



# **CALVERT COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION**

## **Strategic Plan**

**175 Main Street  
Prince Frederick, MD 20678**

**Fiscal Year 2019 - 2023  
July 2018 – June 2023**



[www.calvertcountymd.gov/parksandrecreation](http://www.calvertcountymd.gov/parksandrecreation)

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## Informational Resources

- a. Park Locator Map: <http://www.calvertcountymd.gov/index.aspx?nid=1537>
- b. Customer Service Survey: <http://www.calvertcountymd.gov/PRSurvey>

## I. Executive Summary

The Department of Parks & Recreation, hereinafter referred to as “Department,” is in the business of planning, developing, implementing and professionally managing the parks, programs, policies and procedures, facilities, special events and leisure services established under the leadership of the Board of County Commissioners, County Administrator, Parks Administration, and the associated advisory boards of Calvert County.

The Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan, hereinafter referred to as “Plan,” outlines the general management, assesses the business climate, addresses goals and objectives as well as outlines resources for the Department. The Plan is developed in accordance with the Calvert County Strategic Plan, Calvert County Comprehensive Plan, and the Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan (LPPRP). The Plan is updated every five (5) years by the Parks & Recreation Director and leadership staff. The Plan identifies the Department's top priorities and is also reviewed annually by leadership staff in order to make mid-course corrections if needed. This allows for the opportunity to re-evaluate various components of the Plan and revise plans and systems in order to provide for synchronicity in all County efforts.

A seasoned, dedicated, motivated group of professionals from diverse backgrounds and experiences drive the Department's accomplishments. The Department's mission and leadership guides the efforts to evaluate the needs of the community and work towards providing parks, facilities, and recreation programs that improve the quality of life of residents and visitors to Calvert County.

## II. Vision and Mission

### Vision

*“The Calvert County Department of Parks & Recreation strives to enhance the health, economy and well-being of our community through sustainable practices, leisure opportunities and environmental stewardship.”*

### Mission

*“In partnership with Calvert County residents, the Department of Parks & Recreation cultivates programs, parks and services that positively impact quality of life; preserve natural and cultural resources; promote economic stability; and satisfy community needs for opportunities in recreation, wellness, knowledge, and connecting with nature.”*

### III. Department Overview

The Department supports and maintains 38 properties and 22 school recreation parks totaling 2,066.15 acres.

**As noted in the 2017 Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan, Calvert County park facilities fall into nine categories and include:**

Park Category	Number of Sites
Mini Parks	1
Neighborhood Parks	3
Community Parks	7
District Parks	3
Regional Parks	1
School Recreation Parks	22
Special Use Areas	13
Open Space/Natural Resource Lands	9
Undeveloped Sites	3

**Note that the number of sites listed may differ from the total number of parks as more than one category may be applicable to a single facility.**

#### Mini Parks

This the smallest designation of county designated park types. Mini parks are generally one acre or less in size and designed to address a location specific recreation need.

#### Neighborhood Parks

These are designed to be the recreational and social hub of a neighborhood and includes small open space areas and/or developed recreation facilities. These parks are generally less than ten acres in size.

#### Community Parks

These parks are designed to meet the recreational needs of multiple neighborhoods or larger sections of the community, as well as preserving open spaces and natural landscapes. They typically include athletic facilities for sports as well as playgrounds, picnic facilities, basketball and tennis courts, cycling, dog parks and trails for hiking and cycling.

#### District Parks

These facilities not only draw visitors from Calvert County but also attract tourists from outside the county and state. They are designed to serve as large, active recreation hubs in each of Calvert County's three election districts. These sites provide fields, courts, and associated recreation infrastructure for team and individual sports and recreation activities. These parks include Dunkirk District Park, Hallowing Point Park, and Cove

Point Park. All three facilities boast multiple athletic fields, tennis and basketball courts, playgrounds and picnic areas.

### **Regional Parks**

These parks are designed to serve the needs of a large portion of the county and provide developed recreation facilities, such as sports fields and associated infrastructure, and/or preserved natural areas and open spaces. Regional parks are generally larger than 50 acres in size. Ward Farm Recreation & Nature Park is Calvert County's only regional park set to begin construction in late 2018.

### **School Recreation Parks**

These facilities are the portion of a school or public educational institution available for public recreation use outside of school hours and usage. Limitations on public access and use varies by school site. These are based on agreements with the Calvert County Board of Education and the Department. This includes twenty-two (22) sites for indoor recreation activities, and eleven (11) sites for outdoor recreation activities.

### **Special Use Areas**

Facilities that serve a specific, single purpose. These sites include facilities such as pools, campgrounds, boat ramps, community centers and golf courses. Some of these facilities are relied on to be at least partially self-sufficient and produce enough revenue to not adversely impact ad valorem tax dollars. Those facilities include Chesapeake Hills Golf Course, Breezy Point Beach & Campground, all aquatic facilities and concessions.

### **Open Space/Natural Resource Lands**

By protecting the forests, waterways, and other habitats, these parks provide opportunities for the public to explore, discover and learn about the natural heritage of the county. These areas preserve natural systems, unique landscapes, and/or local areas of unique social or ecological value. These areas offer outdoor recreation opportunities compatible with the natural landscape, cultural heritage, and ecological values of the site.

### **Undeveloped Sites**

These properties are acquisitions that are planned to become future park facilities when funding is available for development.

## **IV. Meeting Customer Needs**

### **Customer Profile**

While the Department strives to serve all residents of and visitors to Calvert County, the typical customer possesses one or more of the following characteristics: is concerned about physical and mental wellness; is interested in the natural environment; is civic-minded; has a need for non-school-hour programming; is seeking a social outlet; or is seeking a recreation or leisure opportunity.

In general, residents and visitors hold high expectations for the quality and cleanliness of the Department's facilities and for the degree of customer service they receive. In

addition, customers expect affordable prices and exceptional value regarding the services the Department offers.

### **Products and Services**

The Department offers a wide variety of products and services throughout Calvert County. This includes:

- Maintenance of parks and green spaces including athletic and multipurpose fields, trails and boardwalks.
- Aquatic facilities including a state of the art indoor aquatic center in Prince Frederick, a full-service waterpark in Lusby, and community pool in Huntingtown.
- Recreation, therapeutic recreation, and nature programming provided by staff, contractual vendors and third party contracted organizations.
- Development of capital improvements including the construction, maintenance, and enhancements of facilities.
- Operation of community centers that provide age appropriate programming to include summer camp programs.
- Maintenance and operation of a variety of hard courts including tennis, basketball, volleyball, skate parks, and pickleball.
- Athletic services to include youth and adult sports such as basketball, football, kickball, softball, tennis, field hockey, golf, soccer, swimming, baseball and lacrosse through staff, contracted vendors or third party contracted organizations.
- Variety of special events that celebrate health and leisure pursuits.
- Outlets for boating, canoeing, kayaking, and paddleboarding.
- Camping, fishing, hiking, biking, and equestrian activities.
- Concession services for athletic fields, beach and aquatic facilities.
- Volunteer and research opportunities.
- Watchable wildlife opportunities.
- Rental facilities for use by the community for meetings and special occasions.
- Protection of natural habitats, conservation, and restoration.

### **Change Dynamics**

The Department maintains a complete inventory of parks, with acreages, park type designation, and facilities. This inventory is reviewed annually and updated as needed to include every five years as a part of the Calvert County Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan. In addition, the Department uses standards per capita based on acres or drive time for specific facilities as benchmarks to inventory fields, courts, etc., and assess need. These are generally established in accordance with state and national standards.

The Calvert County Comprehensive Plan establishes goals, objectives, and policies to guide development. Several elements of the Comprehensive Plan impact and are

impacted by Department services and facilities. These elements include Land and Water Resources, which encourages the preservation, protection, and conservation of natural resources; Recreation, which encourages the development of trails, water access, and a wide selection of public recreational facilities and programs; and Public Facilities and General Services, which provides for public facilities to support planned growth and ensure that buildings and grounds are built with multiple public uses in mind.

The Department maintains a complete inventory of recreation programs and services and updates it annually through recreation programming software, activity guides and through third party partner organizations. Changes are made to programs offered based on participant feedback, market research, trends in recreation, demographic shifts, and analysis of community-wide recreation opportunities.

## V. Departmental Goals and Objectives

### Meet Present and Future Needs of Community

- Complete master plan development for properties known as “Offsite Area A” and the “Watson Property.” Mid Term
- Update master plan for Cove Point Park. Short Term
- Develop a priority list for updates to remaining park master plans and begin implementation of updating plans. Mid Term
- Complete Phase 1 construction at Ward Farm Recreation & Nature Park and begin design of Phase 2. Long Term
- Complete Chesapeake Hills Golf Course renovation master plan. Long Term
- Develop and construct a clubhouse building and course restroom facilities at Chesapeake Hills Golf Course. Long Term
- Explore options to expand Capital Outlay budget, equipment replacement and deferred maintenance funding. Mid Term
- Explore non-traditional funding opportunities department-wide. On Going
- Produce an optimum mix of programming that provides for all recreation needs of the community creating lifelong participants. On Going

### Enhance Services and Facilities

- Establish and utilize customer satisfaction surveys for all facilities and programs with annual analysis of results. On Going
- Develop a special events program to address permitting special events within Calvert County. Mid Term
- Develop plan for consistency and efficacy of park informational and wayfinding signage. Mid Term
- Increase the quality, playability, and safety of the playing surfaces throughout the parks through better drainage, irrigation, specialized equipment and properly trained staff. On Going
- Provide more opportunities for modern day sports enthusiasts such as Pickleball, futsal, e-sports, cycling, and more. On Going

- Explore opportunities for more year around activities and amenities. Mid Term
- Develop and implement plan to install outdoor lighting structures at more fields to increase playability. Long Term
- Assess accessibility for participants of all ability levels to program opportunities and develop plan for accommodation. Long Term
- Develop trail system at Hughes Tree Farm. Short Term
- Install the floating dock at Lower Marlboro wharf. Short Term
- Complete the renovations at Solomons Boat Ramp for improved ADA boating and kayak access. Short Term
- Provide youth group rentals of the cabins at Kings Landing Park. Short Term

### **Improve Processes and Efficiencies**

- Identify and obtain more avenues for staff to become and stay connected to intranet/internet to achieve efficiencies, and improve processes and customer service. Mid Term
- Develop a parks & recreation chapter within the Calvert County Code of Public Laws. Mid Term
- Maintain childcare, pesticide, pool, alcohol, and other certifications and licenses. On Going
- Maintain compliance with federal, state, and county agency standards at golf course, aquatic facilities, concessions and child care facilities (summer camps). On Going
- Develop comprehensive policies and procedures manual and review annually. Short Term
- Develop “Revenue & Fee” policy and manual with annual review to maximize cost recovery while meeting the needs of the community for affordable services. Mid Term
- Create consistency throughout the department in relation to forms, applications, customer service, and available avenues for participation. On Going
- Expand program evaluation process to ensure the best use of staff time and funding. Short Term

### **Develop Collaborative Solutions**

- Develop collaborative marketing strategies with the Departments of Communication & Media Relation and Economic Development. On Going
- Maximize recreation, leisure, and health opportunities and leverage funding opportunities through cooperative partnerships. On Going
- Work with schools for community service hours / volunteer hours. On Going
- Fully implement the Youth Sports Provider Program. Mid Term
- Submit application and work collaboratively with all county departments to become a CAPRA accredited agency. Long Term
- In collaboration with Community Services, develop a strategy to increase transportation opportunities to park facilities through the county. Mid Term

### **Develop Engaged Citizenry**

- Develop a comprehensive marketing and branding plan to guide the efforts of the

#### Department. Short Term

- Develop outreach to educate the public on benefits of Parks & Recreation. Mid Term
- Be involved in countywide website redesign. Long Term
- Increase and enhance quality of social media presence department-wide and among specific designated special facilities. On Going
- Further develop and expand marketing efforts to expand reach throughout Calvert County and regionally to better inform the public. On Going
- Provide more opportunities for the public to interact with staff. On Going
- Utilize an integrated service delivery model that creates and sustains a base of users that drive program attendance and improve staffing. Long Term
- Improve the volunteer experience within the department by defining roles, skills needed/required, evaluation, and recognition and ensure that volunteers are seen as authentic representatives of the department. On Going

#### **Conserve, Protect, and Enhance Natural Resources**

- Explore opportunities to acquire properties for land preservation, public water access and trail development. On Going
- Explore options to increase water access on County owned or maintained properties. On Going
- Expand nature programming into new areas such as community centers, active parks, and Flag Ponds beach that utilize natural features and amenities at each site. Mid Term
- Enhance promotion of ecotourism opportunities. On Going
- Develop a meadow management protocol, to include mowing, invasive species control, and restoration efforts, to enhance and increase habitat for grassland species such as Barn Owls, American Kestrels, Monarchs, and pollinators such as native bees. Mid Term
- Construct the living shoreline at Flag Ponds Nature Park. Mid Term
- Renovate the Battle Creek Cypress Swamp Nature Center to improve visitor experience. Long Term

#### **Build the Team**

- Obtain positions based on five year re-organization plan that address current staffing deficiencies and future needs which includes new facilities coming online. Long Term
- Measure turnover and track information on staff that leaves using exit interviews. On Going
- Continue to expand leadership transparency and communication initiatives. On Going
- Enhance the use and effectiveness of the Parks & Recreation Recognition Committee (PARRC). Mid Term
- Develop a recruitment plan for hard to hire seasonal positions. Mid Term
- In cooperation with Human Resources, develop plan for employee wellness. Mid Term
- Expand employee volunteer opportunities to support community efforts and participation in department outreach. Mid Term

#### **Develop Skills and Competencies**

- Provide opportunities for professional development through workshops, training, professional seminars, and conferences. On Going

- Provide opportunities for more staff to become CPRP and CPRE certified. On Going
- Explore cross-training opportunities department wide. Long Term
- Identify and provide training for new technologies to improve processes and efficiencies. On Going
- Create consistency in employee evaluations that provide objectives based on the Strategic Plan. Short Term

Short Term = Up to one year.

Mid Term = One to three years.

Long Term = Three to five years.

On Going = A continuous process.

## VI. Managing Financial Resources

### Business Climate/Market

Established in 1654, Calvert County is one of the oldest counties in the United States. Calvert County is a 213 square mile area located in Southern Maryland. It boasts a population of 90,883 (US Census estimate from 2016). The median household income is estimated at \$106,247 and is ranked as the fourth wealthiest county in the state of Maryland.

Prince Frederick, the county seat, is located 41 miles southeast of Washington, D.C., and 60 miles south of Baltimore. Although the population has grown over time, Calvert County retains its rural character and agrarian roots, offering good schools, a clean environment and good quality of life. Calvert is a peninsula bound by the Chesapeake Bay on the east and the Patuxent River on the west, defined by steep cliffs and woods on the bay side while rolling fields slip gently down to the river on the other. The county's many creeks provide refuge for wildlife and scenic areas for boating and fishing.

There are two incorporated towns in Calvert County: North Beach and Chesapeake Beach, located on the bay at the northeast corner of the county. In addition, the Comprehensive Plan identifies seven "Town Centers." These include (from north to south) Dunkirk, Owings, Huntingtown, Prince Frederick, St. Leonard, Lusby, and Solomons.

Residents and visitors hold high expectations for the quality and cleanliness of the Department's facilities and for the customer service they receive. In addition, they expect affordable prices and exceptional value on the services offered. The Department of Parks and Recreation recognizes that it is the face of Calvert County government for many residents and visitors. Reaching the county's diverse population with effective communication and excellent service is fundamental to maintaining and enhancing local government's positive public image.

### Change Dynamics

Near the end of fiscal year 2017, the Board of County Commissioners restructured county government. In addition to renaming or realigning departments and divisions, new

departments were also established. The Division of Parks & Recreation and the Division of Natural Resources, both formerly under the Department of General Services, joined to form the new Department of Parks & Recreation. This Department places a strong emphasis on program management and absorbed oversight of aquatics, golf services, beaches and campgrounds, business management, parks, natural resource lands, and recreation programming.

In fiscal year 2018, the new Department of Parks & Recreation hired the first Parks & Recreation Director and began a department reorganization which has established the divisions of Recreation, Parks & Safety, Natural Resources, and Special Facilities. In addition to staffing changes, the addition of park facilities and upcoming large construction projects will greatly impact the services of the department. Ward Farm Recreation and Nature Park was purchased in 2013 and had a completed master plan set for design. Phase 1 design was completed in 2017 with scheduled construction to start in late 2018. Another parcel was purchased in 2017 to address the community need for a community center in the Prince Frederick Town Center. While design is not complete, this project is slated to start construction prior to the next five year strategic plan. Other parcels have been looked at for park projects and will surely impact future goals for the department.

### **Improvement Opportunities**

The preeminent qualifier in any assessment of the future is sustainable growth. The Department's greatest strength is the high quality of its staff, facilities and services, but its greatest challenge in the future is to maintain current standards of quality while serving more customers at more facilities with unchanged resources.

Organizationally, there is need to increase the quality and variety of programs for our diverse community. Providing additional recreational facilities that empower traditional and non-traditional recreational pursuits are important to meet the recreation needs of the citizens.

Improvement is needed in our communication with the public with respect to the diversity of opportunities provided. The public should be aware of the costs associated with providing recreation and leisure opportunities and facilities at established levels of service. Communication efforts will also be better served by consistency in information available to staff to relay outward regarding policies, procedures, and processes.

Personnel needs are important in maintaining a vibrant department. Retention of qualified, seasoned professionals requires training, cross training, support staff, multiple forms of communication, and appreciation. Employees need to be involved in Department processes. Team-building and retreat opportunities are tools that can be used to address issues related to a diverse work-force, provide avenues for constructive communication, resolve conflict, and facilitate optimum productivity among employees. Employees need to be heard and the opportunity to provide input in decision making should be extended wherever possible.

## VII. Budget and Financial Considerations

The Department's major revenue streams are user fees; ad valorem taxes which fund operation expenditures; excise taxes which fund capital expenditures; and grants. Operating and replacement capital dollars are secured each year as part of the budget process. The Department's annual operating budget is approximately **\$10.3 million**. The Department will continue to ensure that if revenues are not being met, expenses will not be incurred for the service. Expanded facilities and/or programming may be placed on hold until revenue streams meet requirements.

### Operating and Personnel

The department employs 57 full-time merit and contract term employees as well as 284 hourly, part-time, seasonal, summer employees. This accounts for a full time equivalent (FTE) of 165.5 employees.

### Organizational Staffing Levels

Parks & Recreation General Fund	75.5
Natural Resources General Fund	14.9
Parks & Recreation Special Revenue Fund	60.8
Golf Course Special Revenue Fund	14.3

All employees at the supervisor level and above are professional staff. Full-time employees are generally career-track. Some employees in the lower-level positions have decided to make Parks and Recreation a career of choice. Hourly workers and seasonal personnel work summer jobs as grounds maintenance, lifeguards, concession attendants, pool clerks or camp aides. Some hourly employees work year round as park rangers, park technicians, naturalists, and maintenance workers.

Succession planning is an important component of developing the workforce. With numerous employees at or reaching retirement age within the next five years, it is important to ensure a smooth transition of duties and responsibilities. Efforts are maintained to ensure individuals participate in Supervisory/Leadership training offered throughout the County. In addition, the Maryland Recreation and Park Association provides leadership training for supervisory and management personnel within the parks system. Staff are encouraged to pursue certifications through the national, state, and local organizations including the National Recreation and Parks Association.

### Capital Improvements

In addition to the five year Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan and Program Open Space Annual Program required by the State of Maryland, the Department maintains a Capital Improvement Program for replacement costs and a long-range funding plan for major renovation and replacement requirements to aging parks and facilities.

Overall, capital funding for the enhancement of the county's parks and recreation system is projected to be substantially higher over the next five fiscal years. Such future, short-term increases in capital investment in the county's parks and recreation system is a positive trend. Conversely, until fiscal year 2019, deferred maintenance costs had not been set at a high priority. Beginning in fiscal year 2019, the Department was allocated additional funding in capital outlay to address the needs of old equipment and outdated signage. It is the hope that this trend will continue toward regular and recurring improvement of recreation facilities and park amenities. This previous lack of planned recurring capital investment minimized the ability of the county to proactively plan for the long-term maintenance, management, and operational needs of existing assets and programs. This trend has shifted over the last year to bring a focus to maintaining current assets.

## VIII. Evaluation Process

Monitoring and evaluating the planning activities and status of implementation of the plan is as important as identifying the strategic issues and goals. One advantage of monitoring and evaluation is to ensure that the department is following the direction established during strategic planning.

Under direction of the Parks & Recreation Director, department leadership staff will annually devise an implementation report that documents achievements to goals and objectives as a part of the annual review process.

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## IX. Annual Review of Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan

The annual review of any plan is an essential component in the overall planning process. Our department's proactive philosophy anticipates community and constituent needs and budgetary constraints rather than reacting to them. The Strategic Plan will be reviewed and updated as needed by department leadership staff annually in June.



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Approved by:  
Shannon Q. Nazzal, CPRE  
Parks & Recreation Director  
July 23, 2018