables</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>1,412(679)</td>
<td>1,535(802)</td>
<td>1,882(1,149)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Waterfront (1 Mile)</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>13.45</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camping Areas (15 Acres)</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>(329)</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>(359)</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>(442)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis Courts</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>(13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picnic Shelters</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>(14)</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>(26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball/Softball Diamonds</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>(21)</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>(37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playgrounds</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>(10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball Courts</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>(23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Centers</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer/Football Fields</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>(19)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>(30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming Facilities</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness Trail (1 Mile)</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiking Trail (1 Mile)</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>(20)</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>(26)</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>(42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skateboard Courts</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unincorporated Population*        | 338,901                | 368,428        | 451,710


b Population taken from Section 2.2 of the Supporting Documentation of the Pasco County Evaluation and Appraisal Report.

Multi-Use Trails

Parks are more than just an area with ball fields, picnic benches, and playgrounds. Parks extend to the trails (linear parks) that provide connectivity between parks and other uses. In addition to the obvious transportation benefit of trails (linear parks), they provide a wide array of additional benefits to the community ranging form health benefits to economic benefits. In addition, greenways (connectivity between natural areas) and blueways (trails within water) provide a wide array of additional benefits to the community ranging from habitat protection to economic benefits.

Trails, greenways, and blueways are all critical components of a parks and recreation system. These facilities serve many purposes including, but not limited to, transportation, recreation, and environmental protection. Connectivity between parks, schools, libraries, and neighborhoods enhance the quality of life with in a community. The focus for trails within the Recreation and Open Space Element is on the recreational opportunities afforded by a comprehensive trail system and enhancing access to the County's parks and recreational resources in ways other than through the automobile.
The current trail network in Pasco County is comprised primarily of facilities located within the Starkey Wilderness Park, Withlacoochee River Park, and other Southwest Florida Water Management District Lands. The one major trail facility not located within a park/natural lands setting is the Suncoast Trail along the Suncoast Parkway and Starkey Boulevard.

The Pasco County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) 2025 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) provided a general guide for trails within Pasco County and connectivity to the region’s overall trail connectivity network. The 2025 LRTP provides a plan for the expansion of the County’s trail network through the year 2025. Map 5-4 displays the 2025 LRTP trail network in relation to parks, libraries, and schools.

As shown in Map 5-4, the existing trail network in Pasco County is relatively disjointed and lacks connectivity and access to points of interest. The primary components of the existing trail system is comprised of the Suncoast Parkway Trail and trails within Starkey and Withlacoochee parks. However, the 2025 LRTP planned and future improvements to the trail network results in a fairly well defined and connected system of trails.

The specific development of a recreational trails master plan, in addition to the MPO LRTP program, would provide a comprehensive inventory and analysis of the existing trail systems in Pasco County and provide recommendations for the enhancement and improved connectivity of the system. The establishment of a greenways/trails committee, through the Parks and Recreation Department, would provide a group of stakeholders within the County’s trails system to develop the master plan.
Review of Best Management Practices for Golf Course Development and Maintenance

According to an inventory of Florida golf courses developed by eFloridagolf.com, Inc., there are 32 courses located in Pasco County that provide over 500 holes of golf. Golf is a way of life for many who live and visit Florida. New subdivisions often include a golf course as one of the prime amenities offered to its residents. Golf courses provide an opportunity for recreation and socialization and also can assist in protecting open space and sensitive environmental resources within a community. However, in order to realize the maximum potential of the environmental benefits of a golf course, certain design and maintenance practices need to be followed. A sensitively designed and appropriately maintained course provides a wealth of benefits to not only the golfer but also to the surrounding natural areas. A course that is designed without consideration for its surroundings and not mindful of appropriate maintenance practices can result in significant damage to the land and surrounding areas.

In order to avoid the negative impacts of golf courses, a program of best management practices (BMP) for golf course design, development, and maintenance should be followed. Three primary sources for guidance regarding BMP for golf courses are:

   (Florida Department of Environmental Protection)
2. “Environmental Principles for Golf Courses in the United States”  
   (Golf Course Superintendents Association of America)
3. “Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program for Golf Courses”  
   (Audubon International)

The following provides a brief review of each of these sources.

In 1995, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) published “Best Management Practices for Golf Course Maintenance Departments.” The intent of the publication is to provide guidance for golf course maintenance departments in their daily maintenance routines to minimize potential for pollution from pesticides, fertilizer, fuel, and cleaning solvents. Best management practices identified by FDEP involve three primary principles:

- Isolate all potential contaminants from soil and water.
- Do not discharge any material other than clean stormwater onto the ground or into the surface water bodies.
- Minimize irrigation, fertilizer, and pesticide use requirements through the use of integrated pest management and native or naturalized vegetation.

Through the application of the three principles and specific procedures within the document, the potential for contamination from golf courses may be significantly reduced.

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) developed in 1996 the “Environmental Principles for Golf Courses in the United States” (Principles). These
Principles set out to provide the foundation for “...environmental excellence in golf course planning and siting, design, construction, maintenance, and facility operations” according to the GCSAA. The precepts of the Principles are defined as follows:

- Enhance local communities ecologically and economically.
- Develop environmentally responsible golf course that are economically viable.
- Protect habitat for wildlife and plant series.
- Every golf course must be developed and managed with consideration for the unique conditions of the ecosystem.
- Provide important greenspace benefits.
- Use natural resources efficiently.
- Respect adjacent land uses when planning, constructing, maintaining, and operating the golf course.
- Create desirable playing conditions through practices that preserve environmental quality.
- Support ongoing research to scientifically establish new and better ways to develop and manage golf courses in harmony with the environment.
- Document outstanding development and management practices to promote widespread implementation of environmentally sound golf.
- Educate golfers and developers about the principles of environmental responsibility and to promote the understanding that environmentally sound golf courses are quality golf courses.

Application of the Principles will result in the design, development, and maintenance of a golf course that provides a net benefit to its area in terms of environmental responsibility and economic viability.

A program to assist golf course design, development, and maintenance professional to effectively manage their course by addressing the environmental concerns of golf courses while maximizing open space benefits is the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP) developed by Audubon International in 1991. The ACSP provides assistance for golf courses with environmental planning, wildlife and habitat management, chemical use reduction and safety, water conservation, and water quality management. Over 2,000 golf courses throughout the United States participate in the program. A survey completed in 2001 by Audubon International of a sample of its members within the program revealed the following impacts of the program:

- Chemical Use Reduction – 82% of members reduced use of pesticides and 92% used pesticides with lower toxicity levels.
- Wildlife and Habitat Management – 89% of members choose native plants for landscaping and the average acreage set aside for wildlife habitat increased to 67 acres.
- Water Quality and Conservation – 89% of members improved irrigation systems saving on average 1.9 million gallons of water per year.

**Conclusion**
Pasco County, as with most counties in Florida, faces a difficult task to adequately provide park and recreation facilities for this quick growing county. Parks and recreation are an integral aspect of assuring high quality of life for a community and its residents. Through the implementation of the goals, objectives, and policies of the Recreation and Open Space Element, the County will be able to provide a parks and recreation system that meets the diverse needs of its population.