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# Chapter 9 Parks and Recreation

## I. Vision

All County residents are able to find opportunities for recreation and relaxation in our park system. It provides facilities and programs for a variety of active sports and also provides pleasant green spaces for passive recreation. Partnerships exist between the County and municipalities which effectively utilize limited resources.

Each population center has a conveniently located neighborhood park with picnic tables and other equipment for family-oriented activities. Larger community parks are connected by a greenways network including walking and biking trails. Several waterfront parks and many public landings provide access to our many miles of Bay and river shoreline.

Frequent surveys determine the ever-changing needs of County residents. The Department of Parks and Recreation offers a wide variety of programs and well-maintained facilities to meet these needs, including those of special groups such as persons with special needs, preschoolers and senior citizens.

### **GOAL:**

*Provide an improved system of parks and recreation facilities based on residents needs.*

## II. Introduction

Talbot County currently provides its residents with many opportunities to pursue recreational and leisure activities. Some of these opportunities are available through a variety of recreation programs offered by the County's Department of Parks and Recreation. Other opportunities exist in a variety of parks ranging from large County-wide park facilities to small neighborhood play areas.

The continued development of parks and recreation facilities is necessary to accommodate a changing and growing population in the County.

In recent years, increased leisure time, a rise in the standard of living and a growing and increasingly elderly population has contributed to changes in the demand for recreational sites and activities. These changes in individual and community recreation needs should be considered in the planning for parks, recreational facilities and programs.

The Land Preservation and Recreation Plan (LPRP) contains a description of the State's recreation and open space classification and standards, an inventory of existing parks, open space and recreational facilities, a demand analysis of park, recreation and open space needs, and plan and implementation recommendations for meeting those needs.

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### **III. County Park Facilities**

Seven major types of recreation areas exist within Talbot County. They include Federal parks, State parks, County-wide parks, community parks, neighborhood recreation areas, special parks and private recreational facilities. See Appendix 9-1 for listing of parks.

#### **A. Federal and State Parks**

The United States Naval Research Lab is the only Federally-owned property in Talbot County. The 2 acre site north of Black Walnut Point was previously used as a Coast Guard facility.

The State owns approximately 485 acres of recreation lands. The State Parks are: Black Walnut State Park, Choptank River Park and Fishing Pier, Wye Oak State Park, Seth Demonstration Forest, and Route 333 and 33 Bike Paths. The mapped location of each of these park facilities is identified on Map 9-1.

#### **B. County Owned Facilities**

##### **County-wide Parks**

Two county-wide park facilities, shown on Map 9-1, are the largest public park facilities in the County and serve a regional population including all residents of Talbot County. The Hog Neck Golf Course (265 acres) and the Talbot County Community Center (51 acres) are located adjacent to Route 50 north of the Town of Easton. The public Golf Course facility includes a 27-hole golf course, driving range, clubhouse, and picnic area. The County Community Center provides indoor facilities for ice skating and ice hockey. Grounds adjacent to the Community Center are improved with lighted outdoor fields to support baseball, lacrosse and soccer.

##### **Community Parks**

The County has 264 acres of land committed to community parks in 18 locations. The parks range in size from ten to 25 acres and are designed to serve residents within five miles of their location. These recreation areas are generally larger than neighborhood parks and include facilities to support field games, court games, and playground apparatus. Community parks often serve residents of the towns in the County and/or are located adjacent to or near school facilities. Five of the community park sites are located at public schools providing for multiple use and efficient maintenance of these facilities. Map 9-1 shows the approximate location of all community parks throughout the County.

##### **Neighborhood Parks**

The County has 88 acres of land committed to neighborhood parks in 16 locations. The parks range in size from one to five acres and are designed to serve residents within a one or two miles of their location. Neighborhood parks are intended to provide areas which support active recreational activities such as playgrounds, playing fields and organized games, as well as passive recreational pursuits. Map 9-1 shows the location of neighborhood park facilities in Talbot.

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## **C. Public / Private Parks**

Special parks in Talbot include existing natural areas, quasi-public facilities and historic and cultural areas. Although special park facilities do not fall within standard park classification systems, these areas are considered a very important part of Talbot's inventory of preservation and recreation lands. There are special park natural areas within the County totaling approximately 2,197 acres which are devoted solely to land preservation and conservation, such as the Knapp Foundation and the McManus Institute Nature Preserves.

Quasi-public areas provide additional parks and open space acreage. These special parks/recreation areas and facilities are identified in the Talbot LPRP and include the Izaak Walton League property with an archery range and picnic facilities, the Easton Club Golf Course, the Martingham Golf Course which includes pool and tennis courts, Kronesburg Park picnic area, Pickering Creek Environmental Center, the Jean Ellen DuPont Audubon Center and Sanctuary, and the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum.

## **D. Private Recreational Facilities**

The public and quasi-public parks of Talbot County are supplemented by 1,264 acres of private parks and recreation areas. These private parks contain a full range of passive and active recreational facilities and range in size from small community clubs to large country clubs and golf courses.

## **E. Waterfront Access**

Talbot offers numerous opportunities for water related recreational activities. Public landings in the County offer boat ramps, mooring facilities, fishing and crabbing piers, picnic areas and parking facilities. Although public landings provide waterfront access opportunity, most facilities are small in land area and limited in size. The County is working toward selective and targeted improvement of waterfront access facilities. Map 9-2 identifies the general location of public landing facilities in the County

# **IV. County Parks and Recreation Department**

The Department of Parks and Recreation is responsible for the administration and programming of recreational facilities and activities for Talbot County. The Department maintains and schedules activities at recreational facilities, participates in the preparation of a five year acquisition and development plan which is required by the State of Maryland as a basis for program open space funding, and oversees the State funded School Community Centers program. The Department is responsible for coordinating park, open space and recreational activities between the County and the incorporated towns. The Department provides technical assistance and encourages towns to participate in the local programming, acquisition, and development of recreation facilities.

The Talbot County Parks and Recreation Advisory Board provides recommendations to the County Council and the County Parks Department relating to plans and policies for public recreation, the organization of recreation councils, the establishment of recreational programs and plans for the

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acquisition of land for public recreation and open space. This Board includes appointees from both the County and the incorporated towns.

The Talbot County Park Board is involved with the administration, long-range planning and policy direction for the Talbot County Community Center. The Board is appointed by the County Council and recommends policies and administrative guidelines, prepares annual reports and submits budget requests for these recreation facilities.

### **Parks and Recreation Policies**

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- C09. P. 1. Actively pursue the goals, objectives and implementation recommendations adopted as part of the Talbot County Land Preservation and Recreation Plan.
- C09. P. 2. Periodically update the Land Preservation and Recreation Plan to keep the inventory of parks and recreational facilities current, reassess demand in light of projected population growth, and identify new or alternative implementation recommendations for site and project selection, land acquisition, facility development, and preservation and conservation programs.
- C09. P. 3. Continue to support the development, operation and funding of indoor and outdoor recreational programs for County residents.
- C09. P. 4. Acquire a shoreline park facility and continue to retain, maintain, and improve existing facilities that provide access to public waters for County recreational boaters, kayakers, outdoorsmen, picnickers and swimmers.
- C09. P. 5. Further develop the existing system of walking and bicycle trails in areas where this activity will not create automobile/bicycle traffic hazards. The development of bike and walking trails shall not occur without consideration of property rights, privacy issues and conflicts with agricultural use. (see Map 4-3 Pedestrian and Bicycle Trails)
- C09. P. 6. Explore the feasibility of developing public and private greenways and open space linear parks in areas of the County where this will not create conflicts with private property rights and privacy.
- C09. P. 7. Encourage developers to provide recreational space in residential development projects. Standards for provision of open space should be evaluated and updated as needed. Such standards shall not permit land area utilized for golf course facilities to satisfy recreational space requirements.
- C09. P. 8. Provide an information program to include maps and brochures that identify park locations and facilities to insure that as many citizens as possible are aware of the recreation and open space opportunities that exist in the County.

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## **Parks and Recreation Strategies**

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### **Public Parks and Recreation Facilities**

Action: Complete update of the Talbot County Land Preservation and Recreation Plan.

The Talbot County Land Preservation and Recreation Plan is currently being updated. The Plan contains numerous recommendations for maintaining and improving the County's system of park sites and recreation facilities.

Although the County has a rather diverse array of recreational facilities and offerings, the recent update of the Land Preservation and Recreation Plan provides an indication that there are areas in need of improvement. Comparison of available recreation land for public use with State standards for provision of parkland suggest the County should target acquisition of additional land to serve the needs of present and future residents.

A survey conducted by the Parks and Recreation Department as part of the Land Preservation and Recreation Plan update indicated a demand for certain types of facilities, notably, soccer fields, facilities to support racket sports, and picnic areas, walking trails and bike trails to support passive recreation activities. Regular joint meetings between the County, its towns, and neighboring counties should be held to better coordinate park and recreation resources, facilities and services.

### **Waterfront Access**

Action: Re-activate planning for the Claiborne Jetty Waterfront Park.

In cooperation with the Claiborne community and the U.S. Government, the County should initiate discussions to re-activate planning for the development of the Claiborne Jetty Waterfront Park as proposed in the 1997 Comprehensive Plan. The site should be accorded special development treatment to recognize the historic significance of the jetty, which served as the transfer terminal for the Chesapeake Bay Steamboat Ferry Service and Steam Railroad Service to St. Michaels, Easton, Salisbury, Berlin and Ocean City (Circa 1898-1915).

Action: Redevelop Easton Point as a "working waterfront" area.

In cooperation with the Town of Easton, Easton Point should be redeveloped as a revitalized "working waterfront" area (see Easton's 1997 Comprehensive Plan), including a prominent public waterfront park. Special development treatment should be provided to recognize the historic significance of this site, which served as the site of the Chesapeake Bay Steamboat Ferry Service for 100 years (circa 1820-1920). The site should also be linked to a county-wide trail system as envisioned in the 1991 Talbot County Public Access Study.

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Action: Acquire a larger waterfront park site that can support a broader range of water-related activities in one location.

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**APPENDIX 9-1. COUNTY PARK FACILITIES**

**Federal Park**

United States Naval Research Lab

**State Parks**

Black Walnut State Park  
Choptank River Park and Fishing Pier  
Wye Oak State Park

Seth Demonstration Forest  
Route 333 and Route 33 Bike Paths

**Countywide Parks**

Hog Neck Golf Course  
Talbot County Community Center

**Community Parks**

Causeway Park in Oxford  
Idlewild Park in Easton  
Moton Park in Easton  
Perry Cabin Park in St. Michaels  
Back Creek Park in Tilghman.  
Chapel District Elementary School  
Easton Middle School  
Easton Elementary School  
Easton Senior High School  
Bay Hundred Community Pool in St. Michaels

Mount Pleasant Park in Easton  
North Easton Park  
Oxford Community Center  
Clint Bradley Park in St. Michaels  
St. Michaels School Complex  
Bay Hundred Community Pool in St. Michaels  
Trappe Park  
Home Run Baker Park in Trappe  
George C. Murphy Community Pool in Easton

**Neighborhood Parks**

Bellevue Park  
Cordova Park  
Clifton Park in Easton  
Lakeside Park in Trappe  
Mill Street Park in St. Michaels  
Mount Pleasant Playground in Easton  
Muskrat Park in St. Michaels  
Neavitt Park

Oxford Town Park  
South Clifton Park in Easton  
South Street Park in Easton  
Stony Ridge Park in Easton  
Thompson Park in Easton  
Tilghman Elementary School  
Whitemarsh Elementary School  
Wittman Park