

Executive Summary

The 2009-2013 Kent County Parks, Recreation and Natural Areas Master Plan (the Plan) actively seeks to meet the needs of current and future generations. It advocates vital objectives for park land management and development based on extensive public input and on reviews of opportunities, challenges and trends with current resources, population and regional growth.

The purpose of the Plan is to provide a logical framework for decisions affecting park and recreation facilities as well as open spaces and natural areas. Public input supported a continuation and strengthening of the Kent County Parks Department programs of land acquisition and parks development and improvement, as established by the Kent County Strategic Plan in 1997. Ongoing pursuit of these programs has led to high overall public satisfaction with the Kent County Parks system. The Plan seeks to balance the actions necessary to maintain and improve this level of satisfaction with those needed to anticipate and address the future recreational needs of the County.

Park areas are viewed by County residents as vital to quality of life. County parks: provide opportunities for a wide variety of recreation to facilitate physical fitness and enjoyment; promote greater knowledge and appreciation of the interrelationships between people and the natural world; and safeguard some of the great natural resources of the county. In light of the role of County parks, public support for land acquisition and stewardship continues to build in Kent County and the Plan recommends strengthening the Department's land and resource stewardship.

This strong public support for land acquisition and stewardship is consistent with the overall vision of Kent County's park system. While individual parks may support active or sports-oriented recreation, the general focus of the department is in preserving open space and providing recreational access to quality natural landscapes. This emphasis is complimented by the Parks Department's ongoing efforts to develop multi-jurisdictional recreational trails.

The Plan is designed to serve as an effective tool to help maintain and improve the present level of service in the parks as well as to enhance an already successful park and recreation system. This "level of service" approach to park and recreation facility planning enables the Kent County Parks Department to identify and meet changing patterns of need and use with flexibility.

Modifications in the level of service provided to County residents can be made at any time. The Plan should be continually monitored and officially updated in terms of need and use so that its recommendations and implementation strategy can be adjusted as necessary.