

*Recreation and Open Space*  
FOUNDATION DOCUMENT

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# Recreation and Open Space

## 13-1 INTRODUCTION

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Santa Rosa County is located in northwest Florida bordering the Gulf of Mexico and Santa Rosa Sound. The County is bounded on the west by Escambia County, on the east by ~~Santa Rosa~~ Okaloosa County and on the north by Escambia County, Alabama.

The purpose of this element is to inventory existing recreation and open space sites and facilities, identify applicable criteria and standards, and assess current and projected needs for recreation and open space. Based upon this analysis, recreation and open space needs will be identified and assessed.

Recreation and open space are important considerations in any planning program. As growth occurs and population increases, the availability of sites for leisure time pursuits or passive enjoyment assumes more importance. Besides their functional value, recreation and open space sites perform various other functions. These may include natural resource protection, development control, aesthetics enhancement, and others.

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. In a similar manner, recreation and open space areas can channel growth by establishing buffers or greenbelts. However, recreation and open space areas should also complement urban development by meeting the community's need for active and passive recreation.

### A. Organization of the Element

This element is divided into four sections: the Introduction, Terms and Concepts, Existing Regulatory Framework, and Data and Analysis. The Introduction provides an overview of the county in relationship to its recreation and open space opportunities. Terms and Concepts define the terms used throughout most of this document. The Existing Regulatory Framework describes the current federal, state, regional and county regulations. The Data and Analysis Section discusses existing recreation and open space sites and facilities, identifies applicable criteria and standards, and assesses current and projected needs for recreation and open space.

### B. 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 at the neighborhood, community and countywide levels, 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.

## 13-2 TERMS AND CONCEPTS

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Terms included in Appendix B of the Foundation Document are applicable to this element and are identified and described by the Florida Department of Community Affairs, in Rule 9J-5 of the Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.) and in Section 163.3164, Florida Statutes (F.S.). All other terms and concepts used in this element are consistent with the intent of Rule 9J-5 and Chapter 163, F.S.

***Recreation and Open Space System:*** The recreation and open space system discussed in this element is composed of public and private sites and facilities which are accessible to the public for user-oriented and/or resource-based recreation. Included in the system are natural reservations which are areas designated for conservation purposes and operated by contractual agreement with or managed by a federal, state, regional, or local government or non-profit agency such as, national parks, state parks, lands purchased under the Save Our Coast, Conservation and Recreational Lands, or Save Our Rivers programs, sanctuaries, preserves, monuments, archaeological sites, historic sites, wildlife management areas, national seashores, and Outstanding Florida Waters - Rule 9J-5.003(78), F.A.C. Activity-based and resource-based recreation sites and facilities can be privately or publicly owned or operated.

***Resource-Based Recreation:*** Resource-based recreation depends on an area's natural resources, such as land, water and wetlands, wildlife and natural scenery. These resources provide areas for passive recreation activities to occur. Passive recreation activities are more mental than physical. Nature study, scenic appreciation, and sight-seeing are among the passive recreation activities. Resource-based recreation is of a passive nature and features such activities as picnicking, camping, fishing, nature study, hiking and freshwater swimming.

***Active Recreation:*** Active recreation involves direct physical participation by the user. These activities usually include the use of special facilities. Active recreation includes traditional sports like

tennis, golf, softball, baseball, basketball, football and playground activities. Activity-based recreation is user oriented and features such activities as baseball, basketball, tennis and swimming pool use.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) in Outdoor Recreation In Florida - 1994 categorizes recreational opportunities as user-oriented (activity-based) and resource-based. The major distinction drawn by the DEP between the types of recreational opportunities is user-oriented recreation can always be provided, assuming adequate space and funds for the development of the facility, while resource-based recreation can only be provided to the extent that the natural or historical resources are available. The DEP categorization of recreational activities is presented in **Table 13-1**. This categorization is representative of typical classifications of recreation activities.

**Table 13-1**  
**Categorization of Recreational Activities**

<u>Activity-Based</u>	<u>Resource-Based</u>
Golf	Boating
Tennis	Camping
Baseball	Fishing
Softball	Hunting
Football	Hiking
Soccer	Nature Study
Handball	Picnicking
Racquetball	Bicycle Riding
Shuffleboard	Horseback Riding
Basketball	Visiting Archaeological and Historical Sites
Swimming Pool Use	Freshwater Swimming

**Source:** Outdoor Recreation In Florida - 1994, State of Florida, Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Recreation and Parks, Office of Park Planning; March, 1994.

*Open Space:* Undeveloped areas of land or water that have been dedicated for public or private use. Open space can be categorized by function. Three categories or functions of open space are recreation and conservation, utilitarian, and corridor.

*Recreation and Conservation Open Space:* Recreation and conservation open space is the most prevalent in Santa Rosa County. This type of open space provides the basis for the *activity-based* and *resource-based* recreation in the County. These are natural areas designated for conservation purposes and are generally operated or managed by federal, state, or local governments, or by non-profit agencies. Examples include Federal Parks, State Parks, Wildlife Management Areas, Aquatic Preserves, Conservation and Recreation Lands (CARL), and Water Management District lands.

*Utilitarian Open Space:* Utilitarian open space is composed of lands not suitable for residential development due to limiting factors, hazardous conditions, or conservation uses. Such lands are: wetlands, floodplains, drainage areas, airport clear zones, power line and gas line easements, right-of-ways, ground water recharge areas, or areas with unstable geological characteristics.

*Corridor Open Space:* Corridor open space consists of travelways that have some aesthetic value or appeal. These corridors provide pathways between residential, commercial, and recreational areas. An example of corridor open space includes scenic road right-of-ways, Greenways (i.e., recreational trails, wildlife corridors, equestrian trails, canoe trails) and Rails-to-Trails.

*Parks:* Areas dedicated for user-oriented (activity-based) or resource-based recreation. Parks are generally classified by their location relative to population, the size of the site and the type of facilities provided. The DEP defines six park classifications in Outdoor Recreation in Florida - 1994: equipped play area and tot lot, neighborhood park, community park, urban open space, urban-district park, and regional park. For the purposes of this element, discussion will be limited to the general park categories such as neighborhood, community, and regional open space.

*Level of Service:* An indicator of the extent or degree of service provided by, or proposed to be provided by, a facility based upon and related to the operational characteristics of the facility. Since parks and recreation facilities are an open access facility system, the level of service standards for parks are usually based upon a demand per aggregate population level within a specified service area. As an example: a community park standard is 2 acres per 1,000 people. The service area for a community park is between a 3-5 mile radius. LOS standards are usually set for both acreage and facility or equipment requirements. State and federal agencies have developed guidelines for acreage and service areas defining various park categories as well as population guidelines for activities and facilities. These guidelines are presented below.

#### ***Site Guidelines for Park Sites***

The DEP identifies site guidelines in the Outdoor Recreation in Florida - 1994 publication developed by assessing criteria and standards recommended by the Florida Planning and Zoning Association; the Florida Recreation and Park Association; the National Recreation and Parks Association; the U.S. Department of the Interior, and various research previously prepared by DEP. The DEP site guidelines for neighborhood, community and regional parks are consistent with DCA definitions and are as follows:

(1) A *neighborhood park* is a "walk to" park, generally located along streets where people can walk or bicycle without encountering heavy traffic. It serves neighborhood residents in a radius of up to one-half mile or a population of up to 5,000. It should have at least 2 acres for each 1,000 population with a size range of 5 to 10 acres. Where a neighborhood park could be located adjacent to an elementary school, the lower end of the range is reduced to 2 acres. Since recreation needs can vary from one neighborhood to another, site design should reflect the needs and character of the neighborhood. Typical facilities at a neighborhood park may include play apparatus, recreation buildings, multipurpose courts, sports fields, picnic areas and free play areas. Additional facilities may be added, depending on the recreational demands of the neighborhood.

(2) A *community park* is a "ride to" park, located near collectors or arterials. It serves the residents of four to six neighborhoods within a radius of up to three miles, or a service population of up to 25,000 people. It should have at least 2 acres per 1,000 population with a minimum size of 20 acres. Where a community park can be located adjacent to a junior or senior high school the lower end of the range is reduced to 5 acres. Typical facilities may include swimming pools, ball fields, tennis courts, play areas, picnic areas, multipurpose courts, recreation buildings, and sport fields. Additional recreation facilities may be included to meet a particular recreation demand in the community. Two important elements of every community park are the use of landscaping and the provision of resource-based recreation areas.

(3) A *regional park* is a large, resource-based area that serves two or more communities or counties and is located within an hour's drive of the residents served. The service population should be over 100,000 people with a minimum acreage requirement of 20 acres per 1,000 population. The size range for the park should be 250 acres to several thousand acres. Generally these are resource-based recreation areas with facilities such as water-based recreation sites, camping areas, hiking and nature trails and picnic areas. Parking areas are necessary support facilities and should be designed to minimize effects on the natural environment. The most prominent feature of the park is the provision of recreational opportunities through the design and development of resources and facilities that capitalize on the natural environment and promote an atmosphere of beauty and serenity. Resource-based facility standards, such as boat ramps per 1,000 people, are generally modified to conform to the limitations of a resource to prevent the overuse and degradation of the resource.

*Table 13-2*, on the following page, summarizes the DEP site guidelines for neighborhood, community and regional parks.

### ***Facility and Activity Guidelines***

In addition to site guidelines, the DEP has developed population guidelines to project the need for facilities and resources and for resource-based and activity-based oriented activities. The guidelines are based on an analysis of various guidelines established by community recreation and parks departments, the National Recreation and Parks Association, the Florida Recreation and Parks Association and various recreation publications. Minimum and maximum ranges for facility site guidelines is identified in the Outdoor Recreation in Florida - 1994 document. Suggested recreation facility development standards were determined by the National Recreation and Park Association. In the National Recreation and Park Association publication Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines, it is emphasized that recreational standards must be developed to meet the needs of a specific area. In this publication it is stated that:

The preparation of parks and recreation standards is by no means an arbitrary activity. Several criteria should guide development for a community as follows:

- Facilities need to reflect the needs of the people in the specific service area.
- Facilities must be realistic and attainable.
- Facilities must be acceptable and useful to both the practitioner and the policy maker.
- Facilities must be based on a sound analysis of the best available information.

**Table 13-2  
Site Guidelines for Park Sites**

<i>Site Type</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Service Area</i>	<i>Service Population</i>	<i>Area/ 1000 Persons</i>	<i>Recommended Size</i>
Neighborhood Park	Areas adjacent to elementary schools when feasible	1/ 4 mile to 1/2 mile	up to 5,000	2 acres/1000	5-10 acres
Community Park	Designed to serve neighborhoods' adjacent to middle and high schools when feasible	1/ 2 mile to 3 miles	up to 25,000 residents of four to six neighborhoods	2 acres/1000	20 acres except near a high school, 5 acres
Regional Park	On periphery of urban area serves two or more communities or counties located within an hours drive	30-60 minutes driving time	over 100,000	20 acres/1000	250-2,000 acres

Source: Outdoor Recreation in Florida - 1994: State of Florida, Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Recreation and Parks; Tallahassee, Florida

### 13-3 EXISTING REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

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#### A. Federal

The *National Park Service*, created by Congress in 1916, is charged with the responsibility of conserving scenery, natural and historic objects, and wildlife, and the administration of the nation's parks and historical and recreational areas. Acquisition and development of these resources for such purposes as providing camping, boating, swimming, hiking, historical interpretation and horseback riding are governed by the service's determination of public demands and needs for such facilities. In addition to its responsibilities for the direct provision of outdoor recreation resources, the National Park Service is charged with a number of other recreational responsibilities transferred upon its consolidation with the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service in 1981. Serving the states as the federal focal point for outdoor recreation, the service has duties in planning, coordination and developing national recreation policy, conducting surveys of recreational resources and needs in the United States, and developing a plan to meet these needs. The National Park Service also provides financial and technical assistance for state recreation planning, land acquisition, and development.

The *U.S. Forest Service and the National Forest System* was created by Congress in 1905. The Forest Service is responsible for fully developing the recreational potential of national forests.

The *Land and Water Conservation Fund* established by Public Law No. 88-578 is administered by the National Park Service. The federal share of this fund is apportioned among the Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for land acquisition. An annual apportionment is also made to the State of Florida for distribution to state agencies and local governments. The Department of Environmental Protection, pursuant to Chapter 375.021(4), F.S., and Chapter 16D-5, Part V, F.A.C., administers these funds. Since 1981, the State's entire annual apportionment from these funds has been allocated to local governments for acquisition and development of resource-based and activity-based (user-oriented) public outdoor recreation projects.

The *Farmers Home Administration (FHA)* provides assistance to farm and ranch owners in the form of non-farm enterprise loans of up to \$300,000 and management assistance for the development of non-farm enterprises to supplement farm incomes. Loans may be used to develop campsites and riding stables. Under rules to be developed by the agency to implement the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), farmers and ranchers will be permitted to retire part of their government-insured debt by donating 50-year conservation easements on portions of their lands. Agreements must be developed with public land management agencies or private organizations to manage the easements for public benefit for fish and wildlife, conservation, or recreation. The Natural Resource Conservation Service (previously Soil Conservation Service) will be responsible for selecting a land manager for each particular donation and for developing the management agreements. FHA also offers loans for converting farms to outdoor recreation use.

The *Wilderness Act of 1964* (16 U.S. Code 1131) established a National Wilderness Preservation System. The system is jointly administered by the Departments of Interior and Agriculture. The agency which had jurisdiction over an area prior to being included in the system is responsible for its management. The National Trails System Act of 1968 (16 U.S. Code 1241) provides the framework for establishing a national system of scenic, recreation and historic trails. The purpose of the Act is to establish recreational trails near urban areas and scenic areas to serve the increasing outdoor recreation needs of an expanding population and to promote close-to-home recreational opportunities. Under the Act, the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture are both given administrative responsibility including designating and managing trails in the system. A 1983 amendment to the Act, Public Law 98-11, designated the Florida Trail as Florida's first national scenic trail. When completed, the Florida Trail will be a continuous footpath extending from the Big Cypress National Preserve in Collier County to the Gulf Islands National Seashore.

The *Federal Water Project Recreation Act of 1965* (16 United States Code 460) increased the involvement of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in recreational development previously provided for in the Flood Control Act of 1944. The 1965 Act establishes outdoor recreation and preservation of wildlife and fish as priorities to be given full consideration in each project. In addition to development of recreation areas, the Corps participates with the State and other public bodies in cost sharing for facilities and provides assistance in the planning and design of facilities.

The *National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968* (16 United States Code 1271) requires that rivers possessing outstanding scenic, cultural or other similar values be preserved in a free flowing condition and protected along with their immediate environments for public benefit. Management plans are developed at the local level at the direction of state agencies.

The *National Historic Preservation Act* of 1966 (16 United States Code 470) gave the National Park Service authority to expand the scope of the National Register of Historic Places to include locally and regionally significant properties of historical and archaeological interest. The Act also authorized a grant program for historic preservation survey and planning activities and for acquisition, restoration, and development of National Register sites.

The *Federal Property and Administration Services Act* of 1949 as amended by Public Law 91-485 authorizes the Department of Interior to sell, lease or donate to any state or its political subdivisions, surplus federal real property which has been determined to be of potential use as a public park or historic monument.

The *Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid Program* (United States Code 669) created by the Federal Aid and Wildlife Restoration Act of 1937 derives revenue from federal excise taxes on sporting firearms and ammunition. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service apportions these revenues to the states using a formula based on the number of hunting licenses sold, the amount of archery equipment sold and the geographical area of the state. Funds are intended to be used for restoring, preserving, and improving wildlife habitat and conducting hunter safety programs. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (formerly the Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission) has utilized funds for the acquisition and management of wildlife management areas and for the management of leasing programs. Currently, funds are used for the maintenance of the State's 4.4 million acre hunting program, the conduction of wildlife research and limited land acquisition.

The *Dingell-Johnson/Wallop-Breaux Federal Aid Program* was created through two acts, the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act of 1950 and the Budget Deficit Reduction Act of 1984 (16 United States Code 777-777K). The funds for this program are generated by federal taxes levied on fishing tackle and equipment sales. Funds are distributed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service based on the geographical area of the state relative to the number of fishing licenses sold each year. Funds are to be used for the promotion of sport fishing and management of sport fishing areas. Florida's share of the funds is allocated between the Department of Environmental Protection and the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Freshwater fishing improvement programs supported with these funds include lake and stream surveys, fish studies, fishing productivity research, repair and improvement of boat access facilities and public education.

The *Natural Resource Conservation Service* is responsible for providing leadership in the planning or income producing recreation enterprises on private land and for assisting other government agencies with recreational development. Technical assistance is provided through local soil and water conservation districts. Limited financial assistance for recreation projects is provided through the Small Watershed Program and the Resource Conservation and Development Projects.

The *Federal-Aid Highway Program* established by Title 23 United States Code, as revised by the Surface Transportation Assistance Act and various other amendments, is administered by the Federal Highway Administration. Under this program, grants are provided to state and local governments for use in developing bicycle and pedestrian facilities within highway rights-of-way.

The *Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act* of 1991 (ISTEA), which was a six year authorization to improve America's highways and mass transportation systems, established the National Recreational Trails Funding Program. This Program was created to allocate funding assistance to the states for recreational trails construction and maintenance. In Florida, this funding program is coordinated by the Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Recreation and Parks. Specifically, many public agencies received funding under this program for the following enhancement projects: bicycle and

pedestrian facilities, scenic easement, scenic or historic sites and highway programs, landscape beautification, historic preservation, historic resource rehabilitation and operation, preservation of abandoned railway corridors, control and removal of outdoor advertising, archaeological planning and research, and mitigation of highway runoff pollution. Enhancement project selection criteria are established under Section 1007 (c) of the Act. In 1998, The Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21) was passed as a reauthorization of ISTEA. TEA-21 continues the Transportation Enhancement Program, which includes bicycle transportation and pedestrian walkways, the Recreational Trails Program and the National Scenic Byways Program. The *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)* was passed as a reauthorization of TEA-21 on August 10, 2005 and is scheduled to expire on September 20, 2009.

Title I of the *Housing and Community Development Act* of 1974 as amended through the Housing and Community Development Amendments of 1981 (42 United States Code 5301) established two assistance programs. The Entitled Grants Program is available to entitlement communities which are municipalities of 50,000 or more, urban counties of 200,000 or more and central cities under 50,000 located in Metropolitan Statistical Areas. The Small Cities Program, administered in Florida by DCA, is available to non-entitlement municipalities and counties. Both programs provide full funding to public agencies for preservation or acquisition of urban open space lands to be used for parks, recreation, conservation, or historic purposes. The program also provides funds for the acquisition of urban open space lands to be used for parks, recreation, conservation, or historic purposes. The programs also provide funds for the acquisition, construction, reconstruction, or installation of parks, playgrounds, and recreational facilities where other federal assistance is unavailable.

The *Federal Coastal Zone Management Act* of 1972 (16 United States Code 1451), as amended, provides for grants-in-aid to coastal states with federally approved coastal zone management programs. In Florida, applications for project grants are administered by the Department of Community Affairs. Typical projects which have been funded include studies of local fishery resources and the installation of a maintenance dredging regulatory program for the Intracoastal Waterway and deep water ports.

## **B. State**

Chapter 375, F.S., the *Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Act* of 1963 established the Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Recreation and Parks as the lead agency responsible for developing and executing a comprehensive outdoor recreation plan for the state. The Act provided for the Land Acquisition Trust Fund to be used for facilitating and expediting the acquisition of land, water areas, and related resources. The Act established the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program for the purpose of providing grants to local governments to acquire or develop land for public outdoor recreation purposes. The program distributes a portion of the Land Acquisition Trust Fund according to rules specified in Chapter 62D-5, Part V, F.A.C. The Act also authorized DEP to participate in the Land and Water Conservation Fund Program described in the previous section. Chapter 62D-5 Part V, F.A.C., provides the rules for participation in this program. Chapter 258, F.S., provides that it shall be the duty of the Division of Recreation and Parks to supervise, administer, regulate, and control the operation of all public parks, including all monuments, memorials, sites of historic interest and value, sites of archaeological interest and value owned, or which may be acquired, by the state, or to the operation, development, preservation, and maintenance of which the state may have made or may make contribution or appropriation of public funds.

State government's responsibility for providing public recreation in Florida is comprised of a varied assortment of special facilities and programs, each unique to the mission of 11 separate agencies. Many of

these programs are funded, in part, by proceeds from the Florida Forever (formerly Preservation 2000) program.

Preservation 2000 was the brainchild of the visionary Commission on Florida's Future, which determined a need for \$3 billion to fund land acquisition projects statewide. In response, then Governor Bob Martinez proposed \$3 billion for the land preservation fund based upon 300 million dollars in yearly bonded funds over ten years. In 1990, the Florida Legislature provided funding for one year on bonds funded by an increase in Florida's documentary stamp tax. The first issue of bonds was sold in May 1991. The Legislature divided the available annual funding among seven programs: Conservation and Recreation Lands (50%); Save Our Rivers (30%); Florida Communities Trust (10%); State Park Inholdings and Additions (2.9%); State Forest Inholdings and Additions (2.9%); Game and Freshwater Fish Commission Inholdings and Additions (2.9%); and Rails to Trails (1.3%). The Legislature further limited use of Preservation 2000 funds committed to Conservation and Recreation Lands (CARL) and Save Our River (SOR) projects to lands in imminent danger of development, in imminent danger of subdivision, likely to quickly appreciate in cost, having significant resource value, available for bargain purchase, or sheltering endangered species. The Legislature also limited bond issues to years when appropriations were provided to retire bond debt.

The second issue of Preservation 2000 bonds came as an amendment to the reauthorized Florida Communities Trust Program. The documentary stamp tax was again increased and designated for a second issue of bonds. The Legislature inserted a section in the amendment declaring its interest in finding a permanent funding source for Preservation 2000 and avoiding additional bond issues.

In 2000, the Florida Legislature replaced the Preservation 2000 program with the Florida Forever Act. Like Preservation 2000, Florida Forever is a 10 year, 3 billion program, however, Florida Forever places additional emphasis on acquiring, protecting and restoring open space, greenways and recreation properties within urban areas; and provides for certain water resources and water supply development projects. Also, under the new law, the Florida Forever Council (FFC) will be created comprised of seven citizens whose responsibilities will be setting the goals and measures of the program. The members will have expertise in agriculture, development, the environment and the associated sciences. FFC members will meet twice a year to revisit the goals and measures of the program, and will meet every two years to discuss the current distribution percentages. They will be able to reset the percentages as needed. In addition, a newly created Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) will be responsible for accepting acquisition applications, prioritizing and recommending modifications to the acquisition list, and will report on the progress of the FFC. The ARC will be comprised of the Department of Environmental Protection Secretary, Division of Forestry Director, Executive Director of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Director of the Division of Historical Resources, Department of Community Affairs Secretary and four citizens with scientific backgrounds. Florida Forever went into effect in 2001.

In 1987, the Legislature shifted the primary funding base for the CARL program to the State's excise tax on documents (property deeds, stock certificates, bonds, promissory notes and similar items), but retained the first \$10 million from severance taxes on phosphate mineral extractions. Funding was further augmented by establishment of the Florida Preservation 2000 Program by the 1990 Legislature. The CARL program received 50% of the Preservation 2000 funds, however, under the new Florida Forever program the funding has been reduced to 35% of the funds. Areas to be purchased under the CARL Program are selected by the Land Acquisition Advisory Council, composed by the Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection, the Director of the Division of Forestry, the Executive Director of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the Director of the Division of Historical Resources, and the Secretary of the Department of Community Affairs. The Council annually ranks proposed acquisition projects according to

criteria in Chapter 18-8, Florida Administrative Code. The Governor and Cabinet, acting as the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund, approve parcels for acquisition based on recommendations made by the Advisory Council. As of 1999, over \$600 million had been committed under the program for acquiring over 310,000 acres of conservation and outdoor recreation lands.

The Florida Legislature established the Conservation and Recreation Lands Trust Fund (CARL) in 1979 (Section 253.023, Florida Statutes), to provide a means of acquiring and managing environmentally endangered lands and other lands for recreation, water management, and preservation of significant archaeological and historical sites. The fund originally combined \$27 million remaining from the \$200 million Environmentally Endangered Lands Program, which was authorized by the Land Conservation Act of 1972, with a portion of the annual revenues obtained from severance taxes on solid minerals and liquid fuels.

Chapter 380, Part III, F.S., the *Florida Communities Trust*, provides for an acquisition program and assistance in recreational planning for local governments. Land acquisitions require matching funds from the local government. This program is administered by the DCA and funded through the Florida Communities Trust Fund and the Florida Forever Program Trust Fund.

Chapter 409, F.S., established the Community Services Trust Fund for the purpose of assisting local governments in the development and administration of community services programs. Programs may include the acquisition, development, and renovation of recreational resources and facilities. Funds are derived from state general revenues and distributed through a County per capita formula. Funds are administered according to rules established in Chapter 9C-2, F.A.C.

Chapter 259, F.S., the Land Conservation Act of 1972 authorizes the issuance of state bonds for acquisition of conservation and recreational lands. Every year the Land Acquisition Advisory Council establishes or updates a list of acquisition projects selected for purchase pursuant to this chapter for the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund to consider for approval.

Section 253.034, F.S., authorizes DEP to dispose of surplus land. The rules for this process are provided in Section 18-2.011, F.A.C. Proposals are circulated to all state agencies serving on the Land Management Advisory Committee. If a parcel is found to be needed for state purposes, the State retains ownership and management responsibilities are transferred to the appropriate managing agency. Lands that have the potential for meeting state recreation purposes, are environmentally fragile or contain archaeological or historical resources remain in state ownership. Parcels without state use, are then made available for lease, sale, or exchange first to local governments and then to private interests. Local governments and private interests may obtain remaining surplus parcels for use in meeting recreation needs on a local basis. This Act includes disposal of lands acquired by the State under the Murphy Act of 1937, which allowed the State to take possession of all private lands with delinquent tax certificates. As the record of ownership is cleared these lands become available for recreation as well as other purposes. Many of the parcels are small but may be of use in local government recreation programs.

Article IV, Section 9, of the Florida Constitution and Chapter 372, F.S., designates the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission as the agency with the authority to exercise all the non-judicial powers of the state with respect to wild animals and freshwater aquatic life. As part of its total program, the Commission administers both wildlife and fish management areas on state, federal and privately owned lands. In addition to hunting, Florida's wildlife management areas also provide opportunities for non-consumptive recreation activities including hiking, nature study, fishing, horseback riding, and picnicking. The Commission's recreational improvements include developing and maintaining user access areas, camping

areas and boat ramps. The fish management program includes maintaining boat ramps, stocking game fish, installing fish attractors, and controlling undesirable aquatic plants. The Commission receives funds for the preservation, restoration and enhancement of Florida's fish and wildlife resources from the Federal government. The Commission also manages a nongame fish and wildlife program funded by the Nongame Wildlife Trust Fund.

Chapter 589, F.S., authorizes the Division of Forestry to provide outdoor recreation facilities and programs within the state forest system. Their involvement ranges from the development of game habitat to the provision of fully developed campgrounds. The Division also assists in maximizing the recreational use of private forest land by developing forest management plans for landowners that include an assessment of the land's potential for hunting, fishing, wildlife management, water access and camping, and design considerations for related facilities.

Chapter 260, F.S., the Florida Recreational Trails Act of 1979, authorized the Division of Recreation and Parks to establish a network of recreation, scenic and historic trails as elements of the Florida Recreational Trails System. Procedures and criteria for the selection, designation, and management of trails and administration of the Florida Recreation Trails system are contained in Chapter 16D-7, Florida Administrative Code. Hiking, canoeing, bicycling, jogging, and horseback riding trails are authorized for inclusion in the system.

Sections 260.011-260.018, F.S., the Florida Greenways and Trails System, establishes the planning, development, operation and maintenance of this system. It is the intent of the Legislature to officially recognize the Florida National Scenic Trail as Florida's official statewide trail from the Panhandle to the Everglades. This system will function as a statewide system of greenways and open space benefiting environmentally sensitive lands and wildlife while providing people with access to healthful outdoor activities.

The Florida Scenic and Wild Rivers Program was established by the DEP Executive Board in January 1972 and revised in June 1978. The program is designed to preserve the aesthetic and wilderness qualities of exceptional rivers and streams in the State. The program is similar to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Program described in the previous section but it is a separate program. Designation by the Executive Board is conferred by approval of a management plan for the river that may include acquisition and local regulatory controls. Chapter 253, F.S., established the Conservation and Recreation Lands Program to provide a means of acquiring and managing environmentally endangered lands and other lands for recreation, water management, and preservation of significant archaeological and historical sites. The funding base for the program is the state's excise tax on documents. The areas to be purchased are selected by the Land Acquisition Selection Committee. The Committee annually ranks proposed acquisition projects according to criteria in Chapter 18-8, F.A.C. The Governor and Cabinet, acting as the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund, selects parcels for acquisition based on recommendations made by the selection committee.

Sections 258.35-258.46, F.S., the Florida Aquatic Preserve Act of 1975, was intended to set aside forever state-owned submerged lands having exceptional biological, aesthetic and scientific value as aquatic preserves or sanctuaries. Preserves are established through a public hearing process conducted by the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvements Trust Fund subject to confirmation by the legislature. A management plan is developed pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 18-20, F.A.C., developed in accordance with provisions of the Act. There is one (1) aquatic preserve in Santa Rosa County: Yellow River Marsh.

Chapter 373, F.S., provides for the Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) Program and the Save Our Rivers Program to be administered by the Water Management Districts. Lands acquired through these programs are made available for public recreation uses when compatible with the management of the property. Santa Rosa County is part of the Pensacola Bay System SWIM project.

Chapter 267, F.S., designates the Division of Historical Resources as the agency responsible for the identification, preservation, protection and interpretation of Florida's heritage. The Division administers grant programs to assist the restoration, rehabilitation, and preservation of historic structures and sites. In cooperation with local organizations, the Division conducts the Florida Historic Markers program to recognize and mark sites which reflect the cultural and historical development of the state. The Division also keeps a computerized inventory of historical, architectural and archaeological sites, which identifies the resources that can be made available for public recreation.

Chapter 380, Part I, F.S., provides development review criteria for Developments of Regional Impact (DRI's) and the Florida Quality Developments (FOD's) program. The adequate provision of recreation and open space and the protection of historical and archaeological resources are considered in the review process.

Section 327.28, F.S., established a Motorboat Revolving Trust Fund composed of fees collected from the registration of non-commercial motorboats. Section 327.25 (12), F.S., earmarks a portion of this fund for the Florida Boating Improvement Program through which grants are awarded to County governments to provide for recreational channel marking, public launching facilities, and other public boating related activities. Chapter 16D-5, Part III, F.A.C., provides the rules for distributing these funds.

In 1972, Congress enacted the Federal Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) to encourage coastal states to develop comprehensive management programs designed to ensure the beneficial use, protection and management of our nation's coastal resources. In response to the Congressional action, the Florida Legislature adopted the *Florida Coastal Management Act* of 1978 (Chapter 380, Part II, Florida Statutes). The Florida Coastal Management Program (FCMP), the State of Florida's federally approved management program, was ratified by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in 1981. The primary legal authorities for the FCMP are codified under 27 statutes administered by ten state agencies, with the Department of Community Affairs acting as the lead agency. Several of the statutes are directly related to acquisition of beach access and conservation and recreation lands, management of coastal state parks, recreational trails, and aquatic preserves. Other statutes indirectly relate to outdoor recreation through regulatory authority and intergovernmental coordination.

The *Save Our Coast Program* was created in September 1981 by a resolution of the Governor and Cabinet to protect representative samples of the State's undeveloped sandy beaches for public recreational use and enjoyment. Functionally, the program is an extension of the State's outdoor recreation land acquisition program established by Chapter 375, Florida Statutes, and is administered under Chapter 16D-10, Florida Administrative Code. The program is funded from revenues obtained from the phased sale of \$275 million in revenue bonds secured by the Land Acquisition Trust Fund. As of December 1992, 27 coastal areas, comprising a total of 73,384 acres and 74 miles of beachfront and shoreline, were acquired at a total expenditure of over \$256.8 million.

The *Beach Access Initiative* was created in May 1987, as a supplement to the program, to concentrate efforts to acquire smaller beachfront parcels in predominately urban areas. The initiative sets aside 25 percent of the proceeds from future Save our Coast bond sales for the purchase of parcels not to exceed

\$250,000. As of December 1992, 5,171 linear feet (32 acres) of saltwater beach access have been acquired or encumbered for acquisition through 46 projects, totaling over \$6.8 million.

The *Beach Erosion Control Assistance Program* is authorized by Section 161.101, Florida Statutes, to utilize the Beach Management Trust Fund to provide assistance to State and local government agencies for federally and non-federally funded beach restoration, renourishment, erosion control, dune restoration and revegetation, dune walkover construction, parking facilities for public access, project design and engineering studies, shoreline monitoring studies, marine habitat mitigation and inlet sand transfer and inlet management planning. Before an area can qualify for funding, the sponsor must provide permanent public accesses at one-half mile intervals, including adequate public parking. Funds allocated under this program can be utilized to match state or federal grant funds. Some \$140 million have been appropriated by the State for more than 300 beach erosion control projects along Florida's coastline since 1965.

The *Artificial Reef Development Program* provides financial assistance from state and federal sources to coastal local governments for the development of saltwater artificial reefs. Eligible expenditures include engineering and transportation of reef materials to an approved site. The program is administered under Chapter 16R-9, Florida Administrative Code. Since the program's inception in 1979, over \$4 million in grants have been authorized for more than 120 artificial reef projects. In addition to financial assistance, the program also provides technical assistance to local coastal governments in developing and managing artificial reefs.

In 1993, legislation was passed to enable the State, through the Florida Department of Transportation, to establish an official program for scenic highways. In 1994, the Department applied for and received a Scenic Byway Grant from the FHWA to develop a *Florida Scenic Highways Program*. Prior to the ISTEA legislation, Florida had no official statewide scenic highway programs. There are several routes designated by the Florida Legislature as "scenic and/or historic", but these roads were selected on a case-by-case basis and evaluated independently without unified criteria.

The Recreation and Open Space Element is required by Chapter 163, Part II, Florida Statutes, however, it does not provide specific guidelines as to its content or how the Element is to be prepared. Perhaps the most profound impact to the revised Recreation and Open Space Element resulted from the repeal of Section 9J-5.014, Florida Administrative Code, on February 20, 1996. In 1992, changes to Chapter 163, Part II, F.S., require that statewide concurrency be provided for parks and recreation, with a timing standard of "no later than one year after issuance of certification of occupancy".

## C. Regional

The *West Florida Regional Planning Council* adopted a Strategic Regional Policy Plan in 1996. The following are related to the Recreation and Open Space Element:

- The development review process should evaluate the impact of the proposed development on environmentally, historically, or culturally significant land.
- State and local governments should landscape parks under their jurisdiction using native plants and employing every energy conservation method practicable for the particular site.
- State and regional agencies and local governments should identify unique historical, cultural, geological, ecological and environmentally sensitive sites for protection and use as recreational facilities.
- Support and participate in the conversion of abandoned railways to recreation facilities through the "Rails to Trails" program.

- State agencies shall increase the outdoor opportunities, the number of recreational user visits and compatible, non-consumptive public uses in state forests.
- All levels of government should minimize the direct land purchase cost by developing parks as multi-purpose governmental expenditures.
- Acquisition of outdoor recreation lands, particularly shoreline areas and seashores should be given priority over development of new facilities.
- Expand efforts to provide recreational opportunities to urban areas, including the development of activity-based parks by local governments.
- User access should be identified when proposing and developing park sites by all levels of government.
- Coordinate public and private resources to meet recreation demands through joint ventures, tax incentives and other cooperative relationships.

## D. Local

The County has an interlocal agreement with the City of Milton for the funding of a boat ramp at Russell Harber Landing.

The County has interlocal agreements with the Santa Rosa County School District for the financing of an outdoor classroom at Bagdad Park and a field house at Locklin Field.

~~The County has a lease agreement with DEP for the Navarre Beach State Park. The Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund is authorized in Section 253.03, F.S., to enter into leases for the maximum benefit and use of public lands by local government, which may properly use and possess them for the benefit of the State. The terms of the agreement lease for the Navarre Beach State Park is for a period of ninety nine (99) years from the date of January 1, 2001, in order to preserve, develop, operate, maintain and otherwise manage said lands for outdoor recreation, park, conservation, and other public purposes. Modifications to this plan can only be made upon a mutual agreement between the parties involved. This agreement may be renewed by mutual consent and upon terms acceptable to both parties.~~

## 13-4 DATA AND ANALYSIS

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The key to developing a successful park system is to determine community needs and preferences, and to adopt LOS standards for those needs which, when implemented, will provide the land, facilities, and programs in locations that serve and satisfy the public. When the standards have been approved by the governing body, funding sources to defray the costs of land acquisition, park and facility development, and operations and maintenance must then be determined. Beyond the standard Park and Recreation standards established by the State's Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), Outdoor Recreation in Florida - 1994, each County must survey its citizens to determine their unique community needs.

### A. Parks and Recreation System Assessment

The parks and recreation assessment is based on an inventory of existing conditions, an evaluation of existing and planned park and recreation facilities and services, and an examination of issues and opportunities. The inventory of park and recreation facilities was identified with the assistance of the Santa

Rosa County Recreation and Parks Department, Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Division of Forestry, Northwest Florida Water Management District and the Department of Interior, National Park Service. Map 13-1 (Appendix A) shows the location of Santa Rosa County facilities.

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 Parks include Gulf Islands National Seashore. Some of the major State Parks include ~~Navarre Beach State Park~~, 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) and the Northwest Florida Water Management District (Lower Escambia River Water Management Area, Garcon Point Water Management Area and Yellow River Water Management Area).

The County's parks and recreational facilities have been organized according to type and ownership as identified in *Table 13-3*. 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 46 parks that are owned by the County, 4 parks are owned by the State and 1 park owned by the Federal government.

**Table 13-3**  
**Santa Rosa County Recreational Parks**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Acres</i>	<i>Management/ Owner</i>	<i>Recreational Function</i>
<b>Regional Parks</b>			
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
<del>Navarre Beach State Park</del>	<del>130.2</del>	<del>State</del>	<del>Resource-based</del>
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
Yellow River Water Management Area	5,519.0	State	Resource-based
Lower Escambia River Water Management Area	21,680.0	State	Resource-based
Blackwater River 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
	<i>Subtotal</i>		
	<del>128,677.51</del>		
	77,290.4		
<b>Community Parks</b>			
Navarre Beach Boat Ramp	17.019.6	County	Resource-based
<del>Navarre Beach Gulf Side Park</del>	<del>13.0</del>	<del>County</del>	<del>Resource-based</del>
Navarre Beach Park	130.2108.9	County	Resource-based
Bagdad Recreation Park	9.0	County	Activity-based
Benny Russell Park	5.0	County	Activity-based
East Milton Park	70.0	County	Activity-based
Florida-Town Park	5.0	County	Activity-based

**Table 13-3  
Santa Rosa County Recreational Parks**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Management/ Owner</b>	<b>Recreational Function</b>
Locklin Field Park	5.0	County	Activity-based
Mayo Park	5.0	County	Activity-based
Optimist Park	5.0	County	Activity-based
Pace Area Recreation Park	30.027.5	County	Activity-based
District One Park	35.0	County	Activity-based
District Three Park	35.0	County	Activity-based
Santa Rosa Sports Plex	73.7	County	Activity-based
Chumuckla Park	7.0	County	Activity-based
Santa Rosa Horse Complex	17.0	County	Activity-based
Santa Rosa Soccer Complex	41.0	County	Activity-based
Wayside Park	3.04.5	County	Resource-based
Navarre Park	5.0	County	Activity-based
Navarre Soccer/Football Park	20.030.3	County	Activity-based
Navarre Sports Complex	30.0	County	Activity-based
Tiger Point Recreational Park	30.0	County	Activity-based
Fidelis Community Center and Park	5.011.6	County	Activity-based
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>392.0510.1</i>		
<b>Neighborhood Parks</b>			
Archie Glover Park Boat Ramp	2.0	County	Resource-based
Bagdad Boat Ramp	1.0	County	Resource-based
Bal Alex Boat Ramp	1.0	County	Resource-based
Cypress Tree Park	2.7	County	Activity-based
Presley Park	1.0	County	Resource-based
Oyster Pile Boat Ramp	1.0	County	Resource-based
Santa Villa Park	2.0	County	Resource-based
Holley-Navarre Ball Field	3.5	County	Resource-based
Bayview Heights #1	4.01.2	County	Resource-based
Bayview Heights #2	0.52.3	County	Resource-based
Marquis Basin Boat Ramp	3.02.9	County	Resource-based
McCallister Park	2.0	County	Activity-based
Metron Estates Recreation Park	0.51.9	County	Resource-based
Patriot Park	2.0	County	Activity-based
Oriole Beach Boat Ramp	0.5	County	Resource-based
Woodlawn Beach Boat Ramp	3.0	County	Resource-based
Hickory Shores Neighborhood Park #1	0.2	County	Resource-based
Hickory Shores Neighborhood Park #2	0.4	County	Resource-based
Hickory Shore Neighborhood Park #3	0.4	County	Resource-based
Lalyenda Neighborhood Park	0.5	County	Resource-based
Reservation Neighborhood Park	0.51.8	County	Resource-based
Sandpiper Village Park	1.0	County	Resource-based
Swenson Park	2.0	County	Activity-based
Villa Venyce Park	2.0	County	Activity-based
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>22.937.3</i>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>429,092.41</b>		
	<b>77,837.8</b>		

**Source:** Santa Rosa Community Planning, Zoning and Development Division, 20022009

## A.1 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 NFWFMD acquires land for water resource purposes and has also developed a Regional Park System. 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 Parks 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.

Santa Rosa County has 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

Santa Rosa County contains several State Parks, two (2) Wildlife Management Areas (one state and one federal), a National Seashore and state and federal lands. These are described further below:

*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 State Park* is located at the eastern end of Navarre Beach. This park comprises 130.2108.9 acres. ~~This is a new park and has not yet been developed.~~ This park contains a fishing pier, restrooms and parking facilities. Activities include fishing, swimming, picnicking and sunbathing. The park will provide both active and passive recreational opportunities.

*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.

Additional *resource-based* park sites not owned by the state or federal governments are briefly described further below:

~~*Navarre Beach Gulf Side Park* is a 13 acre park located on the Gulf side of Navarre Beach. This park contains a fishing pier, restrooms and parking facilities. Activities include fishing, swimming, picnicking and sunbathing.~~

*Navarre Beach Boat Ramp* is a 1719.6 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 contains playground and picnicking areas..

### A.1(a) 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 1817 of the 2724 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).

Archie Glover Boat Ramp, Florida Town Park and Garcon Point Park provide access to Escambia Bay. Avalon Boat Ramp #1, #2 and #3 provide access to Mulatto Bayou. Bagdad Boat Ramp, Morrell Boat Ramp and Oyster Pile Boat Ramp provide access to the Blackwater River. Bal Alex Boat Ramp and Dickerson City Boat Ramp provide access to East Bay. East River Boat Ramp, Holley Boat Ramp #1 and #2 provide access to the East Bay River. Indian Bay Boat Ramp provides access to Indian Bayou. Kaiser's Boat Ramp, McDavid Park, Quintette Boat Ramp, Sandy Landing Boat Ramp, Webb Landing and Williams Lake Boat Ramp provide access to the Escambia River. Mae Lane Boat Ramp and Snapper Avenue Boat Ramp provide access to Ward Basin. Marquis Basin Boat Ramp provides access to Marquis Basin. Oriole Beach Boat Ramp, Navarre Beach Boat Ramp and Woodlawn Beach Boat Ramp provide access to Santa Rosa Sound.

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 13-4*, on the following page, lists the ~~eighteen (18)~~seventeen (17) 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 13-2* (Appendix A) shows the location of the County's Special Purpose Parks and Parks with Special Feature(s).

**Table 13-4**  
**Santa Rosa County Special Purpose Parks**

<u>Boat Ramp</u>	<u>Acres</u>
Avalon Boat Ramp #1	0.5
Avalon Boat Ramp #2	0.1
<del>Avalon Boat Ramp #3</del>	<del>0.1</del>
Dickerson City Ramp	0.2
East River Boat Ramp	0.5
Garcon Point Park	0.5
Holley Boat Ramp #1	0.1
Holley Boat Ramp #2	0.1
Indian Bay Boat Ramp	0.1
Kaiser's Boat Ramp	0.1

Mae Lane Boat Ramp	0.1
McDavid Park	0.1
Morrell Boat Ramp	0.1
Quintette Boat Ramp	0.1
Sandy Landing Boat Ramp	0.1
Snapper Avenue Boat Ramp	0.1
Webb Landing	0.5
Williams Lake Boat Ramp	<u>1.5</u>
<b>Total Acres:</b>	<b>4.94.8</b>

### **A.1(b) Artificial Reef Program**

In addition to the *resource-based* parks, Santa Rosa County has participated in the Artificial Reef Program. This program was established by the state to enhance saltwater fishing; it provided funds to local governments for the development of artificial reefs. Currently, Santa Rosa County has five artificial reefs offshore; these are J. Brown, McKay Reef, Woodburn Reef, Deplat Reef and DEP East. These artificial reefs enhance the fishing in the County and provide both passive and active recreation opportunities. The County will continue to participate in this program as funds become available.

### **A.1(c) Open Space Resources**

Open space can be defined as those areas in the community which are not occupied by buildings, structures, or impervious surfaces. As with recreational facilities, open space can be classified into several categories, depending upon its type and function (i.e., conservation, corridor and utilitarian). Together, these categories of open space comprise the overall open space system in the County and to a great extent determine the character and aesthetics of the County.

### *Conservation Open Space*

Since the early 1990's open space can be described in further detail beyond its previous classic definition of conservation, corridor, and utilitarian. The use of conservation open space could be used for habitat protection of a particular species, preservation of pastoral farm land, preservation of forest resources and acquisition of environmentally significant land based on multiple resource benefits (i.e., flood abatement, water quality protection and improvements, water supply development, wellfield protection, protection of aquifer recharge areas, protection of wetland systems, restoration of uplands and finally the protection and restoration of natural systems). Frequently, the Water Management District purchases conservation open space based on the resource benefits as identified above.

As mentioned above, the Northwest Florida Water Management District owns or maintains 21,680 acres along the Escambia River, 3,250 acres along the Garcon Point Peninsula, 254 acres along the Blackwater River, 1,176.6 acres along Escribano Point and 5,518.5 acres along the Yellow River. The Department of Environmental Protection owns or maintains 16,863.1 acres along the Yellow River. The State of Florida owns 20 acres of undesignated state land near Interstate 10 in the east central part of the County. The Division of Forestry manages 126,483.3 acres of the Blackwater River State Forest in Santa Rosa County and Eglin Air Force Base has approximately 66,506.4 acres in Santa Rosa County. In addition, Naval Air Station Whiting Field has 2,020 acres, which includes Harold, Holley and Santa Rosa Outlying Landing Fields and Blackwater River Recreation Area.

### *Corridor Open Space*

Corridor open space is linear in nature and is difficult to quantify. Typically, corridor open space consists of those right-of-ways (ROW's) or utility easements that accommodate transportation or utility facilities. However, corridor open space can be used for scenic and cultural purposes such as scenic and historic highways, recreational greenways (linear belts), green belts, wildlife corridors and river corridors.

Corridor open space varies along the road right-of-way depending on the County standards for local collector roads, minor arterial roads, major arterial roads, boulevards and interstates. Although these typical road right-of-ways provide open space, these roadways do not generally provide scenic and/or historic roadway experiences. Santa Rosa County does not have any officially designated scenic and historic roadways, however, under the sign code there are designated scenic zones where billboards are prohibited. These roadways include:

- U.S. Highway 90 from Woodbine Road to the Escambia River.
- Avalon Boulevard from 1 mile south of Interstate 10 to U.S. Highway 98.
- The entire length of Garcon Point Road.
- 500 feet either side of the Blackwater River Bridge on Interstate 10.

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. Although the concept of greenbelts is not as popular as it was during the early to mid 1900's, the Santa Rosa County Agriculture (AG) land use designation functions as a greenbelt which conserves and directs urban and suburban growth in the County.

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.

### ***Utilitarian Open Space***

The last major category of open space is utilitarian open space. Utilitarian Open Space is generally defined as open lands used for productive purposes from which monetary benefits accrue. There is some overlap between utilitarian open space and corridor open space; however, easements for pipelines, transmission lines, drainage, and other utilitarian open space (retention/detention ponds, airport flight zones, cemeteries, mining areas, wastewater reuse sites, old land fills, wellfield protection areas, agricultural areas and pasture land) specifically function as utilitarian open space. The specific classification will depend more on its configuration than its function.

Santa Rosa County has a substantial amount of land that could be categorized as utilitarian open space. This land would include the active agriculture and forestry lands in the county as well as those other lands as described above.

## **A.2 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 4641 County owned or maintained parks, 2022 are activity-based. These parks include 1817 community parks totaling 359370.5 acres and twelve neighborhood parks totaling 410.7 acres.

### **A.2(a) 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 13-3 (Appendix A) 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 Toll 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 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 ~~bar-b-q~~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 3027.5 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.

~~The County currently has three community parks scheduled for construction in 2002. These are *District One Park*, *District Three Park* and *Navarre Soccer Park*. These will all be activity based~~

~~parcs. Both District One Park and District Three Park will be located within the central part of the County and the Navarre Soccer Park will be located in the south part of the County.~~

*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.

### A.2(b) 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 13-5** shows an inventory of the municipal parks within the county as well as regional parks located within municipal boundaries.

**Table 13-5  
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
	<b>Total</b>	<b>87.5</b>

*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
	<i>Total</i>	<i>1,567</i>

*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

### A.3 Privately Owned Recreation Facilities in Santa Rosa County

Private recreation sites include those which were provided as residential development amenities and those that are operated on the basis of earning a profit. Private sites, not open to the general public, will not be inventoried as part of the County's recreation and open space system. An example of a strictly private facility is a country club that has a board that approves membership applications or a subdivision park that excludes outside residents. Private facilities must be evaluated separately from public facilities because residents using these facilities may also choose to utilize city or County facilities. Generally, private facilities are not suitable for long-term availability of recreational opportunities to the public. Private facilities are also subject to changes in ownership and use. However, private facilities can function to reduce the demand upon public facilities. An example provided would be a golf course that is part of a golf course community. Such a golf course is for the use of the residents and their guests, but it also serves to reduce the total demand for golf courses in the area. *Table 13-6* is a summary of the privately provided recreation facilities in Santa Rosa County.

**Table 13-6**  
**Privately Owned Recreational Sites in Santa Rosa County**

<u>Facility</u>	<u>Number</u>
Clubs	3
Camps	3
Marinas	3
Resorts	6
Golf Courses	8
Campgrounds	14
Community Centers	4
Racetracks	2
Shooting Ranges	1
Zoo	1

Source: Santa Rosa County Planning, Zoning and Development Division, 2001.

In addition to the facilities listed in Table 13-6, area businesses such as Champion International have also leased out thousands of acres for hunting lodges and hunting clubs.

## B. Recreation Needs Analysis

The previous section identified the Recreation and Open Space Parks in Santa Rosa County including other municipalities and some private recreational opportunities. An analysis of the County public parks is necessary to determine the minimum recreational standards for the County. The minimum level of service standards and the County's future park and recreational needs should be based on the existing and future population, demographic characteristics and the identification of existing problems and future needs. Through this analysis, the current problems and future needs will form the basis for developing goals, objectives and policies.

### B.1 Santa Rosa County Park Standards

Santa Rosa County's park classification is divided into three categories: neighborhood, community and regional/open space. *Table 13-7* lists the existing acres for neighborhood, community and regional/open space parks located in the County.

**Table 13-7**  
**Existing Acreage for Park Types in Santa Rosa County**

<u>Facility</u>	<u>Acres</u>
Neighborhood Park	32242.1
Community park	392510.1
Regional/Open Space	245,967,177,290.1
<b>Total Park Acres</b>	<b>246,681,177,8425.3</b>

Source: Santa Rosa County Planning, Zoning and Development Division, 2004-2008

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#### B.1(a) 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. Two acres per 1,000 population are required. Santa Rosa County currently has 32242.1 acres of neighborhood parks to meet the needs of its residents.

#### B.1(b) 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. Three acres per 1,000 population are required. 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 392510.1 acres of community parks to meet the needs of its residents.

### B.1(c) 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. A minimum of 20 acres per 1,000 population is required. 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 246,077 177,290.1 acres of regional/open space areas.

### B.2 Level of Service Standards

State law requires each local government to adopt Level-of-Service (LOS) standards for parks. Adopting LOS standards, however, has a value beyond meeting State requirements. LOS standards can be a valuable tool for assessing current needs and for predicting future needs. Thus, LOS standards are an important part of capital improvements planning.

Generally, LOS standards should be based on population served. Practically, this means that the LOS standard is measured in terms of the number of facilities or the number of acres of parkland per 1,000 persons. The actual LOS achieved by a local government might be more or less than the LOS standard adopted by the local government. *Table 13-8* depicts the recommended LOS for the County parks based on each park category, the generalized service area, the LOS standards, and the typical facilities located in the park.

**Table 13-8  
Recreation and Park Generalized Service Areas,  
LOS Standards and Typical Facilities, Santa Rosa County**

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Generalized Service Area mile/radius (1)</i>	<i>LOS Acres/1,000</i>	<i>Typical Facilities (2)</i>
Neighborhood	5-2	2	Playground, Ball fields, Multi-purpose area, Picnic areas, Play areas, Passive areas
Community	3-5	3	Playground, Ball fields, Multi-purpose areas, Active and passive areas, Indoor activity area, Community center, Spectator sport areas
Regional/Open space	County-wide	20	passive and active facilities

(1) Service areas are generalized for proposed neighborhood and community parks. This allows for greater flexibility in park location and also allows market and demographic changes.

(2) These facilities may not be located in each park, however; they are used as a guide for development of new parks.

### B.3 Need for Park and Recreation Resources

LOS standards are numerical approximations of the number of recreation sites and facilities required to meet the needs of the population. These figures are important in recreation planning. Santa Rosa County has developed standards for park acreage. Based on these standards, demands and needs for parks have been determined and projected based on population projections. *Table 13-9* lists the demand and needs of the County through 2020, based on the adopted level of service (LOS) standard.

**Table 13-9  
Cumulative Demand and Need, Park and Open Space Acreage  
Santa Rosa County, 2001**

	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Existing 2004 Acres	104,454	120,779	139,677	157,782	176,280
	Demand/Need	Demand/Need	Demand/Need	Demand /Need	Demand/Need
32242.1	209/ 113208.9/-164.7	242/ 80256.1/-214.0	279/ 43270.4/-228.3	316/ 6299.9/-257.8	353/ 31329.3/-287.2
392510.1	313/ 79313.4/196.7	362/ 30384.2/125.9	419/ 27405.7/-104.4	473/ 81449.8/60.3	529/ 137494.0/16.1
45,967177,290.1	2,089/ 243,8782089.1/175,520.1	2,416/ 243,5512561.0/174,729.1	2,794/ 243,1732,704.36/174,585.74	3,156/242,8112,998.9/174,291.2	3,526/ 242,3,525.6/173,764.54

gn means a deficiency in acres.

Santa Rosa County Planning, Zoning and Development Division, 2001/2009.

### B.3 Need for Beaches and Beach Access

The need to renourish Santa Rosa County beaches is a primary planning concern for numerous reasons. The beach is crucial to the tourist industry in the County and the County's beach is a wonderful asset to the community for recreation and open space activities. The beach is a significant factor in the quality of life in Santa Rosa County; however, the County also recognizes that the beach and associated dunes are an environmentally sensitive and continuously changing ecosystem and their protection is a foremost priority. Additionally, there is some difficulty in predicting the need to renourish beaches. Beaches naturally fluctuate in width and length and the erosion process can be accelerated or subdued depending upon seasonal and yearly weather conditions. In an attempt to keep abreast of beach erosion issues, the ACOE surveys beaches to determine and project the need for renourishment. Another obstacle in beach renourishment is the heavy price associated with the endeavor. Since the Federal government has shifted the beach renourishment effort to State and local governments, this price tag is becoming heavier as counties are being required to match funds at a higher ratio than recent years.

Beach and waterway access are another important recreational opportunity provided by the County. On Navarre Beach, there are a total of 14 beach accessways to the Gulf of Mexico or Santa Rosa Sound.

Also, the County has 2724 boat ramps accessing the various waterways in the County. Some of these boat ramps are in poor condition or do not provide adequate parking.

#### **B.4 Open Space Needs**

Unlike parks and recreation areas, open space cannot be assessed by applying a set of quantitative standards to population estimates and projections and comparing the results to the County's existing open space inventory. Instead, the open space analysis must use less objective criteria.

Overall, as an area develops and densities increase, open space is typically reduced. With the conversion of vacant land to developed uses, the need for public open space becomes even more important. Such open space not only enhances the aesthetics of the County; it also defines the community's character.

As previously stated, open space is provided through required corridors associated with some road right-of-ways (ROW) providing on-site green areas. However, it is necessary to ensure that sufficient corridor open space is provided by roadways to ensure the provision of internal open space is provided within development projects.

Corridor open space along road ROW's function best when they are either left natural containing many large canopy trees, or ROW's where the median is landscaped, or where the side shoulders are grassed. Such ROW's are not only attractive, but help prevent driving stress and are important for the County's image.

All types of corridor open space enhance the aesthetics and character of the County. This includes road right-of-ways, drainage right-of-ways, and utility right-of-ways. As development continues in the County, retaining these areas as natural corridors becomes even more important.

Equally important is pastoral open space. Since the larger areas of pastoral open space, (i.e., Blackwater State Park, Blackwater Heritage Trail State Park, Navarre Beach State Park) are publicly owned, these tracts are not threatened as frequently by development. As publicly owned lands, these areas will remain undeveloped and serve as open space functions in perpetuity.

Pastoral open space areas can either be owned publicly or privately. Privately owned lands are potentially developable. Included in this category are estuarine and freshwater wetlands in the County. While various regulatory measures at the federal, state, and local level inhibit development of these areas, pressure for development exists. Besides their value as pastoral open space areas, these wetlands also have significant environmental value.

The pastoral open space areas serve several other functions. They serve as flood control, wildlife, and aesthetic functions. To ensure that these values are maintained, these open space areas need to be preserved.

Unlike corridor and pastoral open space, utilitarian open space is land used for productive and monetary purposes. Because of this, these areas are subject to development when circumstances provide for a more productive or higher intensity use of the land. One common example of this is the conversion of agricultural land to urban uses due to development pressures in high growth areas.

Within the urbanized area of the County, there are many tracts of land containing active agricultural operations as designated by the County's Future Land Use Map. Although these areas presently function as open space and create a green belt area, development will potentially occur in these areas in the future. Through the development process comes a loss of open space area along with its associated scenic losses.

Other types of utilitarian open space only function as transitional uses. These uses are programmed for conversion to urban uses, such as subdivisions or development projects. While these types of uses will not serve as permanent open space areas, other types of utilitarian open space, such as retention ponds, buffer areas, upland set-asides, and required yards, can be expected to remain indefinitely. Because transitional open space will eventually be converted to urban use, it is important to recognize that these areas will not always remain undeveloped and other areas must be identified to provide for a sufficient amount of permanent open space.

Also, the County's historic and archaeological resources must be considered as an important part of the open space system. Protecting the County's archaeological resources is a difficult task. Unlike historic structures, archaeological resources have not been mapped and inventoried. Because there isn't a complete comprehensive inventory of Indian middens and other archaeological sites, many of these sites have the potential of being destroyed by development. Since these sites are often located in areas designated or development, these resources are threatened.

## C. Implementation

The Santa Rosa County Recreation and Parks Department is responsible for the development, operation and maintenance of County parks and recreation facilities. **Forty-six** 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.

### C.1 Funding Sources

The County's main funding sources for parks and recreation are ad valorem taxes and grants. Operational and maintenance expenses typically come from ad valorem taxes. Currently, several funding sources for recreational land acquisition are available, mostly in the form of grants. Open space acquisition, in the form of Environmentally Sensitive Lands, can often be funded utilizing many of the Federal and State acquisition programs currently available. The principal uses of these funding sources are listed below:

Ad valorem monies are limited. Options such as user fees, grants, public-private co-operatives, special event fund raising and other revenue generating tactics can be employed. One idea is to establish a private civic fund that would channel contributions and legacies into building parks. This fund could also help finance other projects such as museums and library enhancements. Alternative funding sources for the acquisition, construction, maintenance, and rehabilitation of recreation and open space facilities exist. These programs include, but are not limited to: Conservation and Recreation Lands Program (CARL), Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), Florida Communities Trust (FCT), the Trust for Public Land (TPL),

the Nature Conservancy (TNC) Save Our Rivers (SOR), Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP), Florida Boating Improvement Program (FBIP), National Park Service Land and Conservation Fund Program (NPSL & CFP), and the Transportation Equity Act for the 21 Century (TEA 21).

The CARL program is the State's largest land acquisition program. Its base funding is currently obtained from documentary stamp taxes and from phosphate mining taxes. Generally, CARL lands are those large parcels of hundreds or thousands of acres that are home to rare plants or animals, and are often the best remaining examples of a particular ecosystem.

The LWCF is a competitive matching grant program that provides financial assistance for development and acquisition of land for public outdoor recreation opportunities. Funds were available for distribution to state agencies and local government entities for approved, high-quality outdoor recreation projects meeting needs identified in the State's Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). However, it should be noted that Congress has not funded LWCF for several years now.

The FCT was established by Chapter 380, Part III, F.S., to administer lands for two separate programs; Preservation 2000 Program and Areas of Critical State Concern. This is Florida's newest land acquisition program and involves activities such as land acquisition projects, resource enhancement projects, public access and urban waterfront restoration projects. This program was created to assist local governments in implementing the conservation, recreation and open space and coastal elements of local government Comprehensive Plans. Funds are used to assist local governments with matching grants, full grants and loans to purchase land for conservation and outdoor recreation purposes. County governments and municipalities of Florida are the only entities to receive Preservation 2000 funds from the Trust. Preservation 2000 was replaced by Florida Forever in 2001.

The TPL is a national, non-profit conservation organization that protects land for people. The only private conservation organization working to acquire and convey into public ownership a wide variety of natural, historic, cultural, and recreational resources in and around the Country's metropolitan areas, TPL has pioneered a number of creative financing methods to assist local governments. Programs include: (1) Lease/Purchase - TPL buys and leases property to local governments for up to 15 years; transactions from \$1 million to \$20 million; full use of property during lease period; (2) Buy and Hold - TPL buys and holds property until all public funding is secured; holding period up to two years; transactions from \$500,000 to \$3 million; and (3) Phased Acquisition - TPL buys and conveys property in phases as public funding becomes available; holding period up to five years; transactions from \$500,000 to \$5 million. TPL's Conservation Services Program is a full-service greenway and scenic assessment program that offers technical assistance, public education and outreach, community organizing and acquisition expertise to local governments, land trusts, citizen groups, private landowners and public agencies for greenway, park planning and scenic assessment projects. Eligible applicants for all of TPL's programs include local governments, local land trusts and citizen groups.

The TNC is an international, non-profit, membership organization. Its mission is to preserve plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. TNC saves critical natural areas by setting them aside through purchase, gift or conservation easement. TNC works in partnership with many private organizations, as well as local, state and federal agencies, to facilitate land purchases, build public support for conservation and manage land. TNC oversees the care of more than 36,300 natural acres in Florida. TNC also helps design and carry out methods for managing thousands of acres of publicly owned land.

The SOR program was enacted by legislation in 1981, this in turn created the Water Management Lands Trust Fund (WMLTF) for acquiring the fee or other interest in lands necessary for water management, water supply, and the conservation and protection of water resources, except that such moneys shall not be used for the acquisition of right-of-way for canals or pipelines. In addition to meeting these legislative criteria, lands to be purchased using SOR funds must be included in a five-year land acquisition plan.

The FRDAP was established by Section 375.075, F.S., and Chapter 16D-5 (Part V), F.A.C., and can be used for acquisition of development or renovation of recreational sites. Acquisition can range from small areas serving a localized need to those of regional significance encompassing hundreds of acres. Development can include single-purpose facilities ranging from beach access, picnicking and ball fields to large multi-activity parks. Since 1991, renovation of older facilities was added as an eligible expense. Projects with a total cost of \$40,000 or less can be funded 100%. Projects with a cost of \$50,001 to \$150,000 can be funded 75% with a match from local government. These funds have been restricted to a cap of \$150,000 per project in recent years. Eligible applicants are units of local government with the legal responsibility for the provision of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities.

The FBIP was established by Section 327.28, F.S., and distributed according to Chapter 16D-5 (Part III.), F.A.C. This program provides for recreational channel marking, public launching facilities, and other public boating-related activities. Funds may also be used for manatee protection and recovery projects. Funds for this program are collected from the registration of boats and returned to county governments for their use.

The NPSL & WCFP is administered by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection pursuant to Chapter 16D-5 (Part VI), F.A.C. Funds are available for distribution by State agencies and local governmental entities for approved, high-quality outdoor recreation projects meeting needs identified in the SCORP. Florida has allocated this portion of these funds to local governments for resource-based and activity-based public outdoor recreation projects. Funding is on a 50:50 basis from state and local sources. Local match may be cash, or in-kind services, and/or land value. Local governments are eligible applicants.

**TEA-21** continues the programs established by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991, which includes the National Recreational Trails Funding Program and the Transportation Enhancement Program. The Trails program was created to allocate funding assistance to the states for recreational trails construction and maintenance. The enhancement program was established for public agencies to receive funding for projects such as bicycle and pedestrian facilities, scenic easements, scenic or historic sites, landscape beautification, historic preservation and others. Funds are dispersed on an 80% Federal, 20% State, and 0% Local. Projects must first be approved in FDOT's Capital Improvements Plan.

Additional funds for recreational projects are provided through other sources. These sources include impact fees, user fees, taxes, assessments, MSTU, MSBU, tourist development taxes, and bonds.

## **C.2 Future Park Sites**

As discussed previously in the Built Facilities section, there are three community parks scheduled for construction in 2002. *District One Park* is located at 5950 Chumuckla Highway in the Pace area of the County. The park will include softball/baseball fields, three pavilions and a playground. *District Three Park* is located at 5974 Chumuckla Highway, which is also in the Pace area of the County. The park will include softball/baseball fields, pavilions, a playground and restroom facilities. The *Navarre Soccer Park* is located at the end of Deer Lane in Navarre. This park will include soccer fields, concession stands and restroom facilities.

*Note: With the exception of distance needed to travel to the park in many cases the recreational needs of the citizens are filled by a community park when there is an absence of a neighborhood park. In other words if we meet the LOS for both neighborhood and community parks we would be duplicating efforts. The use of the community park to fulfill the needs would compensate for the failure to achieve the LOS standard for neighborhood parks.*