



CHAPTER 3: EXISTING RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION

The park system within Pierce County consists of a variety of parks, natural areas, and recreation facilities owned by both public and private providers. Pierce County Parks & Recreation Services (P&RS) contributes approximately 3,879.1 acres of parks and open space to this system. These parks provide a variety of recreation experiences for people who live, work, visit, and play in Pierce County.

This chapter of the Pierce County Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan summarizes the context in which P&RS operates. Specifically, this chapter:

- Presents the park classification system;
- Reviews the existing park and facility inventory; and
- Outlines current recreation programming.

Existing P&RS resources are described more fully in Discussion Paper #2: Park, Facility & Program Analysis, which appears under a separate cover.

PARK CLASSIFICATIONS

Within the context noted above, Parks & Recreation Services provides a variety of recreation opportunities at several different types of parks. Some of these parks are locally oriented, while others serve residents on a larger community scale. Still others are regionally focused, providing festival space and facilities that draw users from throughout the entire county and region. For this reason, a refined classification system was developed to help P&RS plan more effectively for future park, recreation, and open space needs. Park types include regional parks, County parks, local parks, special use facilities, resource conservancy parks, linear parks/trails, and undeveloped sites. These park categories are defined on the next several pages. The entire inventory is summarized by park type in Appendix B. This inventory reflects current information for the park system as of January 2008.

REGIONAL PARKS

Regional parks provide access to significant ecological, cultural, or historical features or unique facilities that attract visitors from throughout the entire region (including incorporated and unincorporated areas). These parks often exceed 200 acres in size and include a variety of recreation opportunities.

Spanaway Regional Park incorporates Spanaway Park, Bresemann Forest, Sprinker Recreation Center, and Lake Spanaway Golf Course.



Regional Parks:

Spanaway Regional Park

Spanaway Park
Bresemann Forest
Sprinker Recreation Center
Lake Spanaway Golf Course

Together, these sites total 320 acres and draw users from throughout the region with facilities such as a boat launch and rentals, swimming beach, picnic shelters, golf course, playground, indoor ice rink, indoor/outdoor tennis courts, meeting and classroom space, skate park, climbing rock, sport fields, urban forest, and trails.

County Parks:

Frontier Park
Heritage Recreation Center
Meridian Habitat Park
Lake Tapps Park

COUNTY PARKS

County parks are large community parks that support a wide range of recreation interests and attract residents from nearby communities. These parks provide active and passive recreation opportunities and may incorporate natural open space. Sites can range from 100-200 acres, depending on the primary purpose and usage of the site.

P&RS currently has 4 sites (210.1 acres) classified as County parks. These parks include Lake Tapps, Frontier Park, the Heritage Recreation Center, and Meridian Habitat Park. These sites provide facilities to support a variety of activities, such as County fairground buildings, an equestrian arena, Quarter Midget race track, lodge, swimming beach, boat launch, trails, sport fields, and community center.

Local Parks:

Dawson Playfield
Gonyea Playfield
Lidford Playfield
Mayfair Playfield
South Hill Community Park

LOCAL PARKS

Local parks include playfields, neighborhood parks, and small community parks that have more limited facilities. These parks typically include a playground, a sports field, tennis or basketball courts, internal pathway, and supporting amenities. Local parks typically range from 5-40 acres.

P&RS manages 6 local parks in the existing system, containing a total of 71.7 acres. These smaller parks and playfields range from 3 to 40 acres in size.

Special Use Facilities:

Fort Steilacoom Golf Course
Fox Island Fishing Pier
Lakewood Community Center

SPECIAL USE FACILITIES

Special use facilities include stand-alone recreation facilities not located within larger parks. These include single-purpose sites that may serve a regional audience, such as golf courses, sports complexes, community centers, marinas, boat ramps, fishing piers, outdoor theaters, urban plazas, historical landmarks, gardens, and gun and archery ranges. Specialized facilities contained within parks of other types are not classified as special use facilities. P&RS has 3 special use sites providing a total of 90.4 acres. These parks include Fort Steilacoom Golf Course, Fox Island Fishing Pier, and the Lakewood Community Center.

RESOURCE CONSERVANCY PARKS

Resource conservancy parks are conservation areas designed to protect and manage unique or significant natural features, such as rivers and streams, wetlands and marshes, steep hillsides, environmentally sensitive areas, and wildlife habitats. Where appropriate, resource conservancy parks may secondarily support passive, nature-oriented outdoor recreation.

P&RS has 6 park sites dedicated to resource conservation. These sites account for nearly 212.5 acres of natural areas and support trail-related and other types of passive recreation.

LINEAR PARKS/TRAILS

Linear parks and trails include built or natural corridors that provide recreation or non-motorized transportation linkages within the county or green buffers between communities. Recreational use is generally passive and trail-related. Linear trail corridors may also include supporting facilities, such as viewing areas, play areas, picnic tables, or trailheads.

P&RS has 3 linear parks, totaling 460 acres. These sites provide opportunities for walking, biking, jogging, in-line skating, dog walking, wildlife watching and, in some areas, equestrian use. Paved trails total 30.9 miles with an additional 0.5 miles of proposed trails.

UNDEVELOPED SITES

Undeveloped sites include land that has been acquired by Parks & Recreation Services for possible future park and/or public access improvements. These sites receive minimal maintenance and are not managed as conservation areas (resource conservancy parks).

P&RS has 2,510 acres of undeveloped sites at 30 sites throughout the County, representing significant tracts of open space within the current park system. Several of these are large, well-situated sites that could be developed as County parks to meet the needs of the surrounding communities. Currently, P&RS is in the process of obtaining public feedback to develop new master plans for several sites, such as Orangegate Park, Cross Property, and Buckley/Bonney Lake Park. Some sites are more valuable as open space, with a potential to be maintained as resource conservancy parks.

Resource Conservancy Parks:

Parkland Habitat
Parkland Prairie Addition
Puget Creek Beach
Seeley Lake Park
South Pierce Wetland
Wetland Replacement

Linear Parks/ Trails:

Nathan Chapman Trail
Cushman Powerline Trail
Foothills Trail

Undeveloped Sites:

Ashford Park
Buckley/Bonney Lake
Chambers Creek Canyon
Crescent Lake Park
Cross Property
Delano Beach Park
Ellenswood Conservancy
Fairfax
Fairfax Town Site
Fox Island Ferry
Half Dollar Park
Herron Point
Hope Park
Hopp Farm
Lake Tapps Habitat
Melesky Property
Marsh Property
Milton Freeway Tracts
Narrows Park
Nisqually River
 Interpretive Center
Orangegate Park
Peninsula Rec. Area
Purdy Sand Spit
Rimrock Park
Riverside Park
Sunrise Beach/Doc
 Weathers Park
Swan Creek Park
Solar Farms
Wales Property
Wilkenson Creek

Several sites within the Carbon River Valley, including Fairfax, Fairfax Town Site, the Marsh Property and Carbon River Valley Property (other County-owned site), are part of a conservation effort along the river watershed. P&RS has contracted with the Cascade Land Conservancy (CLC) to develop a land classification system to guide the long-range management and stewardship of properties owned by the County. From this land classification system, Pierce County will be making important decisions about how to best manage these public lands, including public use and conservation of natural and cultural resources.

Cemeteries:

Dieringer Cemetery
 Old Settlers Cemetery
 Roy Cemetery

CEMETERIES

Three old and/or historic cemeteries do not fit the classification system noted above. These add 5.3 acres to the P&RS inventory. Based on the Revised Code of Washington (RCW), cemeteries without caretakers become the responsibility of Parks and Recreation.

Other County-Owned Parks:

Carbon River Valley
 Chambers Bay Golf
 Course
 Chambers Creek
 Properties
 Cheney Stadium
 Crescent Lake Park
 Hales Pass Community
 Center
 Naches Trail Preserve
 Purdy C
 Puyallup River Levee
 Trail
 Waller Property

OTHER COUNTY-OWNED PARKS

In addition to the parks and open space areas owned and managed by Parks and Recreation Services, there are several other County-owned sites that are not managed by P&RS. Based on inventory data current as of January 2008, nine County-owned parks accounted for an additional 961.7 acres. This category includes Cheney Stadium, the site of a minor league baseball team who manages and maintains this facility. It also includes the site known as Purdy C, which is adjacent to the McCormick Forest (Purdy B) and managed by PenMet. Most of the parks in this category are managed by Pierce County Public Works and Utilities. The largest of these sites is the 700-acre Chambers Creek Properties, which currently include sports fields, a labyrinth, the Grandview and Soundview trails, and the Chambers Bay Golf Course. Unlike Chambers Creek, most Public Works parks are managed as open space rather than recreation (public use) sites. In addition, the Public Works Public Development Program manages other open space parcels not noted in this inventory, such as numerous road ends that provide both fresh and saltwater access across the county.

OTHER SITES

P&RS has a long-term lease with the State of Washington for Fort Steilacoom Park (340.6 acres). Currently, the park is managed by the City of Lakewood, but P&RS has contributed financially to the maintenance and operation of this site. This site is noted separately on the inventory to reflect this unique arrangement.

Other Sites:

Fort Steilacoom Park

EXISTING PARK INVENTORY

The P&RS park and facility inventory is summarized in this section. The complete inventory is presented in Appendix B.

PARK INVENTORY SUMMARY

Parks & Recreation Services owns approximately 3880 acres of parks at 56 sites, ranging from the 1061.4-acre Fairfax conservation forest on the Carbon River to the 0.4 acre Fox Island Ferry Landing. The entire park inventory is summarized in Table 3.1.



Table 3.1: P&RS Park Inventory Summary by Classification

Park Type	Number of Sites	Acres of Park Land	% of Park System ¹
Regional Parks	1	320.0	8.3
County Parks	4	210.1	5.4
Local Parks	6	71.7	1.8
Special Use Facilities	3	90.4	2.3
Resource Conservancy Parks	6	212.5	5.5
Linear Parks/Trails	3	459.2	11.8
Undeveloped Sites	30	2509.9	64.7
Cemeteries	3	5.3	0.1
P&RS Subtotal	56	3879.1	100%
Other County-Owned Parks	9	961.7	
Other Sites	1	340.6	
“Other” Subtotal	10	1312.3	
TOTAL	66	5,191.4	

¹Represents the percentage of the parks and facilities owned and operated by P&RS for each park category.

Undeveloped sites, such as Fairfax and others, account for nearly 65% of the park system. Linear parks/trails (11.9%) and regional parks (8.3%) are the second and third most dominant park types, in terms of acreage owned by Parks and Recreation Services. In addition to P&RS’s inventory, there are approximately 1,300 acres of other sites owned by Pierce County or managed by other agencies, bringing the total to 5,191 acres. These sites account for close to 25% of the overall total parks and open space acreage in the inventory.

Based on this inventory, Parks & Recreation Services provides nearly 5 acres of park land per 1,000 residents, based on its current park inventory and a 2007 estimated County population of 782,200 residents. However, if level of service calculation excludes undeveloped parks and natural areas, the LOS drops to 1.2 acres of developed parks per 1,000 residents. This LOS is lower than comparable counties.

Note: For the Pierce County Capital Facilities Plan (CFP), level of service (LOS) is calculated using the total number of park acres and the population of unincorporated Pierce County (357, 257). Based on these numbers, the existing LOS is 14.5 acres per 1,000 residents. However, this calculation does not reflect the fact that many P&RS parks and facilities serve a regional and County-wide population, not just the residents in unincorporated areas.

EXISTING FACILITY INVENTORY

Parks & Recreation Services offers a variety of sport, recreation, and support amenities and facilities within its parks. These facilities add to the variety of recreation opportunities and experiences provided in the County. Significant facilities provided by P&RS include golf courses, sport complexes, recreation centers, swimming beaches, boat ramps, and an indoor ice skating rink. Table 3.2 summarizes the existing P&RS facilities in Pierce County.

Parks & Recreation Services is unique in the facilities that they provide. According to a survey conducted by the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), many responding counties in the western United States provide group, trail-related, and outdoor-oriented facilities, such as picnic areas with shelters, playgrounds, hiking and biking trails, baseball/softball fields, beach/lake, boat launches, and campgrounds. However, few offer golf courses, gymnasiums, skateboard parks, or rock climbing walls. No other ice rink was noted in the survey.

P&RS FACILITY CONDITION

In spring 2007, all P&RS owned parks were toured to evaluate the condition of amenities and facilities at each site. A rating system based on a three-point scale was developed for each amenity, with each scale following a standard format:

1. Amenity is in **good** condition
2. Amenity is in **fair** condition
3. Amenity is in **poor** condition

If the amenity is subject to ADA guidelines, comments regarding accessibility were also noted. Using the data collected, the planning team examined scores across each amenity type, and developed an average score for each park based on the amenities within it. The evaluation criteria and complete results of the assessment are presented in Appendix C.

Table 3.2: P&RS Facility Inventory Summary

Amenity or Facility	Amount
Recreation Facilities	
Playgrounds	9
Basketball Courts	7.5
Tennis Courts	8
Soccer Fields	17
Baseball Fields	6
Softball Fields	19
Other Sport Fields ¹	12
Boat Ramps	3
Swimming Beaches ²	3
Site Amenities	
Benches	10 sites
Picnic Tables	10 sites
Drinking Fountains	6 sites
Parking Areas	20 sites
Park Structures	
Restrooms	17
Picnic Shelters	8
Recreation/Community Centers	4 sites
Caretaker's Residences	5 sites
Other ³	13 sites

¹ Other sports fields include 1 Ultimate Frisbee field, 3 football fields, 4 T-ball fields, and 4 multi-use backstops.

² These 3 beaches are located at two sites: Spanaway Park and Lake Tapps Park.

³ Other facilities include 3 concession buildings, 3 trailhead kiosks, 2 rental houses, 2 golf courses (9 and 18 holes) 2 disc golf courses, maintenance buildings, climbing rocks, a skate park, BMX track, Quarter Midget race track, pavilion for boat rentals, storage shed, RV site with hookup for caretaker, fishing pier, gazebo, interpretive shelter and remnant barns and dairy buildings.



Overall, the average score for all rated amenities and facilities in the P&RS system was 1.62, meaning that most recreation facilities are in above average (fair to good) condition. The review indicates that there are some disparities in park condition based on park type. Linear parks and trails appear to be well maintained and kept in good condition (with an average score of 1.0). County parks and resource conservancy areas are kept in reasonably good condition as well (with average scores of 1.15 and 1.25 respectively). Regional parks (1.52), special use facilities (1.57), and local parks (1.86) are in fair to good condition depending on the age of facilities and their past renovations.

On average, undeveloped sites had the lowest condition rating (1.92) of any park type. Several of these sites have attracted some nuisance behavior, such as vandalism and dumping. Invasive species and dilapidated or aging structures are also a problem at some sites. Since many undeveloped sites were not rated, it is hard to assess their condition and maintenance needs overall.

OTHER RECREATION FACILITIES

Other County-owned parks and Fort Steilacoom (which is managed by the City of Lakewood) contribute a variety of facilities that support recreation opportunities in Pierce County. Chambers Creek Properties, Chamber Bay Golf Course, Cheney Stadium, and Fort Steilacoom Park, and other sites provide opportunities for playing sports, attending sporting or special events, golfing, walking or jogging, playing on playgrounds, picnicking, relaxing at dog parks, and appreciating nature and the outdoors. These facilities are not noted in Table 3.2, but are included in the inventory in Appendix B. Other park districts and cities throughout Pierce County also contribute numerous facilities that have a local, community-wide, and regional draw.

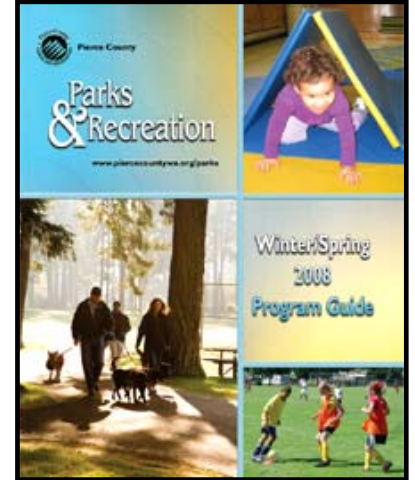
RECREATION PROGRAMMING

Parks & Recreation Services offers a wide variety of recreation programs for diverse age groups and interests. Programs provided by P&RS vary seasonally, ranging from athletic leagues to special events to day camps.

PROGRAM SERVICE AREAS

P&RS programs and events are designed to serve a variety of County residents. While the majority of programming focuses on youth and adults, specific programs target seniors, adults, teens, youth, preschool age children and people with disabilities. Recreation programs are provided in seven major areas:

- **Special Events and Activities:** One of P&RS's programming strengths is in the provision of unique special events and activities. Events such as Fantasy Lights draw an estimated 125,000 spectators annually. Other popular events include Tour de Pierce, Foothills Dash, CarLESS Commute, Classic Car Show, Youth Fishing Derby, Family Movie Nights, Concerts in the Park, Woof Woof Walks, Tree Lighting Ceremonies, the Daddy Daughter Dances, and various ice shows and competitions.
- **Youth Sports and Recreation:** Youth programs are another major service area for P&RS. This service area includes sport camps and clinics, track and field events, team sports, tennis competitions, martial arts, leisure classes, Kidmobile, teen trips and adventures, day camps, summer camps, etc.
- **Adult Sports and Recreation:** The County also provides a number of adult sports and recreational activities, including exercise classes, drop-in programs, team sports, sport clinics, tennis competitions, tournaments, and recreation/leisure classes.
- **Ice Skating:** The ice skating facility at the Sprinker Recreation Center is the focus point for numerous skating-related programs and activities, including classes, performances, recreational skating, ice shows and competitions, birthday parties, and school year-end parties.
- **Golfing:** Two P&RS golf courses help make golf a notable program area. Besides recreational play, the course support lessons, driving ranges, tournaments, junior golf camps, etc.
- **Specialized Programs:** Companionship programs, camps and tours for children and adults with disabilities, and cooperative play programs help fill an important niche for programming in the community.
- **Volunteer Programs:** Volunteerism is a leisure activity that provides benefits both to P&RS and to the volunteers themselves. Volunteers can contribute through programs such as Parks Appreciation Day, Adopt-A-Park and Adopt-A-Trail, and through opportunities to become youth recreation coaches, special event assistants, etc.



In addition to the program service areas noted above, Pierce County Parks and Recreation is organizing environmental programming in cooperation with local school districts and Pierce County Solid Waste Division. Environmental education and outdoor programming are typically significant service areas for county programs.

P&RS PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

In a 2005 self assessment, staff identified recreation programming as one of three strengths of Parks & Recreation Services. In a 2006 all-staff planning session, special events, including Fantasy Lights and the Classic Car Show, were noted for their significance to P&RS and to County residents. Skating programs and ice shows, along with the Kidmobile, Cooperative Play, and Companionship programs were noted as programming highlights, along with the initiation of sports league and golf tournament play.



PROGRAMS ORGANIZED BY OTHERS

In addition to the events and programs organized and provided by Parks and Recreation Services, P&RS facilitates many other special events and recreation activities by providing parks and recreation facilities for use by other programs. Some events, like the Pierce County Fair, represent an area of on-going collaboration for the provision of facilities and facility use. Others, such as Quarter Midget Racing at Frontier Park, are the result of specific lease arrangements. P&RS provides facilities at below cost to support a variety of programs, such as:

- Special events
- Organized sports
- Summer camps
- Senior Activity Center
- Quarter midget racing
- Equestrian arena/events

OTHER RENTAL FACILITIES

P&RS also supports recreation opportunities through short-term rentals of specific facilities and equipment. Examples include:

- Picnic shelters
- Fairground buildings
- Auditorium/multi-purpose room
- Gymnasium
- Ice arena
- Athletic fields
- Tennis courts
- SPIRE rock

- Game bags
- Boat rentals

PROGRAMMING CHALLENGES

P&RS currently fills important programming gaps in various underserved areas by providing recreation opportunities at different locations and times than other local sport and recreation providers. P&RS's recreation centers provide a broad scope of activities to meet the needs of the surrounding community, by offering opportunities that are not provided nearby.

Currently, funding and staffing limit the number and scope of programs provided. Adding new programs often requires cutting some existing programs to free up sufficient funds and staff to offer something new. For this reason, program expansion proposes a great challenge for Parks & Recreation Services.

This current dilemma will get worse as the County's population continues to grow. P&RS will continue to face increasing challenges to meet regional and local programming needs. The identification of programming priorities in core service areas now will help prioritize the distribution of funding, staffing and facilities needed to support P&RS recreation programs, activities, and special events. Future programming will likely require flexibility, focus, mobility, and partnerships.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

As described in this chapter, Pierce County's existing park, facility, and programming resources provide a number of opportunities and constraints for the development of the future park system. Parks and Recreation Services has a wealth of park land, but the majority of it is currently undeveloped. Developed parks provide a variety of facilities in reasonably good condition, but P&RS supports a number of facilities that other counties don't typically support. Similarly, a variety of different programs are offered, as P&RS aims to meet various unmet programming needs in many areas of the county, stretching available staff and funding in several directions. Some focus and refinement may be needed on provision of parks, facilities, and programs in the future. Reclassifying parks, developing design guidelines for parks and facilities, and identifying and focusing in on core program service areas will help P&RS meet these challenges. These strategies will also help P&RS meet community needs, which are discussed in Chapter 4.

