SECTION FIVE: THE PLAN AND ACTION PROGRAM

Chapter Eleven: Recommended Actions

- Plan recommendations for the next ten years include the following:
  1) Acquisition of 1,800 acres of additional park and open space land throughout the County with emphasis on the Grand River Corridor.
  2) Development of an additional Lake Michigan park facility.
  3) Development of recreation facilities and trails at the Upper Macatawa Conservation Area including connections to other parts of the Macatawa Greenway.
  4) Provision of improved public access at undeveloped open space and park lands.
  5) Development of a nature center and expanded interpretive programming
  6) Development of access points and trail connections along the Grand River Greenway corridor
  7) Development of a major recreation activity area on the east side of the County

Chapter Twelve: Park System Financing and Capital Improvement Schedule

- Financing is crucial to improve and operate the County park system
- A diversified system of funding is to be pursued including a dedicated parks millage, general fund support, user fees, partnerships with the private sector, gifts & donations, and state and federal grants

Chapter Thirteen: Administration and Operations

- The park system has grown greatly since 1990 when the Parks Commission took operations from the County Road Commission
- The system seeks efficiency by using small numbers of highly capable full-time staff with an emphasis on seasonal workers and other part-time sources of labor.
- The capital improvement schedule anticipates future staffing needs based on proposed park additions and development.
Recommended actions have been identified for inclusion in the “2006 Ottawa County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan.” First, a review of general land acquisition goals and strategies is provided.

- **General Land Acquisition Goals and Strategies**

More specific land acquisition, park improvement and park planning needs are identified next with recommended actions divided into the following categories:

- Lake Michigan Coastal Greenway
- Grand River Greenway
- Pigeon River Greenway
- Macatawa River Greenway
- General Parks, Open Space Lands and Trails

Where applicable, each identified project is broken down into the following subcategories:

- Land Acquisition/Park Expansion
- Planning/Operational Strategies
- Park and Open Space Improvements

The chapter concludes with recommendations and proposed actions in the following two broad categories:

- Accessibility Improvements
- General Planning/Operational Strategies

It should also be noted that efforts of the Parks Commission will go beyond the recommended actions identified herein to address new issues as they arise.

**GENERAL LAND ACQUISITION GOALS AND STRATEGIES**

As presented in Chapter 9- Parks and Open Space Analysis, rapid growth in Ottawa County is having a profound effect on the county’s landscape, resulting in the loss of natural lands and open space. Significant progress has been made in recent years toward setting aside key lands to meet present and future park and open space needs. Use of the Parks Commission’s adopted acreage guideline of 20 acres per 1,000 population to calculate park and open space needs results
in a current (2004) demand for only 367 additional acres of park and open space land. However, the demand increases significantly to 2872 additional acres by 2020 based on population growth projections.

As presented previously in this plan, the county park system is seeking to acquire key waterfront lands and other properties with high quality natural features. These are the same lands under severe pressure for residential development. Ottawa County Parks must move quickly to acquire key lands and greenway connector properties while opportunities are still available. As noted in the discussion of green infrastructure, key park and open space lands should be put in place ahead of development. Therefore, the goal should be to meet 2020 acreage needs within the next ten years, if possible, to ensure that an interconnected system of parks and open spaces is in place to contribute to the health and quality of life of county residents.

Recognizing the difficulty in predicting the availability of key lands in specific locations, acreage goals are not broken down to specific greenways or geographic areas within the county. The goal is to expand the county park system by 2,872 acres over the next ten-plus years with sensitivity to geographic distribution of lands and facilities based on population demographics in the county.

**LAKE MICHIGAN COASTAL GREENWAY**

**A. General Greenway**

**Land Acquisition/Park Expansion:** The Parks Commission recognizes Lake Michigan beaches are the county’s top recreation attraction and the coastal dunes are one of its most unique natural resources. It will seek opportunities to acquire additional Lake Michigan access as per Commission goals including new park sites (recognizing general guideline of 500 feet minimum frontage), expansion of existing Lake Michigan park sites, and by exploring all other possible means of expanding lake access.

**Planning/Operational Strategies:** The Parks Commission will continue efforts to study the coastal corridor to better identify opportunities for habitat protection, public access to shoreline, trail linkages and achieve other greenway goals.

**Park and Open Space Improvements:** The Parks Commission will work with local governments, the Road Commission and other entities to improve and expand trail connections between greenway park sites. An example of a recent accomplishment in this regard was the successful completion of a demonstration road-shoulder-widening project by the Ottawa County Road Commission in 2004. Identified in the county’s Non-Motorized Pathway Study as a high priority project, the Parks Commission helped to coordinate funding for the project, which added an additional foot of width to a planned road shoulder project on Lakeshore Drive making the shoulder safer for biking. The widened shoulder now extends from Grand Haven past the Rosy Mound Natural Area to Kirk Park and makes this key lakeshore route more attractive for non-motorized transportation of all types.
B. North Ottawa Dunes

**Land Acquisition/Park Expansion:** The Parks Commission has acquired the 500-acre North Ottawa Dunes site as proposed with Trust Fund grant assistance to complete the $7.7 million project. It will also seek to expand the site with the possibility of adding a key 80-acre inholding by donation from Spring Lake Township.

**Planning/Operational Strategies:** A preliminary concept plan developed during the grant application process (Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund) is shown on Figure 11.1. The basic goal is to keep the site in a natural state while still allowing for public use. A system of natural surface trails for hiking and cross-country skiing, linking P.J. Hoffmaster State Park to North Beach Park, Coast Guard Park and Spring Lake Township property is proposed. The addition of parking areas and basic support facilities (i.e., picnicking, restrooms, etc.) is recommended in up to two locations as shown on the preliminary concept plan. Also proposed is a hard surface pathway linking a future access point on the Spring Lake Township property (and Dogwood Drive) to North Shore Drive. A detailed site master planning process with extensive community input will occur in 2006 with funding assistance from the Coastal Management Program through the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.

**Park and Open Space Improvements:** Steps should be taken in early 2006 to sign and secure the site to protect the resource and prevent inappropriate use. Recognizing that extensive public use pressure will likely exist soon after acquisition, an immediate emphasis should be placed on signing and trail planning including a dune top access stairs and boardwalk from North Beach Park to permit public use from existing public access points even prior to master plan completion.

C. North Beach Park

**Land Acquisition/Park Expansion:** Although bordered by cottages and homes with limited expansion opportunities, the Parks Commission will be alert for opportunities to add valuable lakefront and acreage to the park. With the pending acquisition of the contiguous North Ottawa Dunes property (500 acres), North Beach Park will soon function as a much larger park.

**Planning/Operational Strategies:** The Parks Commission should consider the need for master plan revisions in conjunction with North Ottawa Dunes master plan development. See current master plan graphic in Figure 11.2.

**Park and Open Space Improvements:** The park master plan should be implemented with a high priority on establishing pedestrian connections to the North Ottawa Dunes property and dune protection as per results of a 2004 dune study completed through Calvin College.

D. Rosy Mound Natural Area

**Land Acquisition/Park Expansion:** The Parks Commission should seek to expand the site where opportunities exist to acquire adjacent high quality dune property. The Commission should also seek to acquire adjacent reclaimed property following the completion of sand mining activities.
Planning/Operational Strategies: Maintain up-to-date park master plan. See current plan (Figure 11.3).

Park and Open Space Improvements: Basic park improvements were completed in 2004 with state grant assistance including the majority of work called for in the long-range park master plan. Additional park improvements to be completed in the future include additional trails and miscellaneous items as identified in the park master plan.

E. Kirk Park

Land Acquisition/Park Expansion: Although bordered by cottages and homes with limited expansion opportunities, the Parks Commission will be alert for opportunities to add valuable acreage to the park.

Planning/Operational Strategies: There is a need to update the Kirk Park master plan as shown in Figure 11.4. Consideration should be given to timeframes for improving an existing pedestrian easement linking Kirk Park to the Hiawatha Forest Open Space land located east of the park.

Park and Open Space Improvements: The Parks Commission will maintain park facilities in good repair and will undertake park improvements as identified in the updated park master plan. Consideration will be given to replacing or modifying the Kirk Park Lodge and possible addition of beach access stairs on the south side of the park.

F. Port Sheldon Site

Land Acquisition/Park Expansion: Expansion of the Port Sheldon site, which currently has only 200 feet of Lake Michigan frontage, through the purchase of adjacent Lake Michigan frontage represents a unique opportunity to establish a new county park on Lake Michigan with at least 500 feet of lakefront. The site includes good quality forested dunes would provide an attractive setting for public access to the shoreline and an opportunity to preserve additional critical dune habitat. The Parks Commission will seek to acquire adjacent natural duneland with approximately 430 feet of Lake Michigan frontage.

Planning/Operational Strategies: A long-range master plan for the site should be prepared if acquisition of the additional property is successful. A preliminary concept plan for the proposed park is shown in Figure 11.5.

Park and Open Space Improvements: Basic support facilities including parking, beach access, restrooms, etc. should be developed as soon as feasible following acquisition.

G. Tunnel Park

Land Acquisition/Park Expansion: The Parks Commission will seek to extend its lease agreement with Holland Board of Public Works for 200 feet of Lake Michigan frontage before it expires in 2009.

Planning/Operational Strategies: The Parks Commission will maintain an up-to-date master plan for the park. See current plan graphic in Figure 11.6.

Park and Open Space Improvements: Restroom improvements including the addition of changing rooms will be undertaken in the spring of 2006. Consideration should be given to
upgrading play equipment as per park the master plan.

H. Park 12

Land Acquisition/Park Expansion: Limited acquisition of key small parcels may be desirable to maximize the potential of the park master plan.

Planning/Operational Strategies: The current park master plan (see Figures 11.7, 11.8, 11.9 on pages 163-165 and Executive Summary in Appendix N) was completed in March 2004 following extensive public review and comment. In August of 2005, the 20th Circuit Court approved an agreement (Stipulation and Order) between Ottawa County and the West Michigan Park Association (WMPA), which clears the way for implementation of the master plan. The master plan calls for expanded public access to key park parcels including the approximate half mile of Lake Macatawa waterfront, 750 feet of Lake Michigan frontage and Mt. Pisgah with its scenic dune landscape and tremendous views of the surrounding area.

Park and Open Space Improvements: The Parks Commission has scheduled first phase improvements for Black Lake Avenue including road realignment, parking area, fishing dock and other work for completion in the spring of 2006. Bike path improvements along Ottawa Beach Road are also targeted for 2006. Some restoration work at Mt. Pisgah has begun and more guidance will come from a detailed study of the dune through Calvin College scheduled for completion in late 2005. Timeframes for implementation of other aspects of the plan are outlined in Chapter 12. Additional work is needed to identify sources of funding assistance for the various projects.

GRAND RIVER GREENWAY

A. General Greenway

Land Acquisition/Park Expansion: As indicated in Chapter 9, acquisition of land and easements is vital to implementation of the Grand River Greenway. The goal of acquiring 1,300 acres during the first parks millage (1998-2007) is on track with 1,294 acres acquired as of October 2005. The Parks Commission recognizes that the Grand River corridor is the largest greenway corridor in Ottawa County and has greatest potential for land acquisition. Ottawa County Parks will seek to expand the greenway through protection of key natural and recreational lands as identified in the greenway concept plan.

Planning/Operational Strategies: When future land acquisition efforts have succeeded in establishing a solid base for the greenway, a detailed Grand River greenway master plan should be developed which identifies trail linkages and unifies the overall greenway corridor. The planning process will include assessment of “water trails” or a system of canoe/kayak trails and access points within the river corridor. No specific timeframes are identified for undertaking the plan, which will be contingent upon land-acquisition efforts. See current greenway concept plan on page 124.

Park and Open Space Improvements: The concept for the Grand River Greenway calls for establishment of parking, picnic areas, trails (land and water), viewing decks and other park facilities on county-owned lands acquired for the greenway. In addition, a greenway non-motorized paved pathway is envisioned linking parks and open spaces located along the
greenway. Although completion of the all greenway trails is not likely feasible in the 10-year timeframe outlined in this plan, funds are earmarked for construction of initial trail segments. The long-range budget projection shown in Chapter 12 shows $3 million earmarked for projects to address park facility and pathway construction.

B. Connor Bayou

Land Acquisition/Park Expansion: Acquisition of a 95-acre forested riverfront property was completed in early 2005 with funding assistance from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. The acquisition raised the total acreage of the Connor Bayou site to 142 acres with nearly a mile of Grand River frontage. The new addition was acquired at a cost of $1,640,000 with the Trust Fund grant assistance of $823,000. The Parks Commission will seek to expand the Connor Bayou site if opportunities arise to acquire high quality natural land bordering the park.

Planning/Operational Strategies: Development of a master plan for the Connor Bayou site is a high priority to further develop the concept plan that has already been developed (Figure 11.10). Prior to master plan development, the Parks Commission should undertake a feasibility study to determine if a public campground would be feasible at this location. The 2000 Plan recommended exploring the feasibility of a public campground in the county park system but no specific site was recommended. The location and natural features of the Connor Bayou site are thought to be suitable for a campground but further study is needed to help guide the decision, due to the large investment required to develop a campground.

Park and Open Space Improvements: Initial improvements to permit public access were undertaken in the spring of 2005 including a small gravel parking area, informational/boundary signing development of some trails. Steps were also taken to secure structures at the site pending their review for use in the future park. More extensive improvements will await completion of the park master plan.

C. Robinson Township Flood-prone Lands

Land Acquisition/Park Expansion: The Ottawa County Planning Department has been working to assist Robinson Township in securing Hazard Mitigation Grant Assistance through the Federal Emergency Management Agency to purchase and remove flood-prone structures in the Van Lopik and Limberlost subdivisions. The award of federal grant funds totaling over $5,000,000 was announced in 2005. Ottawa County Parks was asked to help fund the 25% local match and manage the future public land as part of the Grand River Greenway. The Parks Commission responded that it would be willing to fund a portion of the local match, commensurate with the purchase of undeveloped floodplain property, if significant blocks of waterfront land are available. As of fall, 2005 there was significant uncertainty as to the level of cooperation from landowners to accept the buy-out. A total of approximately 60 landowners are involved in the two subdivisions, with most properties consisting of small lots with structures.

Planning/Operational Strategies: No planning for the potential land has occurred, although the potential for a riverfront trail/pathway has been noted.

Park and Open Space Improvements: To be determined in future pending successful acquisition.
CONNOR BAYOU
CONCEPTUAL MASTER PLAN
OTTAWA COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION
D. Crockery Creek Site

**Land Acquisition/Park Expansion:** A significant amount of prime natural land exists surrounding the 306-acre Crockery Creek Site. A concerted effort should be made to acquire additional land to expand this outstanding natural area. The Crockery Creek site is one of very few sites remaining in Ottawa County where lands adjacent to the existing park include high quality natural features combined with relatively large parcels.

**Planning/Operational Strategies:** Development of a park master plan for the Crockery Creek site should be undertaken when acquisition efforts to expand the site have been completed. A copy of the current site concept plan is shown in Figure 11.11. A detailed natural features inventory was completed in 2003, which is an important first step in the planning process. As with all park master plans, strong emphasis should be placed on obtaining public input into the planning process. Preliminary plans identified when the property was acquired called for possible canoe/kayak access to the Crockery Creek, trails for hiking and cross-country skiing, fishing access, archery deer hunting opportunities (currently being provided), picnicking, historic interpretation, and other possible uses.

**Park and Open Space Improvements:** Improvements consistent with the future master plan should be considered over the next 5-6 years. Prior to that time, a basic trail system should be developed originating at the existing parking area. The trails will help visitors discover the area and enjoy the site prior to completion of further park improvements. The existing historic farmhouse, barn and outbuildings should be stabilized and preserved (roofs, paint and basic repairs) at least until their value for historic interpretive use has been evaluated in the master planning process.

D. Jubb Bayou Property

**Land Acquisition/Park Expansion:** A 97-acre property, known as the Jubb Bayou Property, was acquired in late 2005. The property features just under a mile of riverfront with extensive frontage on Jubb Bayou. Most of the property is within the Grand River floodplain except for frontage on Oriole Drive with high ground overlooking the site.

**Planning/Operational Strategies:** No long-range plans currently exist for the site. Plans will be developed as planning for the Grand River Greenway corridor moves forward. No park improvements currently exist. A house will be removed from the site. An existing barn will be evaluated for historic importance and possibly retained or relocated. The Parks Commission’s short-term plan is to establish a small parking area and manage the site as an Open Space land with limited improvements.

E. Riverside Park

**Land Acquisition/Park Expansion:** Although opportunities appear limited, the Parks Commission will seek to expand Riverside Park if opportunities arise to acquire contiguous lands. Ottawa County should explore possible partnership opportunities with the State of Michigan for management of the riverfront peninsula extending east of Riverside Park. This property, part of the Bass River Recreation Area, appears to be landlocked and accessible only through county land.
Planning/Operational Strategies: The master plan (Figure 11.12) for this site should be reviewed and updated as needed, especially if park boundaries are expanded.

Park and Open Space Improvements: Park use has grown in recent years as visitors are attracted to the beauty and unique natural resources of the Grand River. With nearly a mile of riverfront and a large boat launch, Riverside Park has long been a primary public access point to the Grand River in central Ottawa County. Further implementation of the current park master plan is recommended in the near future to encourage more general recreational use of the park including modifications to park drives, expanded parking, expanded picnic areas including a new shelter, addition of a play area, improvements to a park hill for sledding use, and construction of riverfront trails and boardwalks for wildlife viewing and fishing access.

F. Eastmanville Bayou Site

Land Acquisition/Park Expansion: Ottawa County Parks owns approximately one mile of riverfront located east of 68th Avenue including a portion of the Eastmanville Bayou. It recently purchased an approximate 50-acre riverfront parcel on the west end of Eastmanville Bayou, which is contiguous with the state’s recently expanded Bass River Recreation Area. One-half mile of private riverfront land separates the two county properties. Ottawa County Parks recognizes the unique potential in this area to provide the public an opportunity to enjoy a large expanse of publicly owned shoreline along the Grand River in Ottawa County along with access to much of Eastmanville Bayou. With Riverside Park located adjacent to the Bass River Recreation Area, the potential exists for 6 miles of contiguous public shoreline, providing tremendous opportunities for natural resource protection and expanded public recreation opportunities.

Planning/Operational Strategies: Ottawa County should continue land acquisition efforts in the area and seek to partner with the state on the development of long-range plans for this area.

Park and Open Space Improvements: Park improvements to recently acquired county land on the west end of Eastmanville Bayou should wait until the completion of land acquisition efforts and development of a master plan for the area.

G. Community Haven

Land Acquisition/Park Expansion: This 229-acre site was dedicated for future park use by the Board of Commissioners on April 13, 2004. Recognizing that equestrians (one of the key user groups proposed for the site) require long-distance trails, an effort should be made to acquire adjacent acreage and/or easements suitable for horse trails.

Planning/Operational Strategies: Parks staff is exploring the development of an educational farm, equestrian facilities, large-group picnic facilities and other activities proposed for the site in the preliminary site master plan. The current plan (see Figure 11.13) is highly conceptual in nature and a full master plan will be undertaken with public input following further study to better define the vision for the site. It is also recommended that a strong effort be made to involve representatives of key proposed user groups to provide input prior to and during the master plan process. The Ottawa County Farm Bureau and Michigan
Figure 11.12
State University Extension have demonstrated strong interest and a willingness to consider partnering on the educational farm project. Numerous equestrian groups have shown equally strong support for the proposed horseback riding trails and facilities. The goal is to complete a park master plan for the site in 2006.

**Park and Open Space Improvements:** Use of the site as a satellite maintenance facility for county park operations in northeast Ottawa County began in late 2004 and basic improvements were completed to existing structures for this purpose. The bulk of the site is currently under lease to an area farmer for use as pastureland with tentative plans to continue through summer of 2006. Funds are targeted in 2006 to repair the barn, clean up the site, delineate a small parking area and provide signing to promote basic access to the site. The goal would be to open the site for public access in the fall of 2006. Major site improvements will occur following completion of the park master plan.

H. Ripps Bayou / Deer Creek Park

**Land Acquisition/Park Expansion:** With 161 acres including over a mile of Grand River frontage, the Ripps Bayou site offers a significant stretch of quality natural land along the Grand River. Public access is currently limited to visitors accessing the site by boat from the Grand River. A recent (late 2004) acquisition includes frontage on Leonard Road, but two creeks and extensive wetlands separate the site’s prime riverfront from areas accessible by vehicle. Further study is necessary to determine the best means of providing public access, although connecting west to Deer Creek Park or east to Lamont are obvious potential solutions pending availability of key lands.

**Planning/Operational Strategies:** Current efforts will focus on property signing and management to ensure existing users, including anglers, kayakers and archery hunters, respect adjacent private properties and do not negatively impact the natural features of the site. Formal master planning efforts will await completion of land acquisition efforts.

**Park and Open Space Improvements:** Short-term plans call for the site to remain unimproved pending expanded access.

I. Grand River Ravines

**Land Acquisition/Park Expansion:** A 68-acre property known as the Timmer Farm was acquired in 1999 in anticipation of acquiring an adjoining approximate 100-acre property with Grand River frontage. The 100-acre property, which has dramatic ravines and high quality natural communities, is identified as one of Ottawa County’s highest quality natural areas in the Natural Features Inventory of Ottawa County (1988). The property also links to an extensive natural ravine system owned by Grand Valley State University (GVSU) and preliminary plans called for a partnership with GVSU to offer a linked trail system through the area. Grant funds were requested and committed from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund for the 100-acre property but efforts to acquire the site were ultimately unsuccessful within the grant timeframes. The Parks Commission remains committed to acquiring the site in the future if the land becomes available. If ultimately successful in acquiring this 100-acre parcel, the potential to link the site with Grand River Park via trails should be explored and key parcels and/or easements acquired. Further trail expansion is
also envisioned with the goal of linking to the Bend Area and ultimately to Kent County trails and other recreation areas.

**Planning/Operational Strategies:** A preliminary concept plan for the site is included on page 176, Figure 11.14. A complete master plan will be undertaken if successful in acquiring the 100-acre parcel.

**Park and Open Space Improvements:** The existing 68-acre site is open for archery hunting. No park improvements currently exist. A house and several outbuildings are in the process of being removed from the site. A historic barn is being retained for possible use on this site or relocation to another park property – possibly Community Haven, for use with the proposed educational farm. The Parks Commission’s intention is to establish a small parking area and manage the site as an Open Space land with limited improvements until adjacent property is acquired.

**J. Grand River Park**

**Land Acquisition/Park Expansion:** The potential exists to expand this 162-acre park to add high quality natural land, buffer existing natural features within the park and to link the park via easements or direct ownership upstream to the Bend Area or downstream to the Grand River Ravines site and GVSU. Given the extremely high population growth in the immediate area and high quality natural riverfront lands adjacent to the park, an effort should be made to expand the park and create linkages to other greenway sites.

**Planning/Operational Strategies:** A full master plan has not been developed for Grand River Park since acquiring the park from Georgetown Township in 1999. At that time consideration was given to improving the 12-acre water body within the park to offer swimming. Recognizing the greater potential of the Bend Area for large-scale water-based recreation activities, a decision was made to delay master planning for Grand River Park until the goals of the site are better defined. Considering that the park is functioning well as currently designed, this plan recommends holding off work on a full master plan until the Parks Commission can progress further with the Bend Area Park and can better assess other nearby greenway opportunities.

**Park and Open Space Improvements:** The park functions well following basic site improvements by parks staff in 1999. Continued high quality maintenance and general site improvements should continue until further direction is obtained from a future park master plan.

**K. Bend Area / Eastern Inland Water Facility**

**Land Acquisition/Park Expansion:** Unique in its development, this project exists only as a master plan now, with Ottawa County owning no land with the exception of the Ottawa County Road Commission, which owns a key 85-acre property. The Parks Commission, with a goal to provide swimming and other water-based recreation opportunities in eastern Ottawa County plus expand the greenway, contacted the landowners, primarily gravel mining operations, and obtained agreement to work with the owners to develop a master plan for the site. The goal was to develop a plan which would result in a county park as the end use and serve as the mine reclamation plan for the entire site. Following completion of the Bend
Area Master Plan, Ottawa County’s next step is to work with the various owners to work out terms for acquiring the properties as mining operations wind down. This is a long-term project and projected timeframes for availability of properties vary from within the next one to two years up to 15 years. Negotiations are currently underway with two key landowners. **Planning/Operational Strategies:** The Bend Area Master Plan was completed in September 2000 and the plan graphic is shown in Figure 11.15. 

**Park and Open Space Improvements:** As properties are acquired or purchase agreements put in place, an early focus will be on site restoration and establishment of wetlands in previously mined areas as called for in the master plan. Improvements to provide basic access will occur as properties are acquired, but major facility development will wait until the acquisition of key properties is completed.

**PIGEON RIVER GREENWAY**

A. General Greenway

**Land Acquisition/Park Expansion:** The Parks Commission should seek to expand the greenway through protection of key natural and recreational lands as identified in the greenway concept plan. The Pigeon River is unique relative to the other greenway initiatives in that it is smaller in scope overall and the majority of desirable greenway expansion property is held by just a few very large private owners.

Consumers Energy owns nearly all riverfront land downstream of Pine Bend. Consumers currently cooperates with Ottawa County by leasing a small portion of its right-of-way to help facilitate trail connections at Pine Bend. Ottawa County has sought and will continue to seek further partnership opportunities with Consumers Energy. As described in the park master plan, the potential exists to provide trails along Consumers’ one and one-half mile stretch of natural riverfront land located between Pine Bend and Lakeshore Drive. If successful with Consumers Energy, the Parks Commission will also need to develop a cooperative arrangement with Port Sheldon Township through their Sheldon Landing Park located on Lakeshore Drive to connect land trails and canoe/kayak trails via the river. Even longer-range efforts to extend greenway public access beyond Lakeshore Drive to the Consumers Energy Pier Walkway is a goal that would provide a unique and highly attractive greenway trail experience of statewide significance.

Long-range potential also exists to work with the large landowner located upstream of Hemlock Crossing to provide a future greenway connection to Pigeon Creek Park. This tremendous expanse of natural land is being maintained in its natural state by current landowners and Ottawa County should be ready to step forward to ensure long-range protection of the greenway corridor if the opportunity arises. Donation of a small (8-acre) parcel immediately upstream of Hemlock Crossing (east of US-31) occurred in early 2005. Additional acquisition should be considered to ensure the future opportunity to link to the larger landholdings, should the opportunity arise in the future.

**Planning/Operational Strategies:** The existing master plan for the Pigeon River Greenway should be evaluated periodically and kept up-to-date.
B. Pigeon Creek Park (and adjacent Open Space land)

Land Acquisition/Park Expansion: As identified in the greenway concept plan, Pigeon Creek Park should be expanded if adjacent high-quality natural land becomes available. Although the park has more miles of trail (10) than any other county park, the addition of adjacent riverfront land to expand trail distance would be of great benefit to all key user groups including hikers, cross-country skiers, equestrians and mountain bikers.

Planning/Operational Strategies: The Parks Commission should maintain an up-to-date park master plan.

Park and Open Space Improvements: No immediate needs currently exist; the Parks Commission should continue to upgrade trails and facilities as necessary. Expansion of the lodge to meet space needs during peak demand periods on winter weekends is under consideration.

C. Hemlock Crossing/Pine Bend

Land Acquisition/Park Expansion: As indicated above, efforts to expand the greenway with additional riverfront both upstream and downstream via lease, easement or acquisition should occur to maximize the potential of this unique natural resource area.

Planning/Operational Strategies: The Parks Commission should maintain an up-to-date park master plan.

Park and Open Space Improvements: The Parks Commission should continue to implement the park master plan including additional trail development/enhancement, Weaver House renovation (currently in progress), and development of a nature center as discussed in Chapter 9, page 130.

Weaver House Restoration: The Weaver House restoration project, in progress and scheduled for completion in 2006, will improve the historic house and grounds for use in programs and by rental groups. Care is being taken to preserve the historic character of the structure while adding features to enable the house to function properly for public use. Two smaller cottages will be assessed and basic improvements completed to stabilize and preserve the structures until decisions are made regarding their potential for renovation.

Nature Center Development and Construction: The rationale for the development and construction of a nature center and interpretive building is discussed under Interpretation of Natural Features in Chapter 7: Activity Needs Analysis. The development of a nature center is included in the 2000 Master Plan for the Pigeon River Greenway at the access now called Hemlock Crossing. Phase I improvements of the Pigeon River Greenway project, not including the nature center, was completed in 2003 at a cost of $1,071,000. These improvements provide the basic infrastructure for the development of a nature center at Hemlock Crossing including an entrance, directional signs, paved entry drive, basic utilities, overflow parking, restrooms, kayak/canoe launch, trail head, 6 miles of nature trails and the many overlooks, trail signs and other features along the trails. The Pigeon River and the diversity of natural communities that are located in this 239-acre park provide an outstanding setting for a
nature center.

The primary costs in the development of a nature center at Hemlock Crossing include construction of the interpretive building, building furnishings and equipment, indoor/outdoor interpretive exhibits, construction of an additional parking area for nature center visitors and additional external features such as boardwalks, overlooks, outdoor classroom, signs and lighting. The Master Plan shows a Nature Center Floor Plan and Elevation for a 7,200 sq. ft. interpretive building and an additional 30-car parking lot with bus turn-around. The Master Plan shows a preliminary cost of $1,161,000 which does not include most building furnishings, equipment or interpretive exhibits. The building alone is estimated at $864,000 ($120/sf). A comparable interpretive building recently constructed at the Love Creek Nature Center (Berrien County Parks) cost $722,000 for a 5,400 sq. ft. building ($134/sf).

When completed, the nature center would provide facilities for the interpretive staff to plan and conduct interpretive programs. Although many programs would be conducted at Hemlock Crossing, the overall interpretive program would still include programs at other sites in the county parks system. The interpretive building would also serve as a clearinghouse for information on all Ottawa County Parks and other park properties. The operation of a nature center would require additional interpretive staff. The Parks Reorganization Report calls for the addition of one full time naturalist (see chapter 13, page 205). Part-time, seasonal staff and/or volunteers may also be required as the program develops.

MACATAWA RIVER GREENWAY

A. General Greenway

**Land Acquisition/Park Expansion:** As indicated in Chapter 9 (page 131), acquisition of land and easements is key to implementation of the Macatawa River Greenway. The goal of acquiring 450 acres during the first parks millage (1998-2007) has been exceeded, with 559 acres acquired as of October 2005. With its goal to expand acreage in light of rapid population growth, Ottawa County Parks will seek to further expand the greenway through protection of key natural and recreational lands as identified in the greenway concept plan.

**Planning/Operational Strategies:** Ottawa County Parks will continue to partner with the Macatawa Greenway Partnership in the development of long-range greenway plans. Further study is needed to analyze natural resource features along the river corridor and assess land acquisition potential. The potential for new county park sites and trails linking greenway sites will be evaluated.

**Park and Open Space Improvements:** The concept for the Macatawa River Greenway is to preserve key blocks of land and establish trails, picnic areas, and other park facilities to provide access to the river corridor. In addition, a greenway non-motorized paved pathway is envisioned linking parks and open spaces within the greenway corridor. Although completion of the entire greenway trail is likely not feasible in the 10-year timeframe outlined in this plan, funds are earmarked for the initial trail segment in the Upper Macatawa Conservation Area. Note that the review and discussion of the Park 12 Property, county park property with frontage on both Lake Macatawa and Lake Michigan, is included in this plan.
under the Lake Michigan Coastal Greenway (see page 138).

B. Upper Macatawa Conservation Area

Land Acquisition/Park Expansion: The potential exists to expand the Upper Macatawa Conservation Area from its existing 549 acres up to approximately 700 acres. The resulting park would be one of the largest in the county park system, offering valuable resource protection and public recreation benefits in a rapidly urbanizing area. Lands targeted for acquisition are shown on the greenway concept plan (see page 133) and include an approximate 80-acre Road Commission parcel plus additional riverfront and floodplain property.

Planning/Operational Strategies: Development of a master plan for the Upper Macatawa Conservation area in 2005 has begun with funding assistance from the Macatawa Greenway Partnership, a non-profit group dedicated to preserving land and establishing a greenway in the Macatawa watershed. Completion of the park master plan is anticipated in early 2006. The plan recognizes the Upper Macatawa Conservation Area as a unique project which seeks to accomplish four basic goals including 1) expand park and open space land and outdoor recreation opportunities, 2) improve water quality, 3) expand flood storage, and 4) preserve, expand and enhance wildlife habitat.

Park and Open Space Improvements: Significant restoration work has been completed at the Upper Macatawa property from 2003-2005. Native grasslands and shallow water wetlands have been installed and tree planting has been completed along riparian edges. Additional restoration is in the design stages for 2006 with funding assistance from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality through the Clean Michigan Initiative with a primary goal of water quality improvements.

A project to provide public access to the site in the form of parking areas and trails is also scheduled for 2006. The Parks Commission has targeted $450,000 toward first phase improvements with priorities to be determined in the master plan process.

Restoration of the site is a key aspect of the Upper Macatawa Conservation Area to achieve goals.

C. Macatawa River Adams Street Access

Land Acquisition/Park Expansion: The Parks Commission will seek to expand this 10-acre site through the acquisition of adjacent natural riverfront land.

Planning/Operational Strategies: A conceptual plan for the site was developed in 2005 (Figure 11.16). The site is envisioned as a river access point for anglers and kayakers and as a staging area for bicyclists riding the future greenway trail. Some limited opportunities for picnicking will also be provided.

Park and Open Space Improvements: Development of parking area and other basic support facilities is scheduled for early 2006.
Figure 11.16
GENERAL PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS

A. General Parks and Open Space Lands

**Land Acquisition/Park Expansion:** In addition to its focus on the coastal and river-based greenways, the Parks Commission is interested in acquiring additional land for park and open space purposes where suitable natural resource features exist in the county.

**Planning and Operational Strategies:** Park master plans for non-greenway parks should be kept up-to-date as guides for expansion and improvements. Other studies (e.g. Natural Features Inventory of Ottawa County) as well as other sources of information should be utilized to seek out properties with unique natural resource features suited for inclusion in the county park and open space system.

B. Grose Park

**Land Acquisition/Park Expansion:** Although opportunities have diminished due to recent development near the park’s easterly boundary, to expansion of Grose Park through the acquisition of adjacent natural land should continue to be explored.

**Planning/Operational Strategies:** An up-to-date park master plan should be maintained for the park (current park master plan approved in 1994 – see Figure 11.17).

**Park and Open Space Improvements:** A major park renovation project was completed in 2000 which upgraded virtually all facilities in the park. A new maintenance garage, designed to also house maintenance needs for the Musketawa Trail, was completed in 2004.

C. Musketawa Trail

**Land Acquisition/Park Expansion:** The approximate 10-mile segment of the Musketawa Trail located in Ottawa County is owned by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and managed by Ottawa County Parks through an operating agreement approved in 2002. Ottawa County Parks owns an 8-acre parcel, acquired via donation, located adjacent to the trail in Wright Township. Consideration should be given to purchase of key parcels along the trail corridor which would preserve key natural lands and enhance the experience of trail users. A good example is the Marne Bog (see below) which has potential to both preserve unique land and provide and interesting and educational outlet for users of the trail.

Ottawa County Parks should also play a lead role in seeking easements or land purchases necessary to permit the extension of the Musketawa Trail east from its current terminus near Marne to link with the White Pine Trail in Kent County. This project is supported by the West Michigan Trails and Greenway Coalition, a regional trails organization, which is seeking to expand and link key trails in the region. Funding for the trail connection was approved as part of a new federal transportation bill in 2005.

**Planning/Operational Strategies:** The Musketawa Trail corridor in Ottawa County should be studied to identify key natural lands for possible acquisition. Further study is also needed to determine the optimum route for extending the trail east to Kent County. A detailed study should be included to assess the availability of lands/easements with costs and benefits identified for various alternatives.
**Park and Open Space Improvements:** Another issue requiring further study is the impact of snowmobile studs on the asphalt trail surface. Currently the trail surface is being degraded by the carbide snowmobile studs used during periods of inadequate snow depths. The gouges in the trail surface will soon begin to limit use by rollerbladers, and eventually bikes, if a solution to the problem is not found. Efforts to restrict snowmobile use to periods with adequate snow base have had limited success. Experimentation is also occurring by DNR officials to test new asphalt/stone mixes to determine whether a top course of asphalt can be installed which will withstand the wear and tear of carbide studs. Regardless, resurfacing of the entire trail may be necessary in the relatively near future to ensure the popularity of the trail in the future.

**D. Marne Bog**

**Land Acquisition/Park Expansion:** The current 40-acre bog property was acquired via donation and has no public access. Efforts should focus on acquisition of land or an easement to provide public access to existing public land, acquisition of the remainder of the bog and acquisition of buffer land around the bog.

**Planning/Operational Strategies:** Any master planning will follow the completion of land acquisition efforts. Planning efforts should be coordinated with the Musketawa Trail, given the proximity of the two park sites.

**Park and Open Space Improvements:** Any site improvements will obviously follow the completion of land acquisition and site planning. The Parks Commission recognizes the key value of this site is to preserve it as a natural area and envisions future improvements to be limited to possible trail/boardwalk, viewing platform and interpretive displays.

**E. Spring Grove Park**

**Land Acquisition/Park Expansion:** The area surrounding Spring Grove Park is rapidly suburbanizing and potential park expansion opportunities are diminishing. The Spring Grove Park master plan identifies the desirability of acquiring approximately 30 acres of wetlands and uplands adjacent to the park. The acquisition would protect the integrity of the wetlands as an important natural feature, expand open space land in Ottawa County and permit interpretation of the resource to park visitors.

**Planning/Operational Strategies:** An up-to-date park master plan should be maintained for the park (current park master plan approved in 1994).

**Park and Open Space Improvements:** The Spring Grove Park Phase II improvement project would continue with development items identified in the 1994 park master plan as shown on page 186, **Figure 11.18**. The focus of improvements would be expanded recreation opportunities in the east half of the park which currently receives little use. A new parking lot would be constructed along with a new picnic shelter. Other improvements would include ball field improvements and development of trails and interpretive facilities. The project would significantly expand picnic opportunities in an area of high demand.
F. Hager Park

**Land Acquisition/Park Expansion:** With subdivisions now nearly surrounding the park, opportunities for park expansion appear limited. The Parks Commission should, however, remain alert to opportunities to expand the park boundaries, given the high use and popularity of Hager Park.

**Planning/Operational Strategies:** The current Hager Park Master Plan, updated in 2002, is included on page 188, **Figure 11.19.** The plan should be reviewed and updated periodically. Restoration measures installed at Hager Creek, a small stream running through the park, should also be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis to help ensure long-term success in controlling bank erosion and protecting water quality. A land management plan should be developed for Hager Park and possible habitat enhancement projects undertaken to improve habitat within the park (e.g. consider planting native grassland in the arboretum section of the park).

**Park and Open Space Improvements:** Hager Park Phase II Improvements completed in 2003 and completion of the Hager Creek Restoration Project (2003) were major enhancements to Hager Park. Future improvements should focus on projects identified in the park master plan including rental facility enhancements, trail improvements and establishment of a trailhead(s) within the park to better orient visitors to park trails, expanded parking, establishment of a wedding gazebo with related hard-surface trails, and other improvements identified in the plan.

F. Park Township Landfill Site

The Park Township Landfill Site is a 300-acre county-owned property located in Section 15 of Park Township. The property is the site of the former Ottawa County landfill which occupies 40 acres of the site. The 40 acres previously used for landfill purposes is a fenced mound in the center of the 300-acre parcel. The remaining 260 acres is heavily wooded, including a mixture of pine plantations and beech-maple forest. This land is developed with trails and is heavily used by the public for hiking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing and other recreation activities. The trails were originally developed in coordination with Park Township which assists with management of the property on an informal basis.

A groundwater contamination problem related to the former landfill is being addressed by groundwater treatment. Ottawa County and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) recently reached an agreement for long-term management of the site which calls for installation of a new clay cap and revisions to the groundwater purification system, with changes to the purge wells and water filtration plant located on nearby county property. The Parks and Recreation Commission has long recognized the park and open space value of this large property and has expressed interest in improving and managing the site in the county park system following the resolution of environmental issues. Based on this past interest, park staff have been consulted regarding issues relating to the process of capping the landfill. A large quantity of sand is required for the project which would most economically be obtained from the site. Park planning staff has provided recommendations for protecting native vegetation (remove primarily red pines) during this process and create a large wetland feature on the property which will provide valuable wildlife habitat. Clay stockpile areas
will also require tree removal which will again be limited to red pines. These cleared areas could then function as run-outs for future sledding hills which will be shaped during the landfill recapping process. The goal is to use native grasses and wildflowers to re-vegetate the top of the landfill which will then be open to the public with trails and overlooks. If dedicated as a county park in the future, Ottawa County Parks will upgrade trails and parking areas and provide restrooms and other site amenities.

The Parks and Recreation Commission feels strongly that the Park Township Landfill site is a valuable open space property which will increase in importance as the Holland area continues to grow. The landfill site is located in a high growth area of the county and it is a very large site (given its proximity to the urban area) which has natural features (i.e. woodlands and rolling terrain) capable of supporting many types of outdoor recreation. The Parks Commission will recommend to the Board of Commissioners that the property be dedicated for county park use and that it be authorized to develop a long-range plan for the site emphasizing continued trail uses with improved support facilities.

G. Open Space Lands

In addition to Open Space Lands previously identified and discussed as part of the Grand River Greenway (i.e., Ripps Bayou, Eastmanville Bayou site and Timmer Farm), Ottawa County Parks manages six (6) additional inland sites not located within the identified greenway corridors. They are listed below and include a total of 1185 acres. Further information is available in the Recreation Inventory - Chapter 4, page 46.

- Robinson Forest: 80 acres, Robinson Township
- Johnson Street Wildlife Management Area: 50 acres, Robinson Township
- Hiawatha Forest: 365 acres, Grand Haven Township
- Port Sheldon Natural Area: 440 acres, Port Sheldon Township
- Van Buren Street Dunes: 120 acres, Port Sheldon Township
- Pigeon Creek Forest: 130 acres, Olive Township

**Land Acquisition/Park Expansion:** Each site should be studied to determine if opportunities exist to acquire adjacent lands or inholdings consisting of good quality natural lands. Efforts to acquire key lands should occur following completion of site plans.

**Planning/Operational Strategies:** Recognizing that many of the properties have red pine plantations that require management, initial work has begun to create forest management plans for each of the properties. Because the Parks Commission’s overall goal is promote the natural character and diversity of each site, the Commission should work to develop broader natural resource management plans for each property and take steps to enhance the habitat value of each site in accordance with these plans.

Relative to recreational use, the Parks Commission’s primary goal with these properties is to provide the public opportunity for access to less structured outdoor recreation environments. The Commission also recognizes that growth and development of lands surrounding Open Space Lands puts pressure on these sites to accommodate additional public use. Basic site improvements are needed to enhance public use of these areas. Guidelines developed in the original Open Space Management Plan state that improvements should
promote “safe non-intensive recreation uses with an emphasis on activities that require minimal facility development and have limited impact on the natural character of the land.”

**Park and Open Space Improvements:** Improvements proposed for each of the sites include provision of gravel roadside parking areas, orientation signs with property maps, rules, etc. and construction of vehicle control barriers. Basic plans have been completed for each site with a goal of completing these improvements in early 2006.

**ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS**

Chapter Eight identifies accessibility improvements required within the county park system to meet compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The scope of required improvements has gradually been reduced as older parks have been renovated in recent years. Grose Park and Spring Grove Park are prime examples of parks where major renovations and improvements in recent years have greatly expanded accessibility for all users. The Parks Commission has placed a high priority on accessible facilities which is reflected in the development of new parks in recent years including Hemlock Crossing / Pine Bend and the Rosy Mound Natural Area. Both of these parks offer up-to-date accessibility features and demonstrate a sincere effort to provide a complete full range of experiences within the park for people of all abilities.

A Transition Plan follows (Table 11.1, Page 191) which identifies proposed timeframes for completion of all identified modification required within the county park system.

**GENERAL PLANNING/OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES**

**A. High Quality Maintenance and Operations**

The importance of providing the highest quality maintenance and operations has been a top goal of the Park Commission since its establishment. The challenge to maintain high standards in an expanding park system is particularly difficult. Special funding sources available for capital outlay expenses are not available for operational costs and the tendency is to fall behind in operational capacity. Through this strategy, the Parks Commission recognizes the difficulty in maintaining high operational standards and identifies the need to properly plan for operational support before proceeding with development.

**B. Security**

Maintaining a safe, family atmosphere within the County Park System is an important concern of the Parks Commission. The Parks and Recreation Commission receives excellent support and cooperation from the Ottawa County Sheriff Department on all issues related to enforcement in the county park system. Although park user surveys, comment cards and records of incidents within the parks do not suggest a significant problem with security, the Commission would like to be proactive in addressing security-related issues.
### Table 11.1 ADA Transition Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>DEER CREEK PARK</th>
<th>GRAND RIVER PARK</th>
<th>KIRK PARK</th>
<th>PIGEON CREEK PARK</th>
<th>RIVERSIDE PARK</th>
<th>SPRING GROVE PARK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Add barrier free parking signs. $1,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>Add accessible route signs. $1,000</td>
<td>Add barrier free parking signs. $1,000</td>
<td>Add three regular and one van accessible BF parking spaces and signs. $7,500</td>
<td>Add barrier free parking signs. $1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Add accessible route to restrooms. $3,750</td>
<td>Add accessible ramp into play area. $400</td>
<td>Add accessible picnic area &amp; modify one existing area. $5,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>Add two accessible picnic areas adjacent to paved path. $5,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Add two accessible picnic areas connected to paved path. $5,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>Construct accessible ramp to lodge. $12,500</td>
<td></td>
<td>Install accessible route to shelter and new accessible parking. $3,200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Add accessible picnic areas. $2,500</td>
<td>Modify dock to accommodate two barrier free fishing stations. $4,000</td>
<td>Modify lodge restrooms to unisex. Existing girl's room to be BF. $12,500</td>
<td></td>
<td>Provide accessible Grand River viewing area. $12,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Add barrier free parking at boat launch. $5,000</td>
<td>Eliminate barriers at boat launch dock. $1,250</td>
<td>Replace lodge doors to meet accessibility standards. $6,250</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Add accessible play equipment. $32,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>Construct accessible route from shelter &amp; path to play area. $3,750</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Park rules and regulations were updated in 1994 which increased the ability of law enforcement officials to address problems within the parks. The new rules also permit selected park staff to write appearance tickets for park rule infractions.

Ongoing efforts should be made to analyze and address security-related issues within the County Park System. The Parks Commission will continue to actively seek advice and input from the Ottawa County Sheriff Department, the Ottawa County Prosecuting Attorney and other law enforcement officials regarding methods for maintaining a high level of security within the Park System.

C. Maintain Up-to-date Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan

The Parks Commission recognizes that the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan is an evolving document which must be updated on a regular basis to reflect changing needs and opportunities. The Commission will monitor the plan and prepare updates as needed.

D. Land Management Plan Development and Implementation

In order to be good stewards of parks-managed properties, the Parks Commission and staff will develop and begin implementing a comprehensive Land Management Plan. This plan will be science-based and will be reviewed periodically by area resource people that are experts in different areas of land management. The Land Management Plan will include, but is not limited, to the following strategies.

**Forest Management:** Along with district foresters, Parks has conducted forest inventories on several key properties. This inventory will be continued. The plan will make recommendations on various forest management options that focus on the protection and management of the diversity of flora and fauna in parks forests.

**Wildlife Management:** In addition to continuing the ongoing collection of data on the diversity and distribution of wildlife in the parks system, the plan will address any perceived wildlife problems and make recommendations to address these problems. The plan will also make recommendations on managing for specific species.

**Invasive Species:** Invasive plant and animals are a serious threat and problem for Ottawa County Parks. Parks staff has been targeting selected exotic species since 2000, primarily garlic mustard, purple loosestrife and spotted knapweed. This plan will address the long list of invasive species and make recommendations on how best to control them. In addition to invasives that are already present, parks must be prepared for looming problems including beech bark disease and emerald ash borer.

**Natural Feature Inventories:** In order to provide meaningful management strategies, it is important to continue to conduct accurate natural feature inventories of parks properties, especially flora. Any listed species must be protected.
Restoration: The restoration of natural communities on parks property is becoming more frequent. Examples are the native grassland restoration at Grand River Park, Hager Creek restoration and wetland restoration at the Upper Macatawa Conservation Area. This plan will identify areas that would benefit from restoration in the parks system.

Monitoring: Monitoring is necessary to evaluate the success of many land management requirements. When applicable, monitoring will be built into various projects and programs.

E. Non-Motorized Pathways

The Parks Commission assisted the Ottawa County Planning Commission in funding and overseeing the development of the Ottawa County Non-Motorized Pathways Study, completed in April of 2002 (see Executive Summary in Appendix J). The purpose of the study was to create a plan to assist local governments in Ottawa County in developing an interconnected countywide non-motorized pathway system.

Further study and review is needed to determine what role, if any, the Ottawa County Parks Commission has in the non-motorized pathway system. Currently the Planning Commission is taking a leadership role in the establishment of a support organization to develop strategies to implement the recommendations of the study.

As noted previously in this plan, Ottawa County Parks provided financial support for implementation of one of the recommendations of the Non-Motorized Pathway Study, the widening of the road shoulder along an approximate 8-mile stretch of Lakeshore Drive that includes the Rosy Mound Natural Area and Kirk Park. In making the decision to provide funding assistance for this project, the Parks Commission recognized the importance of the project as a demonstration project for assessing the importance and public support for widened road shoulders for non-motorized transportation purposes. It also considered the bike access to the several county parks located along Lakeshore Drive and the consideration that the opportunity to add a wider paved shoulder was dependent on Road Commission improvements to Lakeshore Drive which were already scheduled.

The Parks Commission, as demonstrated through the above-referenced project and its strong support for and involvement in the operation and management of the Musketawa Trail is highly supportive of expanding non-motorized pathways in Ottawa County. Because of their regional significance, the Parks Commission recognizes the importance of taking a lead role in the establishment of non-motorized trails along within the greenway corridors, specifically for the Grand and Macatawa Rivers. It will seek to partner with local units of government in the development of these non-motorized greenway trails.
The previous chapter outlines the various actions which form the basis of the 2006 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan and provides some indication relative to the priority of the proposed actions. This chapter will examine potential sources of financing for the Park System, outline a proposed capital improvement schedule, and finally, recommend strategies for completing proposed actions.

PARK SYSTEM FINANCING

Generating the necessary financial resources to improve and operate the County Park System is a crucial task. Voter approval of the dedicated millage for County Parks in 1996 was a monumental event with regard to financing the park system. However, the Parks Commission feels strongly it should seek to diversify its funding support to as great an extent as possible. In this regard, the Parks Commission has outlined the following funding strategy:

A diversified funding strategy for the County Park System should include the following elements:

- A dedicated parks millage of one-third (0.33) mill as a cornerstone to provide funding for expansion of parks and open space lands and their operation and maintenance.
- Continued General Fund support for park operations at current levels to support existing lands and facilities.
- Continued emphasis on user fees where appropriate.
- Development of partnerships with the private sector and other units of government whenever possible.
- Concerted efforts to solicit gifts and donations and establishment of a Parks Foundation or Endowment Fund to provide a vehicle for corporate and other potential donors to provide long-term funding assistance.
- Continued aggressive efforts to secure state and federal grant funds.

It is the intention of the Parks Commission to investigate all opportunities for generating acquisition, development and operation funds. The following briefly reviews some of the key alternative funding sources which the Parks Commission will explore.
General Fund Support

Since its inception, property taxes through the County's General Fund Budget have been a principal means of support for the County Parks budget. The financing proposal proposed to the Board of Commissioners in 1996, which included the request to seek millage support called for continued General Fund support. General Fund support has continued since that time frozen at 1997 levels ($530,000) and the Parks Commission is hopeful that General Fund support can continue in the future. However, as a non-mandated County function, the Parks Commission recognizes it is particularly vulnerable to cutbacks during periods of financial difficulty for the County. In addition, the Parks Commission recognizes that the potential is limited for a significant increase in General Fund support to fund new initiatives. It should be noted, however, that a significant General Fund contribution of $965,000 to land acquisition in the Upper Macatawa Conservation Area occurred in 2003, demonstrating that the Board of Commissioners is willing to provide extra funding assistance in unique circumstances.

User Fees

Surveys of Ottawa County residents indicate support for user fees as a preferred method of paying for parks and recreation services. Currently users of Ottawa County Parks pay motor vehicle parking fees at the four Lake Michigan parks (North Beach, Kirk, Tunnel, and Rosy Mound) and a boat launch fee at Riverside Park. Fee revenues from these source totaled slightly over $200,000 in 2005.

User fees are also charged for facility reservations (i.e., picnic shelters, picnic buildings, etc.) available at many of the parks. This source of user fee support generated over $49,000 in 2005, which included over 700 individual reservations serving approximately 50,000 people.

In 2004, total user fees of about $233,000 made up approximately 17.5% of the Commission's operating budget. The potential to increase revenues from user fees would require either increased fees or implementation of fees for new areas or facilities.

Fees are increased periodically by the Commission based on surveys of park users and research into fee levels in surrounding communities. A formal fee policy would be beneficial to help guide future decision-making regarding fees. The potential to implement motor vehicle parking fees at additional parks should be evaluated on a site-by-site basis. Most do not have the high level of use required to make fees cost-effective, but Hager Park, Riverside, and Grose Park should be evaluated periodically.

It should be noted that while user fees are an important source of park revenues, the Commission should not over-rely on user fees as it establishes plans and financial strategies. User fees can effectively offset a portion of operating costs, but are not a realistic source of capital improvements funds.
Millage

Certainly one of the most reliable sources of funds is that of a voted millage for parks and recreation services. The dedicated County Parks millage of 1/3 mill approved in 1996 provides an assured source of annual funding for a 10-year period. Millage revenues began in 1998 and will run through 2007. The great strides made by the Parks Commission in recent years would not have been possible without the millage funding. See Appendix P for a detailed list of accomplishments. The ability to use millage funds to leverage grant funds and private donations has been key to the Parks Commission’s success.

The 2004 County Resident survey showed continued strong support for the parks mileage, with 75% of those polled expressing support for the millage and 79% expressing a willingness to vote in favor of renewing the millage. Based on the importance of the 1/3 mill levy in funding both new initiatives and ongoing operations, the Parks Commission will seek Board of Commissioner approval to place a proposal on the ballot to extend the millage for an additional 10-year period.

General Obligation Bonds

Under Michigan State Law, county governments can issue General Obligation Bonds against anticipated tax receipts. The advantage for park and recreation development is that larger amounts of funds can be committed to the development of a major facility. A wide variety of needs can be addressed immediately and anticipated increases in the cost of acquisition and development can be circumvented by early action. The disadvantages to issuing general obligation bonds are that they commit the County to a long payback (usually 15 to 20 years). This involves interest charges and places financial obligations on future generations.

Revenue Bonds

In some instances, recreation facilities (e.g., campgrounds, golf courses, etc.) will generate revenue for operation and maintenance costs and enough extra to pay back principal and interest on revenue bonds. Before this method of generating revenue is chosen, it is essential to develop a detailed analysis of estimated cost and income for the particular project.

Gifts and Donations

Gifts to the Parks and Recreation Commission in the form of land, money or other resources can play a vital role in the development of the park system. The North Ottawa Dunes Acquisition with projected donations of $1,350,000 is a prime example. Donations of land have also been important in establishing both the Pigeon and Grand River Greenways. The Parks Commission should seek and encourage gifts of land, money, materials, and talent from local residents, service organizations, businesses and industries. In 2005, the Friends of Ottawa County Parks group was established with 501(c)(3) status and is authorized to accept gifts and bequests for funding special projects in the county park system.
Private Partnership

Opportunities for joint projects with the private sector for golf course, marina or other developments on County land should be continuously explored. Partnerships of this type could be structured to provide a steady revenue flow to the County while also providing recreation opportunities to the public. Currently the Commission realizes revenues from a lease to a private marina on the Park 12 property and from vending concession leases at the Lake Michigan parks.

Support Organizations

In 2005 a support group named Friends of Ottawa County Parks formed and obtained non-profit status. The organization has sponsored numerous activities to build awareness and support for the county park system and has provided support for Parks Commission programs. An agreement between the Parks Commission and the Friends outlines the relationship between the two organizations and, in accordance with that agreement, the Parks Commission should support and seek to maximize the potential of the organization. The Friends can play a key role in assisting the Parks Commission by sponsoring activities, recruiting volunteers and through fundraising initiatives. The potential should be explored for the Friends to play a key role in future fundraising activities, possibly in conjunction with or in place of a future parks foundation.

Public Grant Programs

There are a variety of competitive public grant programs which are aimed at assisting communities in the development of area recreation facilities. The availability of specific programs and funding levels varies widely from year to year depending on the economy and funding cycles. Below is an overview of selected programs and their general guidelines:

Land and Water Conservation Fund: This federal funding program is administered through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and provides a 50% matching grant for projects that meet the outdoor recreational needs of the County. The funds can be used for acquisition, design and development of land and outdoor recreation facilities, such as restrooms, shelters, signs, trails, parking lots, tennis courts, swimming pools, golf courses, etc. Aside from ice skating rinks and indoor pools, major building complexes are presently not eligible.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program is the primary source of federal grant monies in the State of Michigan for the acquisition and development of parks. Although cutbacks at the federal level have substantially reduced the amount of LWCF funds available statewide, significant increases in appropriations are under consideration at the present time and in the future this funding source may provide a major source of capital outlay assistance for Parks Commission projects.

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund: The purpose of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) is to acquire land or rights to land for recreational uses or for protection because of its environmental importance or scenic beauty, and to develop public recreational facilities.
Funds from the program are derived from oil, gas and other mineral lease and royalty payments. The primary goals of the program include protection of the state's natural recreational resources, public access to water bodies, improvement or urban recreation opportunities, and stimulation of the state's economy through recreation related tourism and community revitalization.

There are no minimum or maximum dollar amounts for acquisition projects although development projects have a minimum funding of $15,000.00 and maximum funding of $500,000. All proposals for local grants must include a local match of at least 25 percent of the total project cost.

The MNRTF is currently the primary source of grant funds in the state with approximately $20 million available annually statewide on a competitive basis. Approximately 25% of the total is granted to development projects with the majority of the funds devoted to land acquisition.

The MNRTF has been a key source of funding assistance for Ottawa County Parks as the park system has evolved over the past two decades. Many of the Parks Commission’s key projects including the Rosy Mound Natural Area, North Ottawa Dunes, Crockery Creek property acquisition and the Pigeon River Greenway relied heavily on the MNRTF for assistance, involving both acquisition and development funds.

Michigan Clean Michigan Initiative/Recreation Bond Program: Michigan voters approved the Clean Michigan Initiative Bond Proposal in November of 1998 which provided funds for a variety of environmental and natural resource needs in Michigan. Funds from the bond program are primarily expended, but a $500,000 grant through the water quality section of the program will play a key role in funding the second phase of restoration at the Upper Macatawa Conservation Area in 2006. The potential exists for future bond initiatives at the state level to provide additional capital outlay assistance for expanding and improving the county park system. The Parks Commission should be proactive in seeking support for such initiatives through involvement in state associations.

Coastal Management Program: The Coastal Program Unit of the Department of Natural Resources provides grants to qualifying coastal units of government.

Objectives of the Coastal Management Program Unit include:
- Creation and enhancement of public access in coastal areas.
- Redevelopment of deteriorating urban waterfronts and ports.
- Protection of sensitive natural resources.
- Control of development in erosion or flood hazard areas.
- Preservation and restoration of historic coastal features.

In addition to complying with the Program objectives, all projects must be located within the state's coastal boundary that is generally considered to include those areas within 1,000 feet inland from the ordinary high water mark of the Great Lakes. Requests for funding may not exceed $50,000 and applicants must provide an equal amount as match that may be in the form
of in-kind services, donations, or cash. The Coastal Management Program has provided assistance with numerous planning and small construction projects at the Parks Commission coastal parks and will assist with funding for a master plan for the North Ottawa Dunes property in 2006.

**Michigan Non-game Wildlife Fund:** The Wildlife Division of the DNR administers the Non-game Wildlife Program which provides limited funds for projects addressing non-game wildlife species and their general environments. Specifically, the goals of the Program are:

- Increase people's enjoyment, understanding, and appreciation of precious wildlife and plant resources.
- Preserve populations of desirable non-game wildlife species and their habitat.

Grants of up to $4,000 are provided to local units of government, universities, private individuals and other parties who may meet the basic eligibility requirements including the demonstration of project need and expected year around use and programming of the facility where a facility is being proposed. Applicants are expected to provide at least 50% match of funds being requested.

**Michigan Inland Fisheries Cooperative Grants Program:** The Michigan Inland Fisheries Cooperative Grants Program was established in 1986 and is administered through the MDNR, Fisheries Division. Operating on an appropriation of $200,000 annually, the program is intended to assist local units of government, conservation-related organizations, and individuals wanting to undertake projects that contribute to the enhancement of Michigan's inland fishing opportunities.

Specific criteria that must be met in order for a project to be considered for a fisheries grant include the following:

- Project must be consistent with DNR Fisheries Division management goals, policies and management objectives.
- Project must have public support.
- Project must be initiated and completed within the calendar year of the grant award date.
- The project must show a positive benefit/cost ratio.
- The project must provide evidence of land control for proposed area.

Individual grants of up to $20,000 are awarded for projects and applicants must match, either with financial resources or in-kind services, the grant amount applied for.

**Waterways Fund Program:** The Waterways Fund Program, administered through the MDNR, is aimed at assisting local units of government in providing increased public access to the state's water resources. This access includes harbors-of-refuge, docking, and boat launch facilities. Fund for this program are derived from three primary sources; state gasoline tax, internal revenue producing DNR operations, and monies derived for water craft sales and registration fees.
Grants-in-aid for the construction of recreational boating facilities, equal to 50% of the total cost of such facilities, are made to local units of government. The scope of the grant includes engineering and contingency costs as well as the costs normally associated with facility development. The sponsoring municipality seeking a grant must provide the land free of cost and agree to operate and maintain the completed facility.

**Hazard Mitigation Grant Program:** Under this program, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides funds for state and local post-disaster mitigation measures. Under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, FEMA may contribute up to 75% of the cost of hazard mitigation measures which are determined to be cost-effective and which substantially reduce the risk of future damage, hardship, loss, or suffering in the declared area. Recent flooding and windstorm events in Ottawa County have qualified the County for funding. Funding through this program has been used to purchase land and remove structures on both the Macatawa River Greenway and the Grand River Greenway.

**Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU):** On August 10, 2005, President George W. Bush signed the SAFETEA-LU which authorizes the Federal surface transportation programs for highways, highway safety, and transit for the 5-year period 2005-2009. The new federal transportation bill, SAFETEA-LU, provides significant increases in funding for non-motorized facilities, including grants for bicycling and walking facilities. Grants are available for the following:

- Improve bicycle and pedestrian safety
- Improve air quality with bicycling & walking facilities
- Provide for bicycling & walking in natural areas
- Participate in planning for biking/walking
- Improve bicycle & pedestrian access to transit
- Showcase the benefits of bicycling

The new legislation earmarked funds specifically for a project to connect the Musketawa Trail to the White Pine Trail in Kent County. Ottawa County Parks will work with the West Michigan Trails and Greenways Coalition and Kent County on this project. The Parks Commission should actively seek funding assistance through the new Federal Transportation program for greenway trails for the Macatawa River Greenway and the Grand River Greenway and for implementation of the county’s Non-Motorized Pathway Study.

**CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEDULE**

A capital improvement schedule follows (**Table 12.1**, Pages 202 -205) which outlines proposed projects from 2006 through 2017. The schedule, as presented, is dependent upon voter approval of the millage extension. The Parks Commission recognizes that the millage for County Parks is key to its continued growth and success and the cornerstone for funding major expansion and improvements in the County Park System. The millage is critical not only for funding capital-outlay projects, but also to fund increasing personnel costs and other operating expenditures. It
is essential for the Parks Commission to plan for future administrative and operational costs as new lands and facilities are added.

The budget projection as prepared makes some assumptions that are important to understanding the plan. First, the projection is based on 2006 dollars with no inflation or any adjustments to revenues or expenditures. The assumption is that inflationary expenses will be offset by increases in millage revenues resulting from increased property values. The plan attempts to factor in increases in staffing and other operational costs as the system grows. Corresponding increases are projected for revenues from user fees. The projection also assumes continued availability of state and federal grant programs and a relatively high degree of success in competing for these funds.

The millage budget projection attempts to include all of the key initiatives outlined in the Recommended Actions chapter of this plan. Some specific projects are not shown based on uncertainties as to land availability or other factors. Other projects are included in general categories for land acquisition or development and may not be specifically identified.
### TABLE 12.1 MILLAGE BUDGET PROJECTION

#### General Fund Contribution
- Based on 2005 dollars with no inflation or any adjustments to revenues or expenditures
- User fees and charges expanded as system grows

#### Dedicated 10 year millage of 1/3 mil for operations, land acquisition and facility development beginning 2008

#### 2006-2017 Budget Projections

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<th>User Fees</th>
<th>Millage</th>
<th>State/Federal Grants</th>
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#### Millage Budget Totals
- Expand SWAP hours
- Add Administrative Sec.
- Add Park 12 Park Attendant
- Add Park Attendant
- Add Upper Macatawa
- Add Nature Center
- Add Community
- Park Superintendent
- Add Campground Park Gatekeepers
- Add Grounds Attendant
- Add Naturalist II
- Add Grounds Att.(2) Park Attendant
- Add Park Attendant and Gatekeepers
- Add North Ottawa Dunes
- Add Park Manager
- Add North Beach Park Gatekeepers
- Add Riley Trails
- Add Connor Bayou
- Add Parks Supervisor
- Add Community Gatekeepers
- Add Parks Supervisor
- Add Bend Area Park Gatekeepers
- Add Park Supervisor

#### Capital Outlay - Land Acquisition and New Facility Development

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#### Total Capital Outlay
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**Projected Land Acquisitions** (Total $1,953,000)

- Grand River Acquisitions ($11,953,000)
  - 2008-2017: $8,940,000
  - County: $4,400,000
  - Grant: $600,000

- Community Bank: $300,000
- Suppa Bayou/Deer Crk: $150,000
- Grand River Park: $300,000
- Bend Area: $0

**TOTALS:** $11,953,000
### Pigeon River Greenway

**General Greenway**

- Acquisition 100 acres ($350,000 Grant) - $750,000
- County - $750,000, Grant - $0
- Total: $750,000

**Hemlock Crossing**

- NA (no details provided)
- Total: $0

### Macatawa River Greenway

**General Greenway**

- Acquisition 120 acres ($1,500,000 Grant) - $1,500,000
- County - $900,000, Grant - $600,000
- Total: $0

**Upper Macatawa Conservation Area**

- Acquisition Nyhof (22 acres) - $300,000
- Connector Acquisition - $150,000
- Total (Paved) - ($300,000 Grant) - $600,000
- Trail $200,000
- Phase II $200,000
- Total: $1,500,000

- Conservation Area
- Nyhof (22 acres) $150,000
- (300,000 grant) $300,000
- Bldg w/multipurpose room, parking $200,000
- (300,000 grant) $600,000
- Total: $1,500,000

**Adams Street Site**

- Site Improvements $60,000
- Improvements $0
- Total: $60,000

**TOTALS**

- $750,000
- $0
- $0

---

**Flow of Funds**

- CREP Payment ($14,300)
- Implementation Phase I $450,000
- Phase II Restoration (Grant: $500,000, Donation: $100,000) $600,000
- Total: $4,495,000

- $100,000
## General Parks, Open Space and Trails

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## Miscellaneous Projects

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The Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission was established in 1986 by the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners pursuant to Act 261 of the Public Acts of 1965. Membership of the 10-member Commission, by statute, includes the Chairman of the Road Commission, the Drain Commissioner, the Chairman of the County Planning Commission, and seven members appointed by the Board of Commissioners, not more than three of whom are members of the Board. The Parks and Recreation Commission is a policy-making body that operates under the general control of the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners.

The Parks and Recreation Commission’s expressed goal for the park system is to provide the highest quality recreational experience possible through creative park design, high quality interpretive programs and by implementing high standards for parks maintenance, facility construction, and security. This goal has been pursued through the diligent efforts of park staff in all aspects of park administration, programs, and operations.

**UPDATED ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

The basic structure for park operations was established in 1990 when the Parks Commission took over operations from the Road Commission. It has expanded and evolved as the park system has grown. Since its inception, the Parks Commission has recognized the seasonal nature of its business and has sought to be efficient by employing a minimum number of highly capable full time personnel while emphasizing the use of seasonal employees and alternative sources of labor including inmate work crews, community service workers and related programs.

Beginning in 2003, the Parks Commission worked with the Ottawa County Human Resources Department to study long-term staffing needs. The county park system encompassed approximately 2,000 acres in 1996 and expanded to 4,680 acres by late 2005. The study team considered that additional growth was anticipated prior to the expiration of the current millage in 2007 and further growth is a possibility if the current millage is renewed.

Human Resources staff and County Park staff held a series of meetings over a one-year period to evaluate needs and consider options for additional staffing. Information used in this series of meetings included a detailed analysis of future staffing needs, including a review of proposed future parks and facilities to identify maintenance requirements. A review of organizational structures from successful parks organizations in the state and region was completed. Alternative organizational structures were also proposed.
Issues that received consideration during discussions included the following:

- Growth of operational staff is a key concern (i.e., the structure needed for orderly growth, which will allow for continued high quality maintenance, motivated employees with growth opportunities, flexibility to accommodate new types of facilities and operations).
- A problem often encountered in rapidly growing organizations is maintaining highly motivated employees with positive attitudes. The need to build advancement opportunities into the organizational structure was discussed.
- The need for employees to function well independently was identified as particularly important to county parks, since many employees work off-site from their supervisor.
- Additional professional staff in the main office was recognized as a need due to the growing volume of activity. There is a strong need to add an additional professional staff person to provide additional capability for general administrative work plus new projects.
- Naturalist program: Adding a nature center as identified in long-range plans would necessitate hiring an additional full-time person plus part-time staff.
- Need for flexibility: The potential addition of a nature center, campground, educational farm, and other staff-intensive operations indicates the need for flexibility in the organizational structure. Decisions should be made by the Board with awareness of staffing needs, and the structure should be able to accommodate the necessary staff.
- Recognition that the growing diversity of recreational facilities offered in the park system requires an increasingly diverse staff in terms of training and expertise.
- Geography, the distance between sites, and travel time are important factors which influence how to best shape the park operations system. The need for satellite operations facilities was discussed.
- The seasonality of the operation sets county parks apart from most other County departments and needs to be considered in shaping future operations.

The study led to the recommendation to divide the Parks and Recreation Department into three distinct divisions: Park Operations, Park Planning, and Interpretive and Information Services (see long-term organizational chart on following page). This proposed framework allows for growth of staff and provides for promotional opportunity in all three divisions without drastically changing the historic structure of the department, a structure that has worked well.

Maintenance and Operations

The study led to the addition of key operational and maintenance positions in 2004 and 2005. A new position of Park Manager position was created under the Park Operations Superintendent to provide more field-level planning and supervision and to permit the Park Operations Superintendent to undertake more general park system administrative duties. An additional Park Supervisor position was also added to provide more field capability to manage the increased lands and facilities. The new framework anticipates and accommodates the addition of Park Supervisors as the park system grows. Long-term growth could lead to additional Park Managers to maintain a proper supervisor-to-subordinate ratio.
Park Planning and Development

Following approval of the millage, the Parks Commission added two key staff persons to implement the expanding program. One of these was a Park Planner who was hired with responsibilities for assessing lands, planning new parks and facilities, and developing long-range planning strategies. While this position greatly expanded the capability of the Parks Commission to move forward with new park initiatives, current and planned growth led to the recommendation to add staff in the newly formed Planning and Development Division. A new position titled Coordinator of Park Planning and Development was approved in 2005.

Interpretive and Information Services

Another position added following approval of the millage was the Naturalist/Information Specialist. This position enabled the Commission to greatly expand its nature interpretive programs designed to educate the public on how to appreciate and enjoy the parks... A popular four-season program has been developed offering a wide range of organized outdoor education activities. In addition to programs, this staff person oversees public information including editing the department newsletter, brochure development, informational signs, etc. The Naturalist/Information Specialist also provides expertise in natural lands restoration and management, natural features inventory, and trail design on a system-wide basis.

The organizational study recognized the importance of the interpretive and information services function and called for a separate division by this name. Although currently employing only one staff person, the study recognized the potential for growth with the possible addition of a nature center in the future and identified a new position of Naturalist II in the organizational chart.

Administrative Support

Growth in the park system will also necessitate the hiring of additional administrative support. Another new position projected in the near term is an Administrative Secretary. Currently just one clerical staff person, a Senior Secretary, provides all clerical support for the park system. Growth of reservations, mailings, general phone inquiries and a wide range of clerical and administrative functions will require the addition of a position within the near future.

Future Needs

It is very important for the organizational chart (Figure 13.1 on Page 209) to remain flexible depending upon how the park system is developed in the future. For example, a future campground will have very specific staffing needs and likely offsetting revenues. Both a nature center and the possible educational farm park have unique staffing requirements. It is believed that the approved organizational structure can accommodate this type of growth but will likely need to be adjusted in response to opportunities as they arise.
As noted in the Mission Statement, Goals, and Objectives, Chapter 10, providing "high quality maintenance and operations" is a high priority of the Parks Commission. Maintaining high standards in an expanding park system is particularly difficult. It is critical that necessary administrative, operational and seasonal staff be added as operational requirements expand. Funds for supplies, repairs, needed equipment, and related items must also grow proportionately.

The Millage Budget Projection shown in Table 12.1 on pages 202-205 estimates staff needs and related operational costs for new facilities as they come on line over the several-year period. Of course, with uncertainty regarding future land purchase and facility development, it is not possible to accurately project operational requirements.

**Figure 13.1 Long Range Organizational Chart**