

## CHAPTER 4: PARKS & RECREATION

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### Introduction

Public parks, trails and recreation offer countless values to Flathead County residents and visitors. Public parks, trails and open space provide the opportunity to be physically active and fit. Having close to home access to quality places to recreate is one of the most important factors in determining whether people are active and will continue to stay that way.

### Goal

G.18 To accelerate the development process for park, trail, and open space infrastructure to meet the challenges of community growth and development.

### Policies

- P.18.1 ~~Acquisition~~ ~~Acquire~~ of park and leisure facility sites ~~should occur~~ now to serve the future needs of the county, particularly water-based parks which provide public access to lakes, rivers and streams.
- P.18.2 With the exception of water based parks, utilize subdivision park requirements ~~should be used~~ to create and/or fund dedicated park sites of an optimal size ~~of~~ no less than five acres, to accommodate operation and maintenance costs.
- P.18.3 ~~Existing~~ Ensure existing parks and recreational facilities ~~should are be~~ operated and maintained in a quality condition for use by the general public.
- P.18.4 Develop strategies to fund, operate, and maintain new parks and recreational facilities.
- P.18.5 Prepare a comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan to guide the expansion of the park system to meet the needs and expectations of the growing public. Utilize the work completed by the [LRPTF] ~~of identifying~~ to identify bike path routes, as well as ~~and~~ the work of the three cities and ~~the R~~ails to ~~T~~rails organization.
- P.18.6 ~~Flathead County should p~~Preserve and increase recreational access to public lands and waterways by procuring necessary land, easements, or rights of way.
- P.18.7 Create a Flathead County Bicycle Transportation Advisory Committee to determine and prioritize areas for bike path easement acquisition and

Comment [a1]: What does this stand for?

construction, prioritize use of funds, guide grant applications, identify roads that should have bicycle lanes, determine maintenance funding mechanisms, and set county-wide bicycle path/lane construction standards.

### Goal

- G.19 To create partnerships with common interest groups and the people within our community.

### Policies

- P.19.1 Encourage parks, planning, maintenance and development coordination with other local jurisdictions ~~as well as~~ state and federal agencies.
- P.19.2 Participate with developing partnerships, community civic groups and organizations, private sector building and development industry, and others interested in parks and recreation activities.
- P.19.3 Support “pocket parks” which are owned and maintained by ~~Home-home~~ Owner groups and Associations.
- P.19.4 ~~Riparian buffers should be recognized~~ Recognize riparian buffers for their recreational value and their ability to protect the quality of water along major streams and rivers in the County [to enhance recreational opportunities, protect the quality of water (reduce erosion; surface runoff containing pesticides, fertilizers, etc.; stream bank depredation/defoliation; etc.) and their ability] to protect the natural aesthetics of waterways.
- P.19.5 ~~Whenever possible, County parks should be d~~ Develop County Parks in conjunction with public or private schools ~~in~~ whenever possible.
- P.19.6 Develop standards, procedures, and requirements for the preparation, review, and adoption of neighborhood and subdivision park plans.

### Goal

- G.20 Maintain and/or increase the current level of service for park facilities and recreation services in Flathead County relative to population growth and public demands and expectations.

### Policies

**Comment [a2]:** This portion redundant; needs work.

- P.20.1 Provide ~~for and acquire?~~ new lands and indoor/outdoor recreation and park facilities ~~as~~ outlined in the comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master ~~Plan-Plan~~, to keep pace with expanding population and demand.
- P.20.2 Maintain ~~the current~~ level of recreation services by providing innovative programs geared towards a diverse demographic of county residents (children, adults, seniors, etc.).

### **PART 1: Community Benefits of Parks and Recreation (see Goals 18 and 19)**

The economic benefits of parks and recreation areas are numerous. One of the more significant benefits is the increase in value of private lands adjacent to or near protected public parks, trails or open space. Close proximity of parks to residential areas leads to increased land values and safer walks for children and adults to the park and back. Often, quality parks and recreation areas are an important consideration of businesses looking at expansion or relocation. Parks and recreation areas improve the quality of the living environment and make communities ~~livable and more~~ desirable for businesses and homeowners.

Parks, trails and open spaces provide vital green space in ~~the fastan ever-~~changing landscape. They provide vegetative ~~buffers~~ and recreational areas and can be used to reduce the impacts of development. These areas are also instrumental in providing access to rivers, lakes and adjoining public lands. Just as importantly parks, trails and open space ~~can help to maintain open-~~view sheds, ~~and~~ provide groundwater recharge areas, floodplain protection, natural sound barriers, weed buffers, and filter pollutants from the air. Parks help to keep the living environment healthy.

Parks, trails and open spaces facilitate social interactions ~~for-between~~ individuals, families, civic groups and others. These areas are critical to maintaining community cohesion and pride. Parks provide meeting places where the community can develop social ties and bonds. Leisure activity in parks can reduce stress and enhance a sense of wellness. People go to parks, use trails or experience open space to reinvigorate themselves and to decrease anxieties of daily life.

Community recreation services and programs encourage organized structure and enjoyable activities for people of all ages. The Department of Parks and Recreation offers organized recreation programs for ~~both~~ youth and adults. Programs currently offered for youth include outdoor flag football, volleyball and t-ball at various locations throughout the county. Adult programs include basketball, flag football and softball. The Conrad Sports Complex currently services over 100 softball teams. There are also a large number of nonprofit sports organizations throughout the county that ~~utilize these facilities to~~ offer a wide variety of activities for children and adults.

### **PART 2: Flathead County Parks**

**Existing Characteristics**

The growing popularity and demand for parks and recreational opportunities are in proportion to the dynamic growth and development of Flathead County has experienced over the years. During the growth policy public meetings held throughout Flathead County in November and December of 2005 and January of 2006, numerous residents cited increased and improved parks and recreation services as desirable goals for the future of the county. (See Appendix B: Public Involvement Summary.) A growing public desires greater opportunities for passive and organized recreation programming. Greater access to water-based recreation is also a growing priority. The Department of Parks and Recreation is currently responsible for the development, operation and maintenance of a wide range and variety of parks and recreation facilities. Although the existing park and recreation system offers recreational opportunities for individuals, families and group users, it should be dynamic to meet changing public needs and desires.

The department currently maintains 37-70 park and recreation facilities and one cemetery totaling approximately 383-515 acres. The facilities can be categorized by function. Of the 37-70 park sites, 32 sites are developed parks totaling 383 acres, 20 are land based parks, 14 sites are water based parks, 14 sites are neighborhood parks, 2 are sports parks, 2 and four are classified special use parks and 3 are linear parks. Tables 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 list identifies each park type, location, size and facilities the parks in each category for the sites identified in the Flathead County Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Land based parks account for 97 acres (see Table 4.1). Land based parks range from 1/3 of an acre to 24 acres with an average area of just under five acres. Within these parks there are 20 ball fields, one volleyball court, four basketball courts, multi purpose fields, and most offer picnic area and child playgrounds.

**Table 4.1  
Flathead County Park Inventory**

<u>PARK</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Developed</u> <u>Acres</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Facilities</u>	<u>Water Access</u> <u>Description</u>
<u>AERO LANE PARK</u>	<u>OFF AERO LN</u>	<u>2.00</u>	<u>.864</u>	<u>Neighborhood</u>	<u>2 bleacher sets, 2 dugouts, 1 backstop, 1 fenced ballfield, 4 picnic tables</u>	<u>-</u>
<u>ASHLEY CREEK GREENBELT RAILS TO TRAILS</u>	<u>NEAR KALISPELL, HWY 2 W</u>	<u>9.00</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>Linear Park</u>	<u>Trail</u>	<u>-</u>

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<u>BASS LAKE PARK</u>	<u>Creston</u>	<u>1.00</u>	-	<u>Open Space</u>	-	<u>Bass Lake: Two parks; steep hillside with dense timber and brush growth</u>	Formatted: Font: 9 pt Formatted: Left
<u>BELTON-STAGE</u>	<u>West Glacier - Belton-Stage Rd.</u>	<u>9.97</u>	-	<u>Community</u>	-	-	Formatted: Font: 9 pt Formatted: Left
<u>BEN WILLIAMS PARK</u>	<u>One mile southwest of Lakeside OFF BLACKTAIL RD</u>	<u>5.00</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>Neighborhood</u>	<u>4 picnic tables; 1 park shelter; 1 outhouse; 1 well and water system; playground equipment, 1 volleyball court, horseshoe pits</u>	-	Formatted: Font: 9 pt Formatted: Left
<u>BIG SKY PARK</u>	<u>OFF BIG SKY BOULEVARD</u>	<u>1.00</u>	-	<u>Open Space</u>	-	<u>Spring Creek; marshy access</u>	Formatted: Font: 9 pt Formatted: Left
<u>BLUE GROUSE PARK</u>	<u>BITTERROOT LAKE OFF LODGEPOLE DR</u>	<u>4.00</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>Boat Access</u>	<u>Concrete boat ramp, restrooms,</u>	<u>Bitterroot Lake; Excellent recreation potential</u>	Formatted: Left
<u>CAMELOT ESTATE PARK</u>	<u>EVERGREEN</u>	<u>4.00</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>Neighborhood</u>	<u>Playground equipment, picnic tables, fishing, and benches</u>	<u>Spring Creek runs thru on west edge of property</u>	Formatted: Left
<u>CARLYLE JOHNSON PARK</u>	<u>OFF SHAWNEE DR</u>	<u>14.00</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>Sports</u>	<u>4 baseball and 3 soccer fields, 2 restrooms, playground equipment.</u>	-	Formatted: Left
<u>CAROLINE POINT</u>	<u>DOCK BOAT RAMP</u>	-	-	<u>Boat Access</u>	-	<u>Access too small to be useful for recreation</u>	Formatted: Left
<u>CHURCH-SLOUGH</u>	<u>Lower Valley Rd Carver Sudivision</u>	-	-	<u>Boat Launch</u>	-	<u>Access to Church Slough &amp; Flathead River</u>	Formatted: Left
<u>COUNTRY ESTATES PARK</u>	<u>ENDS OF GARDEN DRIVE AND DAIRY DRIVE</u>	<u>4.00</u>	-	<u>Open Space</u>	-	-	Formatted: Left
<u>CREE LAKE SOUTH PARK</u>	<u>MANY LAKES</u>	-	-	<u>Open Space</u>	-	<u>Cree Lake; Swampy low area on east side of Cree Lake</u>	Formatted: Left
<u>DAN LAKE PARK</u>	<u>CRESTON</u>	<u>1.00</u>	-	<u>Open Space</u>	-	<u>Gully at the north end of Dan Lake, open area</u>	Formatted: Left

<u>DEMERSVILLE CEMETARY PARK</u>	<u>KALISPELL-SOUTH</u>	<u>24.70</u>	-	<u>Open Space</u>	<u>Cemetery</u>	-	Formatted: Left
<u>DOUBLE LAKE PARK</u>	<u>CRESTON</u>	<u>1.00</u>	-	<u>Open Space</u>	-	<u>Dan Lake; small open gully</u>	Formatted: Left
<u>EAGLE POINT PARK</u>	<u>WHITEFISH</u>	<u>2.00</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>Boat Access, Fishing Access</u>	<u>Floating dock</u>	<u>Whitefish Lake; Cliff prevents easy access; accessible by boat or foot</u>	Formatted: Left
<u>EAST BASS LAKE PARK</u>	<u>CRESTON</u>	<u>3.00</u>	-	<u>Open Space</u>	-	<u>Many Lakes; Poor shoreline</u>	Formatted: Left
<u>EAST BLANKENSHIP RIVER ACCESS</u>	<u>Blankenship Rd. &amp; West Glacier</u>	<u>1.00</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>Boat Access, Fishing Access</u>	<u>Restrooms, picnic tables.</u>	-	Formatted: Left
<u>EVERGREEN LIONS PARK</u>	<u>Bernard Road and East Evergreen Drive</u>	<u>3.00</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>Neighborhood</u>	-	-	Formatted: Left
<u>FLATHEAD RIVER RANCHETTE PARK</u>	<u>CRESTON</u>	<u>1.00</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>Boat Access</u>	<u>Floating Dock, Boat launch, benches, picnic table.</u>	<u>Flathead River; beach area poor; good recreational potential</u>	Formatted: Left
<u>FOYS LAKE PARK</u>	<u>OFF MT HWY 404</u>	-	-	<u>Boat Access, Community</u>	<u>Swim area and dock, boat dock and ramp, benches, restrooms, swim dock, swim area + beach, boat dock, 2 bathrooms</u>	<u>Foys Lake: 700 feet of lake shore, excellent recreational potential, beach area is excellent</u>	Formatted: Left
<u>FOYS SCHOOL-FOYS LAKE COMMUNITY CENTER</u>	-	<u>2.00</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>Special Use</u>	<u>Large public meeting room, 2 restrooms, kitchen, basement, large deck and picnic tables outside, Horseshoes pits, Volleyball net</u>	-	Formatted: Left
<u>GILBERT LAKE NORTH PARK</u>	<u>Creston</u>	<u>1.00</u>	-	<u>Open Space</u>	-	<u>Gilbert Lake: small steep hillside on the southern end of the lake;</u>	Formatted: Left
<u>GREEN ACRES PARK</u>	<u>W END OF HAVEN CT</u>	<u>2.00</u>	-	<u>Neighborhood</u>	<u>Playground equipment, picnic tables, grill.</u>	-	Formatted: Left

<u>HAPPY VALLEY PARK</u>	<u>VALLEY MEADOW AIR STRIP BTWN BEAR TR AND COUGAR TR</u>	<u>24.00</u>	-	<u>Community</u>	<u>Playground equipment, picnic tables,</u>	-	Formatted: Left
<u>HERRON PARK</u>	<u>Four miles southwest of Kalispell on Foy's Lake Road</u>	<u>120.00</u>	<u>120</u>	<u>Community Special Use</u>	<u>Restrooms, equestrian jumps, horse stalls, dressage arenas, hiking trails, cross country ski trails, sledding, 2 shelters, Pavillion</u>	<u>Birch Creek: small water body that wanders through the meadow, then goes underground. Possible development</u>	Formatted: Left
<u>HEWITT PARK</u>	<u>West Glacier</u>	<u>1.00</u>	-	<u>Open Space</u>	-	-	Formatted: Left
<u>HILLCREST PARK</u>	<u>WHITEFISH STAGE RD</u>	<u>7.00</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>Sports Park</u>	<u>2 softball fields, bleachers, dugouts, restrooms, playground equipment, 2 soccer fields,</u>	-	Formatted: Left
<u>HILLTOP TERRACE PARK</u>	<u>Columbia Falls, west</u>	<u>2.00</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>Neighborhood</u>	<u>Playground equipment, basketball court,</u>	-	Formatted: Left
<u>HUNGRY HORSE "H" PARK</u>	<u>REACHABLE AT END OF MOUNTAIN DR OR CANYON ROAD OR SOUTHFORK DR</u>	<u>7.40</u>	-	<u>Open Space</u>	-	-	Formatted: Left
<u>HUNGRY HORSE HIGHWAY JOHN LAKE</u>	<u>Hungry Horse</u>	<u>1.50</u>	<u>1.5</u>	<u>Open Space</u>	<u>Picnic tables &amp; Runing Water</u>	-	Formatted: Left
<u>KATHY LAKE PARK</u>	<u>Creston</u>	<u>4.00</u>	-	<u>Open Space</u>	-	<u>John Lake: Large area with potential</u>	Formatted: Left
<u>KATHY LAKE PARK</u>	<u>Creston</u>	<u>3.00</u>	-	<u>Open Space</u>	-	<u>Kathy Lake: steep timbered bowl at east end of lake</u>	Formatted: Left
<u>KELSEY CUMMINGS PARK</u>	<u>Marion, Bitterroot Lake</u>	<u>3.00</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>Boat Access</u>	<u>Picnic tables</u>	<u>Little Bitterroot Lake: excellent recreation, one of two public owned launches on the Lake</u>	Formatted: Left

<u>KINGS LOOP PARK FISHING ACCESS</u>	Evergreen	5.00	5	Neighborhood	Fishing, picnicking.	Whitefish River: river bottom area that is reasonably open	Formatted: Left
<u>KOKANEE BEND PARK</u>	END OF KOKANEE DRIVE	4.00	4	Neighborhood	Baseball field, playground equipment.	Flathead River: site is near the Flathead River and Kokanee Bend Fishing Access owned by the FWP	Formatted: Left
<u>LAKE HILLS PARK</u>	Bigfork	4.00	-	Neighborhood	-	-	Formatted: Left
<u>LAKESIDE - ADAMS PARK (BOAT RAMP)</u>	BOAT RAMP	-	-	Boat Access	-	-	Formatted: Left
<u>LAKESIDE BOAT RAMP</u>	END OF BIERNEY CR RD	-	-	Boat Access	Boat ramp, Large Dock	Flathead Lake: 50 feet of lake frontage	Formatted: Left
<u>LAZY BAY PARK</u>	DELRAY RD/WHITEFISH LAKE	3.00	-	Boat Access	-	Whitefish Lake; Lazy Creek: swamp area on north Whitefish Lake	Formatted: Left
<u>LEISURE ISLAND PARK</u>	Kalispell, east side	137.00	3	Boat Access, Open Space	Boat ramp, picnicking	Flathead and Stillwater Rivers: wooded island between rivers	Formatted: Left
<u>LEISURE LANE</u>	Kalispell	-	-	Open Space	-	Flathead and Stillwater Rivers: island between rivers	Formatted: Left
<u>LITTLE BITTERROOT LAKE ACCESS</u>	Marion	1.00	-	Open Space	-	Bitterroot Lake: lake access, south side of lake; cut from forest; quite steep; limited parking	Formatted: Left
<u>MANY LAKES VACATION VILLAGE</u>	Creston	-	-	-	-	-	Formatted: Left
<u>MARTIN CITY PARK</u>	Martin City	2.00	2	Neighborhood	Ball fields, playground equipment.	-	Formatted: Left
<u>MEADOW HILLS PARK</u>	BETWEEN MEADOW HILLS RD AND YODELIN RIDGE	3.00	3	Neighborhood	Playground equipment, picnic tables.	-	Formatted: Left
<u>MEREDITH LAKE PARK</u>	Creston	10.00	-	Open Space	-	Meredith Lake: large woody gully surrounding lake	Formatted: Left
<u>MISSION VILLAGE OVERLOOK PARK</u>	Kalispell, Whitefish Stage Road	4.20	4.2	Neighborhood	Playground equipment, picnic tables, benches.	-	Formatted: Left

<u>NORTH HAVEN PARK</u>	<u>Kalispell, north on Four Mile Drive</u>	<u>1.00</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>Pocket</u>	<u>Playground equipment.</u>	-	Formatted: Left
<u>PAOLA PARK</u>	<u>Essex, west (north of Hwy 2)</u>	<u>4.00</u>	-	<u>Neighborhood</u>	-	-	Formatted: Left
<u>PARMA PARK</u>	<u>PARK DR - ESSEX</u>	<u>3.00</u>	-	<u>Open Space</u>	-	-	Formatted: Left
<u>PLEASANT VIEW HOMESITES PARK</u>	<u>Creston, Lake Blaine</u>	<u>7.00</u>	-	<u>Open Space</u>	-	-	Formatted: Left
<u>PLUMMERS LAKE PARK</u>	<u>Creston</u>	<u>1.00</u>	-	<u>Open Space</u>	-	<u>Plummers Lake: long, narrow stretch of shoreline and hillside</u>	Formatted: Left
<u>POTOCZNY PARK</u>	<u>OFF HOLT DRIVE - BIGFORK</u>	<u>3.00</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>Neighborhood</u>	<u>Baseball field, restrooms, play equipment, picnic tables.</u>	-	Formatted: Left
<u>RAILS TO TRAILS</u>	<u>Meridian to Appleway</u>	<u>22.00</u>	-	<u>Linear Park</u>	<u>2.5 miles of trail starting at Meridian and Appleway Dr and running West to Spring Creek Road and Hwy 2.</u>	-	Formatted: Left
<u>SCENIC VIEW PARK</u>	<u>OFF HIGHLINE BLVD IN BELTON</u>	<u>8.00</u>	-	<u>Open Space</u>	-	-	Formatted: Left
<u>SILVER SHADOW PARK</u>	<u>Evergreen, north</u>	<u>1.00</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>Pocket</u>	<u>Playground equipment, picnic tables, small ballfield with backstop.</u>	-	Formatted: Left
<u>SKYLINE PARK (ROY COOPER PARK)</u>	<u>Polebridge</u>	<u>3.00</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>Neighborhood</u>	<u>Ballfield, toilet</u>	<u>Two small streams and a shallow pond</u>	Formatted: Left
<u>SOMERS 5N &amp; 5J PARK</u>	<u>Somers</u>	<u>0.00</u>	-	-	-	<u>Swim Acces on Flathead Lake</u>	Formatted: Left
<u>SUNRISE TERRACE PARK</u>	<u>OFF HARBIN HILL ROAD</u>	<u>2.00</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>Neighborhood</u>	<u>Playground equipment, benches.</u>	-	Formatted: Left
<u>SWAN MEADOWS</u>	<u>MEADOWS OFF SWAN RETREAT RD+A24</u>	<u>0.69</u>	-	<u>Open Space</u>	-	<u>Swan River: an open meadow on the Swan River</u>	Formatted: Left

<u>SWIMMING LAKE COURT</u>	<u>Creston</u>	<u>2.00</u>	-	<u>Open Space</u>	-	<u>Swimming Lake: timbered south facing slope to lake</u>
<u>TAMARACK</u>	<u>Creston</u>	-	-	<u>Fishing Access</u>	-	<u>Tamarack Lake: sizeable bass population; one of the best sites in Many Lakes, gentle grassy slope to a beautiful lake (4 individual parks)</u>
<u>TROUTBECK RISE PARK</u>	<u>Lakeside</u>	<u>5.00</u>	-	<u>Open Space</u>	-	-
<u>VETVILLE PARK</u>	<u>Columbia Falls</u>	<u>10.80</u>	-	<u>Open Space</u>	-	-
<u>WAPITI PARK</u>	<u>CORNER OF JUANITA WAY/DALE DR</u>	<u>3</u>	-	<u>Open Space</u>	-	-
<u>WEST BLANKENSHIP RIVER ACCESS</u>	<u>Blankenship Rd. &amp; Flathead River</u>	<u>3.7</u>	<u>3.7</u>	<u>Boat Access, Fishing Access</u>	<u>2 Restrooms, picnic tables.</u>	-
<u>WHITEFISH BOAT ACCESS PARK</u>	<u>OFF WEST LAKESHORE DR</u>	<u>0</u>	-	<u>Boat Access</u>	<u>Dock, restrooms, benches.</u>	-
<u>WHITEFISH STAGE</u>	<u>Edgerton School to City limits</u>	-	-	<u>Linear Park</u>	-	-

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Source: Flathead County Parks and Recreation Master Plan, Resolution No. 2015L

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**Table 4.1  
Existing Land-Based Parks and Recreation Facilities**

<b>Park</b>	<b>Aeres</b>	<b>Facilities</b>
<u>Aero Lane Park</u>	<u>1.0</u>	<u>Ball field</u>
<u>Ben Williams Park</u>	<u>5.0</u>	<u>Volleyball/picnic/playground</u>
<u>Carlyle Johnson Park</u>	<u>14.0</u>	<u>Ball fields/soccer/playground/picnic</u>
<u>Conrad Sports Complex</u>	<u>15.0</u>	<u>Ball fields/basketball/playground/picnic</u>
<u>Country Estates Park</u>	<u>3.7</u>	<u>Grass field</u>
<u>Evergreen Lions Park</u>	<u>3.4</u>	<u>Ball field/basketball/picnic/playground</u>
<u>Green Acres Park</u>	<u>1.5</u>	<u>Picnic/playground</u>
<u>Happy Valley Park</u>	<u>24.0</u>	<u>Playground</u>
<u>Hillcrest Park</u>	<u>7.0</u>	<u>Ball fields/multi use fields/playground</u>
<u>Hilltop Terrace Park</u>	<u>1.9</u>	<u>Picnic/playground</u>
<u>Kokanee Bend Park</u>	<u>4.2</u>	<u>Ball field/picnic/playground/horseshoe</u>
<u>Lake Hills Park</u>	<u>4.1</u>	<u>Not developed</u>
<u>Martin City Park</u>	<u>1.6</u>	<u>Ball field/playground/picnic</u>
<u>Meadow Hills Park</u>	<u>2.9</u>	<u>Picnic/playground</u>
<u>Mission Village Overlook Park</u>	<u>1.6</u>	<u>Picnic/playground</u>
<u>North Haven Park</u>	<u>1.1</u>	<u>Picnic/playground</u>
<u>Potoczny Bigfork Park</u>	<u>0.3</u>	<u>Grass field</u>

Silver Shadow Park	1.0	Ball field/playground/picnic
Sliter Park	2.0	Picnic/playground/stage
Sunrise Terrace Park	2.2	Playground/picnic

Source: Flathead County Parks and Recreation

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According to the Flathead County Parks and Recreation Master Plan, land based parks account for roughly 97 acres (accounting for developed park land sites only). Land based parks range from 1/3 of an acre to 24 acres with an average area of just under five acres. These park include amenities such as ball fields, volleyball courts, basketball courts, multi purpose fields, and picnic areas and playgrounds.<sup>1</sup>

There are 14 developed water based parks covering 163 acres and offering access to lakes and rivers via boat ramps, docks, and fishing. (See Table 4.2.) These water front public access areas are especially important due to the increasing private shoreline development and the increasing popularity of water based recreation. The average size of water based parks is about 12 acres, although most of the Leisure Island Park on Flathead River is undeveloped and in a natural state. Discounting the Leisure Island Park natural area the average size of a water based park is two acres. These water based facilities offer access to three rivers and six lakes. Map 4.1 shows the location of existing park and leisure facilities.<sup>2</sup>

Comment [a3]: Update Map 4.1 accordingly.

**Table 4.2**  
**Existing Water-Based Parks and Recreation Facilities**

Park	Aeres	Facilities
Bigfork Boat Dock (Maintained right of way, not a park)	—	Benches/picnic (Swan River)
Blankenship/Max Edgar Park	8.3	Boat ramp (Echo Lake)
Blue Grouse Park	4.3	Boat ramp/dock/picnic (Little Bitterroot Lake)
Flathead River Ranchettes Park	2.7	Boat ramp/picnic (Flathead River)
Foys Lake Park	—	Boat ramp/dock/swim area/picnic (Foys Lake)
Kelsey/Cummings Dam Park	1.2	Boat ramp/picnic (Little Bitterroot Lake)
Kings Loop Park	2.0	Fishing Access (Whitefish River)
Lakeside Adams Park	—	Boat ramp (Flathead Lake)
Lakeside Bierney Creek Park	—	Boat ramp (Flathead Lake)
Lazy Bay Park	3.2	Dock (Whitefish Lake)
Leisure Island Park	137.2	Boat ramp/picnic (Flathead River)
Little Bitterroot Lake Park	1.2	Lake access (Little Bitterroot Lake)
Somers Swimming Park	2.0	Swim area/picnic (Flathead Lake)

<sup>1</sup> Source: Flathead County Parks and Recreation Master Plan, Resolution No. 2015L; pg. 33, Table 7

<sup>2</sup> Source: Flathead County Parks and Recreation Master Plan, Resolution No. 2015L; pg. 33, Table 7

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Whitefish Boat Park	0.5	Boat dock/picnic (Whitefish Lake)
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Source: Flathead County Parks and Recreation

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Four special use facilities account for 123 acres of County park land (see Table 4.3).<sup>3</sup> Special use facilities are dedicated for specific or single purpose recreational activities and serve a limited population, such as the Herron Equestrian Park. Herron Equestrian Park also offers camping, biking cross country skiing, rugby and other multi purpose organized activities. The Demersville Cemetery receives maintenance only.

**Table 4.3**  
**Existing Special Use Parks**

Park	Aeres	Facilities
Demersville Cemetery	—	Cemetery/Historic Site
Foys Community Center	2.0	Community center building
Herron Equestrian Park	118.0	Horse stalls/dressage/picnic/x-country skiing
Hungry Horse Island Park	3.3	Monuments

Source: Flathead County Parks and Recreation

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**Administration of Parks and Recreation**

Parks and recreation services in Flathead County are overseen by the Flathead County Parks Board. The board was reestablished in 1997 and is comprised of five members. These members are appointed by the Flathead County Board of Commissioners to serve three year terms. The Board has responsibility for the administration of the Department of Parks and Recreation and the authority to employ the department director. The board also employs staff to program recreation as well as operate and maintain facilities. The Parks Board can acquire land needed for parks and recreation facilities. These sites may be in incorporated cities as well as in unincorporated areas of Flathead County.

**PART 3: State and Federal Recreation Areas (see Goal 1 in Chapter 2: Land Uses)**

Within Flathead County there are numerous parks and recreation areas under federal and state management. These facilities offer a wide diversity of ~~and outstanding~~ all season outdoor recreational amenities for county residents. Major recreational facilities and administering agencies are listed in Table 4.4<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> Source: Flathead County Parks and Recreation Master Plan, Resolution No. 2015L; pg. 33, Table 7

**Table 4.42**  
**Federal & State Recreation Areas**

Facility	Area	Management Agency
Glacier Nat'l Park	635,214	US National Park Service
Flathead National Forest	1,875,545	US Forest Service
Kootenai, Lewis and Clark and Lolo National Forests	115,390 (total acreage)	US Forest Service
Lost Trails National Wildlife Refuge	7,885	US Fish & Wildlife
Swan River National Wildlife Refuge	1,568	US Fish & Wildlife
Smith Lake Waterfowl Production Area	5,189	US Fish & Wildlife
Wayfarers State Park	67	Montana Fish, Wildlife, Parks
Whitefish Lake State Park	11	Montana Fish, Wildlife, Parks
Whitefish State Trust Lands	13,000	Montana Fish, Wildlife, Parks
Flathead River FAS	44 acres	Montana Fish, Wildlife, Parks
Pressentine FAS	11 acres	Montana Fish, Wildlife, Parks
Horseshoe Lake FAS	23 acres	Montana Fish, Wildlife, Parks
Kokanee Bend FAS	185 acres	Montana Fish, Wildlife, Parks
Lone Pine State Park	229 acres	Montana Fish, Wildlife, Parks
Old Steel Bridge FAS	128 acres	Montana Fish, Wildlife, Parks
Sportsman's Bridge FAS	6 acres	Montana Fish, Wildlife, Parks

**Source: Montana Natural Resource Information System**

The primary distinction between federal and state recreation areas and county recreation areas is programming. Parks under county administration typically offer active organized sport activities (e.g. softball, volleyball, soccer and football, etc.), while federal and state lands promote unique outdoor activities such as camping, hiking, fishing and hunting. The importance of federal and state lands for recreation is tied to the custom and culture of Montana residents and visitors for outdoor activities. Flathead County seeks to provide recreational opportunities that are an alternative to activities found on federal and state lands as well as safeguard public access to public lands and water bodies.

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**PART 4: Level of Service (see Goal 20)**

Level of service is one tool used to baseline existing parks and recreational infrastructure relative to population. Flathead County’s population ~~in-between 2004-2006 and 2008~~ was estimated slightly less than ~~8287,000~~. The population of the unincorporated area of the county was estimated at ~~53,505483 for this same time period~~. Based on the unincorporated population, the county offers approximately 7.2 acres of total recreational area per 1,000 residents. Park space per 1,000 population is shown on Table 4.5-3 for each type of park.

**Table 4.35  
Park Space Level of Service**

<u>Park Type</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Current Acreage per 1000 pop.</u>	<u>Acreage per 1000 Pop. w/o new facilities in 2025</u>	<u>Additional acres needed to maintain current acreage per 1000 population</u>
<u>Land-Based</u>	<u>97</u>	<u>1.9</u>	<u>1.3</u>	<u>38</u>
<u>Water-Based</u>	<u>163</u>	<u>3.0</u>	<u>2.2</u>	<u>57</u>
<u>Special Use</u>	<u>123</u>	<u>2.3</u>	<u>1.7</u>	<u>48</u>
<u>Overall</u>	<u>383</u>	<u>7.2</u>	<u>5.2</u>	<u>143</u>
<u>Park</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Aeres</u>	<u>Average Size</u>	<u>AC/1,000 population</u>
<u>Land-Based</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>97</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>1.8</u>
<u>Water-Based</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>163<sup>4</sup></u>	<u>12<sup>5</sup></u>	<u>3.0</u>
<u>Special Use</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>123</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>2.3</u>
<u>Overall</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>383</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>7.2</u>

Source: Flathead County Parks and Recreation  
Source: Flathead County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Level of service calculations are used to monitor performance in implementing park and recreation service delivery and infrastructure goals. Level of service goals are normally associated with comprehensive parks master plans. ~~Flathead County does not currently have a comprehensive parks and recreation master plan and, therefore, cannot anticipate future public needs.~~ Flathead County adopted a Parks and Recreation Master Plan in 2009 (Resolution No. 2015L) as an element of the Flathead County Growth Policy, and this document has been utilized extensively to update this chapter on parks and recreation.

<sup>4</sup>-Approximately 137 acres of this total comes from one park (Leisure Island Park) that is primarily undeveloped.  
<sup>5</sup>-This average is heavily skewed by the large size of Leisure Island Park (137 acres).

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Resident comments in 2006 indicated a need to provide organized sports and other recreational activities and services. Softball and youth soccer are popular and highly visible activities, with more than 100 teams competing annually for space at the Conrad Sports Complex. Organized recreation for youth is also in demand. More specialized types of recreation, such as skateboard parks and swimming, are growing in popularity. The County provides organized recreational programs to more than 10,000 residents each year. Presently the county does not have a recreation center for basketball or other indoor recreation activities.

Using the level of service tool to identify future park space needs can predict gaps in service delivery. Using countywide trends, which include incorporated city populations, the overall population is expected to continue to grow by about 20% per decade over the next 20 years to reach a resident population of approximately 112,000. ~~The ratio of overall county to unincorporated populations would result in approximately 74,190 within the unincorporated area by 2025.~~

It can be expected that organized recreation programming will increase in relation to population growth. The current 10,000 residents served through recreational programming in 2005 will increase to about 14,000 by 2025. Park space requirements will need to be analyzed based on long term goals for park system expansion and service delivery. Decisions will need to be made on priorities for passive versus active and organized programming.

Comment [a4]: Where did this data come from?

If no additions to the park system are realized over the next 20 years, the park space will fall from a current level of 7.2 acres per 1,000 population to 5.2 acres per 1,000 residents. The relative decreases in level of service and new park spaces needed to maintain the current level of service are shown in Table 4.63 above.

**Table 4.6  
Park Space Projections**

Park Type	Acre	Current Acreage per 1,000 Pop.	Acreage per 1,000 Pop. w/o new facilities 2025	Additional acres needed to maintain current acreage per 1,000 population
Land-based	97	4.9	4.3	38
Water-based	163	3.0	2.2	57
Special Use	123	2.3	1.7	48
Overall	383	7.2	5.2	143

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To maintain the current level of service, an additional 143 acres of new parks would need to be added to the park system. This would include an additional 38 acres for land based parks, 57 acres of water based parks, and 48 acres of new special use facilities. It is essential that the park and recreation system and programs are viewed in a comprehensive fashion, that all components are considered in development and on-going

management. If Flathead County anticipates providing meaningful park and recreation services to a growing public, it is essential to develop appropriate sites, manage developed parks in a quality condition, and facilitate recreational programming.

~~A The comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan is called for by policy P.17.5 was developed and adopted in 2009 as an element of the Growth Policy by Resolution No. 2015L. To be viable, that plan must consider a number of factors related to parks and recreation master planning throughout Flathead County. Flathead The County's growing population is changing the county's demographics. The total population grew approximately 36% in the last fifteen years between 1990 and 2005, while the student population only grew about 7%. That This rate of change has an obvious impact on the type of recreation facilities that might be needed to serve the residents of Flathead County, and is addressed within the Master Plan document. For a level of service discussion to be meaningful, the plan must also address the adequacy of the current level of service. How, and looks at how population growth much overcrowding has resulted from recent population increases and in what affected the level of service type of park facilities and resulted in the need for additional facilities and the types of funding and maintenance necessary. The county's ability to fund the maintenance of current facilities and services must be addressed as well as determining the best methods of funding the creation and maintenance of additional facilities. A strategic plan that is based on solid research will allow the county to confidently face its future needs for parks and recreation.~~

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