

Marion County, Florida

# Parks and Recreation Master Plan

A Ten Year Vision



2007





*Marion County*  
*Board of County Commissioners*  
*Parks & Recreation Department*

*111 S.E. 25th Avenue, Ocala, Florida 34471*  
*(352) 671-8560 -- Fax: (352) 671-8550*

December 14, 2007

The Honorable Board of County Commissioners  
601 SE 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Ocala, FL 34471

***RE: Marion County Parks and Recreation Department Master Plan***

Commissioners:

The 2007 Parks and Recreation Master Plan represents the comprehensive elements that support the approved mission and goals of the Marion County Parks and Recreation Department for the next ten years, allowing for a five year update. The Department was asked to provide this document for Board review and adoption at a Parks Planning Workshop held on February 13, 2007. This is the third Department-wide master plan since its inception in the early 1990's. The original 1998 Master Plan was updated in 2003.

The master plan recommends a planning framework to preserve what is successful, to improve on what could be better and to provide a structure to integrate the needs of a growing population. The plan also relates future changes and needs to convey a sense of place as well as convey the Department's demonstrated excellence to the community. As this plan evolved, it became clear that a park land use planning process needed to be developed in order to assure future decision making would be in compliance with the planning principles and premises adopted with this plan.

To understand the Department's intention for its future planning, the specific principles and premises have been constructed to provide the framework to drive future decisions for acquisition and development. The overriding principles include sense of place, accessibility, respect for the environment, compatibility and flexibility. These principles are followed by general land use, recreation programming and facilities parameters that are more specific in nature.

It should be noted that many of the proposals represent the Department's suggested direction at this time, although funding may not be identified or a process of implementation has not been committed. In that regard, these planning proposals are meant to keep the current planning concepts documented with intentions to implement as financial and other resources may become available.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the attached information for your review and consideration and I welcome you to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lee A. Niblock, CPRP, Director

Cc: Pat Howard, County Administrator  
PRAC

# Marion County Florida



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## PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Dr. Lee Niblock, CPRP – Director  
Don Hawkins – Operations Manager  
Cathy Norris, CPRP – Recreation Manager  
Greg Wiley – Parks & Natural Resource Manager  
Gina Peebles, PPRP – Administrative Manager  
James R. Couillard, RLA, ASLA – Parks Designer II

### Prepared by:

Marion County Parks and Recreation Department  
With the cooperation and participation of the Marion County  
Planning Department  
Clean Water Program, Marion County Geographic Information Systems Team (GIS)

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# Chapter One

## Introduction



MARION COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION

## Introduction – Marion County Overview

Marion County is located in the heart of north central Florida, between the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. It is bordered by seven counties: Alachua, Citrus, Lake, Levy, Sumter, Putnam and Volusia. The County is home to five incorporated municipalities, with Ocala as the county seat. Other municipalities include Belleview, Dunnellon, McIntosh and Reddick.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Marion County had a total population of 258,916 residents. This is a 25 percent increase from the previous U.S. Census conducted in 1990. While the U.S. Census data is helpful in showing “where we have been,” data from the Bureau of Business and Economic Development (BEBR) at the University of Florida predicts “where we are going” and is more helpful in projecting population growth. Using BEBR data, by the year 2010 the estimated population of Marion County is expected to reach 350,900; in 2020 433,100 and in 2030 501,200. It is important to understand that while the figures released by BEBR are accurate, they represent a “medium” growth rate. Historically population growth has occurred at a higher rate.

Marion County occupies 1,057,280 acres of land with an additional 53,120 acres covered by water. Marion County ranks as the fifth largest in size of counties in Florida. Approximately 276,000 acres of Marion County is in the Ocala National Forest while two additional state parks, Silver River State Park and Rainbow Springs State Park, add another 5,686 acres of open space. The State of Florida, in partnership with Marion County, recently acquired the 4,471 acre Avatar property, a tract containing 11,100 vested lots and the 346 acre Silver Springs Conservation Area both located in the sensitive recharge area for Silver Springs. Of significant mention is the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway, which contains approximately 42,765 acres of managed open space within the County and provides unequalled access for the public’s use and enjoyment. The resources which are protected by these federal and state lands

contribute to the recreational opportunities and provided education and interpretation to the public.

Numerous lakes and rivers including the Ocklawaha River, Rainbow River, Silver River, Withlacoochee River, Lake Weir, Lake Kerr and other significant bodies of water provide a variety of water access for fishing, boating, swimming, tubing, and snorkeling. Several of these bodies are spring-fed from the Floridan Aquifer while three of Florida’s First Magnitude springs (or spring groups) attract divers from around the nation.

The major roadways that provide routes to Marion County include Interstate 75, U.S. Highways 27, 41, 301 and 441, and State Roads 40, 200 and 326. The roads, at some point, converge in Ocala which is centrally located within the County. Excluding I-75, these roadways are where the majority of commercial development occurs while the interfaces between I-75 and the mentioned roadways act as service areas for pass-through travelers.

With a relatively low population-to-area ratio, Marion County has a primarily rural appeal. This character, along with comparatively lower land prices, has attracted new residents consistently over past years. The proximity to larger urban areas (Tampa, Orlando, Jacksonville and Gainesville) without the higher costs of living, traffic and general congestion typically associated with these urban cores makes Marion County a desirable place to live. The rural character and relatively short commutes to larger urban hubs is ideal for families and retirees.

## Purpose and Methodology of this Master Plan

### Purpose

The purpose of the Marion County Parks and Recreation Master Plan is to evaluate parks and recreation facilities, activities, programs, and opportunities currently offered by the Marion County Parks and Recreation Department and guide the County to better service the citizen's recreational needs. Currently, the County's parks system significantly contributes to the greater Marion County community's high quality of life and with the projected increases in population and continued stress on the natural resources in this area, it is important that this Department be prepared for growth *instead* of reacting to it. The benefits of parks and recreation are endless and include increasing adjacent property values, promoting social interaction, relaxation and physical fitness, building family values, protecting the environment and reducing crime.

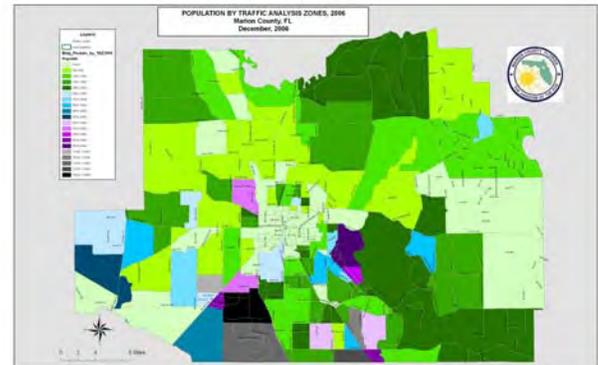
Marion County determined a need to develop a Long-Range (ten-year) vision for creating and maintaining high quality parks for their current and future population during the Parks Planning Workshop meetings held during February, 2007. The Department was directed to complete this Master Plan by the Board of County Commissioners on February 13, 2007.

### Methodology

This Parks and Recreation Master Plan was created using an approach which synthesizes pertinent information and data as gathered from various sources into a logical, easy to read, comprehensive document. It is intended to be a resource for meeting the needs *and exceeding* the expectations of the public.

The process used in compiling the information presented in this plan allows Marion County to inventory and evaluate all existing park facilities and programs, evaluate the communities' satisfaction with those facilities and programs, and recommend a clear direction for the Department to evolve its facilities, programs and services.

Included studies are the Census 2000 and Census 2005 Estimates, data collected from the Bureau for Business and Economic Research (BEER) at the University of Florida, numerous independent reports and statistics, and information collected from other agencies at federal, state and local levels.



(Map provided by Marion County Planning Department)

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and the associated data included in this spatial mapping system help to visually represent the existing facilities and to guide the creation of future service areas of the parks system. By combining geographic information and sets of data, a clear picture can be developed.

Population locations, demographics and projections are based on Census block data, estimated Census figures (for periods between actual Census years) and Planning Department data such as Traffic Analysis Zones and Building Department data such as building permits and average numbers of household occupants. Projections and models are based on continued growth and development trends as they have occurred in the past and how they will continue to occur based on land-use and zoning. In summary, things will continue to occur the way they do now unless changes are made.

## Parks and Recreation Master Plan Background

The Marion County Parks and Recreation Department has completed two Master Plans as governed by the Recreation and Open Space element of the County's Comprehensive Plan. The latest version of the Master Plan was assembled in 2002 and adopted in August, 2003. As directed by the Comprehensive Plan, the Master Plan is to be updated every five years.

This master plan will be the first ten-year plan for the Parks and Recreation Department. This Long-Range vision will help to forecast and plan for future needs and shall be updated every five years.

### Comparison of 2003 Master Plan

One of the main differences between the 2003 Master Plan and this version is the 2003 edition is primarily a Planning document which uses Planning data and figures. While the 2007 edition uses similar sets of data, it is a more comprehensive document which can be used more effectively for reaching Department goals.

Other highpoints in this comparison include:

- Analysis of level of service focused primarily on unincorporated population
- Population during 2003 is listed at 218,238 resident in unincorporated areas
- Based on two acres per 1,000 residents, this nets a need for 437 park acres
- 2003 park acreage shown as 3,838 acres
- States that there is a 2,966 acre surplus in park acres (this is misleading since the surplus was figured using four acres per 1,000 residents; if two acres per 1,000 residents was used, the surplus would have been shown as 3,402 acres)
- 2003 Plan used quadrant system to determine deficits/surpluses in parks; current plan uses County-wide population, including municipalities
- 2003 Plan does mention the lack of an agreement with the School Board, yet gives no path towards acquiring one

The 2003 Master Plan did not acknowledge the difference between park lands which the County owns and/or operates. This resulted in the lumping together of all "park" lands and really stretches the figures of land in the inventory. The current Plan does acknowledge the separation of the two types of parks. By doing so the Department is able to account for parks which they do not own yet they do manage, such as Ray Wayside Park and Gore' Landing. Managing parks which are owned by other agencies helps keep the number of park acres available to the public included in the inventory, while also avoiding the cost of acquiring parks of this nature. This ability also highlights the inter-agency cooperation which currently exists.

Another major difference in the park acres between these two Plans is the sale of roughly 2,023 acres of park land and acquisition of new park lands. Listed below are some of the differences between the two Plans:

#### Deletions

- Marion County Fairgrounds; 323 acres
- JFK Disc Golf Park (Dunnellon Airport open space); 1,700 acres
- Citra Improvement Society Park; 3.6 acres
- Oakcrest Walking Trail/SELP; 1.5 acres

#### Additions

- Liberty Community Park; 11.5 acres
- Wrigley Fields; 72.6 acres
- Silver Springs Conservation Area; 346 acres
- Management of Greenway trailheads at the Baseline facility; 12.33 acres
- Moss Bluff and Orange Lake boat ramps; 28.8 acres combined

**Net Deletion since 2003:** 1,623 acres

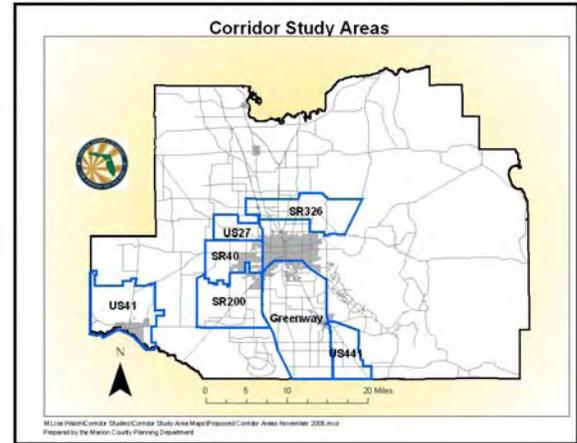
## Related – Referenced Studies

This master plan takes into consideration the following studies and related research:

- “2015 Ocala/Marion Transportation Planning Organization Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan,” 2004
- “Florida 2060, A Population Distribution Scenario for the State of Florida,” 2006
- US 27 Marion County Corridor Study Master Plan, 2003
- US 441 Corridor Study Area Master Plan, 2003
- SR 200 Marion County Corridor Study Area Master Plan, 2003
- Recreation Areas in Marion County – Analysis of Park Service Area Coverage, 2006

Refer to the Reference section of this document for credits and sources or follow the link provided to the completed studies:

[http://www.marioncountyfl.org/PL271/PL\\_CompLetedStudy.htm](http://www.marioncountyfl.org/PL271/PL_CompLetedStudy.htm)



(Map provided by Marion County Planning Department)

## Mapping

All maps for this master plan were generated by the Marion County Parks and Recreation Department using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) with ESRI ArcMap software. Layer and data sets have been reviewed and verified for analysis and park planning purposes. These maps are for spatial analysis only and should not be used to establish legal boundaries.

## The Parks and Recreation Department

### Mission Statement

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



The Marion County Parks and Recreation Department is under the Community Resources Bureau umbrella, which also houses the Animal Center, Community Services, Extension Service, Libraries and Veterans Services. Since the inception of the Department in 1993, we have worked toward improving the quality of life for all Marion County residents and visitors. Providing safe and clean park facilities and helping to protect our environmental and natural resources are a part of the Department’s core mission. Furthermore, planning for the future usage of our park system to meet identified growth trends will ensure the right park is constructed in the right location and offers the right programs.

The Department consists of an administrative and an operations staff with a total manpower of 34 people. During heavy park use periods (typically from April through October), seasonal staff is hired to help meet the work load at the parks. It is during this busy season, with longer daylight hours, where the parks are the busiest; residents and visitors take advantage of the weather and take breaks from their typical work and school schedules.

Along with complying with the Recreation and Open Space element, the Department also works towards achieving the goals, objectives and policies within the Conservation Element of the County Comprehensive Plan and is staffed accordingly with a Parks and Natural Resources Manager and assisting staff personnel. The Natural Resource Division plays a key role in managing the County’s natural resources (which provide recreation opportunities) and serves as a liaison to other federal and state agencies. From cutting fire trails and conducting prescribed burns, identifying and removing exotic invasive plants, the Natural Resources division is busy keeping your parks as family-friendly as possible while being environmentally responsible.

The Operations staff is responsible for the safe operation of all county parks within its jurisdiction. While maintaining the parks is a primary function, the staff also complete numerous capital improvement projects. Installing new trails, building new shelters or information kiosks, painting and generally sprucing up the parks are the types of tasks which this Department does on a regular basis. During the high-use season, the operations staff is very busy supporting the public's use of the park facilities, collecting fees and making sure that the parks are used safely. During the year, notes are taken and observations are made to develop a Fall/Winter Projects List. These projects are completed during the lighter-use season in anticipation of having all of the improvements completed before the heavy-use season begins.

Our field staff has many years of experience in park operations and maintenance. With four Certified Playground Safety Inspectors on staff, visitors can feel confident that their children will play on equipment that is routinely inspected to ensure the highest level of safety possible. We take pride in our parks system, giving attention to the most minute of details to provide a quality, family-oriented, outdoor recreation experience.

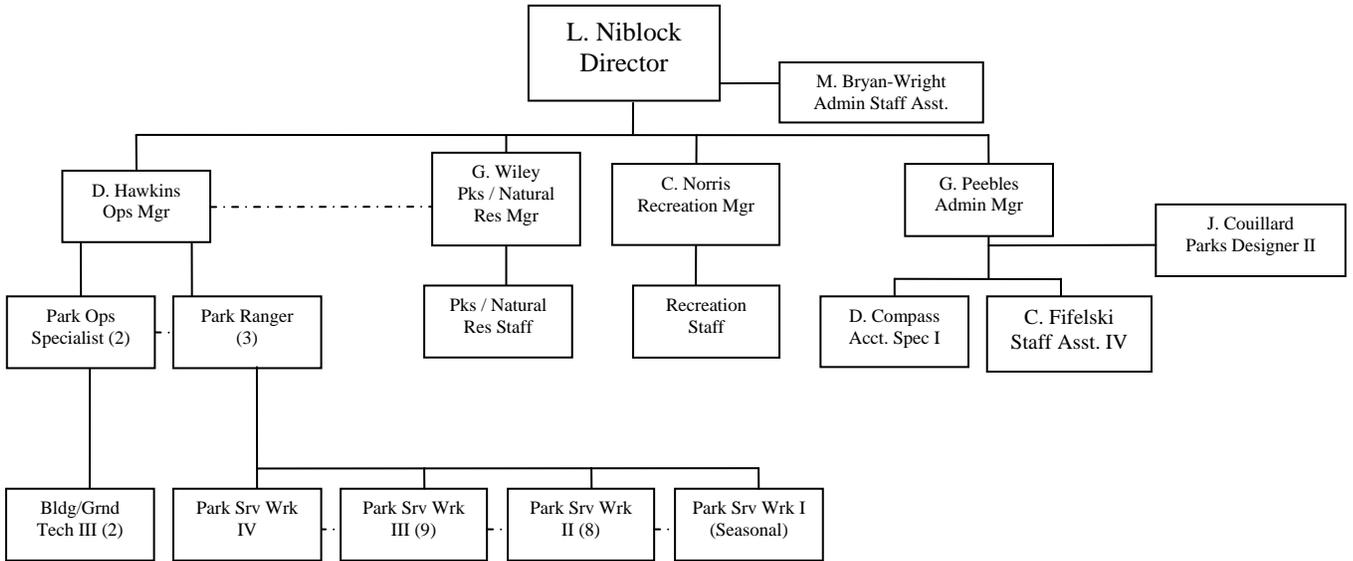


Guided tour of Horseshoe Lake Park

The Department continues to operate parks to the highest standard while keeping costs low. Operationally, the Marion County parks system ranks near the top of the list of all the state's county parks as heard from various elected officials and park customers. The Department uses a Park Ranger/Supervisor combined position to help patrol our parks, keeping them safe and clean and available for the public's use.

# Parks and Recreation Department Structure

Current 2006/2007 Parks and Recreation Department Structure



## Parks and Recreation Advisory Council (PRAC)

Marion County is fortunate to have a nationally recognized and awarded citizen advisory council. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Council advises the Board of County Commissioners and notifies the County Administrator of their actions and recommendations while working closely with the Parks and Recreation Department staff. Together, PRAC, the Board and County Administrator, and Department staff makes a team which works together in exceeding all goals. Comprised of five members, hand selected by each County Commissioner, PRAC speaks directly for the public.



(Current PRAC members: L-R, Shirley Little, Tracy Rains, Stan Hanson, Billy Ward and Pat Gabriel)

In 2006 the Marion County PRAC received the William Penn Mott, Jr. Award for Excellence. The award was presented to PRAC at the National Recreation and Parks Association conference in Seattle, Washington and was the only organizational recipient of this prestigious award. Mr. Mott was the National Park Service Director under President Reagan and pioneered the establishment of non-profit foundations to support the acquisition and development of parks.

## Associations and Memberships

The Parks and Recreation Department is fortunate to have a strongly qualified staff. Several staff members belong to and are actively involved with various state and national organizations, including:

### **NRPA**

National Recreation and Parks Association

### **FRPA**

Florida Recreation and Parks Association

### **ASLA**

American Society of Landscape Architects

### **FTA**

Florida Trail Association

### **FIPP**

Florida Institute of Park Personnel

### **ASPA**

American Society for Public Administration

### **CTF**

Conservation Trust for Florida

# Chapter Two

## Existing Conditions



MARION COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION

## Parks System

The current orientation of the parks system is one that speaks of the natural features which exist here in Marion County. The majority of the county parks are resource-oriented or passive parks, and are dependent upon some particular natural and/or cultural resource. The remainder of the county parks are use-oriented or activity-based parks. These parks are where recreation facilities are provided such as ball fields, play courts and playground structures.

There is a large number of federal and state agencies which own and operate parks and recreation sites within Marion County. Again, as with the County parks system, these other agency-operated areas are also primarily resource-based. These areas not only add to the available recreation opportunities within the County, they also add valuable open space for natural resource protection. Ecologically speaking, these open spaces are fairly connected with each other, instead of being scattered around in hard to manage tracts. Two large tracts, Price's Scrub in the northwest corner of the County and Orange Creek Restoration Area, along the southeastern bank of Orange Lake, are not connected to the other federal or state areas.

The federal and state lands within the County not only provide vast acreage for natural resource management and protection, they also provide superb recreation amenities, including canoeing, camping, and other nature-based activities. Recognizing these sites and facilities exist, the Department is able to focus on providing other amenities which do not require such large tracts of land and on fulfilling other types of recreation needs.

Marion County is also home to a large portion of the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway, which extends from the Gulf to the St. John's River in Putnam County, and is the state's premier greenway. This greenway and Marion County's partnership with operating several of the trailheads along the greenway provides unlimited recreation access.



Recreation sites within Ocala National Forest

The Ocala National Forest occupies 276,000 acres of the County and is one of the most heavily used National Forests in the country, while Silver River State Park provides cabins, camp sites (both primitive and RV), access to the Silver River and a well-known museum which highlights the Silver River and the surrounding areas. Rainbow Springs State Park offers camp sites and recreation provisions related to the Rainbow River.

Refer to the Appendices and References for additional maps and links to Federal and State facilities.

## Existing Parks and Facilities

Currently Marion County Parks and Recreation Department owns and/or operates 48 parks located throughout the County. The current quantity and wide variety of types of natural amenities located within the County inherently provides ample space for a substantial resource or nature-based recreation system. Included in the existing parks system, 26 parks (roughly 2,153 acres) are resource-based which take advantage of the existing natural amenities at each site.

Water plays an important part in the recreational opportunities in Marion County as 17 County parks provide direct access to the numerous lakes, rivers and springs.



Tubing down the Rainbow River (P.Marrifino)

The 13 named springs or spring groups have been providing refuge and resources to Florida inhabitants for over 11,000 years.

The remaining 22 parks (roughly 440 acres) are located throughout the County and provide user-based recreation opportunities for all age groups. Various sports parks, leisure parks with a wide array of amenities, and gather spaces all help balance the services which are provided to the community.

Conservation and preservation lands designated within the County, either Federal or State lands, augment the amount of space available for recreation. The lands which are not owned and/or managed by the Department are not included in analysis of available park lands.

Conservation is discussed in detail in the Appendices.

### Conservation Lands within Marion County, acres

Ocala National Forest	276,000
Silver River State Park	4,215
Rainbow Springs State Park	1,472
Cross Florida Greenway	42,765
Other State lands	22,706
SJRWMD lands	18,129
SWFWMD lands	10,757
Marion County lands*	1,546

\*Included in Inventory as owned and/or managed

### **Demand for Recreation and Recreation Facilities**

For years, the residents of greater Marion County have advocated the provision of recreation facilities through their involvement with active recreation leagues and programs. Individual sports leagues are very active within the County including such leagues as Cal Ripken/Babe Ruth baseball, Pop Warner football and others. By improving the facilities which exist, developing County-wide recreation programs and forecasting where these types of needs will be required in the future, the Department continues to provide services throughout the County now and in to the future.

## Park Types

The National Recreation and Park Association provides descriptions of parks for planning purposes and for offering certain amenities within typical population areas. Marion County follows these guidelines for park planning purposes in accordance with the Recreation and Open Space element of the Comprehensive Plan, yet have also professionally modified these guidelines to serve the uniqueness of the County. These park types are listed below:

### Neighborhood Park:

- Generally located along streets where people can walk or bike without encountering traffic
- Intended to serve the population of a neighborhood in a radius of up to one-half miles and a population of up to 5,000 residents
- Size from 10 - 15 acres
- Site design should reflect the character of the neighborhood
- Contains elements of both active and passive types of recreation
- Typical facilities include:
  - playground apparatus
  - multipurpose courts
  - sports fields
  - free-play areas
  - picnic areas
  - additional facilities may be added depending on the recreation demands of the neighborhood

### Community Park:

- Generally located *near* major streets or arterials
- Designed to serve the needs of four to six neighborhoods and serves residents within a radius of up to three miles, or a service population of up to 25,000 residents
- A minimum of 30<sup>1</sup> acres for each community park is recommended
- Offers a wide range of program and facility opportunities for all individuals and families
- Designed to meet the recreation needs of the entire community
- Typical features include
  - swimming areas
  - ball fields
  - tennis courts
  - play areas
  - picnic areas
  - multipurpose courts
  - recreation buildings
  - playground apparatus
  - walking trails
  - skate parks; skate trail nodes
  - sports fields
  - additional recreation facilities may be included to meet a particular recreation demand in the community
  - two very important elements of every community park; landscaping and the provision of passive recreation areas
  - multi-generational parks (custom designed parks to promote play, fun and fitness for people of all ages and abilities)

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<sup>1</sup> Increased from NRPA standard of 20 acres.

**District Park:**

- Typically 30 – 40 minute drive
- Serves several communities, a city or a county and a population of approximately 50,000 people
- 50 – 75 acres, plus
- Beneficially uses as a resource-based recreation location near urban areas

**Regional Park:**

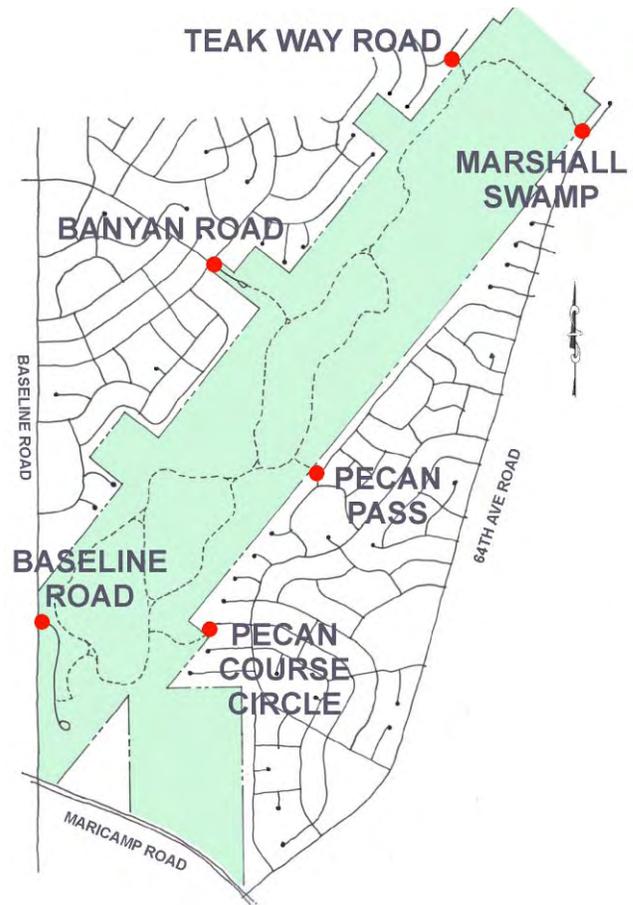
- Can be a one hour drive away from the majority of county residents
- Serves two or more communities or counties and a serves a population of 100,000
- Typical parks of this size should be a minimum of 250 acres plus
- Primarily a resource-based recreation site which contains natural amenities

**Greenways:**

- No real minimum size
  - Linear park (trails, connected open space, etc.)
  - Connectivity is primary goal
- With these characteristics, size becomes relative to achieving the desired shape and function.
- Resource-based recreation is the most compatible land-use, fitting with conservation efforts for the land
- Trail systems are commonly developed in greenways
  - Equestrian, including carriages
  - Hiking
  - Off-road bicycling
  - Multi-use trails
  - Skate trails
- Some greenway lands are used for active recreation facilities, ball fields, etc. which do not typically follow open space conservation or passive uses
- Serve as areas for alternative modes of transportation to help ease the stress on roadway systems

**Water Access Parks – Boat Ramps**

- Parks sizes are not restricted or recommended
- These types of parks are commonly sized by the available land sites which have access to water
- Primary goal of these parks are to provide access to public waterways
- Can be as simple as a canoe launch or as engineered as multiple-lane concrete boat ramps



Baseline Road Trail system – Cross Florida Greenway

## Parks Inventory

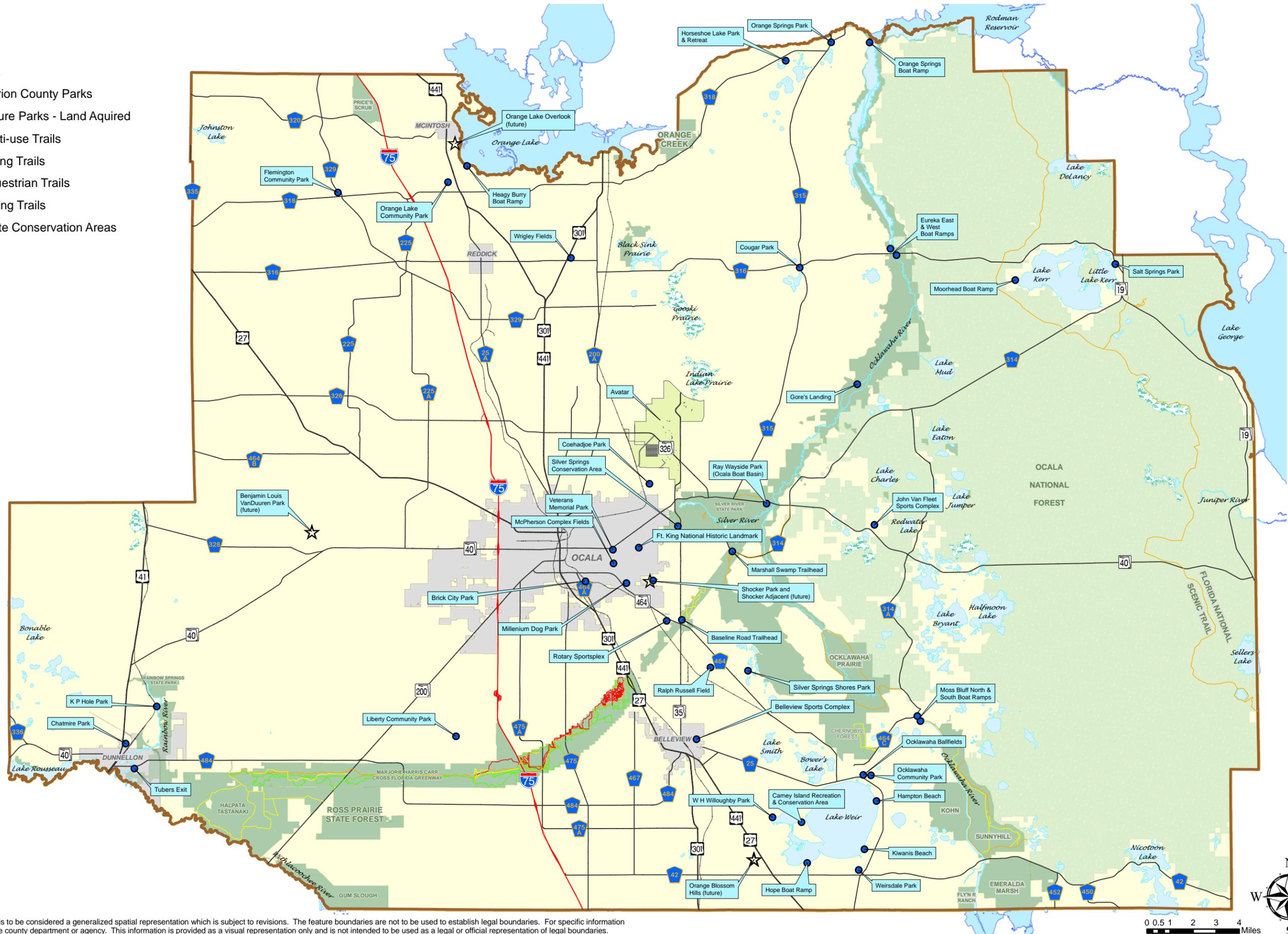
This table illustrates how the Marion County park system fits within each of the described park types. Please refer to [http://www.marioncountyfl.org/PR612/PR\\_ParkDirectory.htm](http://www.marioncountyfl.org/PR612/PR_ParkDirectory.htm) for a list of parks and amenities.

MARION COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT - SITE AMENITIES INVENTORY									
May 2007				Area in Acres					
Marion County Total Area = 1,652 Square Miles				1,057,280					
Marion County BCC Park Inventory				1,764					
Marion County Parks & Recreation Department Managed Acres Total				1,842					
Marion County BCC Conservation Land; Owned and/or Operated				1,546					
Quad	Park Type	Parcel ID	Park Name	Owner	Operator	Acres	Total Acres	Acres in County Inventory	County Managed Acres
<b>Neighborhood</b>									
	User	3340-048-000	Chatmire Park	MCBCC	MCBCC	0.28		0.28	0.28
	User	4853-177-000	Ocklawaha Community Park	MCBCC	MCBCC	1.47		1.47	1.47
	User	00038-001-00	Orange Springs Park	MCBCC	MCBCC	0.72		0.72	0.72
4	User	27599-000-00	Weirsdale Park	MCBCC	MCBCC	2.44		2.44	2.44
<b>Total Neighborhood Park Acres</b>						<b>4.91</b>	<b>4.91</b>	<b>4.91</b>	<b>4.91</b>
<b>Community</b>									
	Resource	20997-010-00	Benjamin VanDuuren Park (future)	MCBCC	MCBCC	12.57		12.57	0.00
	User	0880-007-00	Cougar Park (at Ft. McCoy Library)	MCBCC	MCBCC	4.20		4.20	4.20
	User	01936-005-00	Flemington Community Park	MCBCC	MCBCC	14.12		14.12	14.12
	Resource	49135-000-00	Hampton Beach	MCBCC	MCBCC	4.42		4.42	4.42
	User	32017-002-00	John Van Fleet Sports Complex	MCBCC	Partner	11.97		11.97	0.00
	Resource	4941-000-001	Kiwanis Beach	MCBCC	Partner	1.72		1.72	0.00
	User	35695-002-01	Liberty Community Park	MCBCC	MCBCC	11.50		11.50	11.50
	User	28164-000-00	McPherson Complex Fields	MCBCC	MCBCC	30.00		30.00	0.00
	User	48917-000-00	Ocklawaha Ballfields (Kiwanis)	MCBCC	Partner	29.05		29.05	0.00
	User	47695-002-00	Orange Blossom Hills (future)	MCBCC	MCBCC	13.07		13.07	0.00
	User	03072-012-00	Orange Lake Community Park	MCBCC	Partner	8.50		8.50	0.00
	User	9017-0000-01	Ralph Russell Field	MCBCC	MCBCC	10.96		10.96	10.96
	User	12082-001-00	Salt Springs Park	MCBCC	Partner	13.29		13.29	0.00
	Resource	29647-000-00	Shocker Adjacent (future)	MCBCC	MCBCC	20.00		20.00	0.00
	User	29647-000-00	Shocker Park Softball Complex	MCBCC	Partner	20.00		20.00	0.00
	Resource	9003-0000-03	Silver Spring Shores Park	MCBCC	MSTU	11.42		11.42	0.00
17	Resource	45919-003-00	W H Willoughby Park	Private	MCBCC	5.00		5.00	5.00
<b>Total Community Park Acres</b>						<b>221.79</b>	<b>221.79</b>	<b>221.79</b>	<b>50.20</b>
<b>District</b>									
	User	37913-001-00	Bellevue Sports Complex	MCBCC, Bellevue	Bellevue	80.64	inc. 17 ac city own	63.64	0.00
	User	30393-000-00	Brick City Park / Discovery Science Center	MCBCC	Ocala	35.37		35.37	0.00
	User	15855-000-04	Coehadjoie Park	MCBCC	MCBCC	91.10	22.5 acre power easement	91.10	68.60
	Resource	27596-001-00	Ft King National Historic Landmark	MCBCC, Ocala, Private	Ocala	37.94		36.99	0.00
	Resource	16321-000-00	Gore's Landing	TIITF	MCBCC	0.00	118 ac inc. in Greenway	0.00	118.00
	Resource	34689-000-00	KP Hole Park	MCBCC	MCBCC	3.82		3.82	3.82
	User	29505-005-00	Millennium Dog Park	MCBCC, Ocala	Partner	4.53		2.30	0.00
	Resource		Orange Lake Overlook - Sawallis (future)	MCBCC	MCBCC	9.00		9.00	9.00
	Resource	31724-000-00	Ray Wayside Park (Ocala Boat Basin)	FDOT	MCBCC	22.00		0.00	22.00
	User	31413-000-00	Rotary Sportsplex	TIITF	MCBCC	0.00	83.35 ac inc. in Greenway	0.00	83.35
	User	29306-002-00	Veterans Memorial Park	MCBCC	MCBCC	5.85		5.85	5.85
12	User	07619-000-00	Wrigley Fields	MCBCC	MCBCC	72.60		72.60	72.60
<b>Total District Park Acres</b>						<b>362.85</b>	<b>362.85</b>	<b>320.67</b>	<b>383.22</b>
<b>Regional</b>									
	Resource	45798-000-00	Carney Island Recreation & Conservation Area	MCBCC	MCBCC	780.00		780.00	780.00
	Resource	00109-013-00	Horseshoe Lake Park	MCBCC	MCBCC	200.00		200.00	200.00
	Resource	27348-000-00	Silver Springs Conservation Area	TIITF	MCBCC	346.00		0.00	346.00
4	Resource	31762-000-00	Silver River State Park (County owned portion)	MCBCC	DRP	0.00	inc. in Silver River S. P.	220.00	0.00
<b>Total Regional Park Acres</b>						<b>1,326.00</b>	<b>1,326.00</b>	<b>1,200.00</b>	<b>1,326.00</b>
<b>Greenway</b>									
	Resource	31913-001-00	Baseline Road Trailhead - Main & three trailheads	TIITF, MCBCC	MCBCC	446.48		1.42	7.25
2	Resource	31819-001-00	Marshall Swamp Trailhead	TIITF	MCBCC	5.08		0.00	5.08
<b>Total Greenway Acres</b>						<b>451.56</b>	<b>451.56</b>	<b>1.42</b>	<b>12.33</b>
<b>Water Access</b>									
	Resource	10102-000-00	Eureka East Boat Ramp	TIITF	MCBCC	0.00	14.00 ac inc. in Greenway	0.00	14.00
	Resource	10102-000-00	Eureka West Boat Ramp	TIITF	MCBCC	0.00	8.00 ac inc. in Greenway	0.00	8.00
	Resource	02791-000-00	Heagy-Burry Boat Ramp	MCBCC	MCBCC	2.64		2.64	2.64
	Resource	48162-000-00	Hope Boat Ramp	MCBCC	MCBCC	10.69		10.69	10.69
	Resource	11310-000-00	Moorhead Boat Ramp (Lake Kerr)	MCBCC	MCBCC	2.36		2.36	2.36
	Resource	39676-000-00	Moss Bluff North Boat Ramp	SJRWMD	MCBCC	6.00		0.00	6.00
	Resource	39679-002-00	Moss Bluff South Boat Ramp	SJRWMD	MCBCC	6.00		0.00	6.00
	Resource	00383-001-00	Orange Springs Boat Ramp	TIITF	MCBCC	0.00	15.50 ac inc. in Greenway	0.00	15.50
9	Resource	3380-1528-00	Tuber Exit (Blue Run Park)	Private	MCBCC	0.25		0.00	0.25
<b>Total Water Access Acres</b>						<b>27.94</b>	<b>27.94</b>	<b>15.69</b>	<b>65.44</b>



**Legend**

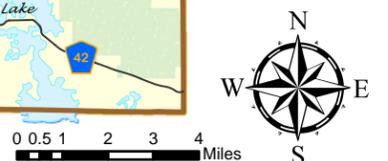
- Marion County Parks
- ☆ Future Parks - Land Acquired
- Multi-use Trails
- Biking Trails
- Equestrian Trails
- Hiking Trails
- State Conservation Areas



**Marion County Parks, Recreation, and Environmental Lands  
Existing County Owned and/or Operated Sites**

Marion County Parks & Recreation Department 111 S.E. 25th Ave. Ocala, FL 34471 (352) 671-8560

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 agency. This information is provided as a visual representation only and is not intended to be used as a legal or official representation of legal boundaries.



## Park Management

The Parks and Recreation Department has historically managed the parks within its jurisdiction to one of the highest standards in Florida in a fiscally responsible manor, keeping costs low while keeping service and appearance high. From overall appearance to the minute of details, the Department has received praise from numerous users and visitors.

### Improved Park Management:

Currently the Department contracts with local businesses for such things as mowing and cleaning restrooms. This allows the Parks staff to concentrate on operating the parks safely and efficiently and to work on capital improvement projects without doing repetitive or labor intensive tasks. A goal of concentrating on direct customer services, helping the park users understand and appreciate the park system is more attainable by using the local businesses to assist in maintenance and repairs and has allowed for developing good working relationships with various service vendors.

Improved parks are maintained and cleaned throughout the year while the less developed parks are generally managed to fit the goals of open space management.



Prescribed burn

### “Less Developed Park” Management:

Less developed parks are those which typically do not have a lot of facilities or improvements, such as conservation or preservation areas. Management of these sites rests primarily in the Natural Resources Division of the Department. This group is responsible for coordinating the creation of Unit Management Plans (along with other federal and/or state agencies), conducting prescribed burns for organic fuel load management, and assisting in the identification and management of natural and exotic species.

### Self Perform Items:

The Parks Department staff also takes on “Self Perform” projects within and separately from other Capital Improvement Projects. These projects include such things as fire trail maintenance, erosion prevention projects, park amenity construction and aspects of park construction which the Department staff is more accustomed to doing than private contractors. Completing such items assure that the jobs are within the allocated budgets and that the finished product is one which only the Department can be responsible for.



Self-perform installation of bollards, Rotary Sportsplex, 2007

## Existing Facility Use

As previously mentioned, the County parks system has a cyclic use schedule. The heavy-use periods are generally the holiday weekends throughout the year and during the late spring, through summer and into the fall. The water access parks (boat ramps) are the most used locations with greenways coming in a close second. Meanwhile, the slower season is the late fall and winter. The use cycle is directly tied to the outdoor seasons when temperatures and holidays enhance outdoor activities.

A recent survey showed that approximately 54 percent of respondents who had visited Florida within the last year enjoyed nature-based activities. Marion County excels with these types of facilities and parks (Visit Florida, 2006). Baby-boomers (anyone born between 1946 and 1964 in a country that experienced an unusual spike in birth rates following World War II) have typically shown to have higher, more disposable incomes are among the most active users of the park system in Marion County and

Trails are used throughout the year since the activities associated with trails are not so directly tied to weather. Horse trails, bike trails and hiking trails are enjoyed particularly in the cooler months since temperatures allow for strenuous activities. Even in the smaller neighborhood parks, the walking trails are one of the heaviest used amenities.

During the fall and winter, park use declines. Colder temperatures tend to keep people indoors while campers and hikers tend to take advantage of the more temperate weather. The water access parks see a decline in use during this time as well. The Department also takes advantage of the lower numbers of users to accomplish Fall/Winter Projects. These projects may impact the usability of the parks and completing the projects during this time lessens the impact to the users and enables the parks to recover from the high-use periods.



Prestige 55 Walkabout at Horseshoe Lake Park, 2007

coincidentally, bird-watchers are found to be a group who have the higher levels of disposable income. These points emphasize the statistical growth on ecotourism which boosts the local economy of a county with so many acres of open space to enjoy.

## Existing Recreation Programs and Services

The Marion County Parks and Recreation Department is in the infancy stage of providing recreation programs and services to Marion County residents through its addition of the Recreation Manager. The County is involved with funding local groups such as the Silver River Marine Institute, helping wayward youth become educated on our natural resources. Until recently, additional funds were directed to the City of Ocala Recreation Department which used these funds for a summer program at four county area schools. The Marion County Parks and Recreation Department now uses these program sites (plus other sites), and will provide a “structured” recreational opportunity for youngsters entering grades 1-8 in outlying areas of the County. This is the start of answering the demand for recreation programming on the outskirts of the municipal jurisdiction. Through the success of this program, other services will become available throughout the County for all age groups.



Wrigley Fields, 2007 (J.Cochran)

The future of recreational opportunities will grow with the need as the program’s success is recognized. Such programming will utilize the County’s numerous parks, exposing the County residents to what Marion County has to offer through varied outdoor recreation programming.

## Private Parks and Recreation

Marion County is home to numerous private communities, sometimes referred to as “gated communities.” While the Planning Department does not maintain an overall inventory of where or how many of these communities exist, it is accurate to state that private communities are located along the major arterial roadways.

There are major private communities such as Spruce Creek (two locations), On Top of The World, Oak Run, The Villages (roughly 2,000 acres in Marion County alone) and several minor communities which are smaller and less well known. The larger communities tend to offer recreation programs, recreation centers and various types of park spaces. The majority of these communities have golf courses which are often used toward open-space credits, or park acre credits.

While the residents within these communities may pay an “amenity fee” back to the community for the use of the community’s facilities, they also pay County assessments. What this means is that, regardless of what type of parks or recreation facilities the residents are paying for, they are also due the same level of service that the residents who live outside of these communities expect to receive. This may result in the lack of public support for new County facilities in the lesser served areas; some private community residents may see the need for new County parks or facilities as unnecessary since “they have theirs.” Meanwhile the public support from the residents who live just outside the gates of the private communities is undermined and lessened.

The Department recognizes this event and sees the need to provide equal park and recreation services on a County-wide basis by using total population figures, densities, and demographics in determining where needs truly exist.

## Partnerships

### Marion County School Board

Schools have historically played a significant role in providing recreation activities through physical education classes during school hours and organized sport activities after school. Today's focus on academics has limited the number of hours students are engaged in recreation and fitness activities, yet some would say that this lack of activity has aided in the creation of an "out-of-shape" generation of children. Fortunately this is being recognized across the country and school districts are implementing policies which require more physical activity during school hours.

School sites can also serve as parks in areas where the schools are located near densely populated regions of the County, yet these sites are generally secured when classes are not in session. Two issues are raised because of this:

- Citizens pay for schools and,
- Citizens pay for parks

In several areas in the County, schools are located within residential areas and are not accessible after school hours, yet the same area has a park deficiency, meaning there are no parks within a reasonable distance.

Schools are not included in the Department's inventory of park or recreation locations. It is recommended that the Department become more directly involved with the Marion County School Board in developing creative planning solutions and inter-governmental cooperation which could open the door to allow for public use of these sites. Additionally, parks could serve as recreation sites for school activities.

This cooperative approach to sharing sites would alleviate the overlapping of funding requirements for the shared use of similar sites.

Refer to the Appendix for the Draft Interlocal Recreation Agreement.

### Municipalities

The Marion County Parks and Recreation Department currently maintains several inter-local agreements to cover the ownership or management of city parks within the County. By either owning directly adjacent lands, allowing a city to manage County-owned lands or by providing management to city-owned land, the Department attempts to work closely with all five municipalities located in Marion County.

### Municipal Services Taxing Units (MSTU)

There are several MSTUs located within Marion County. Each has their own set of operating parameters regarding parks and recreation. Only one MSTU park, Silver Springs Shores Park, is currently listed in the County's park inventory since funding was secured to acquire and develop the site as a community park through the Pennies for Parks bond referendum. This situation allows the general public to utilize this facility, as MSTU facilities are generally only for those residents who live within each MSTU area.

## Park Partnership Program

The purpose of the Marion County Park Partnership Program is to assist local groups with up to a 50/50 match in developing recreation facilities for use by all citizens of Marion County establishing public, private and non-profit partnerships. The total funding provided is \$60,000 per year.

This program has had great success in helping communities and private entities develop facilities throughout the years. Of particular mention is the recent improvements to the Anthony Community Center where a new playground was created, existing play courts were resurfaced while a caretaker's residence was updated with private donations.

For an outline of the Program, eligibility and parameters, please visit:

[http://www.marioncountyfl.org/PR612/PR\\_For ms/PR\\_ppap.pdf](http://www.marioncountyfl.org/PR612/PR_For%20ms/PR_ppap.pdf)

### Parks Volunteers

The Parks and Recreation Volunteer Program provides opportunities to help improve and maintain Marion County Parks. As volunteer stewards, you will have a unique opportunity to contribute your knowledge and skills to enhance your community's recreational experiences.

For a glimpse of what the possibilities are for Parks Volunteers, please visit:

[http://www.marioncountyfl.org/PR612/PR\\_Volunteers.htm](http://www.marioncountyfl.org/PR612/PR_Volunteers.htm)

### Friends of Marion County Parks, Inc.

The Department supports the establishment of a 501 (c)(3) organization which would provide support to the Department through fund raising campaigns and volunteer support.

## Existing Population

According to the Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) at the University of Florida, the population of Marion County in 2007 is projected to be about 325,000.

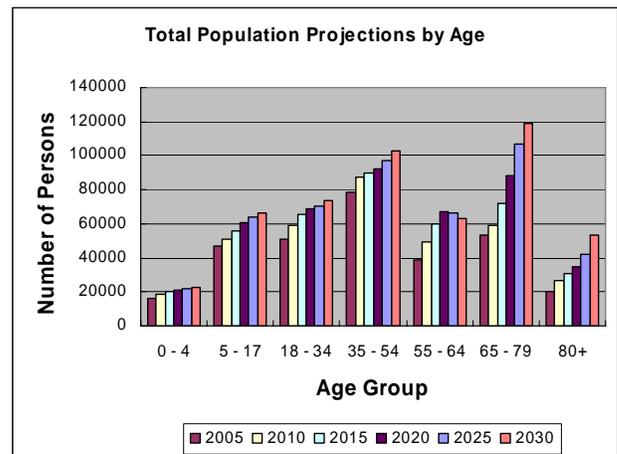
### 2007 (projected)

<b>Marion County, total:</b>	<b>325,000</b>
Ocala:	50,887
Bellevue:	3,966
Dunnellon:	2,074
Reddick:	562
McIntosh:	481
Unincorporated Marion County:	267,030

BEBR indicated the 2005 Population by Age:

### 2005, by Age

<b>Marion County, total:</b>	<b>304,926</b>
0 - 4	15,970(5.2%)
5 - 17	47,068(15.4%)
18 - 34	50,679(16.6%)
35 - 54	78,841(25.9%)
55 - 64	38,976(12.8%)
65 - 79	53,050(17.4%)
80+	20,342(6.7%)



(BEBR, Vol. 37, No. 3, Bulletin 139, July 2004)

This data shows how the age groups of the general population are distributed and how roughly 37 percent of our population is over the age of 55. This is a significant factor for facility planning purposes.

The overall population for our county has increased about 15 percent between the years 2000 and 2005 and is expected to grow by 19 percent by the year 2010. The BEBR Florida Population Studies, Vol. 39, Bulletin 144, February 2006 states “Given Florida’s population growth history, the probability that a county’s future population will be above the high rate projection is greater than the probability that it will be below the low projection.” This has been true for Marion County as it has consistently exceeded the high projections.

One key point to consider is that the population projections published by BEBR “refer solely to permanent residents of Florida; they do not include tourists or seasonal residents.” This is important for Marion County since, as mentioned, the high percentage of seniors shown living here and their arrival is noticeable in park use, traffic, and other services demands.

## How Population Affects Park Planning

According to the Marion County Comprehensive Plan, revised 2005, the “level of service” for parks is currently two acres of park space per every 1,000 resident (2 acres/1,000 residents). As the population increases, so does the need for space to satisfy this adopted requirement.

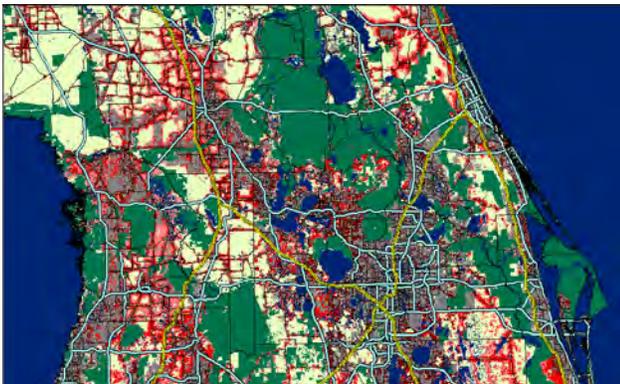
An important fact to remember when using the adopted level of service to determine park needs or surpluses is also the defined park types and what the intention of each park type is. A couple of examples are as follows:

- Neighborhood parks serve the population of up to 5,000 residents within a 1/2 mile radius and is typically 10 – 15 acres in size.
- Community parks serve the population of up to five neighborhoods (approximately 25,000 residents) within a three mile radius and are sited on land no less than 30 acres in size according to the adjusted park size which was mentioned earlier.

As far as calculating the needs for parks strictly by determining the County-wide population, determining the current population concentration and where the future populations are expected to live is also critical. Otherwise, using the listed coverage areas above, one could imagine a grid of parks, subjectively overlaid across the County. In the real world, this is nearly impossible.

Learning where the citizens live, where expected growth should occur, looking at existing parks coverage and then targeting acquisition and development in the projected areas, all while maintaining a “standard of service” County-wide, is the main goal. Once areas that are deficient or services are insufficient are revealed, a detailed study of area demographics is required. Demographic analysis will be the main force in determining park amenities for the initial improvements and will require flexibility in park design to accommodate the expected, if any, demographic change in the future.

A good example of how using a “park acres for number of citizens” approach may fail is the recent opening of Liberty Community Park in the SR 200 corridor area. The residents/visitors who use the park find it to be too small, lacking amenities, and rather under-developed. Yet looking at the number of residents who live within the three-mile service areas, by the book, this park is sized appropriately. The demand for parks in this corridor area shows that using national standards for parks may be useful, however they must be adapted to meet the needs of the public effectively.



(Florida 2060 study)

Projecting populations and future growth trends helps determine where we will need parks, when we will need them and inherently, what type of services will need to be provided. As seen in the above map, the red, orange and peach colors represent population projections for 2020, 2040 and 2060 respectively. The dark green and light green areas are existing conservation and future undisturbed lands. This regional glimpse is a clear picture of how our surrounding areas will continue to be pushed towards development and increase in population. Being prepared to provide parks and recreation services is vital to the success of maintaining the higher quality of life which currently exists here in Marion County.

## Future Population Projections

According to BEBR, the population in Marion County is expected to be 509,800 by the year 2020, *in thirteen years*. This is based on the high rate of population growth as provided by BEBR and as previously mentioned, this rate is typically exceeded.

### 2020, Thirteen Year Projection, high rate

**Marion County, total: 509,800**

### 2020, by Age, high rate

<b>Marion County, total:</b>	<b>509,800</b>
0 – 4	24,980(4.9%)
5 - 17	71,372(14%)
18 - 34	80,548(15.8%)
35 – 54	108,587(21.3%)
55 – 64	79,019(15.5%)
65 – 79	103,999(20.4%)
80+	41,293(8.1%)

### 2030, Twenty-three Year Projection, high rate

**Marion County, total: 657,100**

### 2030, by Age, high rate

<b>Marion County, total:</b>	<b>657,100</b>
0 – 4	29,570(4.5%)
5 - 17	87,394(13.3%)
18 - 34	96,594(14.7%)
35 – 54	134,706(20.5%)
55 – 64	82,795(12.6%)
65 – 79	156,390(23.8%)
80+	69,653(10.6%)

These projections show that the population in Marion County is expected to grow by 36 percent in 2020 and by 50 percent in 2050. Using the standard two acres of park space per 1,000 residents, in 2020 there will be a need for 1,200 acres of park and in 2050, 1,314 acres needed. Looking back at the inventory for parks it appears that there is a sufficient amount of park space to meet these goals, however, due to the number of conservation areas used for park land and how the population is dispersed, meeting local demands cannot be achieved using this method.

The following chart illustrates park acres needed based on population projections, a minimum service area population, and the minimum number of acres one park of each type requires:

Park Type	2007 Pop. 325,000	Max. Pop. Served per Park	Number of Parks Needed	Min. Acre Per Park Type	County Park Acres Needed
Neighborhood		5,000	65.00	10	650.00
Community		25,000	13.00	30	390.00
District		50,000	6.50	50	325.00
Regional		100,000	3.25	250	812.50
					2,178

Park Type	2015 Pop. 439,000	Max. Pop. Served per Park	Number of Parks Needed	Min. Acre Per Park Type	County Park Acres Needed
Neighborhood		5,000	87.80	10	878.00
Community		25,000	17.56	30	526.80
District		50,000	8.78	50	439.00
Regional		100,000	4.39	250	1097.50
					2,941

Park Type	2020 Pop. 509,800	Max. Pop. Served per Park	Number of Parks Needed	Min. Acre Per Park Type	County Park Acres Needed
Neighborhood		5,000	101.96	10	1019.60
Community		25,000	20.39	30	611.76
District		50,000	10.20	50	509.80
Regional		100,000	5.10	250	1274.50
					3,416

Park Type	2030 Pop. 657,100	Max. Pop. Served per Park	Number of Parks Needed	Min. Acre Per Park Type	County Park Acres Needed
Neighborhood		5,000	131.42	10	1314.20
Community		25,000	26.28	30	788.52
District		50,000	13.14	50	657.10
Regional		100,000	6.57	250	1642.75
					4,403

This illustrates a ratio of park acres required at 32 percent neighborhood parks, 13 percent community parks, 16 percent district parks, and 39 percent regional parks. The current inventory of parks, less Water Access Parks (15.69 acres total) show a ratio of parks at 0.5 percent neighborhood parks, 15 percent community parks, 19 percent district parks and 65.5 percent regional parks. Since large regional parks can distort the analyses, as stated in the Carney Island example above, which has 780 acres, the figures can be “rounded” to a general ratio of 1:1:1:1 and applied to the unincorporated population to reveal parks needed for each park type. From a coverage standpoint, dividing the population by the “population served per park type” shows where the park-type deficiencies exist. This point of view clearly shows how the public is not appropriately served by the number of park acres in the overall inventory or adjacent State or Federal lands. Park coverage requirements play a significant role in determining the public’s satisfaction in meeting park and recreation land needs.

## Growth and Expected Demographics

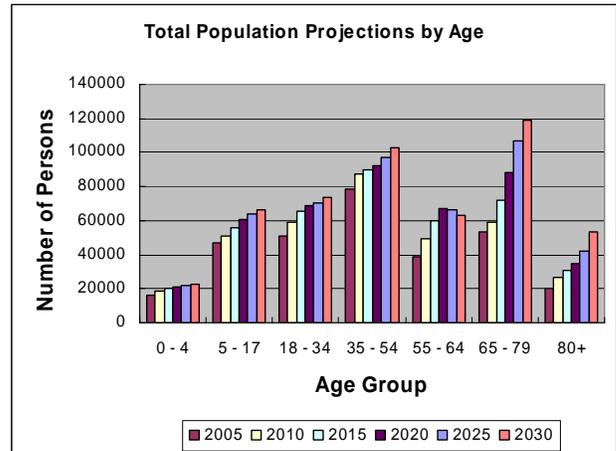
As the population of Marion County continues to grow, it is important to recognize the expected shift in the demographics as well. Based on the quick overview of the above data, it is apparent that the age groups are expected to change significantly with almost half of Marion County's population to be over the age of 55. Not only does this show the growing age of our population, it shows the need to be age-specific when planning park and recreation facilities. In 2005 37 percent of the population was in this same age group.

Flexibility is one of the greatest challenges when speaking of park design. As the demographics of an area may show a median age, that data only represents a snapshot of the demographics of that area at a specific date.

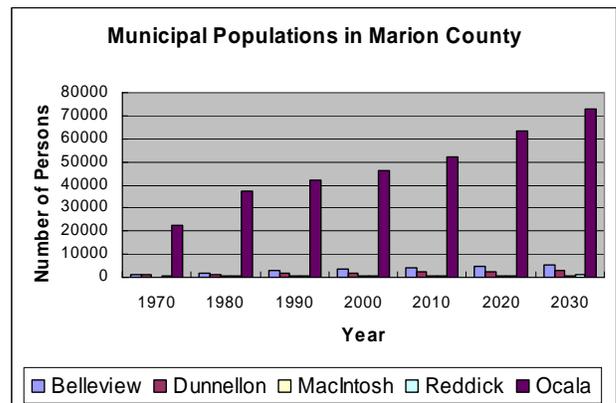
Studies have shown that while an area such as Marion County has great potential for growth, in particular for retirees, there are other age groups which begin moving into the area to support the retirement community expansions. The retirees require services which may or may not have existed in the areas where they now live. This spinoff of support industries draws people from all professions: doctors, food services, leisure services, mechanics, etc.

The demographic data set originally used while planning a new facility may have shown the need to provide facilities for the retirement aged area citizens. Over time, the next data set may show the amenities need to be updated or changed in order to support the younger aged support industry citizens. Either way, building flexibility into the original plans for improvement will allow parks to be used by all age groups. Having the ability to exercise a degree of latitude in planning will help the Department meet its mission now and in the future.

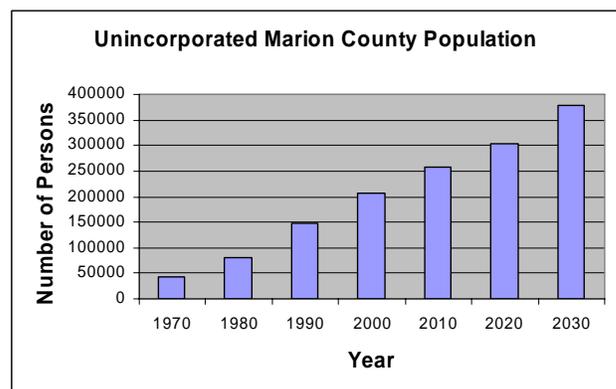
## Population Growth Charts / Tables



BEBR, 2006



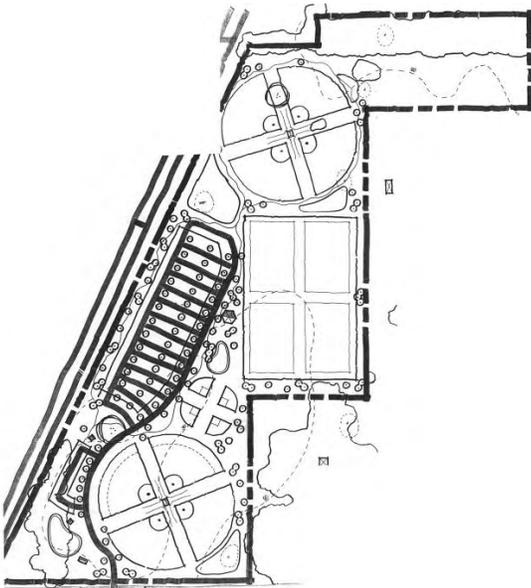
BEBR, 2006



BEBR, 2006

## Park Planning Procedures

The park planning process typically begins with input from the public and is guided by the County's Comprehensive Plan and documents such as this master plan. Since the park system is owned by the public, it is vital to take the public demands into consideration when adding to or improving the existing system, whether it is a call for more playgrounds, more trails or programs for senior citizens.



An initial park concept, Wrigley Fields



The final plan, Wrigley Fields (London Engineering/MPA)

## Park Development

The development of new parks and improvements to existing facilities typically follow the standard County procedures from preliminary budgeting, funding, acquisition, design and construction. There is a multitude of players involved, yet the public is generally the lead member. Responding to the needs of the public, recommendations brought forward through PRAC, the County Administrator and the Board of County Commissioners, the Department is in charge of making it all come together.



## In-House Talent

The Parks and Recreation Department requires a balanced professional staff which can perform uniquely challenging tasks and work together, sharing experience and knowledge, and participating with all aspects of the Department's missions and goals. From land acquisition through design, to operations and recreation programming, the Department is a pool of varied talent and expertise.

## Existing Parks and Recreation Analysis

### Parks

The general approach to the analysis was to use typical standards for park types that are based on maximum service area populations and minimum acres of managed park property. These were used to determine a ratio of acres needed, and then applied to meet County requirements.

The overriding adopted standard is currently two acres of park land per 1,000 population of the County, with an estimated 78 percent of the total County population existing in the unincorporated areas (Ocala/Marion County Economic Development Corporation). With the majority of the population being dispersed across the County, one large park alone (e.g. Carney Island) has the potential to exceed the adopted level of service requirements, yet it does not meet the needs of three-quarters of County residents. While this is only one factor to determine park land needs, this standard can be used to plan for parks in more densely populated areas to achieve the desired level of service for County residents.

To achieve this, acquisition, development and operating costs for neighborhood, community, district and regional parks were obtained (See Chapter 5). These historical records reveal that smaller parks located near populated areas typically have a higher cost per acre (including acquisition, development and operations) than larger parks do. This is in part because smaller parks are amenity-driven and land values are higher in these areas (where smaller parcels are available), and also due to the higher intensity and concentrated use at smaller parks (the more amenities, the higher the operating cost).

It is also important to consider the level of services provided on larger resource-based parks which typically are not loaded with amenities; only portions of these larger parks are used for recreation purposes while the remainder of the site is primarily managed land. These parks are larger in size, yet the primary purpose is open space preservation, not active recreation. Smaller parks, neighborhood and community parks, show the higher operating costs while the larger parks are indicating the lower costs, on a per acre basis. As mentioned in Chapter 5, once Rotary Sportsplex and Wrigley Fields are on-line for a solid fiscal year, the operating costs for the large active-use parks will be available.

By looking at the coverage numbers, the population vs. acreage analysis shows deficiencies in neighborhood parks, community parks and district parks while a surplus is found in regional parks. Again Carney Island (780 acres) is the main contributor to this surplus while Horseshoe Lake Park (200 acres) falls in line with the regional park size guidelines. Community park deficiencies are minimal with a 64 acre deficiency. The neighborhood parks are showing the biggest deficiency with a net difference of 644 park acres.

Management of the park system has shown that the cost of maintaining upwards of 65 neighborhood parks to be unrealistic. The unincorporated areas of Marion County would be better served by providing a higher number of larger community parks where a variety of amenities could be provided. Remember that planning a park which is suited for the population demographics as they exist now may not be the responsible thing to do as demographics change, and the types of services offered in one area for a decade may shift to different types of services in the future. The appropriate park planning goal would be to establish a base level of services for the existing needs and have provisions on the same park land to accommodate the shift in future needs.

## Recreation

Recreational services fall within the same analysis with existing needs which are being addressed at the date of the Master Plan. As previously mentioned, once the success of current recreation programming is seen, the demand will grow and shift to meet the needs of all areas within the County.

The success of the 2007 Summer Recreation Program shows that County residents are ready for more programs. The Recreation Division, while still in an infancy stage, had a tremendous response to the programs which were offered at local schools during this summer. Due to this strong response, the Division is currently planning on more similar type programs for next year as well as other resource-based recreation programs and sports programs.

In previous years, the County provided \$60,000 in funding to the City of Ocala towards the summer recreation program. In 2007 these funds were not provided to the City and instead were used to fund the County recreation program which was essentially the same program (less one basketball program which was valued at \$5,000). The Marion County summer recreation program expenses (including staff, equipment and supplies) came to \$38,288 which resulted in a net savings of roughly \$16,712. Another positive point to the Marion County program is that it reached *further out* into the unincorporated areas of the County.

A post-program analysis provided the Department with a positive response regarding the program. Many of the participants and organizers expressed their satisfaction and desire to be involved with the program again in the coming years. As the program evolves and captures a larger base of participants, the success of the program will become better known. This will continue to play a significant role in improving the quality of life for all County residents.

## Coverage Analysis

By focusing on a selected group of facilities, such as neighborhood and community parks (and other popular amenities), the locations of existing facilities (service areas), parks which are in the 2007/2008 CIP budget and the number of residents served throughout the County, the true needs and service gaps are revealed.

Also, areas with gaps in service coverage are readily identified. As such, this can be applied to facility planning in areas that are underserved, or that have no parks at all.

It is evident that along with the currently proposed park improvements at existing and presently undeveloped sites, additional park facilities are required to meet the needs of residents outside of existing and planned for service areas. The maps included in this Master Plan can be used as one tool, to comprehensively, or on a case by case basis, define areas for future parks.

## Conclusions

During the investigation of the current levels of service, as provided by the Parks and Recreation Department, there appears to be two schools of thought on what the appropriate levels are or should be. One thought is the overall acres of park lands per 1,000 residents while the second thought is the coverage of population based on park types. For this Master Plan, the second approach fits the character of Marion County more appropriately for several reasons.

1. Adding parks and recreation services undoubtedly increases the quality of life for residents and visitors.
2. Adding park land into the County inventory increases lands which will be conserved/preserved; this is favorable in light of the current concerns regarding open space and natural resource protection.
3. Acquiring park land now while land is available to purchase is easier to do versus obtaining land later after prime park land is developed or surrounded by other uses.
4. Listening to the public and addressing their concerns or needs for parks and recreation facilities show that the park acre vs. every 1,000 is not adequate.

Where does this put the future of the Parks and Recreation Department? This analysis shows that more facilities and services are needed. When they are needed, where they are needed and how many are needed is all open to various elements such as higher demand areas, deficiencies of specific park types and the need for structured recreation programming on a continual basis. A vital key to these issues is funding. With the demand for more services comes the need to find funding as well. From acquiring conservation/preservation sites, purchasing recreation equipment, and construction of parks, to managing natural resources, providing recreation supervision and education and keeping parks safe and maintained, all boils down to cost.

The state of the Department depends on the financial support it gathers. The future element of this Master Plan addresses the various funding mechanisms which are available and the reality of these items becoming a reality. Without the support of federal, state and local governments, any parks and recreation department would be significantly challenged to exist. Without these departments and the services they provide to improve our quality of life, local areas would significantly change for the worse as would the shape and character of the areas they serve.

## General Analysis

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The outcome of the analysis is positive. While the current parks system has shown a net loss of park acres since 2003 (see Chapter 1), there is a more pressing need to expand; based on current public need, service area gaps and future population expectations. As the County population grows, the park system must grow. And as the population and park system grows, the need for more recreation opportunities and programming also grows.

While growth is good, it also brings on the need to be flexible with changes. Being prepared for growth serves the residents in a proactive manner while *not* being prepared creates negative issues across the board. By acknowledging the need for future planning, the Department will continue to aid in improving the quality of life for area residents and promote the rural/open space character of the County.



# Chapter Three

## Conservation



MARION COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION

## Conservation

Conservation is a broad topic for Marion County. This term relates to the issues concerning the preservation of open space, responsible use of area resources and protection of sensitive lands and the use and management of these areas. The layers of items which all add up to “conserving” should be tied together in one cohesive plan to guide the future of the County as it is put under the strains of growth and development.

“As land is developed in Florida the native flora is removed and usually replaced with non-native vegetation. Wildlife habitat is reduced, water, fertilizer and pesticide usage increases, and the appearance of Florida is altered.”<sup>1</sup>

### Conservation of Land

One of the key characteristics of the County is the amount of land which is considered to be open space. Whether the areas are managed forests, wetland forests, or open pasture, the vast swaths of undeveloped land is a highly sought after quality which draws numerous new residents and visitors. Unfortunately, this trait is also one of the key reasons why people move to this area. Along with this increase in population, the challenges of maintaining this rural character are also increased. Therefore measures must be in place to help guide the growth in areas which are more suitable while minimizing the impact to this areas appeal.

The setting of land aside, protecting it from future alteration, is a step in the right direction. There are several methods of accomplishing this goal such as:

- Regulatory Controls
- Direct Land Use Controls
- Property Rights
- Land Acquisition

These methods are discussed in the 1989 Parks and Environmental Land Acquisition Manual which is discussed further in this section.

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<sup>1</sup> Foreward, “Natural Florida Landscaping”, D. Walton, L. Schiller

### Conservation of Water

There are two schools of thought which typically come up while discussing water conservation; water quantities and water qualities. While both issues are very important, water conservation (quantity) will be discussed here and water quality will be tied to the Conservation of Area Resources.

Water conservation is not a new topic at all. Yet here in Florida, it is not taken seriously enough to sustain the recent rates of population growth with our current water sources. The majority of the State obtains its fresh water from withdrawing from the Floridan Aquifer and, over time, this resource has been significantly impacted. There has also been some current research which shows that while the population of the State grows, so does the average gallons per day (GPD) of water each household uses. Other states in the Country have also experienced population increases, yet through conservation policies and practices, their average GPD has decreased.

One of the primary uses of water in Florida is for landscape irrigation. On the average, over 50 percent of the average amount of water used at the residential level is for landscaping, the majority of which is irrigated sod. To help ease this “waste” of water, a number of initiatives are in place which will help, either through public education or through regulatory controls, to lessen this high use. One of the biggest challenges is the need for a social change in thinking regarding people’s love for lush, green grass and the used of more region-specific landscaping in an effort to help lessen the need to sustain a non-native landscape.

Currently, Marion County is developing stronger development regulations which will restrict the areas of irrigated turf, minimize fertilizer use and require water conservation irrigation practices. These measures will help lower the gallons of water used on landscaping while public education and water restrictions will help lower the use of water elsewhere.

### Conservation of Area Resources

While water conservation speaks volumes about limiting water use, conservation of area resources include, but are not limited to, water quality, native habitats and listed species of flora and fauna.

Marion County is fortunate to have an abundance of these resources and along with having these resources comes the responsibility of protecting them. As mentioned, these resources are continually stressed by the increases in population and the destruction of native habitat. Land is converted from agricultural and forested land uses into residential or commercial development which starts the cycle of stress on the environment and demand for water.

Water quality and how it is impacted by growth is also important to understand. Not only does growth equal need for water, growth also contributes to the degradation of ground water supply and quality. Stormwater runoff, which contains heavy metals, nitrates and phosphorous from fertilizer use, and non-point source pollutants, eventually finds its way back into the natural hydrologic cycle. The sandy soils generally found in the majority of the County allow for these pollutants to find their way back into the Aquifer. The Marion County Water Resource Assessment and Management Study (WRAMS) identified that the nitrates found in Silver Springs has increased from .04mg/l in 1960 to 1.0mg/l in 2004. This is a 150 percent increase in 44 years and has been related to nitrates from human waste (septic systems) and fertilizer use within the Silver River basin.

The protection of other resources can be achieved through methods discussed in the PELAM (see next segment) and are related to the conservation of land. Species habitat, wetlands, and aquifer vulnerable areas are types of locations which should be high on the list of priorities for protection. Park planning can assist this effort through acquisition and best management practices.

### **Parks and Environmental Land Acquisition Manual (PELAM)**

In 1989 the Marion County Board of County Commissioners approved the "Parks and Environmental Land Acquisition Manual" (PELAM) in an effort to guide acquisition of lands through the Pennies for Parks bond referendum. The PELAM has three major programs for land acquisition:

1. Acquisition of environmentally sensitive lands
2. Acquisition of recreational lands
3. Acquisition and protection of water recharge areas

While this twenty year old document is relatively old, the goals of the document have not changed. It is a matter of fact that, now in 2007, these highlighted programs are even more important that they were in 1989.

Recent inquiries with the Planning Department have determined that there have been no recent updates to the PELAM. Due to the current local issues regarding resource protection and conservation, it is suggested that the PELAM be completely updated.

## Related Conservation Studies

While the PELAM has not been recently used effectively, other Departments have been making tremendous strides in determining the status of the County's resources. The following is a short list of these important studies:

### Marion County Water Resource Assessment and Management Study (WRAMS)

Marion County's 50-Year Water Study

- Authorized in 2004 by the MCBCC
- Conducted by consultants through the Planning Department's Water Resources Division
- Provides an assessment of all potential water sources in Marion County
- Assesses future water demand through the year 2055
- Provides a long-term plan for water resource management for the goal of improved land use decision-making and natural resource protection

### Marion County Aquifer Vulnerability Assessment (MCAVA)

- Conducted by consultants through the Clean Water Program (Transportation Department)
- Analyzes the karst topography throughout the County
- Determines areas within Marion County with various levels of vulnerability
- Science-based (rather than expert-driven) water-resource management tool

## Regulatory Items

Two of the primary regulatory items which shape the County are the Future Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan and zoning. While these are typical of all county governments, what is important about these items is how easily they are changed to meet the need for growth. Agricultural lands are the fastest "disappearing" land uses in the State with the majority of these lands being developed as commercial or residential development. This is

re-emphasized in the "Florida 2060" study mentioned earlier in this plan.

### Springs Protection Zones

Two sets of concentric protection zones have been created in an effort to identify land which has high aquifer recharge characteristics. Each major spring, Rainbow and Silver, has a primary and secondary protection zone based on the number of years it takes for rainfall to be regenerated back through the springs. These eye-opening zones show just how fragile the lands within the zones are.

### Springs Protection Ordinance

This ordinance is currently under review and revision by the Board of County Commissioners.

### Landscape Ordinance

The Planning Department has issued draft copies of their suggested changes to the Marion County Land Development Code. This draft includes restrictions on the amount of irrigated sod, promotes the use of Marion-friendly landscaping practices, limits overhead irrigation and limits the use and application of fertilizer.

### Environmentally Sensitive Overlay Zone (ESOZ)

The ESOZ is a planning tool which adds a layer of requirements for making improvements to lands within the ESOZ. While this zone does not prohibit improvements, it does require additional steps to ensure that these areas are protected.



**Legend**

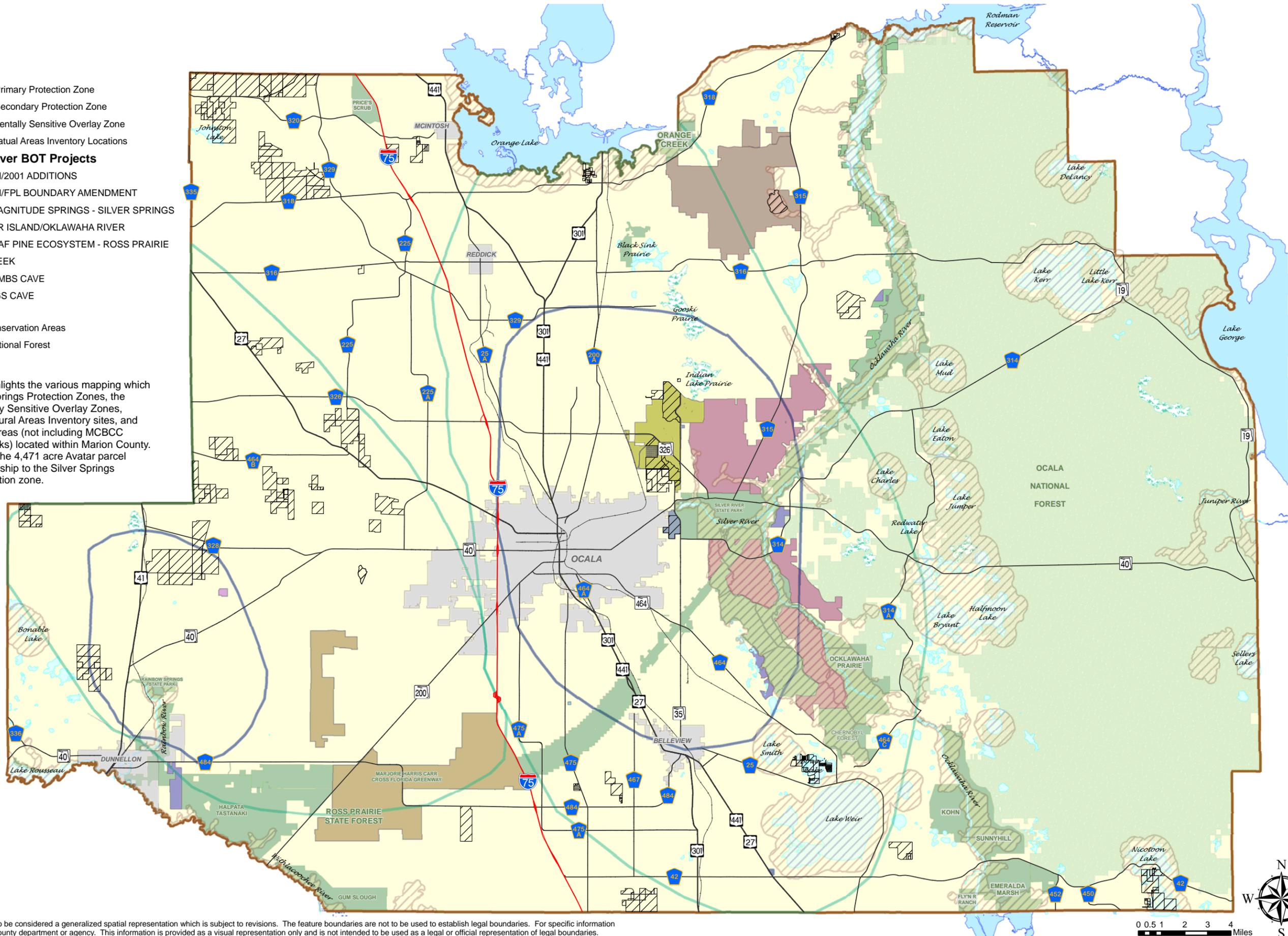
-  Springs Primary Protection Zone
-  Springs Secondary Protection Zone
-  Environmentally Sensitive Overlay Zone
-  Florida Natural Areas Inventory Locations

**Florida Forever BOT Projects**

-  ETONIAH/2001 ADDITIONS
-  ETONIAH/FPL BOUNDARY AMENDMENT
-  FIRST MAGNITUDE SPRINGS - SILVER SPRINGS
-  HEATHER ISLAND/OKLAWAHA RIVER
-  LONGLEAF PINE ECOSYSTEM - ROSS PRAIRIE
-  MILL CREEK
-  CATACOMBS CAVE
-  JENNINGS CAVE

-  State Conservation Areas
-  Ocala National Forest
-  Avatar

This map highlights the various mapping which includes the Springs Protection Zones, the Environmentally Sensitive Overlay Zones, the Florida Natural Areas Inventory sites, and conservation areas (not including MCBCC inventoried parks) located within Marion County. Also shown is the 4,471 acre Avatar parcel and its relationship to the Silver Springs Primary Protection zone.



**Marion County Parks, Recreation, and Environmental Lands  
Conservation and Environmentally Sensitive Lands**

Marion County Parks & Recreation Department 111 S.E. 25th Ave. Ocala, FL 34471 (352) 671-8560

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 agency. This information is provided as a visual representation only and is not intended to be used as a legal or official representation of legal boundaries.



## Open Space

Open Space is defined as land which is designated for protection against either residential or commercial development. Types of land may be agriculture, preferably with conservation easements protecting against future development, parks, bodies of water, federal or state lands and other private holdings which will not be altered. Specific areas as identified by the Florida Natural Areas Inventory are also included.

## Conservation

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The Marion County Parks and Recreation Department also reviews the Conservation Element of the County's Comprehensive Plan and helps in achieving its goals and policies. The Department, through the Parks and Natural Resources Division, oversees this task. They are responsible for natural resource management on a number of sites located in Marion County. The main goals of this group is to maintain, protect, and enhance the natural resources of Marion County; to maintain and improve the current level of biological diversity and integrity of the natural systems within Marion County; and ensure the long-term viability and quality of Marion County's environment.

Monitoring flora and fauna provides information necessary for the development of management strategies. Prescribed fire is a management tool utilized by the Department in an effort to duplicate the naturally occurring fire events that have been shaping this area for centuries. Reduction of fuel reduces the chances of destructive wildfires and is an important part of resource management. Removal of exotic invasive plants, wildlife and reintroduce native species is another important management tool for the Department's resource managers.

Conservation land is commonly defined as land which is minimally impacted by man. Limited structures are built on these types of land; possibly a restroom, picnic pavilion, information kiosks, trails, boardwalks and the like.

## Preservation

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Preservation land is commonly defined as land which has no impact by man. There is very limited access, usually only by foot. These areas are left alone to essentially take care of themselves. Prescribed burning is a management tool which is not utilized in these areas and recreational use is limited as well.

One of the central controversies of the twentieth-century environmental movement has been between those who want to preserve "wilderness" and those who support managed use of the natural resources. The latter is sometimes referred to as the management of resources on a sustainable yield basis. "Conservation: The maintenance of environmental quality and resources or a particular balance among the species present in a given area. The resources may be physical (e.g. fossil fuels), biological (e.g. tropical forests), or cultural (e.g. ancient monuments). In modern scientific usage, conservation implies sound biosphere management within given social and economic constraints, producing goods and services for humans without depleting natural ecosystem diversity, and acknowledging the naturally dynamic character of biological systems. This contrasts with the preservationist approach which, it is argued, protects species or landscapes without reference to natural change in living systems or to human requirements."<sup>2</sup>

## Parks and Recreation Department Position

The Department's views are in line with the above definitions. Conservation areas are those where there are minimal human impacts, yet are accessible for passive activities like hiking, nature viewing or primitive camping. Preservation areas are more protected, where there is little to no human impact or management.

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Allaby, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Ecology* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994], 92

## Environmentally Sensitive Land

Marion County is known for the amount of open space, including the lands listed in the previous section, which is available for public use. There are also significant areas which are classified as being Environmentally Sensitive Land. These include areas with high aquifer vulnerability, threatened ecosystems (meaning these ecosystems may support threatened wildlife and/or protected vegetation species), and bodies of water. The composition of the area, the elements which are either unique to other elements, or how they are combined become known as Environmentally Sensitive Land,” and is the main reason why these lands need to be protected.

The Department utilizes such tools as the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI), GIS mapping layers such as “Environmentally Sensitive Overlay Zones” as determined through the County’s Comprehensive Plan and various planning maps to help guide the Parks Planning Map and potential land acquisition. This enables the Department to team park land acquisition with open-space protection, essentially combining park facilities with conservation.

As shown by the amount of park land currently in the Department’s inventory, which is designated as resource-based recreation sites, the effort to combine recreation with open-space protection is more of a reality than just hopeful planning efforts. Through careful mapping and integration of the need for public recreation (passive recreation), park planning and open-space protection, the Department can serve as the leading group, at the County level, which works toward protection of the land. By continuing to monitor the Conservation Element of the Comprehensive Plan, the Department continues to work with other resource protection divisions within County, State and Federal agencies.

## Current Conservation Land Inventory

Marion County Conservation Lands, acres	
Carney Island Park	780
Horseshoe Lake Park	200
Silver River State Park (County-owned)	220
Silver Springs Conservation Area	<u>346</u>
<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>1,546</b>

Other Conservation Lands, acres	
Ocala National Forest	276,000
Silver River State Park	4,215
Rainbow Springs State Park	1,472
Cross Florida Greenway	42,765
Other State lands	22,706
SJRWMD lands	18,129
SWFWMD lands	10,757
Avatar parcel	<u>4,471</u>
<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>380,515</b>

**Total Conservation Lands: 382,061 acres**  
(roughly 36% of Marion County)

## Department Procedures

The Department currently works towards conservation oriented goals by:

- Restoration of habitats in disturbed areas
- Exotic invasive plant removal
- Reestablishment of native habitat
- Assisting State agencies with their conservation goals and land management

The Natural Resources Division also works along with the Planning Department’s Water Resources Division and the Transportation Department’s Stormwater Division in identifying areas within the County which require protection, renovation and restoration.

## Federal and State Lands Recreation Opportunities

Fortunately for Marion County residents, there is an abundance of recreational opportunities within the County which are owned and/or operated by Federal and State agencies for the public's use. Due to the types of land under the jurisdiction of these agencies, the majority of these sites are classified as resource-based recreation sites. There are some special uses which are allowed on these properties which are not permitted on County park sites.

### **Ocala National Forest** 276,000 acres

The Ocala National Forest is operated by the United States Department of Agriculture. While the overall size of the Forest exceeds the acres listed above, this is the number of acres within Marion County. The Forest offers seasonal hunting by permit, RV and primitive camping, canoeing, various types of trails including OHV trails, one of only two established OHV sites in the State. Visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/florida/> for more information.

### **Silver River State Park** 4,215 acres

Silver River State Park is one of the State's most pristine parks and is home to a Florida First Magnitude spring, Silver Springs. This spring discharges 530 million gallons of fresh water per day! The park also has multiple hiking trails, RV and primitive camp sites, cabins, a Florida Cracker town and is home to the Silver Springs Museum. The park is located just outside of the Ocala city limits on the east side of town. Visit <http://www.floridastateparks.org/silverriver/default.cfm>.

### **Rainbow Springs State Park** 1,472 acres

Rainbow Springs State Park is located in the southwest corner of Marion County and occupies land along the Rainbow River. The spring discharges 475 million gallons of fresh water per day. The park has a wide array of recreation provisions to include camping, swimming, and canoeing. Visit <http://www.floridastateparks.org/rainbowsprings/default.cfm>.

## **Majorie Harris Carr**

### **Cross Florida Greenway** 42,765 acres

The Cross Florida Greenway was established when the Cross Florida Barge Canal was decommissioned on January 22, 1991. At that time the Governor and Cabinet of the State of Florida signed a resolution agreeing to the terms of the Federal deauthorization bill. The bill officially deauthorized the Cross Florida Barge Canal project. This action ultimately led to the creation of the Cross Florida Greenway State Recreation and Conservation Area. The Greenway offers trail users (hiking, biking, equestrian, etc.) relaxing and sometimes challenging routes through the County and serves as an ecological corridor from the Gulf of Mexico to Putnam County, northeast of Marion County. Visit <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/gwt/cfg/> for more information. The Greenway is managed by the Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Greenways and Trails.

### **Other State lands** 22,706 acres

There are other scattered State lands within Marion County which offer similar recreation opportunities as mentioned in the previous segments. These lands typically do not have the organized, or staffed, facilities as the major sites do. A few of these lands include Price's Scrub (northeast), Ross Prairie and Caravelle Ranch Conservation Area.

**St. Johns River Water Management District  
SJRWMD lands 18,129 acres**

St. Johns WMD owns and manages several areas within Marion County for public use. Sites such as Orange Creek Restoration Area (1,020 acres) and Ocklawaha Prairie Refuge and Restoration Area (6,076 acres) are primarily ecological restoration sites which also provide several recreation opportunities such as hiking, wildlife viewing, camping and hunting.



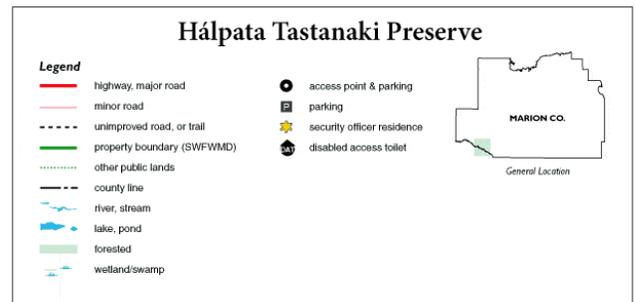
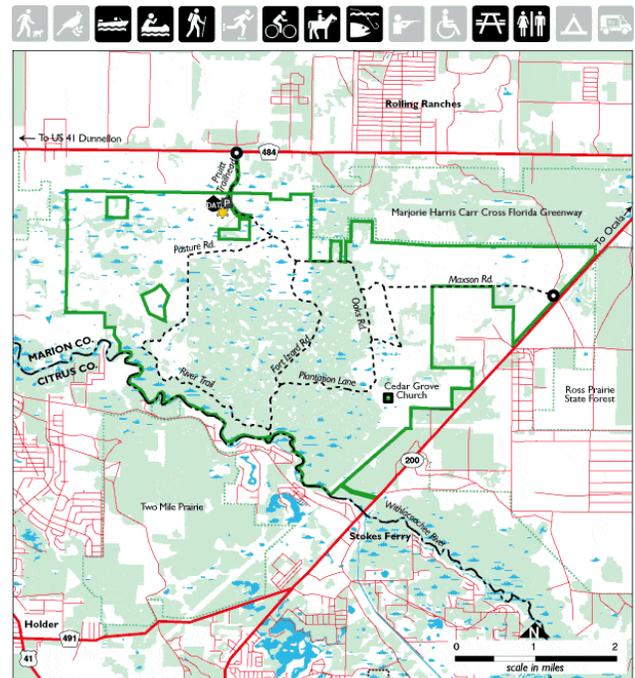
Ocklawaha Prairie Restoration Area (SJRWMD)

Visit

[http://sjr.state.fl.us/programs/operations/land\\_mgmt/index.html](http://sjr.state.fl.us/programs/operations/land_mgmt/index.html) for a detailed list of SJRWMD lands and their associated recreation opportunities.

**Southwest Florida Water Management District  
SWFWMD lands 10,757 acres**

Southwest Florida WMD owns and/or manages over 10,000 acres within Marion County with 8,146 acres occupied by the Hálpata Tastanaki Preserve. A variety of habitat types occurs on the property and includes floodplain swamp and oak scrub along the Withlacoochee River and longleaf pine-turkey oak sandhills occurring in upland areas. Recovering stands of oak scrub scattered amid the sandhill support the threatened Florida scrub-jay.



The site provides for the long-term protection and enhancement of floodplain forests along the Withlacoochee River, isolated wetland systems and extensive upland areas with high rates of aquifer recharge.

Visit <http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/recreation/>

## Conservation Funding

In Chapter 5, Departmental Strategies, funding is discussed in great detail yet it is important to highlight the need to provide funding for conservation lands which may not be used for recreation purposes. According to the previous definitions, these lands may actually be considered to be Preservation lands, where there is little to no active recreation taking place.

### Conservation Land Impact Fees

As described in the Parks and Recreation Impact Fee in Chapter 5, the Conservation Land /Greenway Impact Fee should also be explored. This fee would generate funds for the acquisition and management of environmentally sensitive lands. This fund would assist in providing public access to these lands for passive recreational use and the protection of environmentally sensitive lands.

## The Mind of a Conservationist

“Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land. By land is meant all of the things on, over, or in the earth. Harmony with land is like harmony with a friend; you cannot cherish his right hand and chop off his left. That is to say, you cannot love game and hate predators; you cannot conserve the waters and waste the ranges; you cannot build the forest and mine the farm. The land is one organism. Its parts, like our parts, compete with each other and cooperate with each other. The competitions are as much a part of the inner workings as the co-operators. You can regulate them – cautiously – but not abolish them.”<sup>3</sup>

Marion County continues to be a destination for droves of recreation enthusiasts and outdoorsmen. Promoting Conservation, of land, water and area resources will allow this draw of visitors to continue which in turn will also open the door for more economic pulses. Using fees and funding dedicated towards the protection of these resources, more conservation/preservation lands can be acquired which will only help preserve the character of this County and sustain the local, regional and global environment.

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<sup>3</sup> Leopold, Aldo – A Sand County Almanac





# Marion County Aquifer Vulnerability Assessment A Ground-Water Protection and Management Tool

## INTRODUCTION

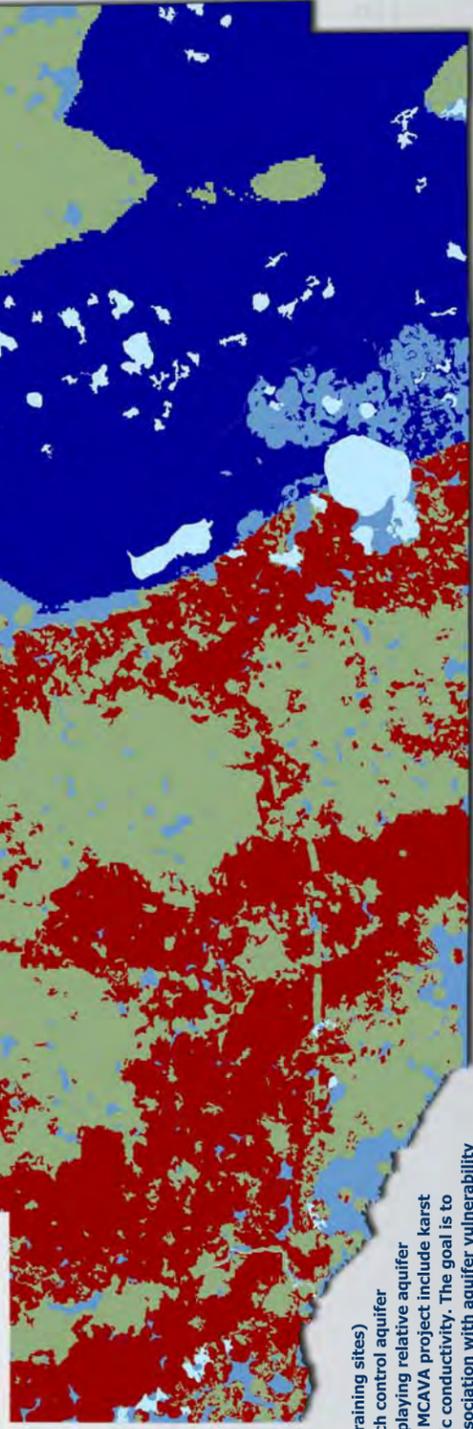
The Floridan Aquifer System (FAS) is the most important and prolific source of fresh water in Marion County. Ground water use from the FAS in Marion County is an estimated 56 million gallons of water per day for public supply, agriculture, domestic, and other uses. As demands for fresh ground water increase in Marion County resulting from continued population growth, identification of zones of relative vulnerability becomes an increasingly important tool for implementation of a successful ground-water protection and management program.

The results of the Marion County Aquifer Vulnerability Assessment (MCAVA) project provide a science-based, water-resource management tool allowing for a proactive approach to protection of the FAS, and, as a result, have the potential to increase the value of protection efforts. Model results will enable improved decisions to be made about aquifer vulnerability based on the input selected, including focused protection of sensitive areas such as springsheds and ground-water recharge areas.

## APPROACH

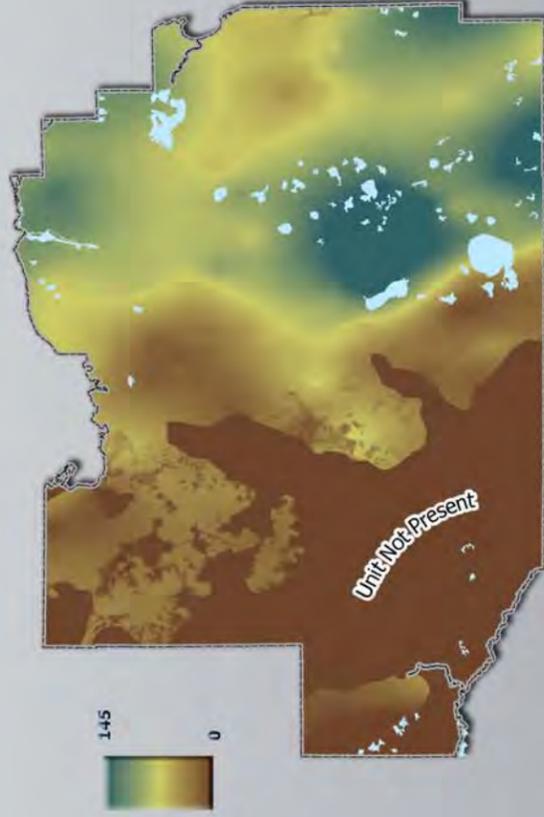
*Weights of Evidence* was used in the MCAVA project to develop an aquifer vulnerability assessment model of the FAS. The modeling technique is based entirely in a geographic information system (GIS). The primary benefits of applying this technique are that it is a data-driven method, rather than expert-driven, and model generation is dependent upon a training dataset consisting of water quality data resulting in self-validated model output.

- Training Site
- Most Vulnerable
- More Vulnerable
- Vulnerable
- Less Vulnerable
- Water Bodies/  
Wetlands



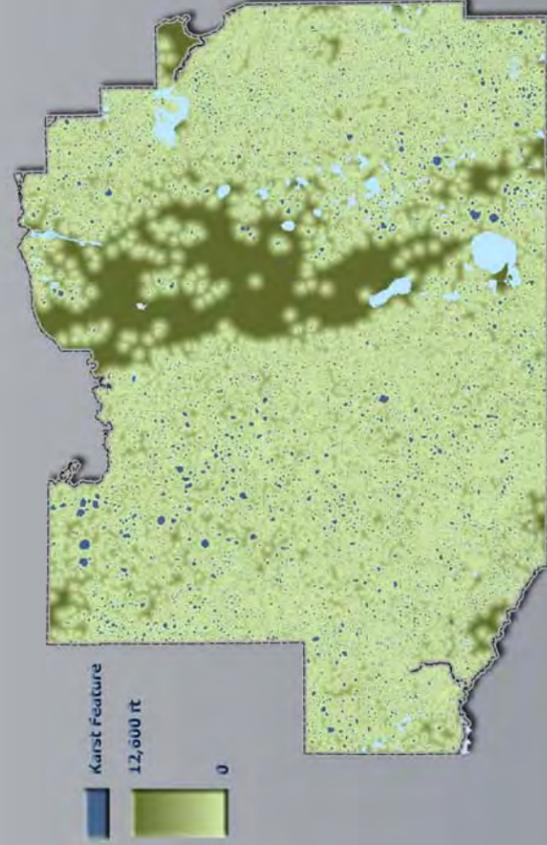
## Model Output

Generation of model output is accomplished by combining water-quality data indicative of high aquifer vulnerability (training sites) with data layers representing hydrogeologic conditions which control aquifer vulnerability. Model output is a GIS-based model output displaying relative aquifer vulnerability across the study area. Data layers used for the MCAVA project include karst features, thickness of aquifer confinement, and soil hydraulic conductivity. The goal is to determine which areas of each data layer share a greater association with aquifer vulnerability based on the location of the training sites. Please refer to the associated report for more information on the modeling process. The MCAVA model response theme indicates that the areas of highest vulnerability are associated with areas of thin to absent aquifer confinement, dense karst-feature distribution, and higher soil hydraulic conductivity.



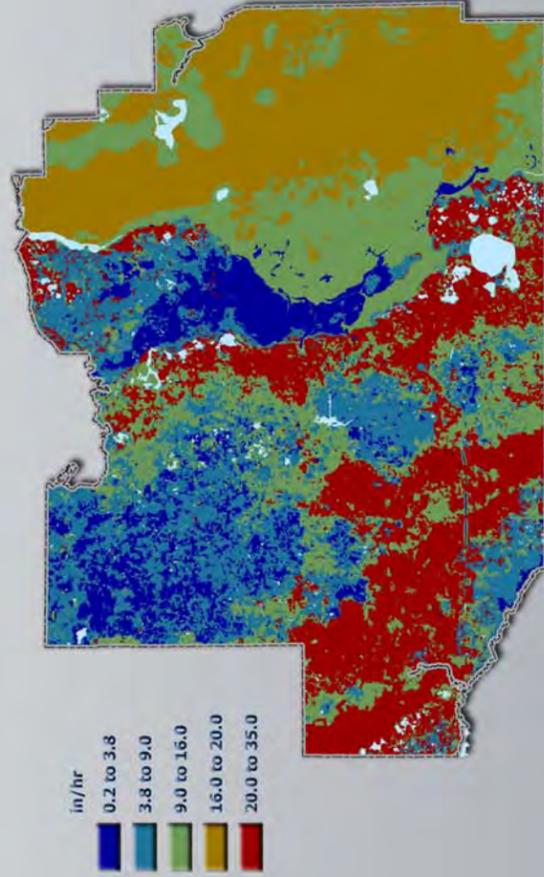
## Intermediate Confining Unit Thickness

Where aquifer confinement is thick and the FAS is deeply buried, aquifer vulnerability is lower, whereas in areas of thin to absent confinement, the vulnerability of the FAS is generally higher.



## Soil Hydraulic Conductivity Theme

The rate that water moves through soil is a critical component of any aquifer vulnerability analysis, as soil is an aquifer system's first line of defense against potential contamination.

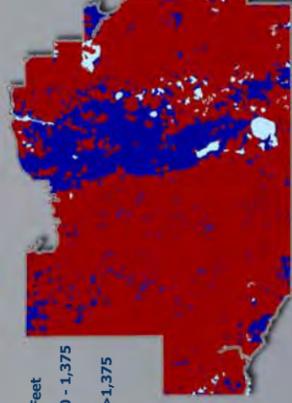


## Generalization of Input Data

The modeling process involves generalizing input layers to evaluate which areas of the data share a greater association with locations of training sites, or, simply, aquifer vulnerability.

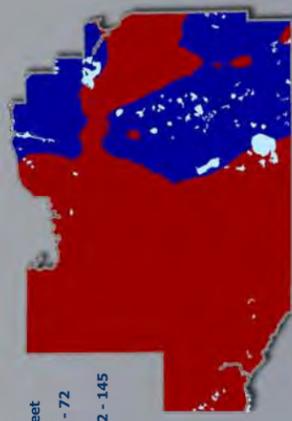
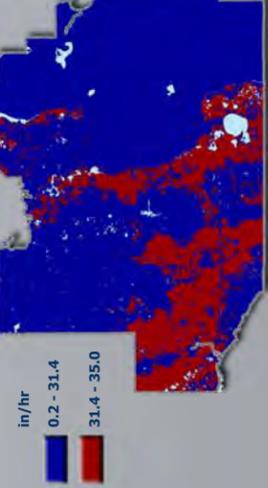
Soil hydraulic conductivity ranges from 0.20 to 34.95 inches per hour (in/hr) across the study area. Modeling indicated that areas underlain by 34.95 to 31.37 in/hr were more associated with higher aquifer vulnerability. The ICU ranges from absent to 145 feet thick across the study area, and the analysis revealed that areas underlain by less than 72 feet of ICU were more associated with higher aquifer vulnerability. Finally, the analysis indicated that areas within 1,375 feet of a karst feature were more associated with higher aquifer vulnerability.

- 0 - 1,375 Feet
- >1,375 Feet



## Effective Karst Feature Theme

Karst features, or sinkholes and depressions, can provide preferential pathways for movement of ground water into the underlying aquifer system and enhance an area's aquifer vulnerability where present. Features are buffered in 25-ft zones above.



## Disclaimer

Maps generated as part of this project were developed by Advanced GeoSpatial, Inc. (AGI) to provide Marion County with a ground-water resource management and protection tool to carry out agency responsibilities related to natural resource management and protection regarding the Floridan Aquifer System. Although efforts were made to ensure information in these maps is accurate and useful, neither Marion County nor AGI assumes responsibility for errors in the information and does not guarantee that the data is free from errors or inaccuracies. Similarly, AGI and Marion County assume no responsibility for consequences of inappropriate uses or interpretations of the data on these maps. Accordingly, these maps are distributed on an "as is" basis and the user assumes all risk as to their quality, results obtained from their use, and performance of the data. AGI and Marion County shall AGI or Marion County, or their respective employees have any liability whatsoever for payment of any consequential, incidental, indirect, special, or tort damages of any kind, including, but not limited to, any loss of profits arising out of use of or reliance on the project results. AGI and Marion County bear no responsibility to inform users of any changes made to this data. Anyone using this data is advised that resolution implied by the data may far exceed actual accuracy and precision. Because this data was developed and collected with Marion County funding, no proprietary rights may be attached to it in whole or in part, nor may it be sold to Marion County or other government agency as part of any procurement of products or services.



Map developed for Marion County, Florida (AS04-04) by Advanced GeoSpatial, Inc. www.agispatial.com

# Chapter Four

## Future Parks and Recreation



MARION COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION

## Improving and Expanding the Park System

What can we do now to the existing park system to help satisfy the immediate needs?

1. Conduct public workshops to discuss the needs of the public.
2. Prioritize those needs:
  - a. Improvements to existing facilities
  - b. Land acquisitions
  - c. Creation of new facilities
  - d. Identify funding
3. Reassess satisfaction of needs.
4. Work on developing the right types of parks at the best locations.

The analysis of the Existing Conditions of the Parks and Recreation Department highlighted issues with regards to how parks and facilities are planned and what the current and projected needs of these facilities will be. Yet outlining the goals to meet these deficiencies and timelines associated with the when and where is just as critical.

The public is our number one client. Listening to their needs is the highest priority and fitting those needs into the appropriate parameters is the goal of this section.

Setting goals is the first, most critical step in making things happen and it is believed that the following segments within this chapter will not only identify some important goals, it will show the way to completing these goals as well.

## The Need for Parks and Recreation

There have been numerous studies and associated levels of research regarding the need for parks and recreation facilities within all levels of our society. The benefits of parks and what a successful recreation program is seldom mentioned, yet on almost every day someone, somewhere is taking advantage of what these two items offer.

From walking along a remote trail in a national park, exploring underwater caverns or learning about the protected fauna of a particular region, public open space is essential for providing places for people to go. They also provide a place for people to interact, to form friendships and to help bond communities.

This is only a glimpse into how important this Department is and the services which it provides. The Parks and Recreation Department is in charge of finding these places, making the experience enjoyable and helping shape the common communities.

Planning for parks and recreation is a large part of making sure our region is ecologically, socially and economically viable. Without parks and without structured recreation, our community would be lost, without places to visit and play outdoors.

## Corridor Studies – Their Effects on Parks

Corridor studies, as commissioned by the Marion County Planning Department, have provided a significant amount of information regarding the current conditions and development trends within these areas. While these issues are always being addressed and studied at the County-wide level, these specific corridor studies, and the fact that they were required and completed, signify the importance, or weight, each of these areas have in the overall character of Marion County.

At the time of completion of this master plan, there are four completed corridor studies which have been reviewed for input regarding parks and recreation. These studies included:

- US 441 Marion County Corridor Study Area Master Plan, March 2003
- SR 200 Marion County Corridor Study Area Master Plan, December 2003
- US 27 Marion County Corridor Study Area Master Plan, December 2003
- SR 326 Corridor Study Master Plan, February 2007

Currently studies for the US 41 Marion County corridor and for the Greenway area are underway.

Completed studies are posted on the Marion County Planning Department website at: [http://www.marioncountyfl.org/PL271/PL\\_CompletedStudy.htm](http://www.marioncountyfl.org/PL271/PL_CompletedStudy.htm)

At the time of this master plan update, the four completed corridor studies were taken into consideration for park planning purposes.

Corridor studies offer a detailed look at planning practices and recommendations on a smaller scale. This focused observation is critical for park planning since each area included within their respective study sites has individual traits and specific needs. As one area's residents have voiced a need for more active recreation sites, another area has mentioned passive recreation needs. Without these studies, more intensive public hearings would be necessary to obtain public reaction and to start narrowing down the County-wide needs for parks and recreation.

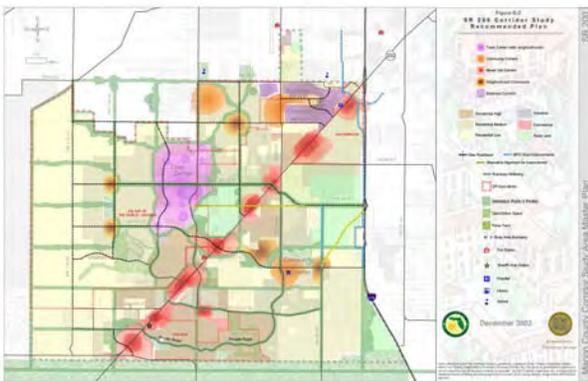
Here are some highlights, pertaining to parks and recreation, specifically mentioned within each study:

### US 441 study (completed 3/03)

- The number of acres being changed from agricultural/rural zoning to urban and non-residential zoning indicates a substantial number of acres will be developed
- Balance between growth and protection of natural resources is highly important
- Land for open space, greenways and passive recreation areas need to be preserved to help target growth in more suitable areas
- Study states that this area is deficient in neighborhood, community and district parks. Contrarily,
  - Numerous parks exist just outside of the study area
  - Land has been acquired for a community park in the Orange Blossom Hills neighborhood. In the recommended master plan for this area, this neighborhood was identified as a place for a potential park.

### SR 200 study (completed 12/03)

- Determined to be “highly suited to accommodate much of the growth anticipated to occur in Marion County”
- Desires for active recreation facilities and open space, in proximity to residential areas, were listed as resident concerns
- This study allows for advanced planning for land acquisition of greenways and other types of parks
- Connectivity to and use of the Cross Florida Greenway is important for this area as multi-use trail systems and open space connectors are shown in the recommended plan
- Promotes the implementation of additional greenways as routes for alternative transportation
- Promotion of natural area protection and water quality/quantity is also mentioned as a major issue to area residents



### SR 326 study (completed 2/07)

- Parks listed as the fourth out of 12 Issues of Greatest Concern as ranked by community meeting participants yet it was mentioned that there is no need for immediate improvements as far as parks are concerned; other issues weighed heavier
  - 30 percent of attendees stated that parks are sufficient
  - 22 percent stated that parks are not sufficient
  - Parks and recreation listed highest on when attendees were asked where the County should spend more on (54 percent)
  - Sidewalks and bikeways rated with 39 percent as another area where more spending should occur
- Environmental and springs protection ranked first in the same poll



### US 27 study (completed 12/03)

- Study area listed as still maintaining a largely rural and residential character
- Suggests acquisition of lands to support anticipated needs to support such services as parks
- Proposes the use of greenways to buffer and to create transition zones between land use types (to help protect the rural character of the study area)

In summary, the corridor studies provide useful planning tools in helping the Parks and Recreation Department project where the immediate and future park and recreational needs exist. Based on the recommended plans provided in the studies, the Department will be better suited in making recommendations for the level of service which it continues to provide. It is up to the County Commission to follow the recommendations.

## Future Park Needs and Timetables

Based on the findings discovered as part of this master plan, there are definite immediate needs, immediate future needs and needs for the next 20 to 30 years. Planning for parks and facilities is best done as early as possible so to take advantage of available space and land, to be prepared financially for acquisition and development (for new and existing parks) and to have a plan in-place to help protect our environmentally sensitive lands, yet setting a more realistic timetable is appropriate for this study.

### Definitions of Needs:

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#### Immediate Needs

These are needs which are evident from population research based on the Census 2000, Census 2005 Estimate and current population records which were gained from the Marion County Planning Department. These needs may also be related to citizen input.

#### Near Future Needs:

Based on solid population projections and expected growth. Need are related to previous growth estimates and how those estimates have been met or exceeded. Primarily within the next five years (2012).

#### Long-Range Needs:

Needs which are based on forecasted expectations of growth, development, and the protection of natural resources. These needs are long-range, approximately 10 to 15 years (2017-2022).

## Identified “Hot Spots” for Needs

Hot Spots are defined as areas where the needs for parks and facilities are currently the highest. Such areas are found based on population density mapping, population projection data, and input from citizen groups.

Please refer to Map 2 on the following page. The color ranges clearly show where the population of Marion County has the higher density.

### Existing “Hot Spots”

- SR 200 Corridor area; retirees and support industry residents
  - Neighborhood parks
  - Community parks
  - Greenway connectivity
- US 27 corridor area; northwest of Ocala
  - Community parks
- SR 326 corridor area; north and northeast of Ocala
  - Neighborhood parks
  - Community parks
  - Greenway connectivity
- CR 25/US 441/Belleview area; southwest and southeast of Belleview city limits
  - Neighborhood parks
  - Community parks
- US 41/SR 40 area; north of Dunnellon
  - Community parks

**Legend**

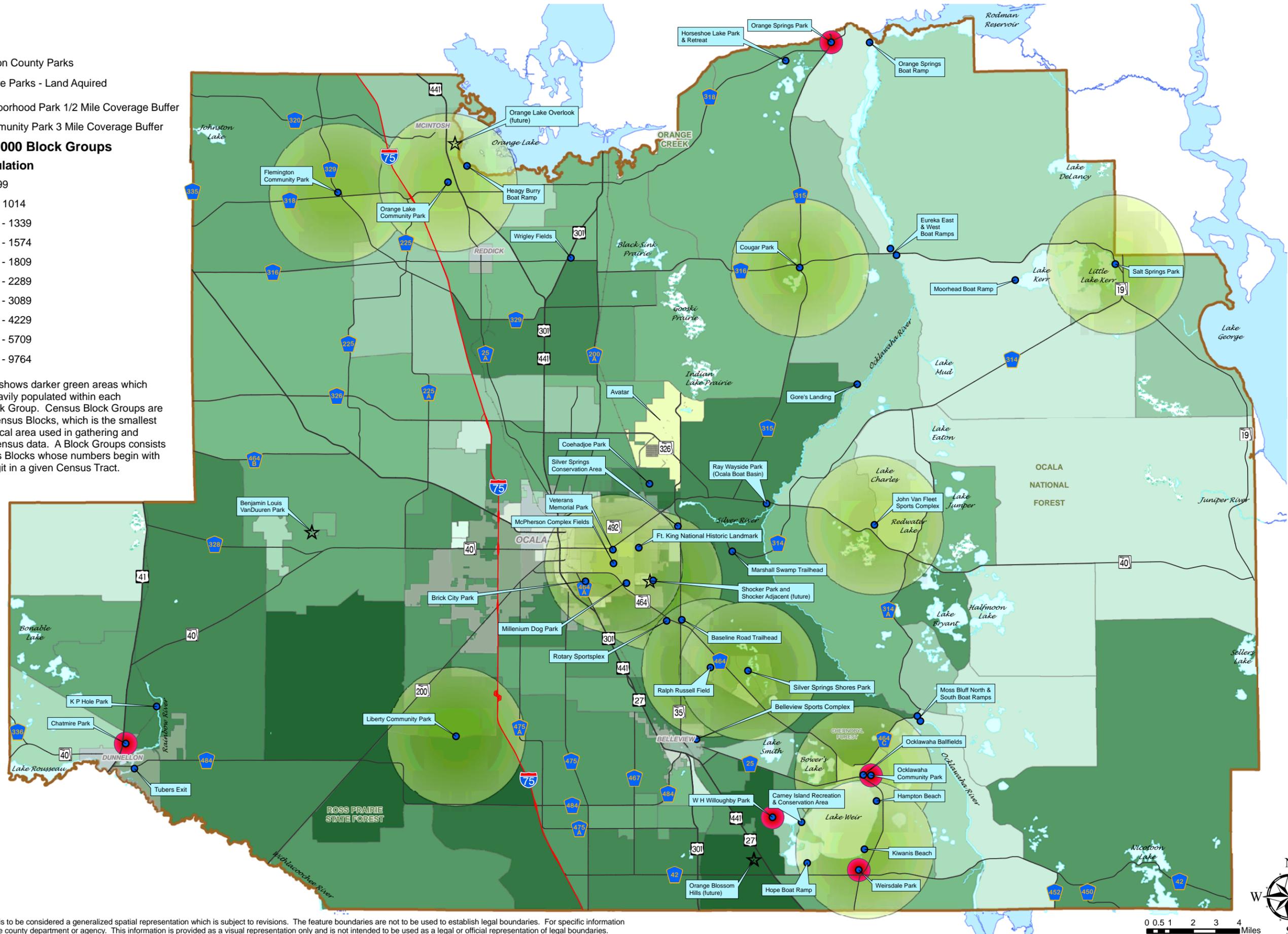
- Marion County Parks
- ☆ Future Parks - Land Aquired
- Neighborhood Park 1/2 Mile Coverage Buffer
- Community Park 3 Mile Coverage Buffer

**Census 2000 Block Groups**

**2000 Population**

- 1 - 699
- 700 - 1014
- 1015 - 1339
- 1340 - 1574
- 1575 - 1809
- 1810 - 2289
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Color range shows darker green areas which are more heavily populated within each Census Block Group. Census Block Groups are groups of Census Blocks, which is the smallest of geographical area used in gathering and analyzing Census data. A Block Groups consists of all Census Blocks whose numbers begin with the same digit in a given Census Tract.



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**Marion County Parks, Recreation, and Environmental Lands  
Existing County Owned and/or Operated Sites  
Census 2000 - Population by Census Block Groups**

Marion County Parks & Recreation Department 111 S.E. 25th Ave. Ocala, FL 34471 (352) 671-8560



## Strategy for Addressing Park Deficiencies

The first step is completed by identifying the *overall needs* for parks and recreation services based on population levels, acres per park type, and what quantity of the population is expected to be covered by each park type and what type of recreation services are desired by the public. This is the “how many” part of the analysis.

The next step is to determine *where* the parks are needed. This is based on population densities, population forecasts and the voice of public demand.

Then, based on the second step, what type of park would be best selected for each of deficit areas. This also relates to recreation services potentially offered at each park. Also considered at this point in the process is the acquisition of environmentally sensitive lands and how these areas could serve as recreation areas as well. Consider this the “what kind(s)” part of the analysis.

Determining *when* the park is needed is just as important as the first few steps. Scheduling when lands must be acquired and when improvements are included into the Department’s Capital Improvements Project budget to complete the planning process and help achieve the goal of improving the park system.

Finally is the funding aspect of this strategy, determining funding sources and scheduling the spending of these funds.

Internal strategies for addressing the needs for additional parks include:

- Developing an overall inventory of existing facilities
- Assessing the inventory
- The dismissal of Park Planning Districts and the Quadrant System
- Accountability of overall County needs

Along with these points, another strategy which is worthy of discussion is the use of community parks to satisfy more residents in lieu of constructing numerous neighborhood parks. While neighborhood parks or “walk-to” parks are viable in the areas with higher population densities, a larger number of citizens can be served by properly located community parks which have the appropriate amenities for that particular area of the County. Demographics will drive the amenities that are planned at specific parks and joined with the newer ideas such as Multigenerational Parks (discussed in detail further in this Chapter) larger community parks can address park acre deficiencies *and* community needs for specific amenities more efficiently.

Operationally, the types of amenities at each park are what can drive the operating costs. Open resource-based recreation sites typically require less management, cleaning, mowing, etc. while the active user-based parks tend to have higher costs associated with such things as site visits, restroom cleaning, vandalism and specific care for athletic fields. Closely monitoring demographics can help keep these costs lower by providing the amenities which are currently needed instead of planning parks based on what types of amenities fit the land. Using the latter technique could create higher unnecessary operation costs by maintaining facilities which are not used to their fullest potential.

The following shows the relationship between population, growth, and the needs for specific, inventoried park types. The established acres per park type is the catalyst for developing figures which show how much park land is needed to fit the Marion County requirements as mentioned previously. Greenways and water access parks are not included in this forecast as they are not typically driven by the population levels. Refer to the MCBCC Park Inventory in Chapter 2 for individual park details.

**Park Acre Needs based on Population Served per Park Type, An Eight-Year Forecast**

Park Type	2007 Pop. 325,000	Max. Pop. Served per Park	Number of Parks Needed	Min. Acre Per Park Type	County Park Acres Needed	Current Park Inv.	Current Park Acres	Park Inv. Surp./Def.	Park Acres Surp./Def.
Neighborhood		5,000	65.00	10	650.00	4	4.91	-61	-645
Community		25,000	13.00	20	260.00	15	196.15	2	-64
District		50,000	6.50	50	325.00	11	311.67	5	-13
Regional		100,000	3.25	250	812.50	4	1,200.00	1	388
					2,048				-335

Park Type	2008 Pop. 340,300	Max. Pop. Served per Park	Number of Parks Needed	Min. Acre Per Park Type	County Park Acres Needed	Current Park Inv.	Current Park Acres	Park Inv. Surp./Def.	Park Acres Surp./Def.
Neighborhood		5,000	68.06	10	680.60	4	4.91	-64	-676
Community		25,000	13.61	20	272.24	16	209.22	2	-63
District		50,000	6.81	50	340.30	11	311.67	4	-29
Regional		100,000	3.40	250	850.75	4	1,200.00	1	349
					2,144				-418

Park Type	2009 Pop. 355,600	Max. Pop. Served per Park	Number of Parks Needed	Min. Acre Per Park Type	County Park Acres Needed	Current Park Inv.	Current Park Acres	Park Inv. Surp./Def.	Park Acres Surp./Def.
Neighborhood		5,000	71.12	10	711.20	4	4.91	-67	-706
Community		25,000	14.22	20	284.48	17	221.79	3	-63
District		50,000	7.11	50	355.60	12	320.67	5	-35
Regional		100,000	3.56	250	889.00	4	1,200.00	0	311
					2,240				-493

Park Type	2010 Pop. 370,900	Max. Pop. Served per Park	Number of Parks Needed	Min. Acre Per Park Type	County Park Acres Needed	Current Park Inv.	Current Park Acres	Park Inv. Surp./Def.	Park Acres Surp./Def.
Neighborhood		5,000	74.18	10	741.80	4	4.91	-70	-737
Community		25,000	14.84	20	296.72	17	221.79	2	-75
District		50,000	7.42	50	370.90	12	320.67	5	-50
Regional		100,000	3.71	250	927.25	4	1,200.00	0	273
					2,337				-589

Park Type	2011 Pop. 384,520	Max. Pop. Served per Park	Number of Parks Needed	Min. Acre Per Park Type	County Park Acres Needed	Current Park Inv.	Current Park Acres	Park Inv. Surp./Def.	Park Acres Surp./Def.
Neighborhood		5,000	76.90	10	769.04	4	4.91	-73	-764
Community		25,000	15.38	20	307.62	17	221.79	2	-86
District		50,000	7.69	50	384.52	12	320.67	4	-64
Regional		100,000	3.85	250	961.30	4	1,200.00	0	239
					2,422				-675

Park Type	2012 Pop. 398,140	Max. Pop. Served per Park	Number of Parks Needed	Min. Acre Per Park Type	County Park Acres Needed	Current Park Inv.	Current Park Acres	Park Inv. Surp./Def.	Park Acres Surp./Def.
Neighborhood		5,000	79.63	10	796.28	4	4.91	-76	-791
Community		25,000	15.93	20	318.51	17	221.79	1	-97
District		50,000	7.96	50	398.14	12	320.67	4	-77
Regional		100,000	3.98	250	995.35	4	1,200.00	0	205
					2,508				-761

Park Type	2013 Pop. 411,760	Max. Pop. Served per Park	Number of Parks Needed	Min. Acre Per Park Type	County Park Acres Needed	Current Park Inv.	Current Park Acres	Park Inv. Surp./Def.	Park Acres Surp./Def.
Neighborhood		5,000	82.35	10	823.52	4	4.91	-78	-819
Community		25,000	16.47	20	329.41	17	221.79	1	-108
District		50,000	8.24	50	411.76	12	320.67	4	-91
Regional		100,000	4.12	250	1029.40	4	1,200.00	0	171
					2,594				-847

Park Type	2014 Pop. 425,380	Max. Pop. Served per Park	Number of Parks Needed	Min. Acre Per Park Type	County Park Acres Needed	Current Park Inv.	Current Park Acres	Park Inv. Surp./Def.	Park Acres Surp./Def.
Neighborhood		5,000	85.08	10	850.76	4	4.91	-81	-846
Community		25,000	17.02	20	340.30	17	221.79	0	-119
District		50,000	8.51	50	425.38	12	320.67	3	-105
Regional		100,000	4.25	250	1063.45	4	1,200.00	0	137
					2,680				-933

Park Type	2015 Pop. 439,000	Max. Pop. Served per Park	Number of Parks Needed	Min. Acre Per Park Type	County Park Acres Needed	Current Park Inv.	Current Park Acres	Park Inv. Surp./Def.	Park Acres Surp./Def.
Neighborhood		5,000	87.80	10	878.00	4	4.91	-84	-873
Community		25,000	17.56	20	351.20	17	221.79	-1	-129
District		50,000	8.78	50	439.00	12	320.67	3	-118
Regional		100,000	4.39	250	1097.50	4	1,200.00	0	103
					2,766				-1,018

Year 2008 includes the addition of one Community Park (Orange Blossom Hills). Year 2009 includes the addition of one Community Park (Benjamin Louis VanDuuren) and one District Park (Orange Lake Overlook – Sawallis). Shocker Adjacent is not included in the Five Year CIP yet the park is included in the overall inventory.

**Legend**

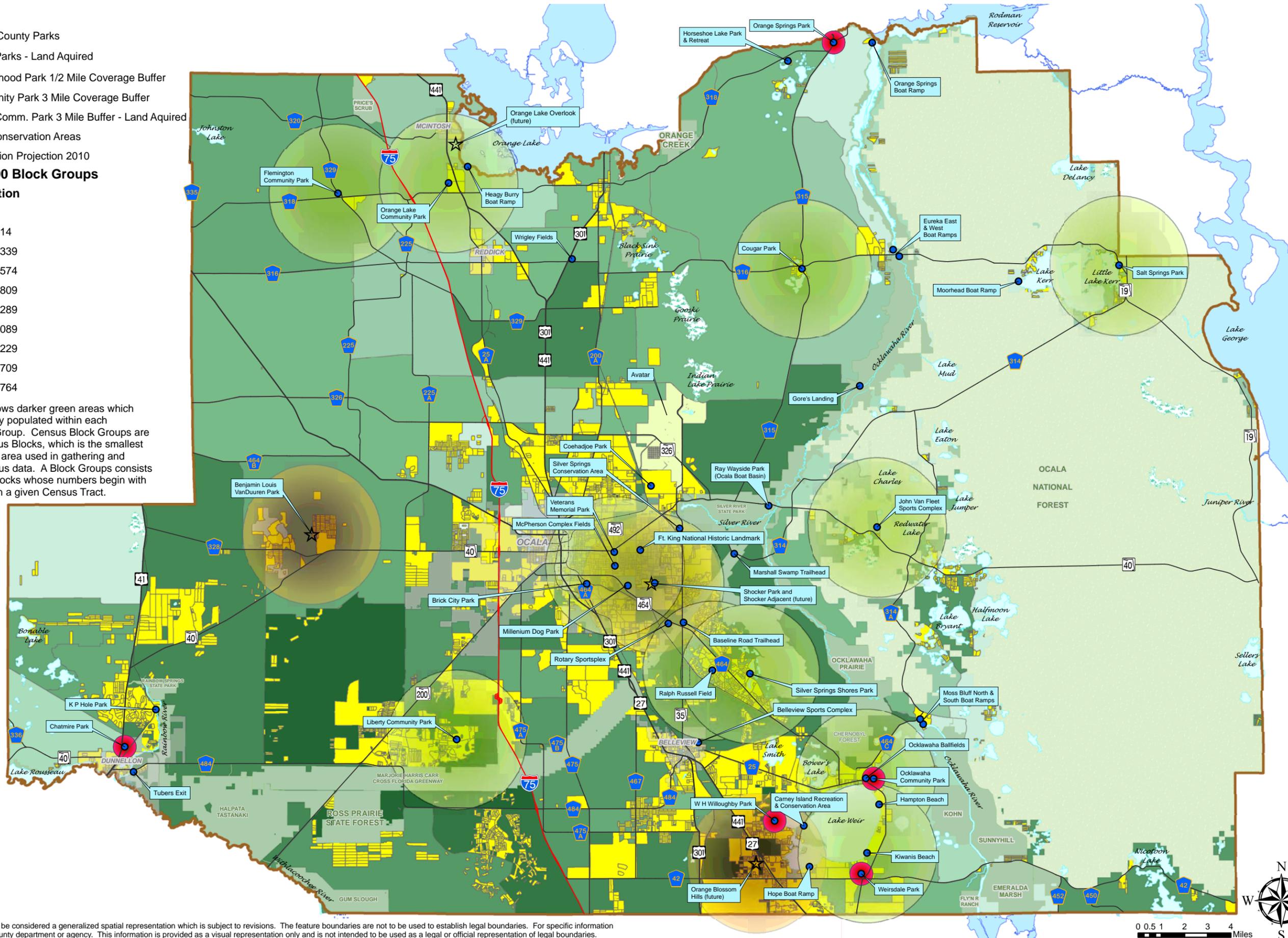
- Marion County Parks
- ☆ Future Parks - Land Aquired
- Neighborhood Park 1/2 Mile Coverage Buffer
- Community Park 3 Mile Coverage Buffer
- Future Comm. Park 3 Mile Buffer - Land Aquired
- State Conservation Areas
- Poplulation Projection 2010

**Census 2000 Block Groups**

**2000 Population**

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**Marion County Parks, Recreation, and Environmental Lands**  
**Existing County Owned and/or Operated Sites**  
**Census 2000 Data & 2010 Population Projection**  
 Marion County Parks & Recreation Department 111 S.E. 25th Ave. Ocala, FL 34471 (352) 671-8560



**Legend**

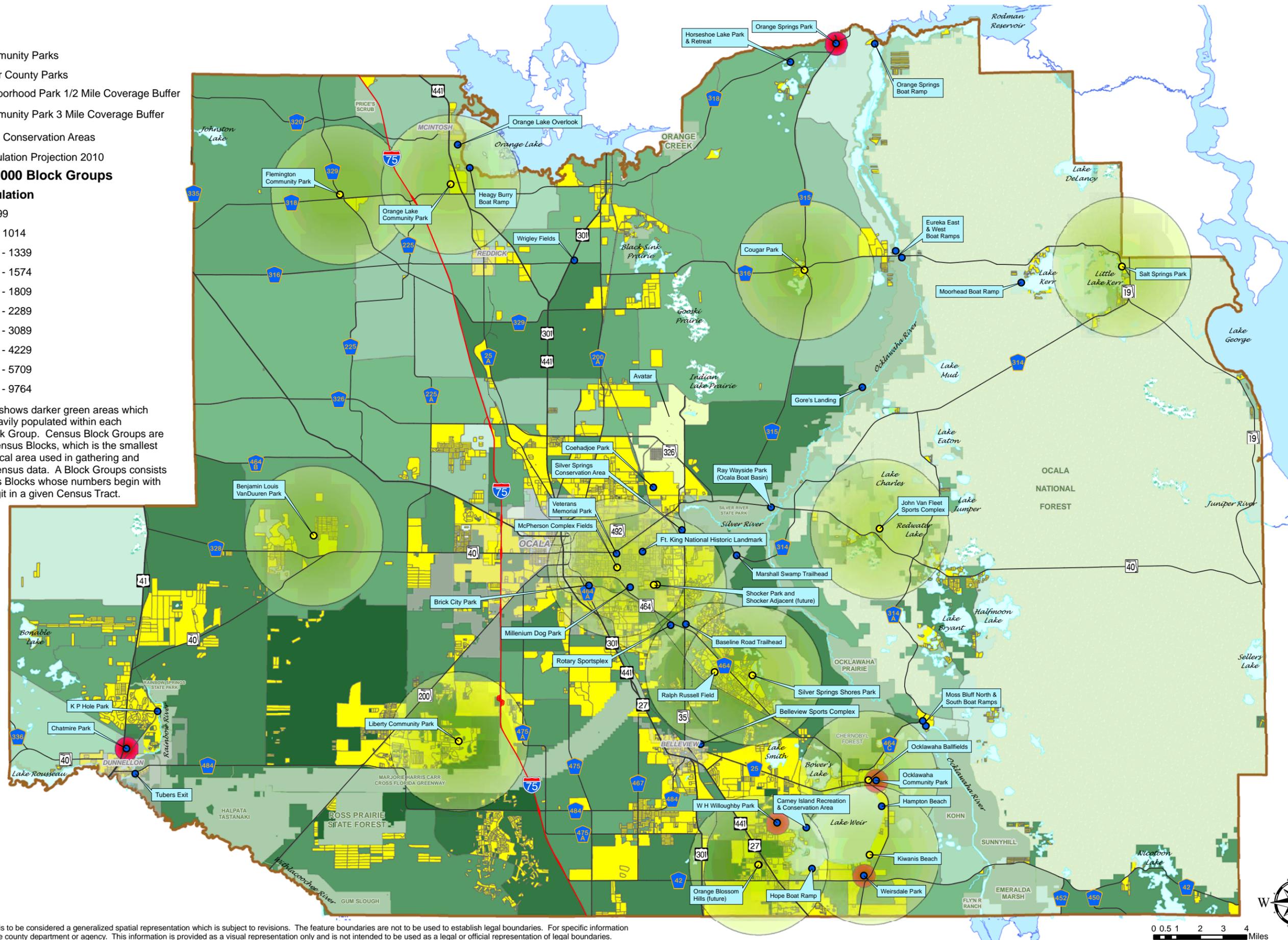
- Community Parks
- Other County Parks
- Neighborhood Park 1/2 Mile Coverage Buffer
- Community Park 3 Mile Coverage Buffer
- State Conservation Areas
- Population Projection 2010

**Census 2000 Block Groups**

**2000 Population**

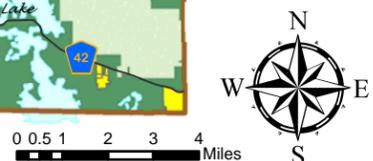
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**Marion County Parks, Recreation, and Environmental Lands**  
**Existing County Owned and/or Operated Sites**  
**2010 Population Projection & Current Parks Included in 5-Year CIP**  
 Marion County Parks & Recreation Department 111 S.E. 25th Ave. Ocala, FL 34471 (352) 671-8560

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While the previous chart indicates a rising number of park acre deficiencies, developing a strategy in addressing these deficiencies is the next step. The population projections are again, the high-rate as provided by BEBR, and the park acre deficiencies are strictly tied to the population projections and are a product of population versus the current park inventory. With that mentioned, once park acres are added to the inventory, naturally the deficiencies will decline.

That leaves the analysis at a point where it is critical to follow the strategy in planning for where parks are needed, what type of parks are needed and when they need to be online.

---

### Neighborhood Parks:

An important item to mention regarding neighborhood parks is the intensive maintenance and personnel costs associated with operating these smaller parks. While neighborhood parks serve a purpose within the park system as small, walk-to or bike-to parks, they tend to be limited in size and amenities. Neighborhood parks should be planned for specific neighborhood needs, those not only shown in the *park acres per number of residents analysis*, but more importantly they should be focused on the public demand, where they are truly needed the most.



Orange Springs Park; Neighborhood Park

In lieu of planning and building over 61 ten acre parks (as determined by the population coverage analysis) it is more reasonable to develop fewer parks which are bigger in size and serve higher numbers of residents. Yet, one of the key aspects of neighborhood parks is that they are more accessible to the area residents; people should be able to walk or bike to neighborhood parks. So planning fewer, larger community parks in place of multiple neighborhood parks is a more logical means of

providing a consistent level of service across the County (and keeping operating costs low). Finding prime sites, or larger parcels of land, closer to locations which would allow for the easier access (walk to / bike to) which is one of the main challenges. On top of finding those ideal parcels, funding the purchase, or finding the land owner who can afford to sell their land at the appraised value of the property, is another major hurdle.

While we are not ruling out the need or addition of neighborhood parks, as there are definitely areas within the County which would be adequately served by ten acre parks, and there are locations located within the County where the public has stated that this size park would be suitable for their need. However, the larger community parks would be able to have a wider array of amenities, serve as recreation hubs and could also function as open-space preservation areas.

### Immediate Needs

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The most vocal of public demand for neighborhood parks resides in the SR 200 area. As shown in Map 4, there is a need for parks based on park area coverage and population, as this area has no neighborhood parks; only one community park exists, Liberty Community Park on SW 103<sup>rd</sup> St. Rd. Using the *park acres per number of residents analysis*, the Census 2000 data shows a population of the SR 200 area as 21,133 residents while the Ocala-Marion Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) forecasts a population of 32,238 by the year 2020.

Looking back at the level of service and/or the number of residents served by particular park types, neighborhood parks should serve roughly 5,000 residents (10-15 acres in size, ½ mile coverage radius) and community parks serve 25,000 residents (30 acres minimum, 3 mile coverage radius). District and regional parks could be located to help relieve the need for park land in this area, however, the type of amenities more commonly associated with neighborhood and community parks are higher on the list of priorities for this area of the County.

The current level of service requirement for the SR 200 area (based on two acres of land per 1,000 residents) per the Census 2000 data would show a need for 42.3 acres of park land. This area is currently deficient by 31 acres based on Census 2000 data and will require over 64 acres of park land by using the 2020 MPO population projections for this area. In the next 13 years, 53 acres of park land is required to be added into the BCC inventory just for the SR 200 area.

In order to meet the future demand, it is recommended that the process of working towards acquiring and developing the deficient number of park acres start in the 2008/2009 fiscal year in order to establish the foot-work in meeting the Immediate Needs which will carry over into the Near Future Needs. By following the guidelines for park types and sizes, the deficiency in the SR 200 area could be met by creating:

- 3 Neighborhood Parks (12 acres each)
- Or
- 2 Neighborhood Parks (12 acres each)
- And 1 Community Park (30 acres each)
- Or
- 2 Community Parks (30 acres each)

The recommended balance would be the second option. By using this option, two neighborhood parks could be located to serve the more densely populated areas and the single community park would serve the less densely populated areas and contain more passive

recreation amenities and potentially connect into the existing greenway system.

Yet to help avoid front-loading the fiscal requirements of adding a large amount of parks within a short period, the second neighborhood park is planned for a future time period. Along with the SR 200 area, the other area which has a high priority for a neighborhood park is the US 441/CR 25/ Bellevue area. As with the SR 200 area, this neighborhood park must be carefully sited to take advantage of available land, dense neighborhoods and appropriate funding for the needed amenities.

**Total Neighborhood Park Immediate Needs:**

Neighborhood Parks	2
Acres	24
Acquisition Cost*	\$480,000
Development Cost**	\$3,360,000

\* Based on median per acre cost \$20,000/acre; unincorporated Marion County lands, 2006, MC Property Appraiser Office  
 \*\* Based on historic development cost, roughly \$140,000 per acre and development of 100% of park acre for this type

Near Future Needs – Five Years

As mentioned in the previous segment, starting the foot work now to address Immediate Needs will help in meeting Near Future Needs. A five year forecast (Near Future) will include items discussed in the Immediate Needs and will include foot work for Long-Range Needs.

According to the BEBR population projections and where the future population of Marion County will reside, these neighborhoods in the unincorporated areas of Marion County will have a need for park lands: Oak Park Estates (one), the US 27 corridor area (one), Forest Corners area (one), and again in the SR 200 area (one), north of SR 200. A total of four neighborhood parks should be planned for in the coming few years to meet the Near Future needs.

**Total Neighborhood Park Near Future Needs:**

Neighborhood Parks	4
Acres	48
Acquisition Cost	\$960,000
Development Cost	\$6,720,000

## Long-Range Needs – Ten to Fifteen Years

The Eight-Year Forecast spreadsheet (page 52) shows an overwhelming number of neighborhood park acre deficiencies. As the current inventory shows only four neighborhood parks and in order to meet this planning requirement, a total of 84 neighborhood parks would be needed by the year 2015. Therein lays a good reason to focus neighborhood parks in the more densely populated areas and using community parks to cover larger service areas. By serving residents in denser locations with smaller parks, and using larger parks to cover the less-dense areas, the difference in operating costs could be balanced on a per visitor basis.

For this Master Plan an effort is made to focus the Long-Range Need for neighborhood parks in these densely populated areas in conjunction with the current population projections. During the next Master Plan update (planned for 2012) a better picture will be available which will show the Long-Range Needs and to re-visit the earlier needs. These needs will carry forward any deficiencies as noted between Master Plan updates.

Per the current data, a total of five neighborhood parks should be planned. Areas which are currently demonstrating a need include: US 40/41 area (two), Meadow Wood Farms (one), Ocala Estates (one), and Summerfield, just west of US 301 (one).

### Total Neighborhood Park Long-Range Needs:

Neighborhood Parks	5
Acres	60
Acquisition Cost	\$1,200,000
Development Cost	\$8,400,000

Creating a long-term relationship with the Marion County School Board would allow the use of school playgrounds and facilities which would satisfy some demand for so many neighborhood parks.

## Community Parks:

One of the park planning goals of the Department is to utilize community parks more effectively to meet the required level of service, maintain a low operating cost, and provide County residents with the amenities they require. This is especially true with the increase in size from 20 acres to 30 areas as shown in Chapter 2. Through careful park planning, this goal may be coupled with another goal in preserving open-space, something neighborhood parks are too small to accomplish.

There is also an opportunity to revisit existing parks to either maximize the land which is already a part of an existing park or to purchase adjacent lands and to reclassify the park once more amenities are added. Refer to the Parks Specific Improvements list on page 75 of this chapter for how existing parks could be improved to help satisfy these immediate needs at the neighborhood and community park levels.

### Immediate Needs

Currently there is a need for additional community parks within the County. The highest demand area is the SR 200 area based on the current population numbers and density.

### Total Community Park Immediate Needs:

Community Parks	1
Acres	30
Acquisition Cost*	\$600,000
Development Cost**	\$3,570,000

\* Based on median per acre cost \$20,000/acre; unincorporated Marion County lands, 2006, MC Property Appraiser Office.

\*\* Based on historic development cost, roughly \$140,000 per acre and development of 85% of park acre for this type.

Near Future Needs – Five Years

The picture of the future park system does change in the coming five years and this is related to the expected population increases for this area. Fortunately, there are two future community parks (Orange Blossom Hills and Benjamin Louis VanDuuren) in areas which are expected to show reasonable growth. Yet through population projection mapping, we can see areas in the County where more parks will be needed.



Liberty Community Park, 2006

Areas with expected growth within the next five years include: Florida Highlands, the Greenway area, Marion Oaks and the US 27 corridor area. Planning, or scouting, locations for these parks now and moving in the acquisition direction would be beneficial and would allow for the phasing of development.

**Total Community Park Near Future Needs:**

Community Parks	4
Acres	120
Acquisition Cost	\$2,400,000
Development Cost	\$14,280,000

Long-Range Needs – Ten to Fifteen Years

Long-range needs for community parks circulates around population projections which are further out and may fluctuate depending on the state of the local economy. Based on current projections, in 2020 the Marion County population is expected to reach 433,100

residents with 44 percent being over the age of 55. Not only do we need to be looking for lands to acquire to meet the level-of-service requirements, we also need to constantly update our facilities to meet the need of the changing demographics of the County. Amenities will change as will the overriding theme of parks; trails will become hardened paths for stability, playgrounds will offer activities for the older generations and unequal access to the County’s vast natural resources will have to account for this shift.

Areas which demonstrate a Long-range need for community parks include: west of Dunnellon, the CR 200A corridor north of Ocala, Forest Corners area and near Citra.

**Total Community Park Long-Range Needs:**

Community Parks	4
Acres	120
Acquisition Cost	\$2,400,000
Development Cost	\$14,280,000

**District Parks**

District parks, as mentioned earlier, are larger parks which are intended to meet the needs of 50,000 residents. These parks range from 50 to 75 acres in size and, because of this size range, tend to be used for resource-based recreation and facilities. However, there are circumstances which would allow for a district park to meet the park requirements for areas where smaller park sites are not available. The amenities chosen for the district park would need to be adjusted to allow it to serve the public sufficiently. The current inventory shows 320.67 district park acres within the County inventory with a total of 12 district parks. Due to the standard size of a district park, an acreage deficiency is not realized until at least 2012.

With the addition of Rotary Sportsplex and the completion of Wrigley Fields (both are classified as district parks), the parks inventory is bolstered with an additional 156 acres of managed land. While these parks are user-based recreation sites (where active recreation activities occur) other district parks focus primarily on resource-based recreation and serve as locations for resource protection.

On a “*park acres per number of residents*” type analysis, it is found that there are no Immediate Needs for district parks. However, for open-space conservation, district and regional parks should be considered as wise purchases for the future.



Near Future Needs – Five Years

Based on the population projections for the year 2012 there will be a need for one district park, which has at least 58 acres. However, the funds required to add an additional district park into the inventory would be better utilized in the implementation of more user-based, smaller parks (neighborhood and community) in this timeframe.

**Total District Park Near Future Needs:**

District Park	0
Acres	0
Acquisition Cost	0
Development Cost	0

Long-Range Needs – Ten to Fifteen Years

As long as one district park of 58 acres or greater is acquired by 2012, the long-range need for additional district parks is minimal. The eight-year forecast shows a 99-acre deficiency in the year 2015 yet with the addition of the one district park in the Near Future period, the 2015 need would drop down to at least 41 acre thus disqualifying the need for any district parks until at least 2016 or 2017 when the population warrants the need for an additional district park.

**Total District Park Long-Range Needs:**

District Park	1
Acres	75
Acquisition Cost*	\$1,500,000
Development Cost**	\$6,300,000

\* Based on median per acre cost \$20,000/acre; unincorporated Marion County lands, 2006, MC Property Appraiser Office

\*\* Based on historic development cost, roughly \$140,000 per acre and development of 60% of park acre for this type

## Regional Parks

Regional parks within the County parks system primarily serve as conservation and resource protection areas. There are four regional parks with a combined 1,326 acres in the County inventory.

Based on current population figures and the BEBR population projections, there are no Immediate Needs for regional parks. The typical size of a regional park is a minimum of 250 acres while Carney Island alone is 780 acres. The size of this park negates the need to add additional regional park acreage into the County inventory until roughly 2025.



Silver Springs Conservation Area

## Near Future Needs – Five Years

In 2012 a “one-park” deficiency is noted in the eight-year forecast while the number of park acres is shown as a surplus. This is due to the relationship between park size as required in the park type definition and the size of the current parks within the inventory.

## Long-Term Needs – Ten to Fifteen Years

While the 2012 single park deficiency will be a reality, the *acreage need* for another regional park is not expected until roughly 2025.

## Greenways

Greenways are not necessarily in a deficient status as they are not tied to population growth yet they are useful in a multitude of other ways. Greenways are mentioned extensively in the four completed Corridor Studies and should be planned for as recommended within those studies. The SR 200 and US 27 studies emphasize the need for open space connectivity and this Master Plan supports the implementation of linear parks to serve as alternative modes of transportation, help protect sensitive lands, to provide recreational opportunities.



The Florida Trail, through Marion County

Since greenways are not actually planned for using population numbers, the need for greenways are planned for by using other methods, in particular from an ecological perspective. Greenway ecology has been significantly studied for decades and their importance can sometime be ignored yet here in Marion County we see how successful greenways can be. The Cross Florida Greenway (CFG), which occupies over 43,000 acres in Marion County, is the prime example of this success. There are only minor pieces of land, and a few roadway crossings, which are currently preventing an uninterrupted, connected greenway from the southwest corner of the County up to the northeast corner. This natural corridor provides endless recreational experiences while providing unhindered wildlife movement.

Adding to the current CFG by designing and implementing smaller scale greenways which connect communities to the current greenways system is desired. Based on the Corridor Studies, this connectivity will add to the quality of life for residents while providing recreation access to the State greenway system and also add to the land set aside for natural habitat. Greenways also provide ideal locations for all types of trails, including water trails, equine trails, hiking and biking trails. This combination of uses are what separate greenways from other site-specific parks.

### **District Parks, Regional Parks and Greenways**

In conjunction with Greenways, district and regional parks should also be included as types of parks which not only provide direct recreational opportunities, yet allow for the protection of natural resources. Even with the current inventory and projected future parks needs (district and regional) being sufficient until at least 2012, open space protection is a critical element of the Department's goals. This translates into "if land becomes available for protection and these lands fit the guidelines for either type of park, it should be designated as so and added into the inventory for future use."

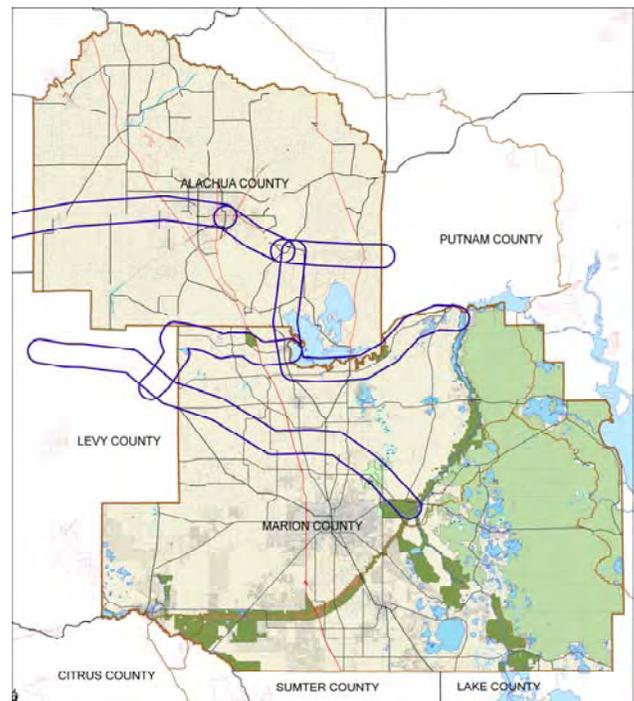
While population and population projections are key elements in park planning for the smaller parks, utilization of the Environmentally Sensitive Lands map, Map 8, to determine where ecologically sensitive lands are and how these lands may fit in to the future park system is appropriate.

Two regional district parks, one within the next five years (Near Future) and one within the next ten to fifteen years (Long-Range) are noted in the previous sections. These two parks present a need to acquire roughly 100 to 150 acres of open-space and recreation and it is recommended that acquisition follow Map 8 as a guide along with Map 7 which show population projections out to year 2055.

Beyond adding more connectivity with the CFG, either by adding more access points to the Greenway or by adding actual connector greenways, Marion County should also take inter-County connectivity into other surrounding counties. The State-wide vision for greenways includes several trail systems which converge in Marion County, including the following trails:

- Silver River – to – Bronson
- Williston – to – Orange Creek
- Nature Coast Trail (also known as the Alachua – to – Marion Connector) which is routed from Gainesville, around the west shore of Orange Lake and then eastwards towards Orange Springs

These trails are assigned different planning priorities with the Alachua – to – Marion listed as a high priority (per the State Office of Greenways and Trails, DEP). The other two listed trails are set at medium priorities.



By working with State agencies, adjacent county governments, willing land owners, these greenway corridors will significantly contribute to the success of the State's greenway vision.

### **Water Access Parks**

Similar to Greenways, water access parks are not currently related to the population or projections. However, realizing that with population increases, the need to provide more access to public waterways is something that must be considered and planned for accordingly.

Fortunately, from a planning perspective, deciding where to add water access parks is solely related to where the water is, where public water access parks (boat ramps) currently exist, where a need to gain improved access has been requested and where land is available for such a use. Unfortunately, land along bodies of public water is costly and many of the lakes in Marion County are surrounded by privately held land.

Currently the County owns five boat ramp parks, including the newly constructed ramps at Carney Island (inventoried as a regional park with boat ramps as an amenity), and manages another seven boat ramps which are included in the inventory as either a regional park or water access parks.

### **Possible Future Water Access Park Locations**

There are a few locations within the County which would serve the residents and visitors with improved or additional access to public waterways. These include: the Withlacoochee River, near SR 200, Lake Bryant, and Nicotoon Lake in the southeast corner of the County.

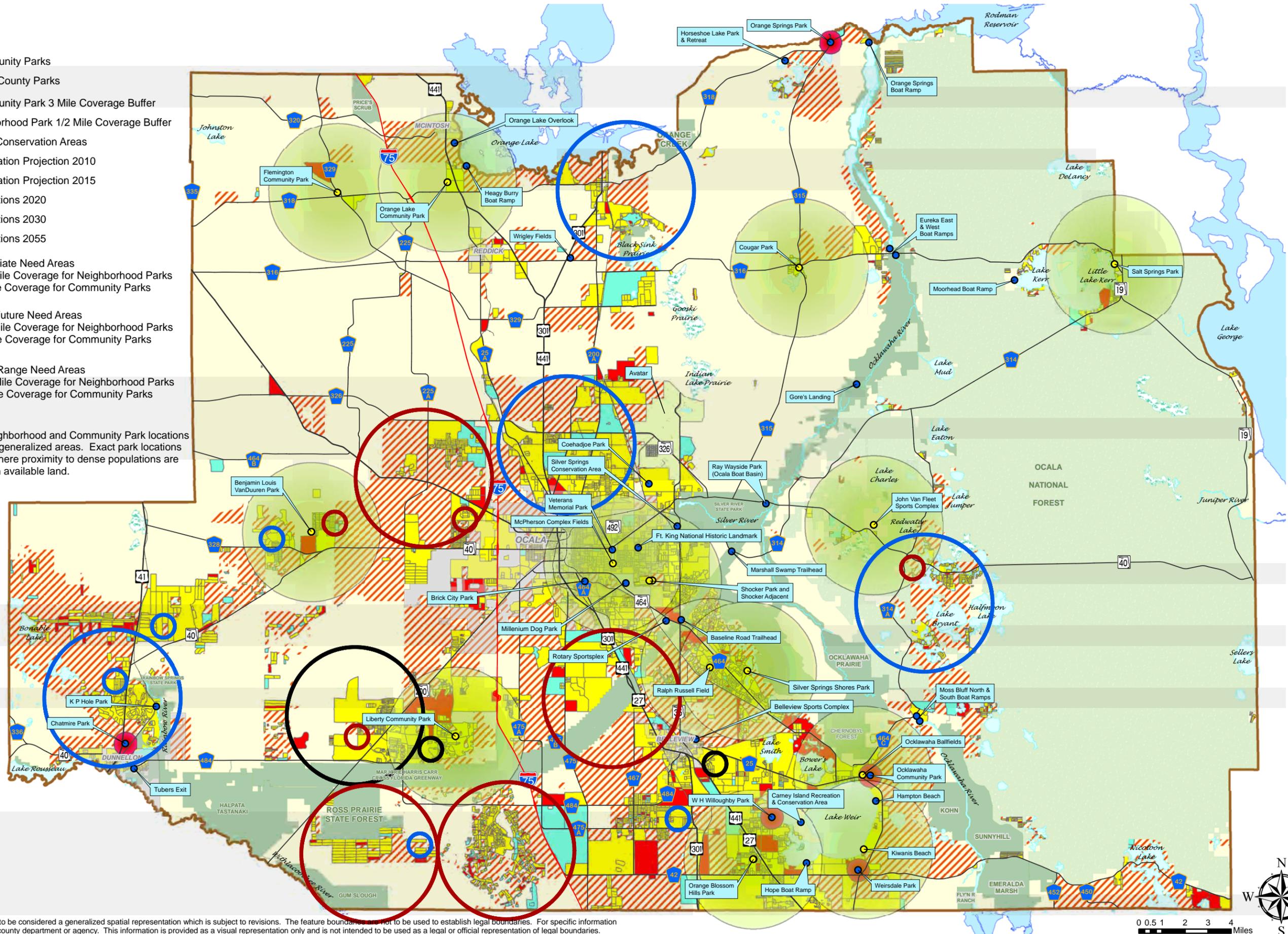
Lake Kerr is one County lake which has good potential for improvements. Currently Moorhead Boat Ramp, on the west shore of the lake, is only 2.36 acres and becomes overly congested during the peak use periods. Trailer traffic tends to become an issue and visitors eventually park their vehicles on private land. The Department should move towards acquiring adjacent land and begin development plans to expand this park and improve the water access and lake experiences.

**Legend**

- Community Parks
- Other County Parks
- Community Park 3 Mile Coverage Buffer
- Neighborhood Park 1/2 Mile Coverage Buffer
- State Conservation Areas
- Population Projection 2010
- Population Projection 2015
- Projections 2020
- Projections 2030
- Projections 2055

- Immediate Need Areas  
1/2 Mile Coverage for Neighborhood Parks  
3 Mile Coverage for Community Parks
- Near Future Need Areas  
1/2 Mile Coverage for Neighborhood Parks  
3 Mile Coverage for Community Parks
- Long-Range Need Areas  
1/2 Mile Coverage for Neighborhood Parks  
3 Mile Coverage for Community Parks

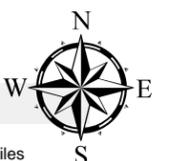
Proposed Neighborhood and Community Park locations are shown as generalized areas. Exact park locations will be sited where proximity to dense populations are in tandem with available land.



**Marion County Parks, Recreation, and Environmental Lands  
Existing County Owned and/or Operated Sites  
Parks Planning Map**

Marion County Parks & Recreation Department 111 S.E. 25th Ave. Ocala, FL 34471 (352) 671-8560

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 agency. This information is provided as a visual representation only and is not intended to be used as a legal or official representation of legal boundaries.



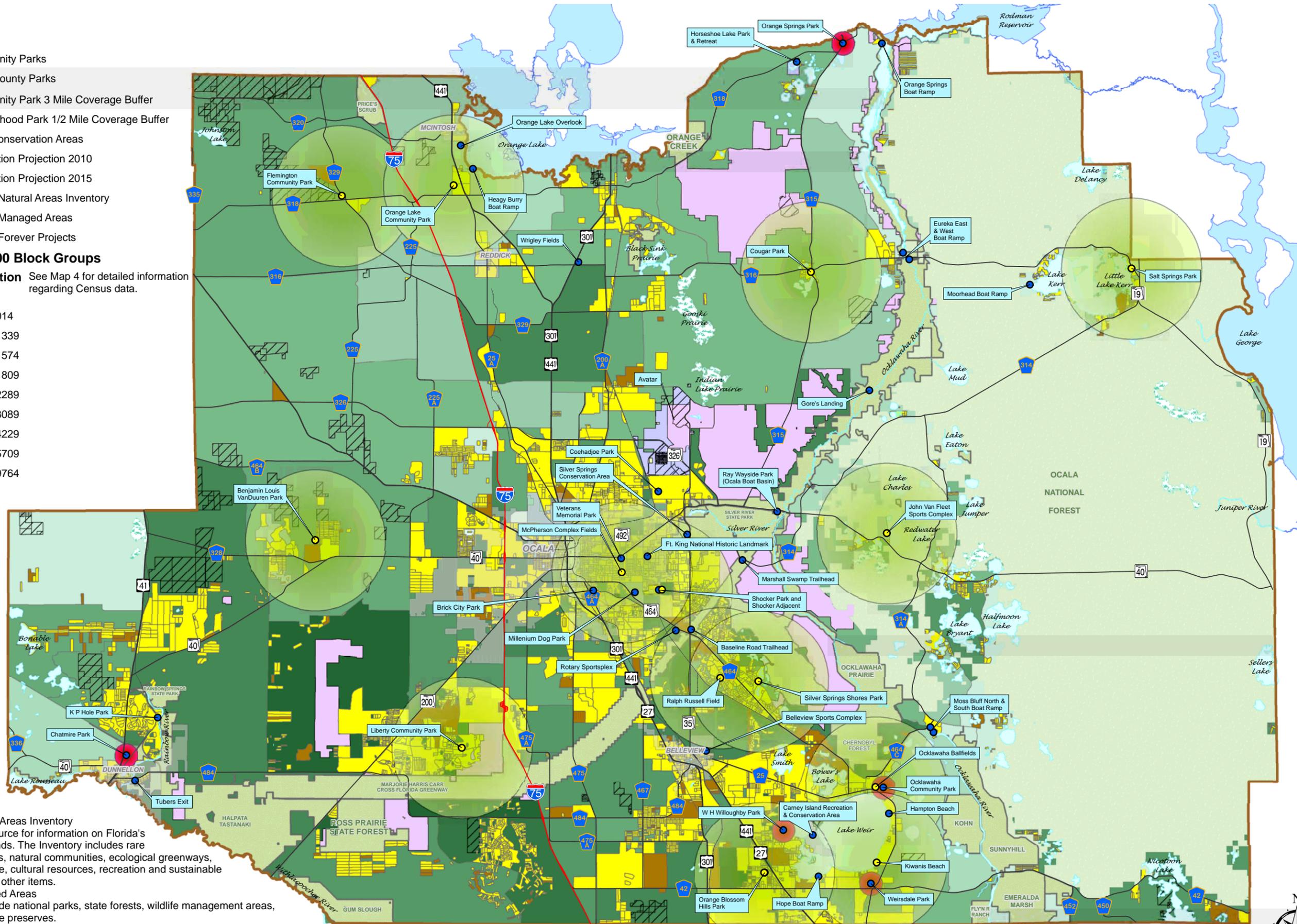
**Legend**

- Community Parks
- Other County Parks
- Community Park 3 Mile Coverage Buffer
- Neighborhood Park 1/2 Mile Coverage Buffer
- State Conservation Areas
- Population Projection 2010
- Population Projection 2015
- Florida Natural Areas Inventory
- Florida Managed Areas
- Florida Forever Projects

**Census 2000 Block Groups**

**2000 Population** See Map 4 for detailed information regarding Census data.

- 1 - 699
- 700 - 1014
- 1015 - 1339
- 1340 - 1574
- 1575 - 1809
- 1810 - 2289
- 2290 - 3089
- 3090 - 4229
- 4230 - 5709
- 5710 - 9764



**Florida Natural Areas Inventory**

The primary source for information on Florida's conservation lands. The Inventory includes rare species habitats, natural communities, ecological greenways, aquifer recharge, cultural resources, recreation and sustainable forestry among other items.

**Florida Managed Areas**

Examples include national parks, state forests, wildlife management areas, local and private preserves.

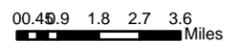
**Florida Forever Projects (Board of Trustees)**

Site-based showing boundaries of all FFBOT projects approved by the State's Acquisition and Restoration Council, 12/9/05.

These lands have been proposed for acquisition because of outstanding natural resources, opportunity for natural resource-based recreation, or historical and archaeological resources.

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 agency. This information is provided as a visual representation only and is not intended to be used as a legal or official representation of legal boundaries.

**Marion County Parks, Recreation, and Environmental Lands**  
**Existing County Owned and/or Operated Sites**  
**Current Population, Projections and Environmentally Sensitive Lands**  
 Marion County Parks & Recreation Department 111 S.E. 25th Ave. Ocala, FL 34471 (352) 671-8560



## Summary of Parks Needs

Referring back to the forecast on page 52, it is clear that while the population of Marion County continues to grow, so will the need for park lands. The first step is to tackle the existing needs, the current deficits, and then follow the strategy of planning new park sites, making improvements to the existing park system and then expand the future system to meet the growing population.

**Park Acre Needs base on Population and Changes per Park Planning Efforts**

Park Type	2007 Pop. 325,000	Max. Pop. Served per Park	Number of Parks Needed	Min. Acre Per Park Type	County Park Acres Needed	Current Park Inv.	Increases in Inv.	Updated Park Inv.	Current Park Acres	Increase of Park Acres	Updated Park Acres	Park Inv. Surp./Def.	Park Acres Surp./Def.
Neighborhood		5,000	65.00	10	650.00	4	0	4	4.91	0	4.91	-61	-645
Community		25,000	13.00	20	260.00	15	0	15	196.15	0	196.15	2	-64
District		50,000	6.50	50	325.00	11	0	11	311.67	0	311.67	5	-13
Regional		100,000	3.25	250	812.50	4	0	4	1,200.00	0	1,200.00	1	388
					2,048								-335
<b>Park Type</b>	<b>2008 Pop.</b> <b>340,300</b>	<b>Max. Pop.</b> <b>Served per Park</b>	<b>Number of</b> <b>Parks Needed</b>	<b>Min. Acre</b> <b>Per Park Type</b>	<b>County Park</b> <b>Acres Needed</b>	<b>Growing</b> <b>Park Inv.</b>	<b>Increases</b> <b>in Inv.</b>	<b>Updated</b> <b>Park Inv.</b>	<b>Current</b> <b>Park Acres</b>	<b>Increase</b> <b>of Park Acres</b>	<b>Updated</b> <b>Park Acres</b>	<b>Park Inv.</b> <b>Surp./Def.</b>	<b>Park Acres</b> <b>Surp./Def.</b>
Neighborhood		5,000	68.06	10	680.60	4	2	6	4.91	24	28.91	-62	-652
Community		25,000	13.61	20	272.24	16	1	17	209.22	30	239.22	3	-33
District		50,000	6.81	50	340.30	11	0	11	311.67	0	311.67	4	-29
Regional		100,000	3.40	250	850.75	4	0	4	1,200.00	0	1,200.00	1	349
					2,144								-364
<b>Park Type</b>	<b>2009 Pop.</b> <b>355,600</b>	<b>Max. Pop.</b> <b>Served per Park</b>	<b>Number of</b> <b>Parks Needed</b>	<b>Min. Acre</b> <b>Per Park Type</b>	<b>County Park</b> <b>Acres Needed</b>	<b>Growing</b> <b>Park Inv.</b>	<b>Increases</b> <b>in Inv.</b>	<b>Updated</b> <b>Park Inv.</b>	<b>Current</b> <b>Park Acres</b>	<b>Increase</b> <b>of Park Acres</b>	<b>Updated</b> <b>Park Acres</b>	<b>Park Inv.</b> <b>Surp./Def.</b>	<b>Park Acres</b> <b>Surp./Def.</b>
Neighborhood		5,000	71.12	10	711.20	6	1	7	28.91	12	40.91	-64	-670
Community		25,000	14.22	20	284.48	18	1	19	221.79	30	251.79	5	-33
District		50,000	7.11	50	355.60	12	0	12	320.67	0	320.67	5	-35
Regional		100,000	3.56	250	889.00	4	0	4	1,200.00	0	1,200.00	0	311
					2,240								-427
<b>Park Type</b>	<b>2010 Pop.</b> <b>370,900</b>	<b>Max. Pop.</b> <b>Served per Park</b>	<b>Number of</b> <b>Parks Needed</b>	<b>Min. Acre</b> <b>Per Park Type</b>	<b>County Park</b> <b>Acres Needed</b>	<b>Growing</b> <b>Park Inv.</b>	<b>Increases</b> <b>in Inv.</b>	<b>Updated</b> <b>Park Inv.</b>	<b>Current</b> <b>Park Acres</b>	<b>Increase</b> <b>of Park Acres</b>	<b>Updated</b> <b>Park Acres</b>	<b>Park Inv.</b> <b>Surp./Def.</b>	<b>Park Acres</b> <b>Surp./Def.</b>
Neighborhood		5,000	74.18	10	741.80	7	1	8	40.91	12	52.91	-66	-689
Community		25,000	14.84	20	296.72	19	1	20	251.79	30	281.79	5	-15
District		50,000	7.42	50	370.90	12	0	12	320.67	0	320.67	5	-50
Regional		100,000	3.71	250	927.25	4	0	4	1,200.00	0	1,200.00	0	273
					2,337								-481
<b>Park Type</b>	<b>2011 Pop.</b> <b>384,520</b>	<b>Max. Pop.</b> <b>Served per Park</b>	<b>Number of</b> <b>Parks Needed</b>	<b>Min. Acre</b> <b>Per Park Type</b>	<b>County Park</b> <b>Acres Needed</b>	<b>Growing</b> <b>Park Inv.</b>	<b>Increases</b> <b>in Inv.</b>	<b>Updated</b> <b>Park Inv.</b>	<b>Current</b> <b>Park Acres</b>	<b>Increase</b> <b>of Park Acres</b>	<b>Updated</b> <b>Park Acres</b>	<b>Park Inv.</b> <b>Surp./Def.</b>	<b>Park Acres</b> <b>Surp./Def.</b>
Neighborhood		5,000	76.90	10	769.04	8	1	9	52.91	12	64.91	-68	-704
Community		25,000	15.38	20	307.62	20	1	21	281.79	30	311.79	6	4
District		50,000	7.69	50	384.52	12	0	12	320.67	0	320.67	4	-64
Regional		100,000	3.85	250	961.30	4	0	4	1,200.00	0	1,200.00	0	239
					2,422								-525
<b>Park Type</b>	<b>2012 Pop.</b> <b>398,140</b>	<b>Max. Pop.</b> <b>Served per Park</b>	<b>Number of</b> <b>Parks Needed</b>	<b>Min. Acre</b> <b>Per Park Type</b>	<b>County Park</b> <b>Acres Needed</b>	<b>Growing</b> <b>Park Inv.</b>	<b>Increases</b> <b>in Inv.</b>	<b>Updated</b> <b>Park Inv.</b>	<b>Current</b> <b>Park Acres</b>	<b>Increase</b> <b>of Park Acres</b>	<b>Updated</b> <b>Park Acres</b>	<b>Park Inv.</b> <b>Surp./Def.</b>	<b>Park Acres</b> <b>Surp./Def.</b>
Neighborhood		5,000	79.63	10	796.28	9	1	10	64.91	12	76.91	-70	-719
Community		25,000	15.93	20	318.51	21	1	22	311.79	30	341.79	6	23
District		50,000	7.96	50	398.14	12	0	12	320.67	0	320.67	4	-77
Regional		100,000	3.98	250	995.35	4	0	4	1,200.00	0	1,200.00	0	205
					2,508								-569
<b>Park Type</b>	<b>2013 Pop.</b> <b>411,760</b>	<b>Max. Pop.</b> <b>Served per Park</b>	<b>Number of</b> <b>Parks Needed</b>	<b>Min. Acre</b> <b>Per Park Type</b>	<b>County Park</b> <b>Acres Needed</b>	<b>Growing</b> <b>Park Inv.</b>	<b>Increases</b> <b>in Inv.</b>	<b>Updated</b> <b>Park Inv.</b>	<b>Current</b> <b>Park Acres</b>	<b>Increase</b> <b>of Park Acres</b>	<b>Updated</b> <b>Park Acres</b>	<b>Park Inv.</b> <b>Surp./Def.</b>	<b>Park Acres</b> <b>Surp./Def.</b>
Neighborhood		5,000	82.35	10	823.52	10	1	11	76.91	12	88.91	-71	-735
Community		25,000	16.47	20	329.41	22	1	23	341.79	30	371.79	7	42
District		50,000	8.24	50	411.76	12	0	12	320.67	0	320.67	4	-91
Regional		100,000	4.12	250	1029.40	4	0	4	1,200.00	0	1,200.00	0	171
					2,594								-613
<b>Park Type</b>	<b>2014 Pop.</b> <b>425,380</b>	<b>Max. Pop.</b> <b>Served per Park</b>	<b>Number of</b> <b>Parks Needed</b>	<b>Min. Acre</b> <b>Per Park Type</b>	<b>County Park</b> <b>Acres Needed</b>	<b>Growing</b> <b>Park Inv.</b>	<b>Increases</b> <b>in Inv.</b>	<b>Updated</b> <b>Park Inv.</b>	<b>Current</b> <b>Park Acres</b>	<b>Increase</b> <b>of Park Acres</b>	<b>Updated</b> <b>Park Acres</b>	<b>Park Inv.</b> <b>Surp./Def.</b>	<b>Park Acres</b> <b>Surp./Def.</b>
Neighborhood		5,000	85.08	10	850.76	11	1	12	88.91	12	100.91	-73	-750
Community		25,000	17.02	20	340.30	23	1	24	371.79	30	401.79	7	61
District		50,000	8.51	50	425.38	12	0	12	320.67	0	320.67	3	-105
Regional		100,000	4.25	250	1063.45	4	0	4	1,200.00	0	1,200.00	0	137
					2,680								-657
<b>Park Type</b>	<b>2015 Pop.</b> <b>439,000</b>	<b>Max. Pop.</b> <b>Served per Park</b>	<b>Number of</b> <b>Parks Needed</b>	<b>Min. Acre</b> <b>Per Park Type</b>	<b>County Park</b> <b>Acres Needed</b>	<b>Growing</b> <b>Park Inv.</b>	<b>Increases</b> <b>in Inv.</b>	<b>Updated</b> <b>Park Inv.</b>	<b>Current</b> <b>Park Acres</b>	<b>Increase</b> <b>of Park Acres</b>	<b>Updated</b> <b>Park Acres</b>	<b>Park Inv.</b> <b>Surp./Def.</b>	<b>Park Acres</b> <b>Surp./Def.</b>
Neighborhood		5,000	87.80	10	878.00	12	1	13	100.91	12	112.91	-75	-765
Community		25,000	17.56	20	351.20	24	1	25	401.79	30	431.79	7	81
District		50,000	8.78	50	439.00	12	1	13	320.67	75	395.67	4	-43
Regional		100,000	4.39	250	1097.50	4	0	4	1,200.00	0	1,200.00	0	103
					2,765								-625
<b>Park Type</b>	<b>2016 Pop.</b> <b>451,300</b>	<b>Max. Pop.</b> <b>Served per Park</b>	<b>Number of</b> <b>Parks Needed</b>	<b>Min. Acre</b> <b>Per Park Type</b>	<b>County Park</b> <b>Acres Needed</b>	<b>Growing</b> <b>Park Inv.</b>	<b>Increases</b> <b>in Inv.</b>	<b>Updated</b> <b>Park Inv.</b>	<b>Current</b> <b>Park Acres</b>	<b>Increase</b> <b>of Park Acres</b>	<b>Updated</b> <b>Park Acres</b>	<b>Park Inv.</b> <b>Surp./Def.</b>	<b>Park Acres</b> <b>Surp./Def.</b>
Neighborhood		5,000	90.26	10	902.60	13	1	14	112.91	12	124.91	-76	-778
Community		25,000	18.05	20	361.04	25	1	26	431.79	30	461.79	8	101
District		50,000	9.03	50	451.30	13	0	13	395.67	0	395.67	4	-56
Regional		100,000	4.51	250	1128.25	4	0	4	1,200.00	0	1,200.00	-1	72
					2,843								-661
<b>Park Type</b>	<b>2017 Pop.</b> <b>463,900</b>	<b>Max. Pop.</b> <b>Served per Park</b>	<b>Number of</b> <b>Parks Needed</b>	<b>Min. Acre</b> <b>Per Park Type</b>	<b>County Park</b> <b>Acres Needed</b>	<b>Growing</b> <b>Park Inv.</b>	<b>Increases</b> <b>in Inv.</b>	<b>Updated</b> <b>Park Inv.</b>	<b>Current</b> <b>Park Acres</b>	<b>Increase</b> <b>of Park Acres</b>	<b>Updated</b> <b>Park Acres</b>	<b>Park Inv.</b> <b>Surp./Def.</b>	<b>Park Acres</b> <b>Surp./Def.</b>
Neighborhood		5,000	92.78	10	927.80	14	1	15	124.91	12	136.91	-78	-791
Community		25,000	18.56	20	371.12	26	0	26	461.79	0	461.79	7	91
District		50,000	9.28	50	463.90	13	0	13	395.67	0	395.67	4	-68
Regional		100,000	4.64	250	1159.75	4	0	4	1,200.00	0	1,200.00	-1	40
					2,929								-728

Community Park improvements are included in the CIP for Orange Blossom Hills (2008) and Benjamin Van Duuren (2009).  
 District Park improvements are included in the CIP for Orange Lake Overlook - Sawallis in 2009.  
 The two Community and one District park increases are included in the 2008 and 2009 Growing Park Inventory.  
 The Acre per Park Type between existing Neighborhood Parks changes from 10 acres minimum to 12 acres minimum per Chapter 2.

The most deficient area is with the neighborhood parks. Unfortunately, with the high costs of operating and the higher prices of land closer to developed/more densely populated areas, adding enough neighborhood parks to help lessen the deficit would be a daunting financial task.

Fortunately, there are other ways to meet the demand. For instance, while the population of Marion County continues to grow, so does the need for more park space and the larger parks can help mitigate the need for so many small parks. Looking at the total acres of deficiencies will show how close the Department is in meeting its level of service requirements.

Look back at the Eight-Year Forecast to see where the current deficiencies are and compare this to where the deficiencies will be as long as the proper funding is in place and the park planning procedures are followed. Currently, the Department is deficient by 335 acres of overall park land. In 2012 the original deficit is expected to be 761 acres if no more parks are added to the system. Based on the Page 69 forecast with the planned additions, in 2012 the deficit is only 569 acres. This shows an addition of 192 park acres and importantly, these parks would be properly distributed in the areas which have the highest demand.

Surpluses acreage and/or by park-type should not be viewed as having too many parks of one type. The lack of adequate park acres by park-type is more important. The reason for the flip-flop on surpluses and deficits is a result in having parks which do not meet the size requirement for those individual park types. Based on the basic requirements for acres of specific park-types, a neighborhood park should be no less than ten acres. The four neighborhood parks currently in the Department inventory should have a total of no less than 40 acres yet in actuality the total acres of neighborhood parks is only 4.91.

As mentioned, the park acre deficiencies by park-type can be offset by looking at the overall deficiency.

### **Are we asking too much or too little?**

There needs to be a starting point in meeting the goals and strategies of this Master Plan. By showing how population drives park planning, this is the first step.

The main reason for the large number of “deficient park-type acres” is due to the size of the existing parks. Planning recommendations show neighborhood parks should be 10 to 12 acres, community parks being 30 acres and district parks between 50 and 75 acres. The current average sizes for these parks are 1.2 acres, 13.0 acres and 26.7 acres respectively. New parks should meet the minimum size recommendations per park type. Adding more parks which do not meet these size recommendations will only weaken the goals of this Master Plan.

We may not have accomplished all of the “acres of parks needed” requirements yet we are moving towards meeting those goals. By ignoring the need for more park acres, the deficiencies will continue to increase. The proactive choice would be to start increasing the park lands available to all residents in the immediate future and be better prepared for the expected growth of the County.

## Future Park Types and Facilities

Using the national and state guidelines for park types and adjusting them to fit the uniqueness of Marion County will be essential for the success of the park and recreation system. One of the major forces which will drive park types and recreation programming is the aging of the population. Over 25 percent of the citizens in Marion County are over 65 and, based on some of the other discoveries previously discussed, this age group has more dispensable income for recreation purposes and is inherently more active than previous generations.

Age appropriateness in park facility/amenity planning is not a new goal yet it will become a strong guiding force when planning parks and programming. As always, accessibility will remain a goal in allowing all citizens the opportunity to enjoy the recreation experience. Going above and beyond the basic requirements will be important and will allow the Department to show how accessibility does not need to be an after-thought or a missed opportunity.

Some age appropriate amenities may include:

- Hardened paths
- Senior sports league facilities
- Senior-based activity amenities
- Lawn sports (bocci, croquet, etc.)
- Pickle-ball (half-court tennis)

Other future park amenities may include items which are more ecologically sensitive such as:

- “Green” buildings and park amenities
- Site design for ecological enhancement
- Open space protection and acquisition of sensitive lands
- Interpretation and education of environmental issues on the park level

## Ideas that Fit Marion County

### Multigenerational Parks

Multigenerational parks are not a new idea in park planning and facilities. While this idea may seem like a “no-can-do” idea, they have been designed and built, and proved successful in other areas within the country, especially in areas with a diverse and growing population, much like Marion County.

These parks include amenities which satisfy a wide range of user groups, from all ages. Seniors have walking/fitness trails (typically hardened/stabilized surfaces), adults have active sports and open space for playing sports and gathering, teens have age appropriate facilities to augment the sports fields (possible skating facilities, etc.) and younger children have ample playgrounds and other amenities. These items sometimes appear to conflict with each other and at times can seem like an open invitation for confrontation, yet melding these various age groups have been successful in other areas. This is attributed to having people at the park at all times and the park users tend to take ownership of their amenities and they work together to make the system work.

An area where this theory would fit is in the SR 200 corridor due to the limited facilities and the highly mixed demographics.

### The New Theories in Skate Parks

The newer ideas in skate parks are based on trails and nodes which invited skaters to travel and explore different levels of challenges and experiences. Marion County is ripe for these features.

### Amphitheatres and Event Locations

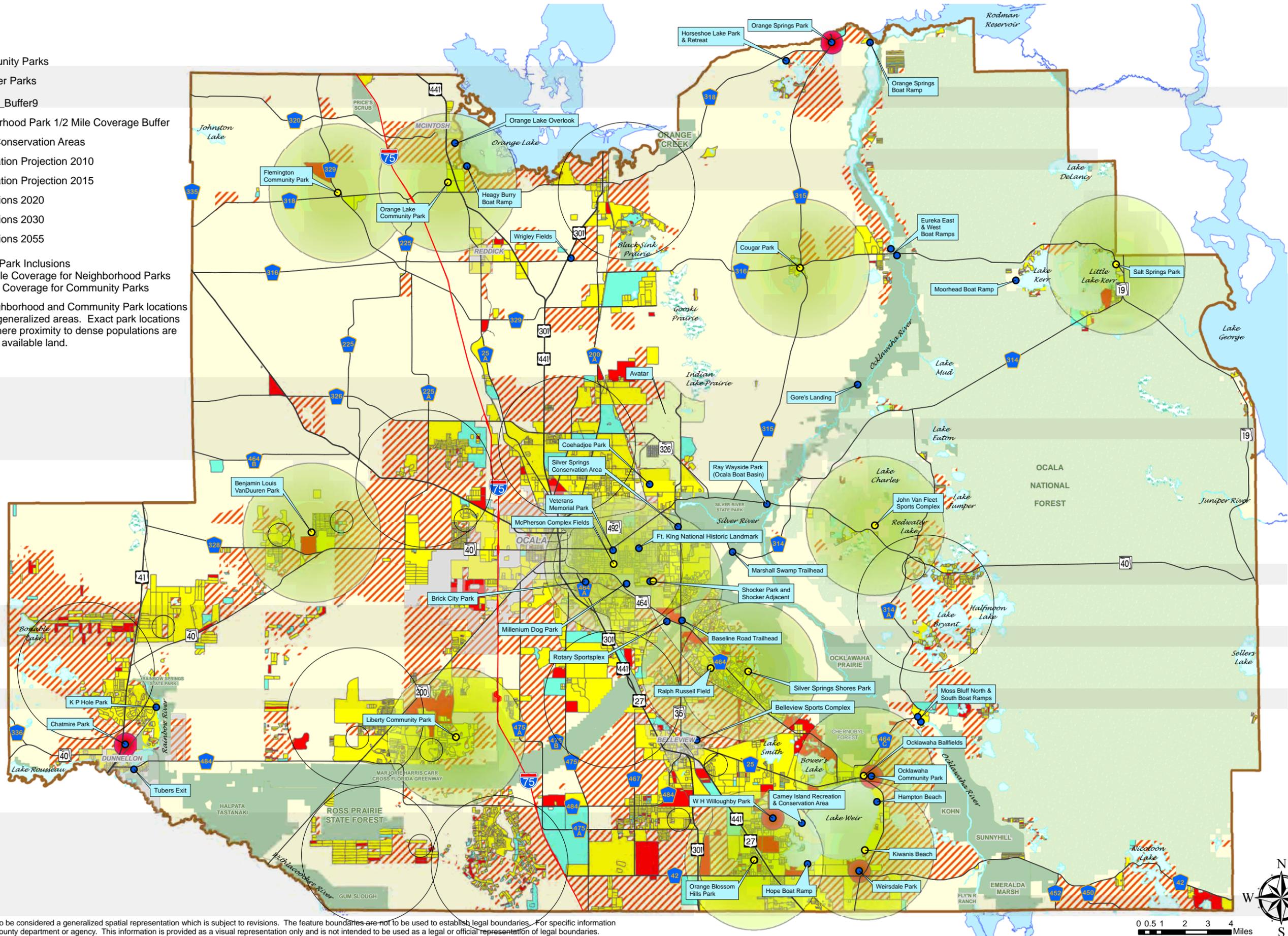
Currently there are no anchored, centrally located event facilities in Marion County. Sites are currently being evaluated for such uses.



**Legend**

- Community Parks
- All Other Parks
- Parks1\_Buffer9
- Neighborhood Park 1/2 Mile Coverage Buffer
- State Conservation Areas
- Poplulation Projection 2010
- Poplulation Projection 2015
- Projections 2020
- Projections 2030
- Projections 2055
- Future Park Inclusions  
 1/2 Mile Coverage for Neighborhood Parks  
 3 Mile Coverage for Community Parks

Proposed Neighborhood and Community Park locations are shown as generalized areas. Exact park locations will be sited where proximity to dense populations are in tandem with available land.



**Marion County Parks, Recreation, and Environmental Lands  
Existing County Owned and/or Operated Sites  
Future Parks Map**

Marion County Parks & Recreation Department 111 S.E. 25th Ave. Ocala, FL 34471 (352) 671-8560

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 agency. This information is provided as a visual representation only and is not intended to be used as a legal or official representation of legal boundaries.

0 0.5 1 2 3 4 Miles



## Park Specific Improvements and Mentioning

This segment speaks of specific existing parks and what types of improvement should be made in order for each park to facilitate immediate needs. Possible changes to each existing park are also mentioned.

### Neighborhood Parks

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Generally speaking the inventoried neighborhood parks are all relatively small (as listed below) and have limited space for any type of additional amenities or facilities. These parks are located in smaller neighborhoods and they are each well-used by the community members.

Chatmire Playground (.28 acre)  
Ocklawaha Community Park (1.47 acres)  
Orange Springs Park (.72 acre)  
Weirsdale Park (2.44 acres)

The deficiency in neighborhood parks is better understood by realizing how small the existing neighborhood parks actually are. Using a minimum size of ten or twelve acres for this class of parks will allow for more varied facilities and recreation services. Looking back at Map 4 will also show that there are not any neighborhood parks in some of the more densely populated areas in the unincorporated areas of the County.

### Community Parks

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Currently there are 17 community parks in the Department's inventory, with a total of 221.79 acres of land set for this use. Six of these parks are considered resource-based while the remainders are classified as user-based. Three of the parks included in the inventory are not developed at this time (Benjamin Louis VanDuuren Park, 12.57 acres, Orange Blossom Hills Park, 13.07 acres, and Shocker Park, 20.0 acres) while Shocker Park is the only park which is not currently on any CIP budget schedule.

Benjamin Louis VanDuuren Park and Orange Blossom Hills Park are both located in areas which show a need for parks based on population densities and population projections. Improvements to these previously acquired parcels are included in the 2008/2009 CIP budget.

Existing community parks which should be improved to better serve the residents in the areas where the parks exist include: Liberty Community Park; SR 200 area Hampton Beach; Ocklawaha McPherson Complex Fields; Ocala WH Willoughby Park; Summerfield

### District Parks

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District parks currently within the County inventory are a unique group of parks, including such places as Gore's Landing, Rotary Sportsplex and Coehadjoe Park. This classification of park lends itself to being one of the most adaptable types, meaning they have a large size and can offer either user-based or resource-based activities.

Coehadjoe Park, on the northeast side of Ocala, is a good example of this unique park class. Inventoried as 91.1 acres, only the southern half of the park (approximately 36 acres) is actively used. The northern side of the park has tremendous possibilities for future use including such items as: an amphitheater, disc golf course, skating trails and other ideas focused on large-group use activities.

## Water Access Parks

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Of the nine boat ramp parks, which the County owns/operates, there is a handful which requires immediate improvements.

Moorhead Boat Ramp – Lake Kerr; historically Lake Kerr seems to avoid the rapid changes in lake levels which other area lakes fall victim to. This allows Moorhead to stay busy when other ramps are unusable due to low water levels. Unfortunately, the size of the parking lot is too small to handle the historic number of boat ramp users. It is recommended for this plan to seek acquire adjacent lands and work towards improving the site to handle a larger capacity of users year-round.

Hope Boat Ramp – Lake Weir; currently a budget has been approved to renovate the boat launching and vehicular circulation patterns at this park. As of October 1, 2007, this park is limited to Marion County residents (park pass holders) only. This management strategy was set to encourage the use of Carney Island facilities, which has a higher use-capacity.

Heagy-Burry, located on the south shore of Orange Lake, is the County's only public boat access to Orange Lake and is well used. Fishing in Orange Lake has historically offered some of the best fresh-water fishing in the State, yet the park lacks permanent facilities. Currently there are no permanent restroom facilities, only a portable toilet is in place. Also, the karst nature of this site is obvious since numerous sink holes have opened and have required immediate, unforeseeable repairs. Repairs are also needed for lake bank stabilization and on-going erosion.

Ray Wayside Park – Ocala Boat Basin; while this park is listed as a district park, it is mostly used as a boat launch facility with access to the Silver and the Ocklawaha Rivers. The major concern is the ramp itself, which is in a serious state of disrepair. The top layer of the ramp is falling apart and it can be very slick. Also, the slope of the ramp is excessive. Combine this with the slick surface, the ramps have had numerous occurrences of trailers and vehicles sliding into

the water. A new ramp system, with a tolerable slope and raked surface will help mitigate these issues. Also, the number of boat trailer parking spaces is limited.

Tuber's Exit – Rainbow River (Blue Run Park)  
A State grant application, through the Florida Communities Trust (Department of Community Affairs), was recently scored near the top of all grant applications for the acquisition of 32 acres along the Rainbow River (Cunningham/Nelson property). The County currently leases a quarter-acre site along CR 484 which is used to collect tubers that have floated down the Rainbow River from the KP Hole Park, approximately three and a half miles upstream. Based on the formal awarding of the high grant score on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007, and through inter-governmental cooperation with the City of Dunnellon, this site will be dedicated to environmental protection through enhanced river access, ecologically sensitive site improvements and interpretive trails. One goal for the improvements of this site is to implement "green" building and site improvement strategies.

## Future Recreation Trends

Marion County's growth rate has consistently increased in the recent past. Other counties within the state have grown and adapted to new or uncommon sport events and facilities while Marion's nature based services have historically been adequate for our population composition. By reviewing what other areas have done, or have been planning for, Marion County can be prepared for these emerging changes.

There are five indicator areas relevant to the task of evaluating future demands. They are demographics, environment, technology, economics, and government.<sup>1</sup>

### Demographics

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The aging of the general population is the most significant indicator in forecasting future recreation trends. With the push for improved health and fitness, people are generally living longer, more fruitful lives. People are also retiring at younger ages and, as mentioned earlier, they have more dispersible incomes. The older, more active retirees tend to need more passive recreation such as golf, walking, and gardening.

The ethnic diversity and population growth in immigrant communities is also a factor for Marion County while traditional programs and facilities may need to shift to account for these changes.

As the demographics of the Marion County community change, so will the interests in recreational activities and new trends. From a programming standpoint, the Parks and Recreation Department will be cognizant of these new and changing trends in the leisure services industry, continually striving to meet the community's needs in a cost effective manner.

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<sup>1</sup> SRF Consulting Group, Inc.

## Environment

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Interest in the environment continues to increase. Public concern regarding the environment equals a need to provide areas where they can learn and appreciate the surroundings where we live. Protection of open space while allowing access to these areas fits hand-in-hand for resource-based facilities. Greenways and trails are examples of the highest demanded types of parks and they allow for the accomplishment of numerous recreation and conservation goals.

Water access is another high-demand facility while continued strains on the environment and global warming will impact the use of lakes and rivers. Water quality concerns will push the need for more creative uses of existing water access locations.

Finally, energy costs and their continued escalation will play a role in park planning as people will tend to take advantage of more local facilities and take shorter vacations.

### Technology

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Interestingly, the rampant access to the internet has an affect on traditional recreation as people are enjoying their time in front of the computer. This competes for leisure time. Unfortunately, simulated games and sports have taken time away from enjoying these activities first hand. Spectator sports are on the rise and participative sports are on the decline and this may affect the investment in traditional facilities. In order to combat this trend, providing quality services and recreational programming is required to maintain competitiveness with non-traditional activities.

### Economics

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The divide between the "haves and the have-nots" for access to recreation is continuing to grow further and further apart. The more affluent population with more discretionary income has access to more and broader recreation, including travel and entertainment. On the flip-side there is also an increase in

population within urban areas who are considered to be poor. What this shows is a need to develop strategies to address the provisions for the affluent population and the non-affluent.

While it may take a longer, more detailed look in to these observations, a more general approach may be suitable. Going back to look at how technology is forcing competition of traditional recreation, offering higher quality and more diverse facilities may help compete for the recreation dollars available in either type of households. For instance, instead of providing access to lakes in the form of swim areas, more inter-active water play facilities, such as slides and water toys, may offer more competition.

#### Government

The cost of implementing future recreation trends creates a great fiscal constraint. Costs associated with operating parks and recreation facilities compete with other services provided by local governments. Especially now, in a “tax-shy” society where the cost of living continues to climb while in areas such as Marion County where the earning wages are lower than other parts of Florida, this is especially true. Government is constantly pushed to make decisions about which services will continue and where other services will be cut. This factor also subjects the County parks and recreation services to competition from private recreation, e.g. theme parks.

Risks and liabilities also restrict the implementation of some modern facilities. For instance, skate parks, while high in demand and found in more urbanized cities, can present a risk for the operating agencies. Yet risk exists at almost all recreation facilities, from foul balls striking someone, a bad golf shot heading towards a busy street or a malfunctioning playground. How the modern facility is planned, sold to the community and operated can make or break the deal when it comes to developing more modern, high demand amenities.

## Recreation Programming

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the future of recreational opportunities will grow with the need and has the potential to expose County residents to what Marion County has to offer through various outdoor recreation programming. While being in the “infancy” of programming development, some highpoints are listed below:

### Near Future Needs:

- Summer Recreation (current program)
- Youth Outdoor Recreation – Adventure Camp
- Canoe/Kayaking excursions – youth/adult/family
- Development of Wrigley Fields usage
- Development of such special events such as Halloween in the Park (joint venture with Parks and Recreation and Library Departments) and a Safe Kids Boating Program
- Mobile Recreation Program – recreation provided at various County community parks; one day a week during the summer; rotating schedule with a program at a different park each day. This program to provide a family experience with structured programming
- “VIP” Program (Volunteer in the Parks Program) – the program will provide volunteer opportunities in the areas of outdoor recreation/education for youth and adults
- Develop an “Adopt-a-Camper” program that provides financial assistance for needy youth to participate in County recreation programs.
- Promote the benefit of “wellness” through opportunities in the County parks such as hiking, trail biking, and walking groups, etc.

### Long Range Needs:

- Development of a County outdoor recreation/education facility that provides adventure experience with the opportunity to learn outdoor skills and a variety of outdoor pursuits for youth and adults
- Continued development of wellness and exercise through the addition of “Wellness Stations” within a few of our community area parks. Trail fitness stations will provide enjoyable strengthening, flexibility and balance activities that address the major components of a well-rounded fitness program, for active, older adults, as well as youth, in a park setting
- Addition of new park playground structures that add a natural setting to the park (i.e., climbing boulders, climbing wall, and similar structures)
- Continued development of Wrigley Fields usage



# Chapter Five

## Department Strategies



MARION COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION

## Department Finances

The Parks and Recreation Department operates within the Board adopted budget for items including operations, administration, capital and personnel. Over the past seven years, these costs initially declined followed by modest increases associated with the opening of new parks.

Fiscal Year	Annual Budget	Number of Staff
07/08	\$3,228,222	36.0
06/07	\$2,544,924	34.0
05/06	\$2,253,421	29.5
04/05	\$1,866,506	28.0
03/04	\$1,793,456	30.0
02/03	\$1,939,155	34.0
01/02	\$2,071,270	38.5
00/01	\$2,314,543	52.0

Recently, the number of parks has grown in response to public demand for more facilities and services as documented during numerous PRAC meetings and calls fielded by the Department. The creation of the Parks and Natural Resources Specialist and Recreation Specialist positions will assist in completing the Department's mission of providing park facilities and programs to the public.

### Expenses

The 2007/2008 budget includes:

Personal Services:	\$2,045,486.00
Operating Expenses:	\$973,026.00
Capital Outlay:	\$208,010.00
Non-Operating:	\$1,700.00

## How Much Does the Existing Park System Cost?

There are a several methods used to calculate the cost of parks. One is to compare the overall Department budget versus the number of park acres in the Department's inventory. A second method is to compare the number of parks (which can be broken down into various aspects) with the total County-wide population. Figures used in the following analysis are based on fiscal year 05/06 numbers and compare operating costs with the number of visitors.

Number of Parks: 48

### User-based (active) Parks

User-based parks: 22  
 Total cost per type: \$168,077.88  
 Average cost for user-based: \$7,639.90  
 Total acreage: 439.16  
 Cost per acre: \$382.57\*

### Resource-based Parks

Resource-based parks: 26  
 Total cost per type: \$766,795.14  
 Average cost for resource-based: \$29,492.12  
 Total acreage: 2,153.39  
 Cost per acre: \$356.09

### Total Operating Costs

05/06 Cost: \$934,873.02  
 05/06 Population: 315,074  
 Cost per resident: \$2.97

\*This cost per acre will reveal a more accurate operating cost for user-based parks after the Rotary Sportsplex and Wrigley Fields are on-line and operated for a complete fiscal year.

## Park Visitation and Cost per Resident

Of the 48 parks in the current inventory, 17 have traffic counting devices which keep a tally of how many vehicles enter each of these parks daily. A total of 17 traffic counters are in the park system for two reasons: the parks with unimproved road access cannot accommodate these counters and some parks are remotely located so it does not make fiscal sense to install them. These counts are turned into monthly tabulations and are reviewed by the Department's Operations Division and by the PRAC.

In the 05/06 fiscal year, 434,686 vehicles entered the metered parks. However, this number takes into consideration all vehicles including parks staff, facility maintenance personnel, utility company vehicles and other pass-through vehicles are counted. In order to account for these miscellaneous vehicle counts, for the sake of this analysis, the number of visits was reduced by ten percent. Doing so reduces the vehicle counts for these parks to 391,217.

Dividing the number of visitors by the number of represented parks, and applying that average across the number of inventoried parks, would result in an inaccurate average since some parks are visited more frequently than others.

Alternately, a more accurate determination would be to show the average cost per County resident.

2005/2006 budget:	\$2,253,421
2005/2006 population:	315,074

<b>Cost per Resident:</b>	<b>\$7.15</b>
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## Revenue

Currently the Department receives revenue through four primary sources:

- Ad valorem
- Developer's Parkland Contributions
- Grant sources
- Parks and Recreation fund

The Pennies for Parks \$20 million voter approved bond referendum is anticipated to be completely depleted this coming year. The success of this referendum is visibly seen through the purchase and development of numerous parks and facilities, namely Liberty Community Park, Wrigley Fields, improvements to Carney Island, W.H. Willoughby Park and others.

The Parks and Recreation fund was recently created as a way for the Department to better utilize revenues collected at fee-based parks. These fees approximated \$498,000 in the first year of allocation. The creation of this fund progressively adds support for capital improvements and operation costs within the Parks and Recreation Department. This innovative approach to funding the Department's capital accounts will be beneficial in leveraging grants and will help offset operational expenditures.

## **Future Funding**

During the February 13, 2007 Parks Planning Workshop the Board, with assistance from the Department, reviewed the current status of the parks system, future needs and potential funding sources. The outcome of this workshop and the direction approved by the Board of County Commissioners allowed the Department to continue to pursue multiple funding sources for future parks acquisition and development. With the expected expiration of the Pennies for Parks fund, the creation of future funding sources is critical to meet future needs.

Of the funding options presented, the Board indicated a consensus priority of these options. A continuation of the Parks and Recreation (Fee) Fund and an aggressive pursuit of grants and partnerships was directed. Parks and Recreation Impact Fees will be considered at a later date as will the possibility of a County-wide MSTU if deemed more appropriate than direct General Fund support. Staff was also directed to bring back two "position papers," one on the creation of a \$.005 (1/2 cent) sales tax on Quality of Life issues and the continuation or re-creation of the successful Pennies for Parks bond referendum. These position papers will be presented to the Board for their review in mid-2008.

### **Proposed funding sources:**

#### **Parks and Recreation Impact Fee:**

The Department is currently working with a consultant on the implementation of Impact Fees for acquisition and development of future parks. This fee would be assessed to new residential development, single-family, mobile home and attached homes (apartment complexes). The Department is working closely with the consultant to ensure the fee is fair and legally defensible.

#### **Transfer of Development Rights (TDR):**

When TDR credits are sold, the proceeds would be issued to the Department for use in acquiring environmentally sensitive lands. Acquiring these lands will help fulfill the requirements set forth in the Conservation Element and the Recreation

and Open Space Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

#### **County-wide MSTU:**

The Department has proposed the implementation of a County-wide Municipal Services Taxing Unit (MSTU) to be created to help fund the operations of the parks system. This proposal would capture funds from across the County and was intended to help balance the funding formula which supports the Department. This proposal has not been approved by the Board as of the adoption of this Master Plan.

#### **Parks and Recreation fund:**

Until recently, all revenue gained from park pass sales, park entry fees, pavilion and cabin rentals and recreation program fees was added to the County's general fund. These dollars (roughly \$498,000 annually) will now be added to the Parks and Recreation fund, which can be used to leverage grant monies, offset operation costs and used for site improvements.

#### **Grants:**

The Department will continue to aggressively seek federal, state, local and private grants for the acquisition and improvement of park land and facilities. Using other funding sources to help match and leverage grant funds will allow for the Department to maximize the return of taxpayer dollars through the creation of high quality facilities and programs, while providing mutually beneficial partnerships.

#### **Foundation support:**

Pursuing the creation of a Friends (of Marion County Parks & Recreation) Foundation could provide real benefits in funding support and as a source of volunteers for the Parks and Recreation system.

#### **Sales tax:**

The creation of a \$.005 (1/2 cent) Quality of Life sales tax could potentially produce roughly \$25M annually for capital projects such as libraries, road infrastructure and overlay, west Marion animal services and others.

## Future Funding Needs

Based on projected population increases, the existing level of service provided and the improvements that can be made to the existing parks system, a forecast which shows how much funding is required and when it is needed is provided below. The Funding Schedule includes acquisition and development based on \$160,000 per acre (combining acquisition and development). Neighborhood parks are shown as 100 percent developed, community parks as 85 percent developed, district parks as 60 percent developed and regional parks as 25 percent developed. Figures shown are in 2007 dollars.

2007/2008	Qty. /No. of Acres
Neighborhood Parks	0/0
Community Parks	0/0
District Parks	3/246.95*
Regional Parks	0/0

\*Previously planned, constructed and funded to include Coehadjoe Park (no acquisition/development), Rotary Sportsplex (no acquisition/development) and Wrigley Fields

### Funding Schedule:

Neighborhood Parks	\$0.00
Community Parks	\$0.00
District Parks	\$0.00
Regional Parks	\$0.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>

2008/2009	Qty. /No. of Acres
Neighborhood Parks	2/24
Community Parks	1/13.07* and 1/30
District Parks	1/9*
Regional Parks	0/0

\*Orange Blossom Hills (Community) and Orange Lake Overlook (District), included in CIP

### Funding Schedule:

Neighborhood Parks	\$3,840,000
Community Parks	\$2,200,000*/\$4,170,000
District Parks	\$820,000*
Regional Parks	\$0.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$8,010,000</b>

\*Orange Blossom Hills and Orange Lake Overlook; included in CIP

2009/2010	Qty. /No. of Acres
Neighborhood Parks	1/12
Community Parks	1/12.57* and 1/30
District Parks	0/0
Regional Parks	0/0

\*Benjamin Louis VanDuuren; included in CIP

### Funding Schedule:

Neighborhood Parks	\$1,920,000
Community Parks	\$402,000*/\$4,170,000
District Parks	\$0.00
Regional Parks	\$0.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$6,090,000</b>

\*Benjamin Louis VanDuuren; included in CIP

2010/2011	Qty. /No. of Acres
Neighborhood Parks	1/12
Community Parks	1/30
District Parks	0/0
Regional Parks	0/0

### Funding Schedule:

Neighborhood Parks	\$1,920,000
Community Parks	\$4,170,000
District Parks	\$0.00
Regional Parks	\$0.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$6,090,000</b>

2011/2012	Qty. /No. of Acres
Neighborhood Parks	1/12
Community Parks	1/30
District Parks	0/0
Regional Parks	0/0

### Funding Schedule:

Neighborhood Parks	\$1,920,000
Community Parks	\$4,170,000
District Parks	\$0.00
Regional Parks	\$0.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$6,090,000</b>

2012/2013	Qty. /No. of Acres
Neighborhood Parks	1/12
Community Parks	1/30
District Parks	0/0
Regional Parks	0/0

Funding Schedule:	
Neighborhood Parks	\$1,920,000
Community Parks	\$4,170,000
District Parks	\$0.00
Regional Parks	\$0.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$6,090,000</b>

2013/2014	Qty. /No. of Acres
Neighborhood Parks	1/12
Community Parks	1/30
District Parks	0/0
Regional Parks	0/0

Funding Schedule:	
Neighborhood Parks	\$1,920,000
Community Parks	\$4,170,000
District Parks	\$0.00
Regional Parks	\$0.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$6,090,000</b>

2014/2015	Qty. /No. of Acres
Neighborhood Parks	1/12
Community Parks	1/30
District Parks	0/0
Regional Parks	0/0

Funding Schedule:	
Neighborhood Parks	\$1,920,000
Community Parks	\$4,170,000
District Parks	\$0.00
Regional Parks	\$0.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$6,090,000</b>

2015/2016	Qty. /No. of Acres
Neighborhood Parks	1/12
Community Parks	1/30
District Parks	1/75
Regional Parks	0/0

(2015/2016, continued)

Funding Schedule:	
Neighborhood Parks	\$1,920,000
Community Parks	\$4,170,000
District Parks	\$7,800,000
Regional Parks	\$0.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$13,890,000</b>

2016/2017	Qty. /No. of Acres
Neighborhood Parks	1/12
Community Parks	1/30
District Parks	0/0
Regional Parks	0/0

Funding Schedule:	
Neighborhood Parks	\$1,920,000
Community Parks	\$4,170,000
District Parks	\$0.00
Regional Parks	\$0.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$6,090,000</b>

2017/2018	Qty. /No. of Acres
Neighborhood Parks	1/12
Community Parks	0/0
District Parks	0/0
Regional Parks	0/0

Funding Schedule:	
Neighborhood Parks	\$1,920,000
Community Parks	\$0.00
District Parks	\$0.00
Regional Parks	\$0.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$1,920,000</b>

### Funding Summary

If approved by the Board, over the next five years the Department will spend an estimated \$32,370,000 for acquisition and development for 11 parks, not including improvements already shown in the adopted CIP.

In the following five years, the Department will need an additional \$34,080,000 for the acquisition and development of ten parks, not including any park improvements already included in the CIP budget.

## Department Operational Plan

Along with the costs associated with park land acquisition and development, another funding requirement for the Department relates to operations.

As mentioned in the Department Finances segment earlier in this chapter, the fiscal year 2005/2006 Operating Cost was \$934,873.02. This figure related to the operation of the 05/06 inventory of parks when the population of Marion County was 315,074 residents.

With the 48 parks listed in the current inventory, the 05/06 figures are the most accurate. It is important to consider the fact that several parks have been added to the inventory since 05/06. These parks have not been operated by the Department for a full fiscal year since this Master Plan update.

### Future Operation Costs

At the beginning of this chapter, the 05/06 operational expenses were listed to show the difference between resource-based and user-based parks. In order to forecast future operation costs, a ratio of how many of each type of park (either resource or user) was developed.

#### Current Ratios

Neighborhood Parks	100% User
Community Parks	35% Resource/65% User
District Parks	42% Resource/58% User
Regional Parks	100% Resource

Since there is no forecasted need for regional parks, greenways or foreseeable water access parks, no Future Operation Costs are projected.

### Operation Expenses, per Fiscal Year; estimated (For Projected Parks Needs only; per acre)

#### 2007/2008

Adopted Operating Expenses	\$1,023,026
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#### 2008/2009

Neighborhood (2 User):	\$9,162
Community (1 User):	\$7,635

#### 2009/2010

Neighborhood (1 User):	\$4,581
Community (1 User):	\$7,635

#### 2010/2011

Neighborhood (1 User):	\$4,581
Community (1 User):	\$7,635

#### 2011/2012

Neighborhood (1 User):	\$4,581
Community (1 User):	7,635

#### 2012/2013

Neighborhood (1 User):	\$4,581
Community (1 Resource):	\$7,932

#### 2013/2014

Neighborhood (1 User):	\$4,581
Community (1 User):	\$7,635

#### 2014/2015

Neighborhood (1 User):	\$4,581
Community (1 Resource):	\$7,932

#### 2015/2016

Neighborhood (1 User):	\$4,581
Community (1 User):	\$7,635
District (1 Resource):	\$29,746

#### 2016/2017

Neighborhood (1 User):	\$4,581
Community (1 Resource):	\$7,932

#### 2017/2018

Neighborhood (1 User):	\$4,581
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### Operational Costs Subtotal:

Next Five Years (thru 2013):	\$70,539
Later Five Years (2013-2018):	\$83,785

**Marion County Parks and Recreation Department**  
 Funding Schedule Summary for Projects Not Included in Existing CIP Budget

Fiscal Year	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	1st Five Year Summary	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2nd Five Year Summary	Ten Year Total
<b>Parks Need</b>														
Neighborhood Park	0	2	1	1	1	1	6	1	1	1	1	1	5	11
Community Park	0	1	1	1	1	1	5	1	1	1	1	0	4	9
District Park	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
Regional Park	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Park Acres Need</b>														
Neighborhood Park	0	24	12	12	12	12	72	12	12	12	12	12	60	132
Community Park	0	30	30	30	30	30	150	30	30	30	30	0	120	270
District Park	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	75	0	0	75	75
Regional Park	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Park Land Acquisition</b>														
Neighborhood Park	0	3,840,000	1,920,000	1,920,000	1,920,000	1,920,000	11,520,000	1,920,000	1,920,000	1,920,000	1,920,000	1,920,000	17,280,000	28,800,000
Community Park	0	4,170,000	4,170,000	4,170,000	4,170,000	4,170,000	20,850,000	4,170,000	4,170,000	4,170,000	4,170,000	0	33,360,000	54,210,000
District Park	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7,800,000	0	0	15,600,000	15,600,000
Regional Park	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>FY Subtotal:</b>		<b>\$8,010,000</b>	<b>\$6,090,000</b>	<b>\$6,090,000</b>	<b>\$6,090,000</b>	<b>\$6,090,000</b>	<b>\$32,370,000</b>	<b>\$6,090,000</b>	<b>\$6,090,000</b>	<b>\$13,890,000</b>	<b>\$6,090,000</b>	<b>\$1,920,000</b>	<b>\$34,080,000</b>	<b>\$66,450,000</b>
<b>Operation Costs</b>														
Neighborhood; User	0	9,162	13,743	18,324	32,067	36,648	109,944	114,525	119,106	123,687	128,268	132,849	618,435	728,379
Community; User	0	7,635	15,270	22,905	38,175	38,175	122,160	129,795	129,795	137,430	137,430	137,430	671,880	794,040
Community; Resource	0	0	0	0	0	7,932	7,932	7,932	15,864	15,864	23,796	23,796	87,252	95,184
District; Resource	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	29,746	29,746	29,746	89,238	89,238
<b>FY Subtotal:</b>		<b>\$16,797</b>	<b>\$29,013</b>	<b>\$41,229</b>	<b>\$70,242</b>	<b>\$82,755</b>	<b>\$211,023</b>	<b>\$252,252</b>	<b>\$264,765</b>	<b>\$306,727</b>	<b>\$319,240</b>	<b>\$323,821</b>	<b>\$1,226,769</b>	<b>\$1,437,792</b>
<b>Fiscal Year Totals:</b>		<b>\$8,026,797</b>	<b>\$6,119,013</b>	<b>\$6,131,229</b>	<b>\$6,160,242</b>	<b>\$6,172,755</b>	<b>\$32,581,023</b>	<b>\$6,342,252</b>	<b>\$6,354,765</b>	<b>\$14,196,727</b>	<b>\$6,409,240</b>	<b>\$2,243,821</b>	<b>\$35,306,769</b>	<b>\$67,887,792</b>

**Park Acquisition and Development Costs**

Park Type	Park Size Acres	Land Costs; Avg. \$20,000 per acre	Percent Developed	Development Cost; Avg. \$140,000 per acre	Total Land and Development Cost
Neighborhood Park	12	\$240,000	100%	\$1,680,000	\$1,920,000
Community Park	30	\$600,000	85%	\$3,570,000	\$4,170,000
District Park	75	\$1,500,000	60%	\$6,300,000	\$7,800,000
Regional Park	250	\$5,000,000	20%	\$7,000,000	\$12,000,000

## Future Funding Strategies

This chapter has addressed the Department's finances, including revenue and expenditures, possible future funding mechanisms and future funding needs.

Based on the Funding Schedule Summary, the Department is anticipating a financial need of \$32,581,023 for the construction and operation of six neighborhood parks and five community parks in the first five years of the ten year plan. Of this figure, \$211,023 is for operations (funding of operation costs is addressed differently than funding for acquisition and development).

A number of funding opportunities exist, which were discussed by the Board and Department staff at the February 13, 2007 Parks Planning Workshop. Those opportunities included a dedicated millage; the implementation of a County-wide MSTU; resident vs. non-resident user fees; impact fees; developer's parkland contribution; Transfer of Development Rights (TDR's); establishment of the Parks fund; a \$.005 sales tax; a bond referendum and pursuing local, state and federal grants.

All of the above have been successfully implemented in one or more Florida counties or cities. Marion County currently utilizes developer's parkland contributions and TDR's. Since the Workshop, an impact fee study has been drafted and is currently under staff review. However, an impact fee can only be used for capital improvements, as can a \$.005 sales tax, bond referendum and the majority of grant awards.

The other suggested funding sources, such as the recently implemented Parks and Recreation fund, dedicated millage and a County-wide MSTU can be used for capital and / or operating expenditures.

Most investors would recommend a diversified portfolio to their clients to avoid having all their "eggs in one basket." In that regard, it was the recommendation of the Department to implement a number of the suggested strategies to ensure the success of the parks development program well into the future, especially in light of more stringent State legislation limiting property tax assessments.

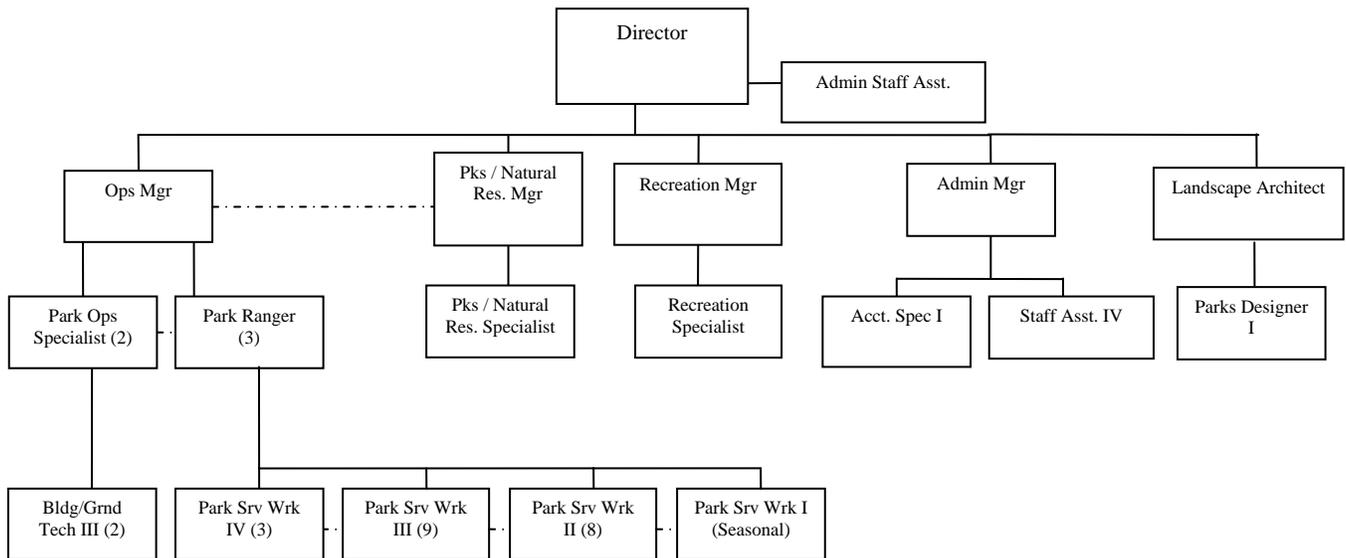
One suggestion that requires serious and thoughtful consideration is a \$.005 sales tax for Quality of Life capital projects. This tax could be recommended for implementation after the sun setting of the School Board's \$.005 sales tax in January 2010. The County's sales tax could be used to fund many Quality of Life issues including parks and recreation; libraries; the West Animal Center; Extension Service's facility improvements; road infrastructure and overlay and possibly social agency and cultural construction projects.

### Recommended Department Structure

Recommended Department structure changes, as shown below, are relatively minor. The Parks Designer II position has the opportunity to better serve Marion County if the position is classified as a Professional Position, one that carries the requirement of State licensure, specifically Landscape Architect. While this position primarily serves the needs of the Department, other County departments could also have access to the professional services provided. The Landscape Architect position could provide development plan review (Development Review Committee), development code assistance, detailed specification writing for irrigation design, landscape design, outdoor structures, landscape

maintenance oversight, project management, and other abilities as licensed by the State. By offering these services across the County, not only could other departments avoid paying outside consultants for such services, the County would also gain a professional position which would guide the shape of the County in the future.

Another recommended change would be the addition of two Park Services Worker IVs. These positions would assist the existing Park Rangers with implementing the specific details associated with park operations.



## The Economic Potential of Recreation

The success of the 2007 summer recreation program confirms there is a desire by the public to participate in organized recreation activities. With the creation and management of quality recreation facilities, the Department is demonstrating its ability to attract major tournaments to the County. Tournaments have the potential to generate significant economic benefits for local merchants as well as increase revenues to defray the cost of facilities maintenance.

Marion County has a great potential to grow into a large tournament and organized competition location for recreation activities from team sports, to challenges such as mountain biking or off-road running, or unique sports such as disc-golf.

Gaining financial support to continue to improve the parks system and to provide locations for emerging sports (i.e. lacrosse and women's field hockey), along with attracting tournament play will continue to benefit Marion County citizens.

## The Marketing of Parks and Recreation

The benefits of parks and recreation are endless. It is proven that they add significantly to the quality of life in all communities. One area which seems to be underserved in Marion County is the marketing of parks and recreation services.

The *"It Starts in Parks"* slogan was a theme that resulted from a partnership between the National Recreation and Park Association and Sports Illustrated. It later was adopted by the Florida Recreation and Park Association as well as many parks and recreation departments as it encompasses the message of the importance and value parks and recreation has within a community.

There are eight messages that incorporate the benefits of parks and recreation to our Marion

County community: achievement, community, conservation, economic development, health, heritage, nature and Florida's future.

**"Achievement"** ....where Marion County Parks and Recreation give children a chance to learn life lessons, to experience success early, and to dream big, as they venture up the Ocklawaha River on their first canoe trip.

**"Community"** ....where your local park brings people together, developing lifetime friendships, and bridging generations together at family gatherings.

**"Conservation of our natural treasures"** .....as our population grows, our Marion County elected officials realize the importance of conserving green space and waterways with the acquisition of land for public use over the years.

**"Economic development"** .....our own Rotary Sportsplex hosts many youth league baseball tournaments which attracts visitors to Marion County and new dollars in our local economy.



**"Good Health"** ....physical activity is a key to maintaining a healthy body and healthy mind....achieved in many of our parks and trails through such activities as hiking, biking, rollerblading and canoeing. Parks and Recreation facilities and services in the community also help to combat the growing national plaque of childhood obesity.

**“Heritage”** .....jointly owned by Marion County and the City of Ocala, the Ft. King site, was recently designated as a National Historic Landmark. This was an active fort during the Second Seminole War, and was established by the U.S. Army to protect the northern boundary of the Indian reservation.

**“Respect for Nature”** ....the joy of tubing or canoeing down the Rainbow River from KP Hole, or experiencing the rustic feel of outdoor living at Horseshoe Lake Park & Retreat where one can fish, canoe, hike, and enjoy the soft sounds of nature in the early evening, or a sunset across the lake.

**Florida’s Future.....” *It Starts in Parks*”**.....1,000 new residents each day... with such growth people need a place to connect and form new relationships, learn about Florida and Marion County’s heritage and its natural treasures. Our parks are a place where we come together. How do you weave strangers into citizens and friends? “It starts in parks.”

This initiative provides endless possibilities in the marketing of the Marion County Parks and Recreation Department. Each of the messages can be used to help focus the Department’s marketing strategies.

## **Other Marketing Opportunities**

Another area where marketing of the Department could be improved is through the world-wide web. Currently, the link to the Department’s website is: <http://www.marioncountyfl.org/parks.htm>. While administratively it makes sense to have the Department’s page linked through the prime Marion County website, this address could be simpler. With approval from County Administration, it is recommended that the Department is granted a homepage with a name such as [www.marioncountyparks.com](http://www.marioncountyparks.com) or [www.marionparksandrecreation.com](http://www.marionparksandrecreation.com). These examples could fit easily on marketing items such as stickers and shirts.

Marketing of the Parks and Recreation Department is unique within the County. The majority of other departments do not offer services which are as marketable based on the services they provide. Actively pursuing visitors to the parks or recreation program attendees will pay off. Funds gained through park use or recreation enrollment would be added to the Parks and Recreation fund, which could be used to offer more facilities, programs, services and venue enhancements.

## **Local Billboards and Publications**

The Department should also continue to become more visible throughout the community by investing in area magazine publications, regional recreation newsletters, roadway billboards and other announcements.

## **Clothing and Other Merchandise**

Have you ever visited a State park or other tourist spot and bought a tee shirt to remember your visit? The Department can exploit this same idea and sell similar products at our well known parks such as KP Hole, Horseshoe Lake or even Carney Island. Even better, open an on-line shop through the Department website.

## Newsletter

The Department should consider a quarterly or monthly newsletter which would announce upcoming events, recreation programs and general information of what the Department is doing as far as improving the parks system. These newsletters can be posted online, distributed at other departmental offices and public places.

## Brochures

The Parks and Recreation brochure, which includes a list of all parks and facilities and a map of where these areas exist, should be distributed more widely. Places like tourist/visitor information centers, area restaurants, hotels and private parks should have Department brochures which would help market the benefits of the parks system.

## Postcards

Simple 3" x 5" postcards can be mailed throughout the County to simply let the area residents know what the Department has to offer. Contact information, maps, park amenities and other quick-shot items can be provided to County residents for a nominal cost.

## Handouts

The Department represents itself well at local festivals and public functions. During these events, handouts, or trinkets, which provide easy access to Departmental information, should be freely given away. These items, like magnets, key chains and token toys, represent sustainability as reminders for people to visit their parks.

## Special Park Days

There are several ideas which fit in with the character and resources currently available to draw more visitors to County parks. Those ideas include "Free Parks Day" where user fees are waived, "Dog Days" where certain parks allow pets to visit (certain requirements would apply), waiving admission on Veterans Day for our Veterans and promoting parks to day-care facilities. Implementing these special days would help open the door for more park visitors who may not realize what recreation resources are currently available.

## Technology

Not only is the creation of a dedicated website a sound marketing idea, the use of technology within the parks system can also help get people outdoors. One way this can be achieved is through the introduction of wireless internet access at model parks. Parks which are closer to urban cores and those with a higher number of visitors are ideal for this application. Additionally, Horseshoe Lake Park & Retreat conference center and cabins represent a niche market as a writer's venue, which could also be enhanced by the added benefit of wireless network availability.

Some people may find it relaxing to use computers under the shade of a tree, take work out of the workplace or just visit the park and learn more about where they are and their surroundings. Technology can play a role in getting people outdoors.

Test sites should be created and monitored before initiating this plan County-wide. Two suggested locations would be the Baseline Road Trailhead and Liberty Community Park. The closer the test parks are to urban, business settings the more opportunity there is for success.

## Parks Standardization

The Marion County parks system is implementing standardization, especially with new park development and the continuation of parks being acquired and improved. Why not set a standard in design, amenity types and colors? One reason may be the most significant. From a site design standpoint, each location, each area or each park should speak specifically of that area. This is known as developing a “sense of place” and it is a key element in avoiding the “sense of nowhere” commonly seen along roads and neighborhoods. We would like our visitors to know when they arrive at a Marion County facility that they are, in fact, in Marion County.

The following link will direct you to the Marion County Parks and Recreation website where the Parks Standards are listed and shown.

Parks Standards: ([website hyperlink](#))

This online document will be continuously updated to provide up-to-date examples for the Department.

## Construction Guidelines for Marion County Parks and Recreation Department

Along with parks standardization, developing guidelines for parks will help the development of future facilities run smoothly. This sub-document will provide samples, or examples, of how areas should be designed and constructed. Specific items such as how a horseshoe pit is built, what materials are to be used, or the alignment of baseball field dugouts or types of pavilions should be readily available for use by consultants and park staff if questions arise.

The following link will direct you to the Marion County Parks and Recreation website where the Construction Guidelines are provided.

Construction Guidelines: ([website hyperlink](#))

This online document will be continuously updated to provide up-to-date documents/designs for the Department.

## How Does this Master Plan Satisfy the Comprehensive Plan?

The Parks and Recreation Department addresses two of the County's Comprehensive Plan Elements; the Recreation and Open Space Element and the Conservation Element.

During the course of writing this Master Plan update, the Planning Department is also reviewing and updating the entire Comprehensive Plan. In an effort to finalize this plan, the following analysis is a review of how successful the Department's strategies are.

### Recreation and Open Space

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- This plan fully acknowledges the requirement for using population numbers and population projections as a method of park planning
- Future recommendations for park types is balanced between multiple types
- Uses a "County-wide" approach in lieu of the Quadrant system currently in place
- Creates a "Park and Recreation Planning Map" (Map 7)
- Acknowledges the existing level of service standard of two acres of park per 1,000 residents and uses the standard in park planning measures
- Recognizes that established levels of service do not always meet public need (of 1,764 acres in the inventory, 1,546 are classified as conservation lands and are not necessarily recreation sites)
- Promotion of inter-agency coordination and cooperation for acquisition and recreation programming
- Identified future acquisitions related to Environmentally Sensitive Lands
- Encourages the provision of facilities for outdoor recreation
- Provides suggestions on funding mechanisms which would sustain the Department's goals and objectives
- Outlines ways to develop economic opportunities for recreation services

### Conservation

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- Designates other environmentally sensitive lands through GIS mapping
- Includes the need to acquire such lands for resource protection and public use
- Provides a means to protect, conserve, appropriately use and enhance the quality and natural function of environmentally sensitive lands
- Suggests teamwork between Federal, State and local agencies to provide protection of sensitive lands
- Manages resource-based parks as a method to protect natural resources and provide public access for recreation and education purposes

During the next Master Plan update, the latest changes made to the Comprehensive Plan will be considered and implemented.

It is the intent of this Master Plan to be a working document which is updated to keep in line with any emerging trends, small scale changes or additions which would improve the goals and objectives of the Department.

## Department Procedures Manual

The Department recently completed an updated Marion County Parks and Recreation Procedures Manual on June 3, 2007. This manual is intended to help guide the Department staff during the course of day-to-day work activities and procedures.

The Manual includes items such as:

- Accident/Incident reporting procedures
- Computer access policies
- Meetings and meeting protocol
- Playground safety
- Purchasing procedures
- Timesheets and Payroll

While this Manual does not contain all of the County policies as included in the Employee Handbook, it does reference more Department-related requirements. This is important due to the Department's public exposure.

## Department Website

The Parks and Recreation Department is one of the only "marketable" departments within the Marion County system, allowing for an unlimited number of marketing methods.

Marketing of the Department is viewed as an expense, yet if pursued aggressively, marketing can become a revenue source.

One of the best marketing strategies in the business world is the creating of a user-friendly website. This Master Plan recommends that a dedicated Marion County Parks and Recreation website be created and maintained on a bi-weekly or monthly basis.

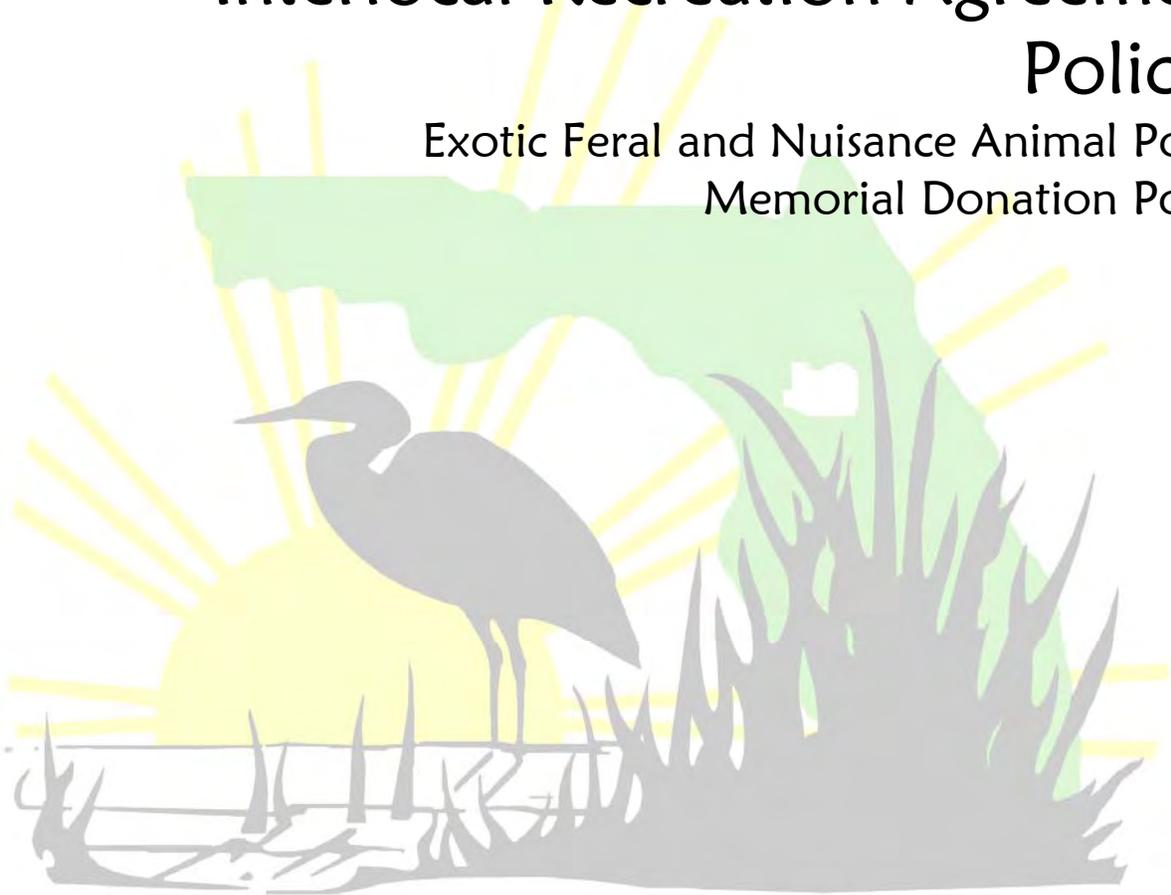
Advertising upcoming events, showcasing the parks system to a world-wide audience and allowing residents and visitors open access to the facilities and services provided will only benefit the Department. Additionally, it will help ease some of the funding pains associated with providing a top-rate park system.

Numerous county governments, within Florida and in other States, maintain an independent website which is solely dedicated to their Parks and Recreation departments. With an easy-to-read website address, one that is small enough to be printed on other marketing devices, marketing of the Department can become easier to accomplish.

# Appendices

## Natural Resources – Amenities Population Projections – Recap Interlocal Recreation Agreement Policies

Exotic Feral and Nuisance Animal Policy  
Memorial Donation Policy



MARION COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION

## Appendix 1

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### Natural Resources - Amenities

The natural resources found within Marion County play significant role in the quality of life for residents, pass-through visitors and tourists. The location and size Marion County allows for a wide dynamic of natural features, ecosystems and good connectivity to surrounding areas. Connectivity and diversity are essential in successful natural settings and in the protection of natural resources and understanding how this exists is important in helping protect our resources while providing excellent recreation opportunities for everyone.

Following is a glimpse of our natural amenities.

### Geography and Weather

- Five municipalities
  - Ocala; County seat
  - Dunnellon
  - Belleview
  - Reddick
  - McIntosh
- Strong rural character in the overall area
- A strong climatic cycle exists with strong changes of high and low temperatures
- Extreme weather events are also cyclic, reoccurring annually (hurricane season, summer storms, temperatures, etc.)
- Most lightning strikes than any other place within the US
- USDA Plant Hardiness Zones 8b and 9a
  - 8b = 20°F - 15°F
  - 9a = 25°F - 20°F
- Plant Heat Zone; average number of days with temperatures over 86°F
  - Zone 9 = 120 - 150
  - Zone 10 = 150 - 180
- Prevailing winds
  - Summer: east, southeast
  - Winter: north, northwest
- Rainfall Averages
  - Annual average: 55 inches
  - Dry season: November - April
  - Wet season: June – September

## Geology

- The majority of Marion County is sited on vital aquifer recharge areas
- Two main physiographical districts
  - *Ocala Uplift District*(western portion of Marion); rolling karst plains; stream sculpted hills, flats, swamps and wetlands
  - *Central Lake District*(eastern portion of Marion); sandhill karst terrain; principal recharge area for Floridan aquifer; mainly sandy, clayey substrata with significant organic deposits
- Karst substrate exists throughout the county
- Central Florida Ridge formed along north-northwest to south-southwest axis along the “backbone” of the panhandle

## Topography

- Low elevation: 50’ NGVD; Dunnellon
- Highest elevation: 200’ NGVD +; Ocala

## Hydrology

- 83 square miles of Marion County is covered by water
- Three major drainage basins
  - Withlacoochee River
  - Ocklawaha River
  - St. John’s River
- Aquatic Preserves
  - Rainbow River
  - Ocklawaha River
- Major Rivers
  - Ocklawaha River
  - Silver River
  - Rainbow River
  - Withlacoochee River

- Major Lakes
  - Lake Weir, Little Lake Weir
  - Lake Kerr, Little Lake Kerr
- Named Spring or Spring Groups: 13
- Home to three First Magnitude Springs (*Discharges 65 million gallons per day*)
  - Silver Springs Group – 513,786,240 gallons per day
  - Rainbow Springs Group – 461,000,000 gallons per day
  - Silver Glen Spring – 67,444,946 gallons per day
- Home to six Second Magnitude Springs (*Discharges between 6.5 million and 65 million gallons per day*)
  - Camp Seminole Springs
  - Morman Branch Springs
  - Orange Springs
  - Tobacco Patch Springs
  - Wells Landing Springs
  - Wilson Head Springs
- Roughly 240 square miles of wetland
- Within two Water Management District jurisdictions
  - Eastern half: St. John’s River Water Management District
  - Western half: Southwest Florida Water Management District

## Soils

- Major soil types in Marion County
  - Blitchton/Flemington/Kanapaha association; nearly level to strongly sloping, poorly drained soils; sandy to less than 20" to more than 40"
  - Arrendondo/Gainesville association; nearly level to sloping, well drained; some sandy to more than 40"; loamy below and others sandy throughout
  - Kendrick/Hague/Zuber association; nearly level to sloping, well drained; sandy to a depth of less than 40"; loamy or clayey below
  - Astatula association; nearly level to strongly sloping, excessively drained; sandy to more than 80"
- Soil types are distributed widely across the County
- Soils in Marion County are generally in pH 5.0 to 6.5
- Wide array and availability of developable soils, suitable for commercial and residential building, adds to the draw for new residents

## Vegetative Communities

- Primary Ecosystems
  - Upland Mesic Hardwood Forest
  - Scrub Forest
  - Sandhill
  - Pine Flatwoods
  - Wetland Forest
- Protected or Managed Native Habitat
  - Preserved Lands
  - Conservation Areas

- Aquatic Preserves
- Major Open Land Use Types
  - Grazing Pastures
  - Silviculture
  - Horse farms and training facilities
  - Conservation and Preservation Lands

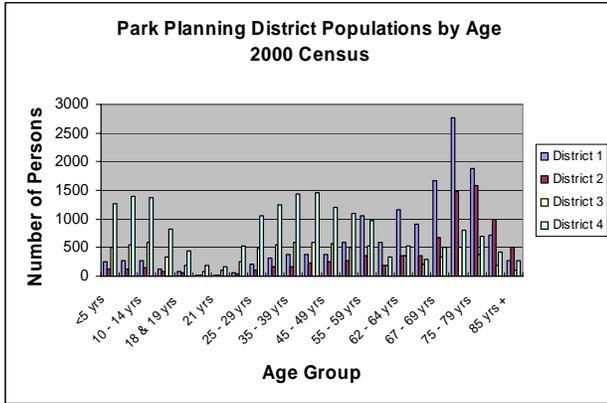
## Fauna and Flora

- Examples of Common Wildlife Species
  - White Tail Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*)
  - Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*)
  - Cottontail Rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus*)
  - Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*)
  - Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*)
  - Rat Snake (*Elaphe obsoleta*)
- Examples of Common Fish Species
  - Largemouth Bass (*Micropterus salmoides*)
  - Black Crappie (*Pomoxis nigromaculatus*)
  - Bluegill (*Lepomis macrochirus*)
  - Channel Catfish (*Ictalurus punctatus*)
- Examples of Common Plant Species
  - Live Oak (*Quercus virginiana*)
  - Long Leaf Pine (*Pinus palustris*)
  - Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)
  - Cabbage Palm (*Sabal palmetto*)
  - Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*)
- Current Listed Threatened/Endangered Species

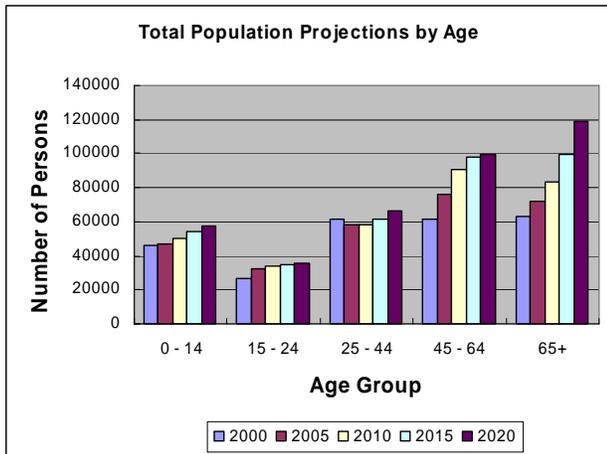
- Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) (Threaten)
- Florida Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis pratensis*) (Threaten)
- Florida Scrub Jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*) (Threaten)
- Eastern Indigo Snake (*Drymarchon corais couperi*) (Threaten)
- Sand Skink (*Neoseps reynoldsi*) (Threaten)
- Red Cockaded Woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*) (Endangered)
- Wood Stork (*Mycteria Americana*) (Endangered)
- Current Listed Major Invasive Exotic Species
  - Upland Flora
    - Cogon Grass (*Imperata cylindrica*)
    - Air Potato (*Dioscorea bulbifera*)
    - Japanese Climbing Fern (*Lygodium japonicum*)
    - Mimosa (*Albizia julibrissin*)
  - Aquatic Flora
    - Hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*)
    - Water-Hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*)
    - Torpedo Grass (*Panicum repens*)
    - Waterlettuce (*Pistia stratiotes*)
  - Upland Fauna
    - Feral Pig (*Sus scrofa*)
    - Feral Cat (*Felis catus*)
- Nine-Banded Armadillo (*Dasypus novemcinctus*)
- Cuban Treefrog (*Osteopilus septentrionalis*)
- Fire Ant (*Solenopsis invicta*)
- Aquatic Fauna
  - Sailfin Catfish (*Pterygoplichthys multiradiatus*)
  - Blue Tilapia (*Oreochromis aureus*)
  - Brown Hoplo (*Hoplosternum littorale*)

Appendix 2

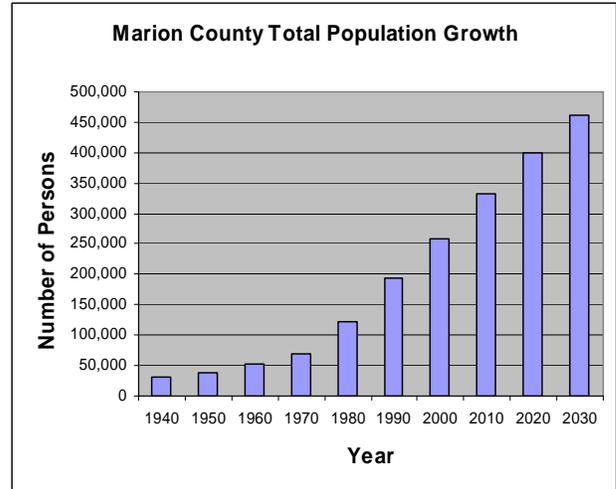
Population Projections – A Recap



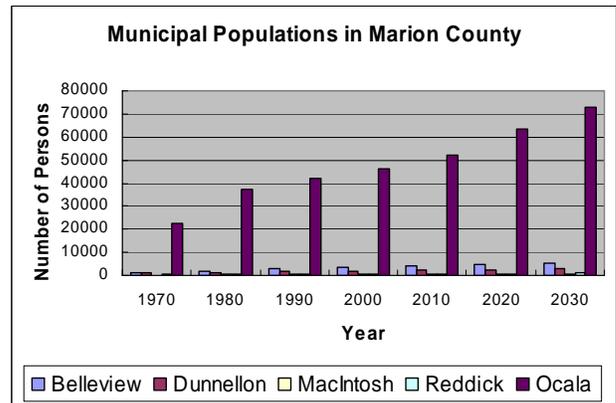
(Census 2000; Chart generated by Planning Department using Park Planning Districts; this Master Plan does not use Districts and accounts for population County-wide)



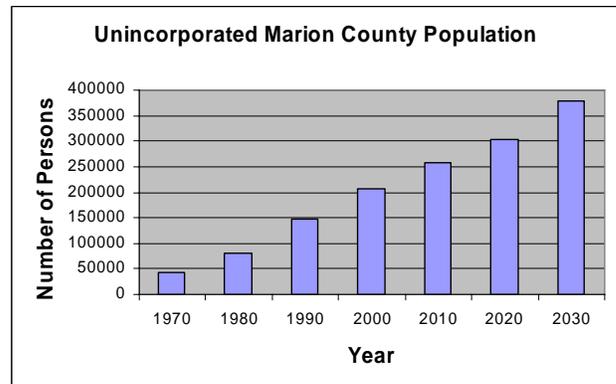
(BEBR; 2002)



(BEBR; 2006)



(BEBR; 2006)



(BEBR; 2006)



**Legend**

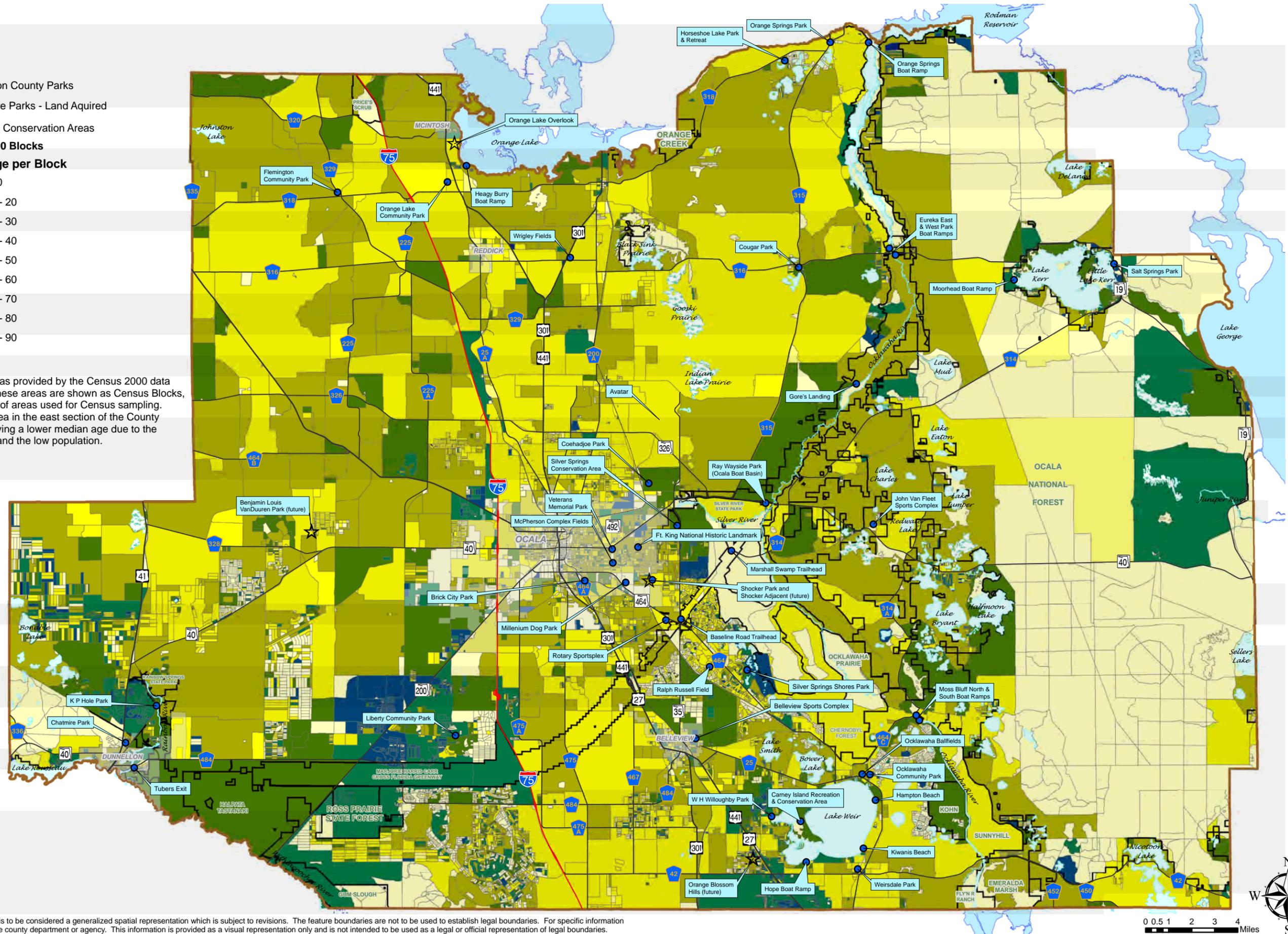
- Marion County Parks
- ☆ Future Parks - Land Aquired
- ▭ State Conservation Areas

**Census 2000 Blocks**

**Median Age per Block**

- 0 - 10
- 10.1 - 20
- 20.1 - 30
- 30.1 - 40
- 40.1 - 50
- 50.1 - 60
- 60.1 - 70
- 70.1 - 80
- 80.1 - 90
- 90 +

Median Age as provided by the Census 2000 data map sets. These areas are shown as Census Blocks, the smallest of areas used for Census sampling. The large area in the east section of the County is shown having a lower median age due to the Block sizes and the low population.



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 agency. This information is provided as a visual representation only and is not intended to be used as a legal or official representation of legal boundaries.

**Marion County Parks, Recreation, and Environmental Lands  
Existing County Owned and/or Operated Sites  
Census 2000 - Median Age by Census Block**

Marion County Parks & Recreation Department 111 S.E. 25th Ave. Ocala, FL 34471 (352) 671-8560



Appendix 3

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THIS AGREEMENT, made and entered into this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 200\_, by and between MARION COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, FLORIDA, a county corporation, hereinafter referred to as “MCBCC”, and the SCHOOL BOARD OF MARION COUNTY, hereinafter referred to as “Board.”

**WITNESSTH:**

WHEREAS, the Board is desirous of using County-owned parks and recreational facilities for its physical education classes, athletic programs and various classes; and

WHEREAS, the MCBCC is desirous of using various school facilities owned, for recreational programs; and

WHEREAS, the MCBCC and Board are each willing to cooperate under certain conditions and provisions.

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the covenants herein contained and other good and valuable consideration, the Board and MCBCC mutually agree to the joint use of their respective facilities as outlined in Exhibit “A” hereto attached and made part of said agreement, under the following terms and conditions:

1. The term of this Agreement will be for a period of \_\_\_\_\_ years beginning \_\_\_\_\_, 200\_, and ending \_\_\_\_\_, 200\_. This Agreement may be extended for additional \_\_\_\_\_ - year periods under the same terms and conditions set forth herein, with written agreement and approval by the Board and MCBCC.

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2. Short – term uses of facilities may be scheduled with the joint approval of the Superintendent of Schools and County Administrator, or their respective designees, as indicated on the attached Exhibit A, or the Board’s Rental of Facilities Agreement, a sample of which is attached as Exhibit B, which will be considered an amendment to this Agreement when executed by the Superintendent of Schools and the County Administrator, or their respective designees.

3. The premises owned by MCBCC will be used by the Board in its recreational, physical / education programs, and school athletics and will not conflict with any MCBCC programs and will conform with the hours the facilities are normally opened to the public or staff is present.

4. The parties agree to maintain the play field or facilities and surrounding area in a clean and sanitary condition after use by their employees, agents, volunteers, or invitees.

5. Both the MCBCC and the Board, and their invitees will abide by each other’s policies, including policies, which state that the consumption of alcohol on MCBCC, and the consumption of alcohol and tobacco on Board property, including any outside areas, is prohibited.

6. Each party will provide its own personnel for the supervision of the programs it conducts.

7. Use of the subject premises by private parties, organizations, or by business enterprises for profit is prohibited. The Board and MCBCC agree to make no unlawful, improper or offensive use of the subject premises and all rights of the using

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party hereunder will be terminated by the Board or MCBCC in the event that such use is made thereof.

8. Subject to the Florida Statutory limits on the waiver of sovereign immunity, the parties agree that each will save the other harmless on account of the negligent acts of its employees, servants or agents or on account of any unsafe conditions that may exist as a result of the negligent operation by the parties of the Facilities. The Board and MCBCC agree to provide each other, if requested, proof of insurance coverage or self-insurance in the amounts set forth in Florida statutes.

9. The Board and MCBCC will not assign this agreement or sublet the premises or any part thereof without the written consent of the other party. The Board and MCBCC agree that each party and its officers, agents, and servants, will have the right to enter and inspect the subject premises and the operation being conducted thereon at reasonable times. This agreement will remain in effect unless terminated by either party as follows:

a) Upon breach of this agreement by a party, the other party will give written notice of termination of this agreement specifying the claimed breach and the action required to cure the breach. If the breaching party fails to cure the breach within five days from receipt of said notice, then the contract will terminate ten days from receipt of the written notice.

b) Either party may terminate this agreement by giving written notice to the other party that the agreement will terminate thirty days from receipt of said notice by the other party.

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10. Additional MCBCC or School Board facilities may be used at appropriate times and places with written approval of the County Administrator or Superintendent of Schools or their respective designees.

11. The Board and MCBCC agree that in the event of unforeseen questions arising out of the use of the said facilities or questions of use, questions will be settled in writing between the Superintendent of Schools and County Administrator or their respective designees for resolution of such questions concerning this Agreement.

12. In the event litigation is necessary to enforce any terms or Conditions of this Agreement, the prevailing party will be entitled to recover its costs and expenses, including reasonable attorneys' fees from the non-prevailing party.

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IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto executed this agreement the day and year first above mentioned.

ATTEST:

**MARION COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, FLORIDA**

\_\_\_\_\_  
County Administrator

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
MCBCC Chariman

Approved as to form and content:

Attest:

\_\_\_\_\_  
County Attorney

\_\_\_\_\_  
County Clerk

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

**THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MARION COUNTY**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent

\_\_\_\_\_  
School Board Chairman

Approved as to form and content:

\_\_\_\_\_  
School Board Attorney

DRAFT

List Available Facility Label (S) if School Board Label (C) if County	List Programs, if Known Label (S) if School Board Label (C) if County	Comments
(S) Anthony Elementary	( C ) Summer Program	
(S) East Marion Elementary	( C ) Summer Program	
(S) Lake Weir Middle School	( C ) Summer Program	
(S) Reddick Elementary School	( C ) Summer Program	
( C ) Wrigley Fields	( S ) Education/Physical Education Classes, Athletic Team groups, school activities/programs	
( C ) Coehadjoe Park	( S ) Education/Physical Education Classes, Athletic Team groups, school activities/programs	
( C ) Rotary Sportsplex	( S ) Soccer Program	Property owned by State but leased to County, managed by Sportplex Board - school use arranged through Big Sun Soccer

The dates and times of the programs listed above are as approved by the Principal and MCBCC Staff. Outside School and County facilities may be used without cost except for direct costs in the of field lining and extended hours for ball field lighting, and other reimbursable costs. Short-term interior School or County facilities may be used without cost if appropriate staff is already scheduled to be on duty. Use of an interior school facility or interior county facility when not normally staffed must be pre-approved by County Administrator and the School's Area Office; direct costs may apply.

The respective agencies supervise their own program unless noted otherwise.

Date:

## Appendix 4

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### Exotic, Feral, and Nuisance Animal Policy

#### PREAMBLE

##### Exotic and Feral Animals

Exotic and feral animals are species not indigenous to Florida that occur here usually because of human-aided range expansion or translocation. Exotic and feral animal populations are regarded, together with exotic invasive plants, as the main threats to healthy natural biological diversity within the County. In order to protect and preserve native wildlife and plants from predation, disease, and other impacts presented by exotic and feral animals and to maintain the integrity of ecosystems and ecological processes it is necessary to control the number of exotic and feral animals. Examples of exotic and feral animal species include foreign wildlife, feral dogs, feral cats, and feral hogs.

##### Nuisance Animals

Nuisance animals are individual animals of native species whose actions create special management problems. Examples of animal species from which nuisance cases may arise include raccoons, gray squirrels, armadillos, poisonous snakes, coyotes and alligators. The following problems with nuisance animals in general may occur:

- Potential threat to humans of physical injury (bites; scratches) or disease occurs due to diseased animals, abnormal or conditioned animal behavior patterns, including persistence in high public use areas.
- Unacceptable damage occurs to park facilities or other public or private property.
- Unacceptable damage occurs to valuable park natural resources.

#### POLICY

The Parks and Recreation Department, through the Parks and Natural Resources Division, will seek to reduce the adverse impact of exotic and feral animals on the natural biodiversity of the County by:

- Removing, where practical, all exotic and feral animals from parks except where provisions are included in park management plans for retaining some feral animals for specific management or conservation purposes.
- Ensuring that all exotic and feral animal control be humane and done by the most appropriate methods. Control may include commercial harvesting and utilization of feral animals but it is understood that in many situations this may be inappropriate or inadequate and other control methods must be used.
- Implementing approved exotic and feral animal management programs which have clear measurable objectives, involve follow-up monitoring to gauge effectiveness and are revised as control priorities change.

- Co-operating with landholders and local authorities to ensure that all unmanaged exotic and feral animal populations are controlled as far as is practical.
- Explaining to landholders and the public generally the reasons why feral animal control programs are desirable and necessary.

The Parks and Recreation Department, through the Parks and Natural Resources Division, will seek to reduce the threat to humans and adverse impact of nuisance animals on park lands, public facilities and adjacent private property of the County by:

- Educating park visitors through appropriate methods to avoid careless or deliberate encounters with potential nuisance animals and thereby avoid exposure to their hazards.
- Anticipate, detect, and resolve nuisance animal situations before they become critical.
- Eliminate or modify a food source or visitor behavior which attracts animals to public areas.
- Nuisance animals that approach humans for food, or that approach high public use areas, should be discouraged to recondition them to avoid humans.
- Relocate nuisance animals, if practicable, after consultation with Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). Relocation to occur within the same property whenever possible, and if not, to other properties with permission and FWC permit, if required.
- Ensure that all persistent nuisance animal control be humane and done by the most appropriate methods. Control may include relocation, but it is understood that in many situations this may be inappropriate or inadequate and other control methods must be used.
- Native animals exhibiting behaviors of being diseased (ex: rabies; distemper) shall be humanely destroyed, when possible, and safely transported to a testing facility. If the animal is found to be infected with a disease that is dangerous or fatal to humans, the Department shall immediately report the findings to the County Health Department and take any other appropriate action necessary.
- Nuisance animals on the State or Federal protected species list shall be address through the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission or appropriate agency.

August 6, 2007

Dear Perspective Donor:

I am pleased to provide the opportunity to make a donation to the Marion County Parks and Recreation Department in memory of a loved one. The attached memorial donation policy will help to answer questions you have about how to proceed with your memorial idea.

The policy was developed to give Parks and Recreation Department staff an established method to accept memorials within our parks. It is our hope that the attached policy will allow us to provide you with a coordinated and consistent approach for processing your memorial requests. The policy is designed to assist in answering many of the basic questions you may have as you begin to think about the best way to memorialize your loved one. The outline of the various categories in which we will accept memorials will get you started on deciding the type of memorial that best meets your needs. Once you review the policy and have formulated your idea, please contact us at 352-671-8560. At that point, we can begin to discuss how your ideas fit with our current park planning processes.

Thank you for considering the Marion County Parks and Recreation Department for your memorial donation. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lee A. Niblock, CPRP  
Director

LAN/glp

## **Memorial Donation Policy**

### **Department Donation Policy**

The Marion County Parks and Recreation Department provides the opportunity for members of our community to donate memorials to loved ones within our park system. In order to allow for a coordinated and consistent program for soliciting and recognizing contributions, we have established an introductory letter and the following guidelines. The guidelines were developed based on research on the best practices of similar agencies nationwide, the needs and resource capabilities of the Parks and Recreation Department and the desire of citizens to recognize loved ones through monetary contributions providing for specific lasting memorials.

The Parks and Recreation Department memorial donation guidelines allow for several types of memorial opportunities. We encourage citizens to contact the Department to discuss ideas for locations of memorials, however final memorial locations will be dependent on the needs of the Department and planning processes already underway. Donations may be tax deductible. (Please see your tax advisor.)

Memorials will be accepted in the following categories:

- Memorial Tree Donations - Living memorial donations will be accepted in the form of tree plantings in County parks.
- Memorial Bench and Brick Donations - Memorial bench and brick donations are currently accepted and encouraged at the *Ocala – Marion County Veteran’s Memorial Park*
- Other Park Amenity Donations - will be considered within the County park system on a case by case basis. Donations for general park and recreation purposes are accepted and encouraged. Memorial Statues, Fountains, Plazas and Gardens may be accepted under specific circumstances. The Department will determine placement of all such memorials.
- Park Naming Opportunities - Naming of a park as a memorial may be submitted under the County's Naming Policy.

For additional information, or to pursue a memorial donation, please call the Parks and Recreation Department at 352-671-8560.

### **Memorial Tree Donation Policy**

The Parks and Recreation Department will accept donations for trees by the public for gifts and memorials to be planted in appropriate locations in the County parks for a fee. The following guidelines will apply:

- Tree species, height and caliper will be selected by the Parks and Natural Resources Division or the Parks Designer II.
- Due to concerns over maintenance and vandalism, plaques will not be included as part of the memorial tree donation program.

- In instances where trees do not survive, tree replacements will be provided if Parks and Natural Resources Division staff planted the tree. Replacement trees may or may not be of the same variety as that of the original donation.
- The Parks and Natural Resources Division staff will consider special park location requests with the final location to be determined by the Department.
- Requests may be made at any time of the year and will be considered for the following spring or fall planting.

**Memorial Bench and Brick Donation Policy**

Memorial bench and brick donations will be of the amount listed in the fee schedule which is available by contacting the *Ocala – Marion County Veteran’s Memorial Park*. The memorial fee will include the bench or brick, installation and administrative costs of the program.

**Other Park Amenity Donation Policy**

Park amenities will be accepted on the basis that they will be maintained for ten years in their original location, or in an area near their original location. After 10 years, the amenity may be removed or relocated pending redevelopment of the park site.

- Small plaques may be included on the amenity with design, placement and language to be determined by the Department.
- All park amenities will be constructed of materials selected by the Parks and Recreation Department to meet the design and maintenance considerations of the Department.
- General memorial donations gifted to the Parks and Recreation Department will be acknowledged by a letter from the Parks and Recreation Advisory Council. Funds generated by these donations will be used to best meet current needs of the Department as determined by the Director or his designee. From time to time, the Department may be accepting donations for a specific project to benefit the Department. A list of opportunities for project-specific donations will be maintained and provided to those who express interest.
- Memorial Statues, Fountains, Plazas, Gardens - donations which are large in scale are generally not encouraged. To the extent that projects of this nature are consistent with park planning processes they may be considered on a case-by-case basis. Donors may contact the Department to discuss their idea.

**Park Naming Opportunities**

Park Naming Opportunities exist for naming of park sites within the park system as detailed in the County's Naming Policy. Copies of this policy are available by contacting the Department.

## References

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### **Marion County Planning Department**

Marion County Comprehensive Plan

[http://www.marioncountyfl.org/PL271/PL\\_Comp\\_Plan.htm](http://www.marioncountyfl.org/PL271/PL_Comp_Plan.htm)

Various Planning Department Studies

SR 326 Corridor Study Master Plan

US 27 Corridor Study Area Master Plan

SR 200 Corridor Study Area Master Plan

US 441 Corridor Study Area Master Plan

[http://www.marioncountyfl.org/PL271/PL\\_CompletedStudy.htm](http://www.marioncountyfl.org/PL271/PL_CompletedStudy.htm)

US 41 Corridor Study

[http://www.marioncountyfl.org/PL271/PL\\_US41Study.htm](http://www.marioncountyfl.org/PL271/PL_US41Study.htm)

Greenway Corridor Study

[http://www.marioncountyfl.org/PL271/PL\\_GreenwayCorridorStudy.htm](http://www.marioncountyfl.org/PL271/PL_GreenwayCorridorStudy.htm)

50 Year Clean Water Study

[http://www.marioncountyfl.org/PL271/PL\\_WRAMS/PL\\_water\\_study.htm](http://www.marioncountyfl.org/PL271/PL_WRAMS/PL_water_study.htm)

Marion County Water Resource Assessment and Management Study (WRAMS)

[http://www.marioncountyfl.org/PL271/PL\\_WRAMS/PL\\_water\\_study.htm](http://www.marioncountyfl.org/PL271/PL_WRAMS/PL_water_study.htm)

### **Marion County Parks and Recreation Department**

Recreation Areas in Marion County – Analysis of Park Service Area Coverage, 2006

Florida 2060: A Population Distribution Scenario for the State of Florida

<http://www.1000friendsofflorida.org/planning/2060.asp>

## Publications

### Ecosystems of Florida

Edited by Myers, Ronald L. and Ewel, John J., University of Central Florida Press, 1990

### Anatomy of a Park: The Essentials of Recreation Area Planning and Design, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.

Molnar, Donald J., McGraw-Hill, New York, 1986

### Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines

National Recreation and Park Association, 1987

### Open Space Guidelines and Standards – A Guide to Understanding the New vs. the Old

National Recreation and Park Association, 1990

Marion County Public Policy Institute, 2005 Traffic/Transportation Study: A Roadmap to the future of Marion County, Fall, 2005

Outdoor Recreation in Florida – 2000, Florida’s Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

State of Florida, Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Recreation and Parks, Office of Park Planning, 2002

## Recreation Links

Marion County Parks and Recreation Department  
[http://www.marioncountyfl.org/PR612/PR\\_home.htm](http://www.marioncountyfl.org/PR612/PR_home.htm)

City of Ocala – Recreation and Parks  
[http://www.ocalafl.org/recreation\\_and\\_parks.aspx](http://www.ocalafl.org/recreation_and_parks.aspx)

City of Belleview  
<http://www.belleviewflorida.com/>

City of Dunnellon  
<http://www.dunnellonflorida.com/>

Florida Recreation and Parks Association  
<http://web.frpa.org/>

Florida State Parks  
<http://www.floridastateparks.org/>

Florida Department of Environmental Protection – Office of Greenways and Trails  
<http://www.floridadep.org/gwt/>

United States Department of Agriculture – State Forests; Ocala National Forest  
[http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/florida/recreation/index\\_oca.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/florida/recreation/index_oca.shtml)

St. Johns River Water Management District – Recreation Guide  
[http://sjr.state.fl.us/programs/operations/land\\_mgmt/index.html](http://sjr.state.fl.us/programs/operations/land_mgmt/index.html)

Southwest Florida Water Management District – Recreation Guide  
<http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/recreation/>



## **Parks Standardization**

The Marion County parks system is implementing standardization, especially with new park development and the continuation of parks being acquired and improved.

This chapter is a subdocument to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Parks Standardization will be a continually updated and revised working document which will provide drawings and specifications of amenities which are typically installed at any County owned and/or maintained park and recreation site.

The following link will direct you to the Marion County Parks and Recreation website where the Parks Standards are listed and shown.

Parks Standards: ([website hyperlink](#))

As updates and revisions are completed, each document will be distributed to those departments which have received a copy of the Master Plan. The digital copy of the Parks Standardization will be updated as needed.

## **Construction Guidelines for Marion County Parks and Recreation Department**

Along with parks standardization, developing guidelines for parks will help the development of future facilities run smoothly.

This chapter is a subdocument to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Construction Guidelines will be a continually updated and revised working document which will provide drawings and specifications of park specific facilities that are typically built at any County owned and/or maintained park and recreation site. Examples include: baseball field construction, pavilion types and sizes, entry signs, etc. This subdocument will be provided to private sector consultant teams which are involved with the planning, design and construction of future park facilities.

The following link will direct you to the Marion County Parks and Recreation website where the Construction Guidelines are provided.

Construction Guidelines: ([website hyperlink](#))

As updates and revisions are completed, each document will be distributed to those departments which have received a copy of the Master Plan. The digital copy of the Construction Guidelines for Marion County Parks and Recreation Department will be updated as needed.