
RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

DATA INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

The Recreation and Open Space Element presents a review of the current recreation facilities and opportunities in St. Lucie County, and includes Level of Service Standards and Goals, Objectives and Policies designed to assist the County in meeting the future recreation needs of its residents and visitors.

Recreation facilities are important components of a community's physical development pattern. They contribute to the attractiveness of the area, as well as the health and well-being of its citizens. St. Lucie County's location along the Atlantic Ocean provides abundant water-oriented recreational opportunities. The County would like to continue providing for diverse recreational interests with an emphasis on community and regional park creation in the future.

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT CONDITIONS

The St. Lucie County Parks and Recreation Services Department, Environmental Resources Department, and Mosquito Control and Coastal Management Services Department operate facilities and conducts programs throughout the County. These activities are conducted at County-owned or leased recreational facilities which are under the management or use of several departments. Several park facilities within the City of Fort Pierce are under the maintenance responsibility of the City; however, program administration has, through an interlocal agreement, been delegated to the County. The City of Port St. Lucie operates and maintains their own park facilities and programs. In addition to the local facilities, the State of Florida owns/operates/administers over 7,750 acres of recreational and open space lands within the County.

Community Parks System Master Plan and Classification System

The St. Lucie County Community Parks System Master Plan adopted in 2002, indicates that the provision of larger parks such as community and urban district (generally called "regional") parks should be the main emphasis of the County's parks and recreation system. The Parks and Recreation Services Department revised its parks classification system in 2010 based upon an extensive review of other Florida Comprehensive Plan Recreation and Open Space Elements. The current framework includes the following categories:

Neighborhood Parks

This general classification of parks includes parks that serve neighborhoods and mixed use centers in suburban and urban areas of the County. They are easily accessible, low-intensity recreational areas for unscheduled use. Neighborhood Parks provide visual relief from urban congestion and scenic value, and buffering between adjacent land uses. Primary users are within walking distance (1/2 plus/minus mile radius). Ease of non-motorized access is a primary consideration. Typically less than 25 acres, they

primarily offer a variety of active or passive recreation opportunities, or a combination of both, amenities may include a playground, picnic shelter or picnic area, basketball court, open space play/practice fields and perimeter walking trails.

NOTE: No level of service standard to be adopted for Neighborhood Parks.

Community Parks

This park classification includes larger parks that serve larger geographic areas of the County and provide a variety of individual and organized recreation activities conveniently located for short-term visits. Community parks may be located in residential and suburban areas. Community parks may also be located adjacent to elementary or middle schools to maximize cooperative use of recreation facilities. Parking is provided on the site or on a shared location with an appropriate adjoining facility. The service area for community parks generally extends up to 10 miles. The park size is typically 26 - 99 acres, serving several neighborhoods. Facility development may include picnic shelters and tables, court facilities (tennis, basketball and/or volleyball), playground, garden plots, athletic fields, Recreation Center, trails and parking. Courts and athletic facilities may be lighted or unlighted. Restroom facilities may exist on site with scheduled athletic fields. Access should be available by secondary roads, where possible, as well as the Countywide trail system to encourage pedestrian and bicycle trips; public transit access is also desirable. Service area is generally a two mile radius. Parking must be provided.

Community Water Access Parks (Beach and River)

This park classification includes parks that serve the entire County and provide access to beaches and inland waters. Some water access parks may be leased under state management plans. Depending on the specific location, a variety of access modes may be available – from automobiles, buses, walk-to, canoe/kayak-to, boat-to and public transit. The service area is county-wide and the size will vary. Some parks are under management plans which should give total consideration to the resources and allow public use only as compatible with resource protection. Other facilities provided may include picnic areas, pavilions, boat ramps, canoe/kayak launches, fishing piers, fish cleaning tables, sand volleyball, and playgrounds. Restroom facilities may exist on the site. Parking must be provided. For LOS analysis, these parks are considered a subset of Community Parks, and acreage is folded into “Community Parks”.

Regional Parks

This classification includes parks that primarily serves the needs of an entire community or region, or has specialized facilities, and is greater than 100 acres. Regional Parks have a service area radius of ten to twenty miles. A wide variety of passive and active recreation facilities including “Athletic Complexes”, picnic shelters and tables, court facilities (tennis, basketball and/or volleyball), playground, pools, recreation centers, campgrounds, golf courses, stadiums, trails and parking. Courts and athletic facilities are typically lighted. Restroom facilities exist on site with scheduled athletic fields. Access should be available by primary roads where possible. Public transit access is also desirable. Parking must be provided. These parks may be located in most areas of the County.

Resource-based Parks (ESL and Preserves)

This classification includes parks that primarily preserve and protect environmentally sensitive lands, and interpret natural and/or cultural resources. The location for Resource-based Parks is determined by the location of the specific resources. Size and access can take many forms depending on the setting and type of resources. Management plans should give consideration to the resource and allow public use only as it is compatible with resource protection.

Resource-based Parks are selected for inclusion in the park system because of their exemplary natural and/or cultural features and are acquired, identified and preserved for stewardship and protection. Protection and stewardship of unique natural and cultural resources provide a variety of public benefits. These parks provide educational and interpretative opportunities relative to environmental and cultural resources. These lands may offer opportunities to restore degraded areas and to protect, increase, and restore biodiversity of species that may inhabit these areas. In addition, passive recreation opportunities and facilities are also appropriate at these parks. Development which does not adversely affect resources and which enhances awareness of the resource values is appropriate. Development of public sites should include opportunities for public education and enjoyment. Interpretive (educational) facilities and structures may include visitor centers, nature centers, orientation kiosks, nature watching stations, demonstration areas, preserved buildings and gardens, hiking, biking, and equestrian trails as designated. To the extent that they do not adversely impact the resources themselves, support amenities may also be developed such as camping, picnicking areas, restrooms, signs, benches and parking. Trails and trail connections are a significant feature at these parks.

Inventory of Existing Facilities

The following table summarizes existing recreation and open space facilities owned, operated, and/or maintained by St. Lucie County. The location of the facilities is indicated on Map REC-1. Many of the existing parks continue historic Comprehensive Plan categorizations.

Table 7-1: Parks Inventory

Name	Address	Acres
SLC Neighborhood Parks (Unincorporated St. Lucie County)		
Collins Park	341 Barraclough St	0.62
Palm Lake Park	5000 Seagrape Dr	8.91
Indrio Road Park and School House	8850 Indrio Rd	7.75
Lakewood Park	6106 N Kings Hwy	7.14
Paradise Park	2020 Juanita Avenue	1.72
White City School Recreation	905 W. 2nd Street	2.00
		28.14
SLC Neighborhood Parks (Within City Limits)		
Maravilla	2622 Oleander Blvd	6.00
		6.00
SLC Community Parks (Unincorporated St. Lucie County)		
White City Park	1801 W Midway Rd	15.37
		15.37

Name	Address	Acres
SLC Community Parks (Within City Limits)		
Black Pearl Boat Ramp	800 N Indian River Dr	1.60
Elks Park	2501 Delaware Ave	11.86
Horatio Grisby Park	1306 Avenue M	6.10
Illous Ellis Park	1301 Avenue M	16.02
MLK Jr Dreamland Park	301 S 25th St	16.83
South County Regional Sports Complex	560 NW University Blvd	10.31
Weldon B Lewis Park	4650 Oleander Ave	47.60
		110.32
SLC Community Water Access (Beach & River) Parks (Unincorporated St. Lucie County)		
Blind Creek Beachside	5460 S Ocean Dr	150.14
Blind Creek Riverside South	5101 S Ocean Dr	245.10
Blue Heron Beach	2101 Blue Heron Blvd	1.20
Byrn Mawr Beach Access	5056 N SR Highway A1A	1.16
DJ Wilcox Riverside	399 Wilcox Rd	38.65
Dollman Park Beachside	9200 S Ocean Dr	21.28
Dollman Park Riverside	9101 S Ocean Dr	242.19
Frederick Douglass Memorial Park	3600 S Ocean Dr	19.40
Hermans Bay Beach	7880 S Ocean Dr	1.37
John Brooks Park Beachside	3300 S Ocean Dr	210.88
John Brooks Park Riverside	2601 S Ocean Dr	142.21
Middle Cove Beach	4600 S Ocean Dr	4.42
Normandy Beach	8550 S Ocean Dr	1.04
Ocean Bay Beachside	7600 S Ocean Dr	14.30
Pepper Park Beachside	3302 N SR Highway A1A	20.53
Pepper Park Riverside	3375 N SR Highway A1A	20.38
Vitolo Family Preserve North	3701 S Ocean Dr	77.21
Vitolo Family Preserve South	4101 S Ocean Dr	25.09
Walton Rocks Beach and Dog Park	6700 S Ocean Dr	96.57
Waveland Beach Park	10350 S Ocean Dr	3.36
		1,336.48
SLC Community Water Access (Beach & River) Parks (Within City Limits)		
Harbour Pointe	1 Avenue M Ext	19.98
Little Jim Bridge Park	601 N. Causeway Dr	1.67
North Causeway Island Park	500 N Causeway Dr	6.24
River Park Marina	500 SE Prima Vista Blvd	13.14
South Causeway Island Park	Seaway Dr	4.58
Stan Blum Boat Ramp	613 N Causeway Dr	11.06
		56.67
Regional		
Lakewood Park Regional Park	5990 Emerson Ave	155.47
Lawnwood Regional Park	1302 Virginia Ave	90.47
Savannas Recreation Area	1400 Midway Rd	14.00
		259.94

Name	Address	Acres
Resource-Based Park (ESL & Preserves)		
Bear Point Sanctuary	2601 S Ocean Dr	341.64
Blind Creek Riverside North	4651 S Ocean Dr	35.12
Bluefield Preserve	30501 Bluefield Ranch Rd	3,276.93
Captain Hammonds Hammock	Canoe Access Only	34.31
Citrus Hammock	Canoe Access Only	46.82
Coon Island Park	Indian River Lagoon	2.92
DJ Wilcox Preserve	300 Michigan St	66.71
George Lestrangle Preserve	4911 Ralls Rd	96.65
Germany Canal Recreation Area	Germany Rd	640.00
Goat Island	Canoe Access Only	21.40
Gordy Road Recreation Area	3650 Gordy Rd	40.96
Greene Swamp		513.00
Harbor Branch Preserve		250.00
Indrio Savannas Preserve	5100 Tozour Road	297.00
Indrio Scrub Preserve	5100 Old Dixie Hwy	13.23
Jack Island State Preserve	900 Jack Island Access Rd	414.32
Kings Island Preserve	900 Jack Island Access Rd	166.25
Ocean Bay Riverside	6851 S Ocean Dr	88.14
Oxbow Eco Center	5400 NE St James Dr	254.15
Paleo Hammock Preserve	8551 Carlton Rd	194.80
Pinelands Preserve	7601 VPI Grove Rd	750.79
Platt's Creek	North Fork of the St. Lucie River	100.00
Queens Island Preserve	4653 SR N Highway A1A	389.55
Savannas Recreation Area	1400 E Midway Rd	561.35
Sheraton Scrub Preserve	2222 N 41st St	65.12
Spruce Bluff Preserve	611 SE Dar Ln	88.27
Sweetwater Hammock Preserve	4100 S 25th St	8.32
Teague Hammock Preserve	8550 Carlton Rd	300.38
Ten Mile Creek Preserve	3401 Gordy Rd	8.63
Walton Scrub Preserve	10809 S Indian River Dr	31.25
Wildcat Cove	3399 N SR Highway A1A	114.68
		9,212.69

Other County Facilities

Fairgrounds and Equestrian Center	15601 W Midway Rd	245.85
Fairwinds Golf Course	4400 Fairwinds Dr	323.16
Havert L Fenn Center	2000 Virginia Ave	5.06
Lawnwood Skate Park	2100 Virginia Ave	5.10
Lincoln Park Community Center	1306 Avenue M	2.71
Museum Pointe Park	414 Seaway Dr	9.30
National Navy UDT SEAL Museum	3300 N Highway A1A	11.55
Ravenswood Community Pool & Shuffleboard Courts	200 Ravenswood Lane	1.59
St Lucie County Marine Center	420 Seaway Dr	0.20
St Lucie County Regional History Center	414 Seaway Dr	0.77
St Lucie Village Heritage Park	305 Torpey Rd	75.58
Tradition Field Sports Complx	525 NW Peacock Dr	97.48
Walton Community Center	11090 Ridge Ave	0.76
		779.11

Source: St. Lucie Growth Management, St. Lucie Parks and Recreation Services, 2010.

Note: The County is evaluating public access and potential future acquisition for its Greenways & Trails Program.

As Table 7-1 indicates, St. Lucie County contains approximately 2,592 acres of neighborhood, community, water access, and regional parks, and other County facilities. Resource-based parks, including Environmentally Significant Lands and preserves, comprise over 9,212 acres. Ownership of and responsibility for the management of the recreational lands in St. Lucie County falls to a mixture of state and local agencies.

Additionally, the State of Florida operates four major parks in St. Lucie County. These are:

- Jack Island State Preserve (414.32 acres)
- Ft. Pierce Inlet State Recreation Area (355.38 acres)
- Avalon State Park (673.62 acres)
- Savannas Preserve State Park (6,311.33 acres)

Private Recreation Facilities

In addition to public facilities, St. Lucie County has a number of large developments that have private recreational facilities such as golf courses, tennis courts, pools, and trails. Most residential development projects that use the Planned Unit Development zoning furnish some type of recreational facilities for their residents. These facilities satisfy some proportion of the total recreation demand for the residents of these communities.

NEEDS ANALYSIS

Level of Service: Community Parks

The St. Lucie County Comprehensive Plan includes Beach Access and Beach Parks in its level of service (LOS) measurement for Community Parks. The current inventory shows 1,518.84 acres of Community Parks and Community Water Access Parks. The LOS standard for publicly-owned Community Parks in St. Lucie County is 5 acres per one thousand (1,000) residents in the County’s unincorporated area. As a comparison, Martin County and Palm Beach County have Community Park levels of service of 2 acres and 2.5 acres per 1,000 residents respectively. St. Lucie County’s LOS for this recreation category is projected through 2030. As the following table shows, the County will have sufficient Community Park acreage in the short and long term planning periods.

Community Parks LOS projections

	2009	2010	2011	2015	2020	2025	2030
Population (unincorporated area only)	72,925	74,983	75,961	79,874	83,974	87,796	91,201
Community Park acreage	1,519	1,519	1,519	1,519	1,519	1,519	1,519
Acreage needed to maintain LOS	365	375	380	399	420	439	456
Surplus/deficit acreage	1,154	1,144	1,139	1,119	1,099	1,080	1,063

Source: St. Lucie County, Calvin, Giordano & Associates, Inc., 2010. Based on 125.69 acres of Community Parks and 1,393.15 acres of Community Water Access Parks.

Level of Service: Regional Parks

The current inventory identifies 259.94 acres of Regional Parks. The LOS standard for Regional Parks in St. Lucie County is 2.5 acres per one thousand (1,000) residents Countywide. As the following table shows, the County has a deficit of Regional Park acreage. The County shall review development of additional regional parks to fulfill the 2002 Community Parks Master Plan and future updates.

Regional Parks LOS projections

	2009	2010	2011	2015	2020	2025	2030
Population (Countywide)	272,864	276,700	283,980	313,100	354,300	395,200	434,100
Regional Park acreage	260	260	260	260	260	260	260
Acreage needed to maintain LOS	682	692	710	783	886	988	1,085
Surplus/deficit acreage	-422	-432	-450	-523	-626	-728	-825

Source: St. Lucie County, Calvin, Giordano & Associates, Inc., 2010. Based on 259.94 acres of Regional Parks.

Level of Service: Resource-based Parks

The current inventory identifies 9,212.69 acres of Resource-based Parks. The LOS standard for Resource-based Parks in St. Lucie County is 21.2 acres per one thousand (1,000) residents Countywide. As the following table shows, the County will have sufficient Resource-based Park acreage in the short and long term planning periods. It should be noted most counties do not provide a resource-based park level of service. However, because these parks are such an important part of St. Lucie County's overall all recreational amenities, they have been included.

Resource-based Parks LOS projections

	2009	2010	2011	2015	2020	2025	2030
Population (Countywide)	272,864	276,700	283,980	313,100	354,300	395,200	434,100
Resource Based Park acreage	9,213	9,213	9,213	9,213	9,213	9,213	9,213
Acreage needed to maintain LOS	5,785	5,866	6,020	6,638	7,511	8,378	9,203
Surplus/deficit acreage	3,428	3,347	3,192	2,575	1,702	834	10

Source: St. Lucie County, Calvin, Giordano & Associates, Inc., 2010. Based on 9,212.69 acres of Resourced-based Parks.

RECREATION ELEMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

Goal 97.1: Provide adequate parks, recreation facilities and open-space areas that offer a broad range of activities to all citizens and visitors of St. Lucie County.

Objective 97.1.1: Active and passive recreation facilities and open-space areas for the residents and visitors of St. Lucie County shall be provided in a manner consistent with the Level of Service Standards set forth in this element. Consistency with these standards shall be maintained in subsequent years.

Policy 97.1.1.1 - Level of Service for Recreation and Open Space shall be as follows:

- a. Community parks: 5 acres/1000 residents in the unincorporated area
- b. Regional parks: ~~5-2.5~~ acres/1000 population countywide
- c. ~~Outdoor Reserve Recreation Area~~Resource-based Parks: ~~28.60~~21.2 acres/1000 population countywide. (~~Ord. No. 07-019, §: B(Exh. A), 12-18-07~~)

Policy 97.1.1.2 - Accept and achieve the Level of Service Standards as set forth in this and the Capital Improvements Elements, through an equitable and systematic land acquisition and development program.

Policy 97.1.1.3 - The County will continue to correct and improve upon existing deficiencies through additional land acquisition and development, and through expansion or renovation of existing parks and recreational facilities, ~~through projects specified in the Capital Improvement Element.~~

Policy 97.1.1.4 - All areas having the Conservation Public Land Use designation will be used solely for preservation and/or passive recreation. No residential or commercial development will be permitted other than development typically related to park service and security functions.

Objective 97.1.2: Through the use of public funds, gifts, contributions, mandatory fees and/or deductions, cooperative agreements, or other means, St. Lucie County will coordinate public and private resources to meet the recreation and open space needs of its residents and visitors.

Policy 97.1.2.1 - The County shall pursue development and enhancement of its recreational programs, facilities, open spaces, and natural preserves in the following programs:

- a. Continue to administer the countywide parks impact fee in order to partially fund new park development.
- b. Supplement facility needs through interlocal agreements, operational practices, user fees and public/private cooperative efforts.
- c. Utilization of municipal service taxing unit (MSTU) funds.
- d. Loans and bonds approved by referendum or by the Board of County

Commissioners.

~~Policy 9.1.2.2 – The County shall use monies collected from the parks impact fee to acquire additional open space and natural preservation areas and to develop necessary facilities.~~

Policy 97.1.2.32 - The County shall continue to work with other units of local government to provide for the reciprocal use of recreation, school and other facilities, while ensuring neither party assumes an inequitable burden of expenses.

Policy 97.1.2.43 - The County shall allow, to the extent legally possible, financially feasible, and whenever practical, other governmental agencies, such as the St. Lucie County School Board, to use the St. Lucie County Sports Complex.

Policy 97.1.2.54 - The County shall maintain a detailed Recreation and Open Space Inventory that indicates the general location of existing and proposed sites and facilities as well as functional classification, nature of improvements, usage, size, priority, and other appropriate considerations.

Objective 97.1.3: St. Lucie County shall provide vehicular and pedestrian access to all public recreation facilities, including barrier-free design features at entrance points to facilities such as buildings used for group assembly, spectator seating areas, and beaches and shores.

Policy 97.1.3.1 - Acquire and develop easements or rights-of-way as required to provide adequate access for public recreation facilities. Construct access ways which are compatible with the character and needs of the facility, as well as being harmonious with surrounding development patterns.

Policy 97.1.3.2 - Continue to provide public access to Atlantic Ocean beaches, and continue to give careful consideration to providing related parking areas and dune cross-over facilities without disturbance to the dune environment, natural habitats, and designated areas of particular concern.

Policy 7.1.3.3 – To the extent financially feasible, implement the policies advanced in the adopted Bicycle, Pedestrian, Greenways & Trailways Master Plan, as it may be amended, to promote non-motorized access and connectivity to recreational facilities.

Objective 97.1.4: ~~By January 2002, update the Countywide Facilities Master Plan~~To the extent financially feasible, implement and update the vision of the March 2002 Community Parks System Master Plan.

Policy 97.1.4.1 - ~~Continue to Assess~~assess the County's recreational needs based on ~~this the~~ Level of Service Standards as defined in this Comprehensive Plan~~plan.~~

Policy 97.1.4.2 - Continue to seek funding for acquisition, expansion, and development of recreational infrastructure, with an emphasis and focus on

Community and Regional Parks.

~~Policy 9.1.4.3 – Provide recreational infrastructure as required.~~

Objective ~~97.1.5~~: Develop and implement strategies to encourage eco-tourism in St. Lucie County.

Policy ~~97.1.5.1~~ - Identify appropriate and sustainable sites to develop as eco-tourism destinations and passive recreational opportunities.

Policy ~~97.1.5.2~~ - Provide required infrastructure to attract visitors to and protect eco-tourism destinations.

Policy ~~97.1.5.3~~ - In conjunction with the County's Tourist Development Office, publicize the improved eco-tourism sites and St. Lucie County as an eco-tourism destination.

Objective ~~97.1.6~~: ~~Develop and implement strategies to adequately manage~~Continue to preserve and enhance Environmentally Sensitive Lands in St. Lucie County.

Policy ~~97.1.6.1~~ - Encourage the State of Florida to provide future funding for acquisition and management of Environmentally Sensitive Lands.

Policy ~~97.1.6.2~~ - Seek funding from outside sources for acquisition, improvement and management of Environmentally Sensitive Lands.

Policy ~~97.1.6.3~~ ~~-To the extent financially feasible, Budget~~ budget for personnel and equipment for management of Environmentally Sensitive Lands to ensure that these lands are preserved, enhanced, and developed for access and uses that will maintain wildlife habitat, open space, aesthetic value, and passive recreation.

~~Policy 7.1.6.4 – As financially feasible, provide educational programs that foster awareness, understanding, and respect for natural resources.~~

Objective ~~97.1.7~~: Provide for an integrated system of Greenways and Trails in St. Lucie County.

Policy ~~97.1.7.1~~ - ~~By July 1, 2002, finalize~~To the extent financially feasible, implement the goals, objectives, and policies advanced in the Bicycle, Pedestrian, Greenways and Trails Masterplan ~~Master Plan~~ for St. Lucie County.

Policy ~~97.1.7.2~~ - Seek funding from outside sources for development and management of ~~Greenways~~ greenways and ~~Trails~~ trails.

Objective ~~97.1.8~~: The County shall protect environmentally significant areas with emphasis on native upland habitats, and the prevention of the net loss of listed species and their habitats. This shall be accomplished through the County Environmental Significant Lands Acquisition program, ongoing natural resource protection programs and the implementation of Land Development Code, including impact fees.
(Ord. No. 07-019, § B (Exh. A), 12-18-07)