

Chapter 7: Recreation and Open Space Element

Goal ~~9.1~~ 7.1 • ~~Ensure the provision of sufficient~~ Provide parks, recreational facilities and open space to satisfy the health, safety and welfare needs of citizens and visitors, including special groups, such as the elderly, handicapped and pre-school age children.

Objective ~~9.1.A~~ 7.1.A • Ensure public access to recreation sites, open spaces, beaches and shores on a continuing basis. ~~by implementing Policies 9.A.1.1 through 9.A.1.10, among others.~~

Policy ~~9.1.A.1~~ • ~~The County shall continue to require the provision of open space by private development when such development is within the Mixed Residential/Commercial Future Land Use Category.~~

Staff Analysis Note: This Policy was relocated.

Policy ~~9.1.A.2~~ 7.1.A.1 • The County will maintain public access onto Navarre Beach and will pursue the development of additional areas where feasible.

Policy ~~9.1.A.3~~ • ~~The County shall continue to maintain and improve the county owned parks, recreation sites and open spaces within the County.~~

Staff Analysis Note: This Policy was relocated.

Policy ~~9.1.A.4~~ 7.1.A.2 • The County shall continue to install and maintain signage so as to identify public areas, beach access points and other shoreline access points.

Policy ~~9.1.A.5~~ 7.1.A.3 • The County shall continue to utilize the Florida Boating Improvement Fund proceeds for improvements to the various boat ramps located within Santa Rosa County.

Policy ~~9.1.A.6~~ 7.1.A.4 • The County shall improve the physical access to recreation sites, open spaces, beaches and shores by:

- A) Advocating the addition of bike lanes to State and County Roads.
- B) Requiring ~~mixed use~~ developments to provide walk/bike paths to connect its internal open space and recreational sites to residential areas.
- C) Prioritizing the development of bike facilities, paths, sidewalks, and multi use trails that link neighborhoods to schools and parks.
- D) The provision of adequate parking at beach and waterway access points or off-beach/waterway parking shall be located where vehicle and pedestrian traffic identifies that there is a need to increase these facilities.
- E) The County shall continue to research and apply for grants and other available funding to acquire and construct parking and access at chosen points.

Policy ~~9.1.A.7~~ • ~~The County shall continue to provide for the handicapped, elderly and pre-school age children: parking, accessibility to facilities and recreational opportunities.~~

Staff Analysis Note: This policy was relocated.

~~Policy 9.1.A.8 • The County shall consider, as part of the annual capital budgeting process, all recommendations of the Navarre Beach Master Plan concerning public access to the beach and other recreational improvements.~~

~~Policy 9.1.A.9 7.1.A.5 • Santa Rosa County shall require the design of parking areas and access ways to be constructed so that they enhance and protect the waterways adjacent to lands within the County. Such parking areas shall be designed to include (but not limited to) existing trees and use of pervious parking wherever feasible.~~

~~Policy 9.1.A.10 7.1.A.6 • The County shall not vacate existing easements, walkways and other access points to Navarre Beach without equivalent or greater mitigation.~~

Policy 7.1.A.7 • The County will encourage the establishment of recreation trails and bike trails to increase, where feasible, the opportunity for biking, walking, in-line skating and other forms of outdoor recreation.

Staff Analysis Note: Not a new policy, reference old Policy 9.1.C.8

~~Policy 9.1.A.11 • The County shall continue to seek advice from citizens for the development of recreational opportunities and facilities.~~

Staff Analysis Note: This policy was relocated.

Objective 9.1.B 7.1.B • Continue cooperative efforts between the public and private sectors in the provision of recreational opportunities and assure that such efforts are coordinated.

~~Policy 9.1.B.1 • The Community Planning, Zoning & Development Division shall include within its annual review efforts an analysis of the cooperation and coordination between the public and private sectors in the provision of recreational opportunities.~~

Policy 7.1.B.1 • The County shall continue to maintain and improve the county-owned parks, recreation sites and open spaces within the County.

Staff Analysis Note: Policy was relocated here, this is not a new Policy (reference old 9.1.A.3).

~~Policy 9.1.B.2 7.1.B.2 • The County shall continue its cooperative efforts with the Cities of Gulf Breeze, Milton and Jay as well as with other communities within the County and with the private sector and non-profit organizations (i.e., YMCA, Little League, etc.) and the Santa Rosa County School Board in the provision of recreational facilities and open space areas.~~

~~Policy 9.1.B.3 7.1.B.3 • The County shall continue to apply for all available state and federal funds to implement recreation programs and provisions of this element.~~

~~Policy 9.1.B.4 7.1.B.4 • The County shall work with other public agencies for the development of compatible multi-use programs for the public lands within the County.~~

Policy 7.1.B.5 • Planned Unit Developments and other large developments containing large scale residential development in excess of 300 residential units shall provide neighborhood-sized active parks, playing fields, usable open space, trail systems water access or other

recreational or open space areas/facilities as amenable to the development within the development within the development.

Staff Analysis Note: This Policy was revised and relocated (reference old policy 9.1.C.2). The Development of Regional Impact (DRI) review process is no longer statutorily defined. Current policy did not define “other large developments” making implementation difficult. Staff recommends deletion of the policy or the clarification suggested above.

Policy 7.1.B.6 • The County shall continue to acquire (through lease, acquisition or dedication) open space and natural areas so as to maintain and improve: (1) recreational opportunities for all residents; and (2) the natural function of open space, wetlands and other sensitive lands within the County.

Staff Analysis Note: This Policy was relocated, reference old Policy 9.1.C.6.

Objective 9.1.C 7.1.C • Continually ensure that parks and recreation facilities and open space are adequately and efficiently provided by public agencies and private enterprise by implementing Policies 9.1.C.1 through 9.1.C.9. Establish funding priorities for recreational facilities and open spaces within the County.

~~Policy 9.1.C.1 7.1.C.1 • In selecting future park sites for site improvements, the County shall give full consideration to those commission districts which require immediate construction, maintenance or rehabilitation of existing facilities.~~

~~Policy 9.1.C.2 • Developments of Regional Impact (DRI's), Planned Unit Developments and other large developments containing residential development shall provide neighborhood sized parks and playing fields within the development for their residents that meet the County's LOS standard.~~

Staff Analysis Note: This Policy was revised and relocated.

~~Policy 9.1.C.3 • The County shall develop existing parks based on the area's needs, and the functional capacity of the parks, according to the adopted level of service standard. The adopted level of service standard for parks, open space and recreational facilities in Santa Rosa County is 20 acres per 1,000 population~~

Staff Analysis Note: Santa Rosa County has opted out of concurrency for parks and recreational facilities.

~~Policy 9.1.C.4 7.1.C.2 • Public recreational and park sites shall not be diverted to other uses except in cases of overriding public need and when other equivalent sites are supplied.~~

~~Policy 9.1.C.5 • The County shall continue to preserve and protect the shoreline through regulations contained within the LDC (reference Policy 7.1.A.6 and LDC Section 12.01.00).~~

~~Policy 9.1.C.6 • The County shall continue to acquire (through lease, acquisition or dedication) open space and natural areas so as to maintain and improve: (1) recreational opportunities for all residents; and (2) the natural function of open space, wetlands and other sensitive lands within the County.~~

Staff Analysis Note: This Policy was relocated.

~~Policy 9.1.C.7 • The County shall consider the use of wetlands and conservation areas for passive recreational and open space areas, provided these sites have been determined to not endanger the public health, safety or welfare.~~

~~Policy 9.1.C.8 • The County will encourage the establishment of recreation trails and bike trails to increase, where feasible, the opportunity for biking, walking, in-line skating and other forms of outdoor recreation.~~

Staff Analysis Note: This Policy was relocated.

~~Policy 9.1.C.9 • In addition to open space provided through natural reservations, protected environmental lands, and storm water management areas, the County shall ensure open space through regulations in the Land Development Code that shall contain requirements for open space in developments such as set back and landscape requirements.~~

Policy 7.1.C.3 • The County shall continue to provide for the handicapped, elderly and pre-school age children: parking, accessibility to facilities and recreational opportunities.

Staff Analysis Note: This policy was relocated, not a new policy. Reference old Policy 9.1.A.8.

Policy 7.1.C.4 • The County shall continue to seek advice from citizens for the development of recreational opportunities and facilities.

Staff Analysis Note: This policy was relocated, not a new policy. Reference old Policy 9.1.A.11.

7.1 Introduction

Within the context of the Comprehensive Plan, open space and recreational facilities play a key role in shaping both the landscape and the quality of life through the conservation of natural and cultural resources, protection of environmental quality, provision public health enhancing opportunities, and management of urban growth. Through their location, recreation and open space areas can serve to protect valuable natural resources by putting such areas under public control and restricting development. However, recreation and open space areas should also complement urban development by meeting the community's need for active and passive recreation.

7.2 Relationship to other Elements of the Comprehensive Plan

There are several key linkages between the Recreation and Open Space Element and other Elements of the Comprehensive Plan which include the following:

The *Future Land Use Element* as an overall blueprint for managing growth in the County, defines the direction and intensity of future growth and development, and will strongly influence the analysis of future recreational demand and facility needs in different portions of the County.

The *Transportation Element* provides input on the issue of accessibility of park and recreation facilities and on linkage opportunities between parks, open space, and alternative transportation corridors such as bikeways and pedestrian ways.

The *Infrastructure Element*, particularly the potable water and sanitary sewer sections, which describes the availability of public water and sewer, and drainage patterns, will greatly help to shape development trends within the planning horizon. This will, in turn, influence the analysis of recreational demand and facility need.

The *Coastal Management and Conservation Elements* identify all of the County's natural resources (i.e., geology, topography, minerals, soils, surface water quality and groundwater quality and quantity, floodplains, natural vegetative communities, wildlife habitats, fisheries, air quality, hazardous waste in addition to coastal management issues, beach and dune preservation, beach access, archaeological and historic sites, natural disaster planning, coastal high hazard areas and evacuation planning) and discusses various preservation techniques (i.e., preservation ordinances, conservation easements, financial incentives and land acquisition) as well as various land management techniques which will help to eliminate various land use conflicts.

The *Intergovernmental Coordination Element* provides opportunities to improve County collaboration and coordination with other agencies, such as the School Board, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission or others, in the delivery of park and recreation services.

The *Capital Improvements Element* will reflect the County's strategy for the delivery of infrastructure and other public services, which will serve a primary role in growth management and help shape future demand for recreation. In addition, the Capital Improvements Element will reflect the five-year budget plan for park and open space capital outlay, which should support the Goals, Objectives, and Policies of this Element.

7.3 Existing Recreation and Open Space Facilities/Lands Summary

Santa Rosa County is fortunate to have many recreational and conservation opportunities. Some of these recreational opportunities are provided by the Federal and State Park system. The major Federal park in the County is the Gulf Islands National Seashore. Some of the major State Parks include Blackwater River State Park and Blackwater Heritage Trail State Park. There are also additional federal and state lands owned or managed by the Air Force (Eglin Air Force Base), the Navy (Naval Air Station Whiting Field), the Division of Forestry (Blackwater River State Forest), the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (Yellow River Marsh Aquatic Preserve and Yellow River Marsh State Buffer Preserve), the Northwest Florida Water Management District (Lower Escambia River Water Management Area, Garcon Point Water Management Area and Yellow River Water Management Area) and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (Escribano Point Wildlife Management Area).

The County's parks and recreational facilities have been organized according to type and ownership as identified in **Table 7-1**. This table identifies the park classification, name, acres, management/owner and recreational function. Both the table and the following text organizes and describes the County's existing parks and recreational facilities in terms of their function which is either *resource-based* or *activity-based*. As identified in this table, there are a total of 40 parks that are owned by the County (not including 27 boat ramps), 10 parks are owned by the State and 1 park owned by the Federal government. These facilities are also mapped on **Map 7-1** and **Map XXX** found within the Conservation Element Supporting Documentation.

7.3.1 Classification of Parks

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks are small parks with a generalized service area from approximately .5 mile to 2 miles. Neighborhood parks primarily serve a group of residents in a neighborhood. These parks serve both the passive and active needs of the users. The usual facilities may include a playground, ball playing fields, multi purpose play areas, picnic and passive areas. Santa Rosa County currently has 42.1 acres of neighborhood parks to meet the needs of its residents.

Community Parks

Community parks serve a larger population than neighborhood parks and have a generalized service area from approximately 3 miles to 5 miles. These parks usually serve several neighborhoods, and may require some driving time. These parks serve both the active and passive needs of residents and visitors. Usual facilities may include a playground, ball playing fields, multi-purpose play areas, tennis courts, indoor recreation activity area, pool, community center, picnic and passive area. Bleachers and spectator areas may also be included in a community park, providing areas for organized sport activities. Santa Rosa County currently has 510.1 acres of community parks to meet the needs of its residents.

Regional/Open Space Areas

Regional/Open Space areas include State and Federal parks; state, regional, and local acquired lands; and historic structures that provide a potential for park development. The generalized service area for regional/open space area is Countywide. Primary facilities are passive and are usually associated with a natural resource. Primary activities include nature trails, museums, and commemorative structures. Camping, nature and riding trails, picnic areas, hiking areas, swimming and fishing are also enjoyed in a regional/open space area. Santa Rosa County currently has approximately 177,290 acres of regional/open space areas.

Map 7 - 1 Public Land and Facilities
Santa Rosa County, Florida

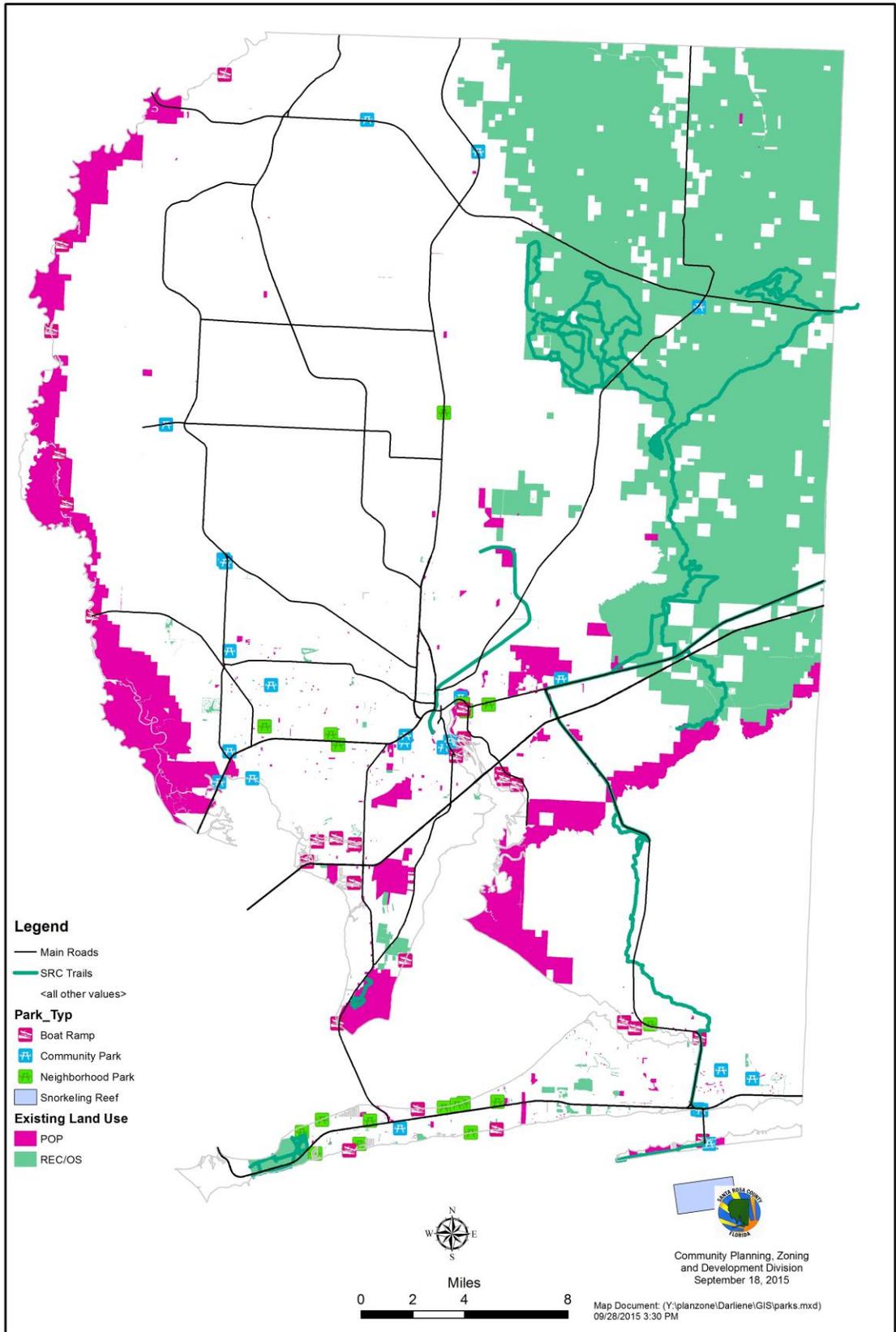


Table 7-1: Santa Rosa County Recreational Parks and Open Space Inventory

Name	Acres	Management/Owner	Recreational Function
Regional Parks			
Gulf Island National Seashore	1,378.0	Federal	Resource-based
Blackwater River State Park	590.0	State	Resource-based
Blackwater Heritage Trail State Park	96.0	State	Resource-based
Blackwater River State Forest	126,483.3	State	Resource-based
Yellow River Marsh Aquatic Preserve	16,435.0	State	Resource-based
Garcon Point Water Management Area	3,251.0	State	Resource-based
Lower Escambia River Water Management Area	21,680.0	State	Resource-based
Blackwater River Water Management Area	253.0	State	Resource-based
Escribano Point Management Area	1,177.0	State	Resource-based
Yellow River Marsh State Buffer Preserve	428.1	State	Resource-based
Yellow River Water Management Area	5,519.0	State	Resource-based
Subtotal	177,290.4		
Community Parks			
Chumuckla Community Center & Park	7.0	County	Activity-based
East Milton Park	70.0	County	Activity-based
Fidelis Community Center & Park	11.6	County	Activity-based
Locklin Field	5.0	County	Activity-based
Navarre Sports Complex	30.0	County	Activity-based
Optimist Park	5.0	County	Activity-based
Pace Area Recreation Park	27.5	County	Activity-based
Tiger Point Park	30.0	County	Activity-based
Bagdad Community Center & Park	9.0	County	Activity-based
Floridatown Park	5.0	County	Activity-based
Navarre Park	5.0	County	Activity-based
Wayside Park	4.5	County	Resource-based
Navarre Football/Soccer Park	30.3	County	Activity-based
Mayo Park	5.0	County	Activity-based
Simpson River Pier	0.05	County	Activity-based
Santa Rosa Horse Complex	17.0	County	Activity-based
Santa Rosa Soccer Complex	41.0	County	Activity-based
Navarre Nature Walk Park	1.0	County	Activity-based
Benny Russell Park	5.0	County	Activity-based
Munson Park	10.13	County	Activity-based
Santa Rosa Sports Plex	73.7	County	Activity-based
Navarre Beach Marine Park	108.9	County	Resource-based
Bagdad Mill Site	20.6	County	Activity-based
Subtotal	522.3		
Neighborhood Parks			
La Leyenda Park	0.5	County	Activity-based
Metron Estates Public Park	1.9	County	Activity-based (unimproved)
Sandpiper Village Park	1.0	County	Activity-based
Santa Villa Park	2.0	County	Activity-based
Villa Venyce Park	2.0	County	Activity-based
Bayview Heights #4	1.14	County	Activity-based
Cypress Tree Park	2.7	County	Activity-based
Hickory Shores #1 Park	0.44	County	Activity-based
Hickory Shores #2 Park	0.34	County	Activity-based
Hickory Shores #3 Park	0.42	County	Activity-based
Swenson Park	2.0	County	Activity-based

Santa Rosa County Comprehensive Plan Support Documentation

Holley Ball Park	3.5	County	Activity-based
Bayview Heights #1	1.2	County	Activity-based (unimproved)
Bayview Heights #3	2.3	County	Activity-based (unimproved)
McCallister Park	2.0	County	Activity-based
Pace Patriot Park	2.0	County	Activity-based
Coldwater Creek	0.04	County	Resource-based
Nantahala Beach Rd. Public Access	0.4	County	Resource-based
Subtotal	25.88		
Boat Ramps			
Avalon Boat Ramp #3	0.2	County	Resource-based
Garcon Point Boat Ramp	0.46	County	Resource-based
Oyster Pile Boat Ramp	1.0	County	Resource-based
Presley Park	1.0	County	Resource-based
Morrell Boat Ramp	0.15	County	Resource-based
Woodlawn Beach Boat Ramp	3.0	County	Resource-based
Terrell Landing	0.11	County	Resource-based
Indian Bayou Boat Ramp	0.18	County	Resource-based
Oriole Beach Boat Ramp	0.5	County	Resource-based
Archie Glover Boat Ramp	2.0	County	Resource-based
Avalon Boat Ramp #2	0.25	County	Resource-based
Dickerson City Boat Ramp	0.11	County	Resource-based
East River Boat Ramp	0.44	County	Resource-based
Holley Boat Ramp #1	0.54	County	Resource-based
Keyser Boat Ramp	0.12	County	Resource-based
Quintette Boat Ramp	0.19	County	Resource-based
Snapper Avenue Boat Ramp	0.23	County	Resource-based
Webb Boat Ramp/Webb Landing	0.15	County	Resource-based
Williams Lake Boat Ramp	0.16	County	Resource-based
Navarre Beach Boat Ramp	19.6	County	Resource-based
Chumuckla Springs Boat Ramp	17.53	County	Resource-based
Holley Boat Ramp #2	0.13	County	Resource-based
Bal Alex Boat Ramp	1.0	County	Resource-based
Bagdad Boat Ramp	1.0	County	Resource-based
Avalon Boat Ramp #1	0.40	County	Resource-based
Mae Lane Boat Ramp	0.1	County	Resource-based
Marqui Basin Boat Ramp	2.9	County	Resource-based
Subtotal	53.45		
Total	177,891.95		
Source: Santa Rosa Community Planning, Zoning and Development Division, 2015			

7.4 Resource-Based Parks and Lands

Santa Rosa County has an abundance of natural resources, which can be used as open space and passive recreation. The County is comprised of State Park areas, open space (wetlands), gulf beach, river areas (creeks, rivers, bays and streams), special purpose parks and/or parks with special features. The Department of Environmental Protection has developed a State Park system. In addition, the NFWMD acquires land for water resource purposes and has also developed a regional park (Garcon Point). These parks are defined as regional park areas, which preserve the natural setting of the area. State parks also permit a program of recreational activities both active and passive. However, most of the State owned lands in Santa Rosa County provide only passive recreational opportunities.

Wildlife Management Areas provide open space recreational activities including hunting, fishing and nature study, while also preserving the natural setting of the environment. Wildlife Management Areas are operated by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

The *Gulf of Mexico* and *Santa Rosa Sound* beach on Navarre Beach that plays a prominent role in the tourist industry, vital to Santa Rosa County while providing residents with an unsurpassed recreation and open space resource. The beach primarily provides *resource-based* passive recreation. Besides the beach, Santa Rosa County offers other water access opportunities, including rivers, bays, basins and bayous

Blackwater River State Park is located in Harold in the eastern part of the County. The park comprises 590 acres. The primary activities are river related and include canoeing, boating, picnicking, nature study, camping, fishing, and swimming.

Blackwater Heritage Trail State Park is comprised of 96 acres and is located in the central part of the County. The park contains an 8.5 mile paved trail running from the City of Milton to Naval Air Station Whiting Field. Park activities include bicycling, birding, horse trails, nature trails, picnicking, running, walking, roller-skating, roller-blading and a visitor center.

Navarre Beach Marine Park is located at the eastern end of Navarre Beach. This park comprises 108.9 acres. The Navarre Beach Marine Park and adjoining public beach area offer eight public beach access points with ample parking, restrooms, outdoor showers and 15 pavilions available for public rental. Navarre Beach Marine Park is also home to near shore reef systems on both the Santa Rosa Sound and Gulf of Mexico, the Navarre Beach Marine Science Center and the Navarre Beach Sea Turtle Conservation Center.

Blackwater River State Forest spans the northeastern part of Santa Rosa County and the northwestern part of Okaloosa County. The total area of the forest is 189,594 acres with approximately 126,483.3 acres located within Santa Rosa County. Forest activities include fishing, boating, camping, hiking, biking and horse trails. These activities are offered at the various recreation areas in the forest such as Coldwater Recreation Area, Bear Lake Recreation Area and Krul Recreation Area. This also includes the Blackwater Wildlife Management Area, which is regulated by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Hunting is allowed by permit within the management area.

Gulf Island National Seashore is located at the western end of Santa Rosa Island and along U.S. Highway 98 in the City of Gulf Breeze. This park comprises approximately 5,823 acres in Santa Rosa and Escambia Counties with approximately 1,378 acres located in Santa Rosa County. Activities include nature study, group camping, canoeing, kayaking, bicycling, fishing, picnicking, swimming and hiking.

The *Yellow River Marsh Aquatic Preserve* comprises 16,435 acres in the eastern part of the County. The preserve includes a large portion of the Yellow River just before it dumps into Blackwater Bay. Activities include fishing, boating, swimming, canoeing, kayaking and bird watching.

The *Yellow River Marsh State Buffer Preserve* comprises 428.1 acres and is located next to the Yellow River Marsh Aquatic Preserve and south of the Yellow River Water Management Area. Activities include hiking, kayaking and bird watching.

The *Garcon Point Water Management Area* is located in the south central part of the County and is comprised of 3,251 acres located along the Garcon Point Peninsula. Seventy-eight (78) acres are less-than-fee. Activities include hunting, fishing, camping and hiking.

The *Lower Escambia River Water Management Area* is located along the western boundary of the County and is comprised of 34,473 acres covering Santa Rosa and Escambia Counties. Approximately 21,680 acres are located within Santa Rosa County. Activities include hunting, fishing, camping and hiking.

The *Yellow River Water Management Area* is located in the eastern part of the County and is comprised of 17,446 acres covering Santa Rosa and Okaloosa Counties. Approximately 5,519 acres are located within Santa Rosa County. Activities include hunting, fishing, camping and hiking.

In addition to the Water Management Areas described above, the *Northwest Florida Water Management District* also owns or manages 253 acres along the Blackwater River and 1,177 acres along Escribano Point.

The *Gillis Road Tract* is a 20 acre parcel of undesignated state land. It is owned by the State of Florida (Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund) and is located near Interstate 10 in the east central part of the County

Eglin Air Force Base spans three counties, Walton, Okaloosa and Santa Rosa. The base has approximately 66,506.4 acres within Santa Rosa County located in the southeastern section of the County. These lands offer both active and passive activities and are part of the Eglin Wildlife Management Area. These activities include camping, fishing, hunting, hiking and bird watching. Permits are necessary for these activities and may be necessary for entrance upon the federal reservation.

Naval Air Station Whiting Field has three Outlying Landing Fields (Harold, Holley and Santa Rosa) and the Blackwater River Recreation Area. These areas comprise approximately 2,020 acres. Activities at the Blackwater River Recreation Area include fishing, swimming, hiking and bird watching.

Escribano Point Wildlife Management Area encompass 4,018-acres within the Grassy Point Area in the southwestern tip of the Yellow River Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The northern parcel is an expanse of black needlerush marsh surrounding Catfish Creek and tidal creeks that grade into pine forest at higher elevations. The southern parcels consist of basin swamp, maritime hammock and scrubby pine forest. The parcels protect some of the last undeveloped waterfront tracts in the county. They are part of a network of publicly owned conservation lands that provide habitat for rare plants and animals such as the white-topped pitcher plant, Gulf sturgeon and Florida black bear and help safeguard the water quality in Blackwater Bay, East Bay and the Yellow River.

7.5 Special Purpose Parks/Parks with Special Feature(s)

Special Purpose Parks serve a regional service area where the focus is specific and only limited to a certain type of recreation, i.e., fishing pier, boat ramp, parking and/or beach access. These specialized parks include 17 of the 27 County boat ramps. On the other hand, Parks with Special Features have a regional service area and serve more than one park purpose in addition to providing a special feature i.e., fishing pier, boat ramp, parking and/or beach access. Many of the previously classified regional state and federal parks are also listed as parks with special features (i.e., Blackwater River State Park, Blackwater Heritage Trail State Park, Navarre Beach State Park, Blackwater River State Forest and Wildlife Management Area and Gulf Islands National Seashore).

The county's rivers, bays, basins and bayous provide both active recreational activities and open space enjoyment for residents and visitors in the County. **Table 7-1**, lists the boat ramps that function as Special Purpose Parks and provide public access to these waterways. These sites provide passive recreation areas, in addition to the boat ramp facility. In some areas, these sites may also be suitable for minimum playground activities, picnic tables and benches. These waterways provide boating, fishing, and other water-related recreational activities. These waterways also have associated streams and creeks and these areas also provide recreational access. **Map 7-1** shows the location of the County's Special Purpose Parks and Parks with Special Feature(s).

7.5.1 Corridor Open Space, Greenbelts, and Linear Open Space

Corridor open space is linear in nature and is difficult to quantify. Corridor open space can be used for scenic and cultural purposes such as scenic and historic highways, recreational greenways (linear belts), bicycle and pedestrian facilities, stormwater management facilities, green belts, wildlife corridors and river corridors.

Recreational greenways are natural corridor systems that interconnect or link natural reserves, parks, cultural and historic sites with each other and provide opportunities for environmental hiking trails, horseback riding, canoeing and wildlife conservation. Greenways create a strong sense of place and create community and multi-cultural appreciation by connecting land and communities that help sustain Florida's future by conserving its green infrastructure. Greenways also provide an opportunity for continuing economic benefits and by connecting people with their natural, historic, and cultural heritage by improving the quality of life for people.

Besides greenways, *greenbelts* protect natural lands or working landscapes that typically surround cities and serve to conserve and direct urban/suburban growth. Greenbelts like greenways can be linear in nature.

Rivers also can function as interconnecting linear corridors. In Santa Rosa County, this is the case with the Blackwater River, the Yellow River and the Escambia River along with their associated creeks and tributaries. Coldwater Creek and the Blackwater River are well utilized paddling trails located within Santa Rosa County.

7.6 Activity-Based Park Facilities

Active recreation involves direct physical participation by the user. These activities usually involve the use of special facilities. Out of a total of 40 County owned or maintained parks, 39 are activity-based. These parks include 23 community parks totaling 522 acres and 18 neighborhood parks totaling 23 acres.

Santa Rosa County Parks

Built facilities provide the user with an activity in which to participate, providing an area for active recreation to occur. These facilities include playgrounds, ball playing fields, tennis courts, swimming pools and community centers. These facility types are located in various areas throughout Santa Rosa County. The following description is for neighborhood and community parks having built facilities. **Map 7-1** shows the location of these sites in the county.

Navarre Park is a community park located on U.S. Highway 98 at the base of the Navarre Beach Bridge and comprises five acres. The park has a playground, a basketball court, picnic area, 2 pavilions, a pier, a swimming area and restroom facilities.

The *Navarre Sports Complex* is a community park located at 2499 Pawnee Drive in Navarre. This is a 30 acre park and includes basketball courts, 11 lighted baseball/softball fields, 1 lighted soccer field, a playground, a picnic area, 3 pavilions, a walking/biking track, 2 concession stands, a gymnasium with concession and restroom facilities.

Tiger Point Recreational Park is a community park located at 3899 Gulf Breeze Parkway and comprises 30 acres. The park includes tennis courts, 9 softball/baseball fields, 2 soccer/football fields, a playground, a walking/biking track, a community center, and restroom facilities.

Bagdad Recreation Park is a community park located at 4591 School Avenue. This is a 9 acres park and includes 2 basketball courts, 2 tennis courts, 1 softball/baseball field, a playground, a picnic area, a pavilion and restroom facilities.

Benny Russell Park is a community park located at 5417 West Spencer Field Road in Pace and comprises 5 acres. The park includes a lighted playground area, a picnic area, 4 pavilions and restroom facilities.

East Milton Park is a community park located at 8604 Bobby Brown Road. This is a 70 acre park and includes a basketball court, 2 tennis courts, 11 lighted softball/baseball fields, 4 lighted soccer/football fields, a playground, a picnic area, a walking/biking track, a horse arena, a gym, a concession stand and restroom facilities.

Florida Town Park is a community park located on Floridatown Road and comprises 5 acres. This park includes a boat ramp, a pier, a swimming area, a picnic area, a barbecue grill and restroom facilities.

Locklin Field is a community park located at 7051 Johnson Road in East Milton. This is a 5 acre park and includes a softball/baseball field, a concession stand, a field house and restroom facilities.

Mayo Park is a community park located on Sunago Drive and is comprised of 5 acres. This park includes a swimming area, a picnic area and restroom facilities.

Optimist Park is a community park located at 6244 Old Bagdad Highway. This is a 5 acres park and includes 2 softball/baseball fields, 2 soccer/football fields, 3 racquetball courts, 2 horseshoe pits, a playground, a picnic area, a pavilion, a walking/biking track and restroom facilities.

Pace Area Recreation Park is a community park located at 4280 Woodbine Road and comprises 27.5 acres. This park includes 9 softball/baseball fields, a lighted soccer/football field, a picnic area, a pavilion, a walking/biking track, 3 racquetball courts, a concession stand and restroom facilities.

Chumuckla Park is a community park located at 2355 Highway 182. This is a 7 acre park and includes a softball/baseball field, a concession stand and restroom facilities.

The *Santa Rosa Horse Complex* is a community park located at 3306 Joppa Drive in Chumuckla and is comprised of 17 acres. This park includes a horse arena, a playground, a concession stand, a picnic area and restroom facilities.

The *Santa Rosa Soccer Complex* is a community park located adjacent to the Santa Rosa Horse Complex in Chumuckla and comprises 41 acres. This park includes 16 soccer fields (2 lighted), 2 planned basketball courts, a playground, a picnic area, and restroom facilities.

Fidelis Community Center and Park is a community park located at 13785 Highway 87 North in the northern part of the County and comprises 5 acres. This park includes a playground, a community center with restroom facilities, 1 tennis court, 1 basketball court, 1 adult softball/baseball field and 1 T-ball baseball field.

Navarre Soccer/Football Park is a community park located at 9299 Military Trail and comprises 30.3 acres. The park contains 5 lighted soccer fields.

Santa Rosa Sports Plex is a community park located at 5976 Chumuckla Highway. This is a 73.7 acres park and a playground area, walking/biking trail, concession stand, and 16 baseball/softball fields.

Cypress Tree Park is a neighborhood park located on Pecos Pass in the Midway area. This is a 2.7 acres park and included a playground, picnic area and a multi-purpose sports field.

Swenson Park is a neighborhood park located at Circle Lande and West Avenue. This is a 2 acre park and includes a lighted basketball court and a lighted tennis court.

Villa Venyce Park is a neighborhood park located on Gondolier Boulevard and is comprised of 2 acres. This park includes 2 tennis courts.

Navarre Beach Boat Ramp is a 19.6 acre park located on the Sound side of Navarre Beach. Currently, this park contains a boat ramp, pier and parking facilities. Activities include boating and fishing.

Holley-Navarre Ball Field is a neighborhood park located at 3146 Bob Tolbert Rd. This is a 3.5 acre field which contains a ball field and picnic area.

McCallister Park is a neighborhood park located at 5272 Richburg St. This is a 2.0 acre park that contains playground and picnicking areas.

Pace Patriot Park is a neighborhood park located at 4750 Pace Patriot Blvd. This 2.0 acre park contains a playground, picnic tables, benches and a walking trail.

Sandpiper Village Park located at 2728 Sunrunner Ln Oriole Beach. This park has picnic tables, a playground, pavilions and a pier.

La Layenda Park located at 3359 La Layenda Ct in Gulf Breeze. The park has a small basketball court, playground, benches and pavilion.

Santa Villa Park is a neighborhood park located on Santa Villa Drive in the Pea Ridge area. The park has benches, grills, a pavilion and exercise station.

Municipal Parks

In addition to County parks, there are also parks located within the three municipalities within the county. County residents will utilize park facilities without regard to local government jurisdiction. Residents in the unincorporated areas of the county will use parks within the cities and vice versa. **Table 7-3** shows an inventory of the municipal parks within the county as well as regional parks located within municipal boundaries.

**Table 7-3
Municipal Parks in Santa Rosa County**

City of Milton Parks

<u>Park Classification</u>	<u>Park Name</u>	<u>Acres</u>
Regional	Blackwater Heritage Trail State Park	18.7
Community	Sander Street Expansion Park	18
	Sanders Park	17
	Carpenter Park	15
	Russell Harber Landing	12
	Riverwalk	5
	Neighborhood	Mary Street Park
	Charleston Oak Park	0.5
	Barn Street Park	0.3
	Total	87.5

City of Gulf Breeze Parks

<u>Park Classification</u>	<u>Park Name</u>	<u>Acres</u>
Regional	Gulf Island National Seashore	1,378
Community	Shoreline Park	155.5
	Gulf Breeze Schools	20
	Wayside Park	5
	Bay Bridge Pier	3.7
Mini	Woodland Park	1.2
	Highpoint Park	1.2
	McClure Park	1.2
	Williamsburg Park	1.2
	Total	1,567

Town of Jay Parks

<u>Park Classification</u>	<u>Park Name</u>	<u>Acres</u>
Community	Bray Hendricks Town Park	25
Neighborhood	Jay Rosa Subdivision Park	1.2
<i>Total</i>		<i>26.2</i>

Source: City of Milton, City of Gulf Breeze, Town of Jay and Santa Rosa County, 2001

7.8 Implementation and Recommendations

The Santa Rosa County Recreation and Parks Department is responsible for the development, operation and maintenance of County parks and recreation facilities. Forty-one parks and recreation facilities are maintained by the County’s Park and Recreation Department, ranging from small neighborhood parks to community parks. In addition, the County’s Special Purpose Parks are also maintained and operated by the County’s Parks and Recreation Department.

Opportunities to purchase land for parks decreases and/or becomes increasingly expensive as the land values increase due to the increase in development. Therefore, the County should consider developing a Parks and Recreation Master Plan. This Master Plan should include an inventory of the County’s existing park acreage, the conditions and type of County facilities, population projection needs (i.e., unincorporated County or total County and/or seasonal population), specific park needs (based on studies, public meetings, questionnaires, surveys and/or interviews with the Recreation and Parks Department), and the capital improvement needs required to maintain existing parks. The Master Plan should also re-evaluate resource and park management operations, re-evaluate administrative and financial strategies and investigate alternative revenue sources such as, but not limited to, user fees, bond referendum, grant programs and public/private partnerships.

Concepts that could be included in this Master Plan are as follows:

- Special attention to the urbanized Planning Areas (South End and Pace), Commission Districts, or the entire County including current and future needs
- Accessibility and walkability for the urbanized areas – creation of a system of linked recreation facilities including linkages to bicycle and pedestrian planning efforts
- Planning area based systems of play rather than focusing on individual play areas or parks
- Providing age-appropriate opportunities for the physical development of a wide range of age groups, from infants and toddlers to adolescents and adults of all ages; and
- Funding and financing