STATE OF MONTANA RAVALLI COUNTY Page: 1 of 92
DOCUMENT: 704523 COUNTY RESOLUTIONS
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Regina Plettenberg, CLERK AND RECORDER
Fee $0.00 By Carianna M Newton Deputy

Ret: Commissioners Office

RESOLUTION NO. 3421

Amendment to Resolution No 1515

THE RAVALLI COUNTY MASTER PARK AND RECREATION PLAN

WHEREAS, Ravalli County is authorized by the Montana Code Annotated to adopt a Master Park and Recreation Plan to help protect the health, safety and welfare of county residents and visitors, and to manage parks, common areas, community centers and other appropriate lands to serve the needs of Ravalli County residents; and

WHEREAS, the BOARD OF RAVALLI COUNTY COMMISSIONERS adopted the Ravalli County Master Park and Recreation Plan on July, 8, 2004, by Resolution No. 1515; and

WHEREAS, by maintaining their commitment to create and maintain parks through long term planning, the Ravalli County Park Board met during legally noticed Park Board meetings to review and make changes to the Master Park and Recreation Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Park Board presented proposed changes to the Ravalli County Commissioners on August 25, 2016, with public comment; and

WHEREAS, the Ravalli County Commissioners held a public hearing on September 14, 2016 and November 2, 2016 to review and approve the proposed changes;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, THE RAVALLI COUNTY COMMISSIONERS does hereby amend the Ravalli County Master Park and Recreation Plan as attached.

PASSED AND APPROVED THIS 2ND DAY OF NOVEMBER, 2016.
RAVALLI COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Ray Hawk, Chairman

Jeff Burrows, Member

Greg Chilcott, Member

JR Iman, Member

Doug Schallenberger, Member

SEAL OF RAVALLI COUNTY STATE OF MONTANA

Attest: Clerk & Recorder
by: Carianna M Newton, Deputy

Resolution No. 3421 - Attachment:
RAVALLI COUNTY MASTER PARK AND RECREATION PLAN

Ravalli County
MONTANA

Master Park and Recreation Plan

Adopted July 8, 2004 Resolution No. 1515
Amended September 14, 2016 &
November 02, 2016, Resolution No. 3421

Executive Summary

- Ravalli County recognizes the societal, economic, personal, and ecological benefits that result from a strong park system.

- Dedicated parks, common areas, community centers, private lands and other public lands serve the park needs of Ravalli County residents.

- Ravalli County owns approximately twenty-five parcels that are either dedicated as parks or used for that purpose. Approximately thirty parcels owned by homeowner associations, schools, communities, or other organizations also serve as park lands.

- For park planning purposes, the County has been divided into seven planning regions, which are consistent with existing park districts where applicable. Lone Rock and Stevensville planning regions follow the existing Fire District boundaries. Corvallis/Pinesdale, Darby, Florence, Hamilton/Grantsdale, and Victor planning regions follow the existing school district boundaries. (See "Parks Planning Regions" Map, page 13)

- Five types of parks have been characterized: regional, community, neighborhood, pocket and conservation.

- Some park lands are inappropriate due to size, slope, or location to effectively serve the needs of residents or protect natural resources. Many parks have also been neglected, and are in poor condition.

- The Park Board will strive to help communities develop a diversity of parks that allow for a variety of recreation experiences.

- The Park Board will help shape the County's park system by building partnerships with local organizations. The Park Board, in these partnerships, will provide professional assistance and funding, when available, to assist with park development and maintenance. In most instances, a local organization will be expected to supply matching funds and volunteer labor. The Park Board may also contract services for development and maintenance.

Acknowledgements

Board of County Commissioners

Ray Hawk, Chair
Greg Chilcott
JR Iman
Jeff Burrows
Doug Schallenberger

Ravalli County Park Board

Gary Leese
Bob Cron
Marne Newton
John Ormiston
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Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Leisure contributes significantly to individuals' economic well-being, health, family and social relations. People's ability to recreate results in reduced health care costs, increased productivity, and higher morale. Recreation also provides for increased community satisfaction, social bonding, and reduced delinquency. Finally, it leads to improved physical and mental health, personal development, and personal satisfaction. In short, abundant recreation opportunities create healthier individuals and communities, and contribute to the overall quality of life.

To understand the role that recreation plays in Ravalli County, one must first understand residents' relationship with their natural environment. Their interactions with the land provide sustenance and good health, mental and spiritual well-being, and a bond that links neighbors and communities across geographical boundaries. Some residents maintain connections with the natural world through daily work and activities. Others, more tied to an urban setting, interact with the natural environment less frequently and only during leisure time.

Natural and semi-natural parks within communities, developed for recreation, also provide settings and opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable, and allow additional recreation experiences that contribute to residents' quality of life.

Ravalli County has made a commitment to create parks to provide these opportunities. The need for long-range planning and demand for parklands will increase due to growth trends in Ravalli County.

SCOPE OF DOCUMENT

This document is a result of long-range parks planning and is meant to guide citizens, the County Park Board, and the Board of County Commissioners in their work to improve and maintain parklands.

In this Park and Recreation Master Plan, the term "Park" is used broadly. It refers not only to County-owned lands that are officially dedicated as parks, but also to County-owned lands used for recreation, other public recreation and gathering places (community halls, schools, and school grounds), quasi-public lands dedicated to homeowner associations as common areas, lands that serve as trails, as well as state and federal lands and water.

The County has an interest in privately, quasi-publicly and publicly owned lands and their recreation use. These areas serve a function similar to dedicated parklands by contributing to the system of recreation lands available to County residents. Including these lands in this plan will help the owners/managers develop and maintain the areas in the way that best serves users. It will also help the County to see how County parkland fits in a broader context of park and recreation resources for the County and guide the Park Board's allocation of park development funds to the communities and neighborhoods most in need of assistance.

Although both County lands and other parks and recreation resources are described in this document, the County is not responsible for non-county owned and maintained park and recreation resources.

In general, the management of state and federal lands are not covered in this plan. While the County may enter into cooperative agreements with these land managers in the future, to address the use of these lands within this plan would go beyond the scope of the plan. It is recognized that these lands play a crucial role in both conserving natural resources and providing recreation opportunities. Without them, the types and quantities of unfulfilled park needs would be vast.

Amendments to this plan should occur as an ongoing process as needs change, as the plan's goals have been achieved, as recreation needs in the County change, as the framework from which this plan operates is found to be ineffectual, or as the Park Board wishes to implement a change in its park management policies.

CURRENT CONDITION OF PARKS

As a whole, County parks currently do not address many of the recreation opportunities needed by area residents. Numerous parks are of inappropriate size, slope, or land form. Most contain no built structures. Many parks receive little or no maintenance, and consequently host a variety of noxious weeds and often may pose a fire hazard to nearby dwellings.

Other non-county parks have been designed and developed by clubs and communities to help serve the public's recreation needs and are well maintained by those clubs and communities.

A diverse system of parks exists in the County; however, only some are suitable for their intended purpose. Most of these lands have not been put to their optimal use. With proper planning, management, and funding they can be developed or conserved to meet the needs of County residents. (See Recreational Facilities Inventory)

CURRENT MANAGEMENT OF PARKS

The Ravalli County Park Board, created on January 29, 1973, and authorized by Title 7 Chapter 17, Montana Code Annotated, consisted of three County Commissioners and five appointed citizen members. Membership of the Park Board was revised on May 6, 1999, and now consists of one County Commissioner and eight appointed citizen members. The Board now provides broad level management of the parks in Ravalli County, and has assisted in the funding, development and maintenance of area parks.

The Park Board also coordinates with other agencies such as the individual Park Districts of Florence, Hamilton, Lone Rock, Stevensville, Ravalli County Park District #2 and Victor to develop and maintain parklands within the County. In addition, Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks, US Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, and the incorporated communities of Darby, Hamilton, Pinesdale, and Stevensville, the unincorporated communities of Conner, Corvallis, Florence, Sula and each of the seven school districts also administer lands often termed parks.

The Park Board system of providing broad oversight, guidance, and monetary incentives to dedicated local groups has allowed development and maintenance of a number of parks. However, this development has not followed a cohesive plan. Requests have generally been received and evaluated on their own individual merits, with little guidance as to how the development would contribute to the overall park system of the County.

Often, few citizens or organizations have been aware of the existence of County or neighborhood parkland in their neighborhoods. Consequently, the Park Board has received relatively few requests for assistance, and has been unable to shape the overall system of parks. With the greater citizen awareness of parks that will arise out of the planning process, it is expected that many more requests will be received by the Park Board in the future.

RELATIONSHIP: BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, PARK BOARD, PARK DISTRICTS AND PLANNING BOARD

The County Commissioners have ultimate authority and control of county lands, including park lands. The County Commissioners may, in their discretion, establish a County Board of Park Commissioners (Park Board).

The Park Board takes general control of county parklands. State Statute (MCA 7-16-2312, 7-16-2322, 7-16-2323, 7-16-2324, 7-16-2325) provides that a Park Board's authority may include powers to employ persons and make contracts; to create rules relating to the use of county parks by the public, which may then be reinforced by an ordinance adopted by County Commissioners; to lease county lands acquired for park purposes but not yet being used as parks; and to advise the County Commissioners prior to the sale, lease, or exchange of dedicated parklands. A Park Board may also employ a Park Superintendent, who would then act as the Secretary of the Park Board and serve in a managerial capacity over the county parks. The Ravalli County Commissioners have however, chosen to retain these authorities rather than provide them to the Ravalli County Park Board. As a result, the primary role of the Park Board is to advise and make recommendations to the County Commissioners.

A Park Board oversees the parks, which are not within an individual county Park District. Upon formation of a county Park District, that District then has the duty and power to operate and maintain park and recreation land within the district. With regard to the parks within a county Park District, the individual Park District has all powers necessary for the operation and maintenance of the park and recreation lands within that district.

County Planning Boards involvement with parkland is limited to the subdivision review process. A Planning Board may recommend to accept a gift or donation of property, including an improved or unimproved park or playground.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

As previously discussed, the primary goal of providing a parks system across the County is to provide opportunities for personal, social, and economic benefits that improve County residents' quality of life.

Specific objectives of this plan are as follows:

1. Provide citizens with a spectrum of recreation opportunities and experiences. Parks should provide opportunities and experiences unavailable from either privately or other publicly owned lands.

    - The Park Board will encourage acquisition, development, and maintenance of parks in a comprehensive, cohesive manner that addresses the priorities identified in each part of the County, as well as countywide priorities. This subjective could be achieved through partnerships with Federal and State agencies to provide recreational opportunities.

    - Parkland will be integrated in location and design with other infrastructure, such as housing, education, services, non-motorized travel corridors, etc.

    - The Park Board will continue to manage parks at a broad level by setting policies, providing planning assistance to communities, developers or others seeking assistance, and approving site design and management plans for future recreational areas.

    - Subject to funding constraints, the Park Board will encourage and provide funds to local citizens and organizations to develop, maintain, and manage the daily functions of the public's parks.

2. Maintain conservation areas to protect a diversity of habitats and species.

    - The Park Board and local organizations will manage land identified as conservation parks primarily to protect their natural resources. Human use will be managed in a way to retain these natural values.

    - In addition to park dedication, tools such as conservation easements and cooperative management agreements will be used to conserve areas of great ecological significance.

Management Framework

INTRODUCTION

Identifying the recreation needs of Ravalli County citizenry is not easy and cannot be determined by following a standard formula. While "park standards" traditionally used throughout the country suggest the number and size of parks appropriate for an area based on its population, these standards are inadequate for determining the needs of Ravalli County residents.

Ravalli County lacks a large urban area or concentrated population base to determine what type parks are needed in a general area. The citizens of Ravalli County have extensive access to Federal land and major urban areas (by Montana standards) in other counties with diverse recreation sites, which contributes to the fact that Ravalli County has no historic plan for growth. As Ravalli County continues to grow we foresee a need to identify each planning regions recreation needs.

The most obvious method of determining specific needs of a region, community or neighborhood is to inquire of the residents. These specific needs can be determined through public meetings, surveys, and informal discussions. National recreation planning organizations have recognized this fact and are revising their guidelines to suggest using frequent contact with residents to determine specific needs.

More general needs, such as park locations and settings, are often consistent across regions and communities. The framework discussed in the following chapters is based upon these general needs, and are meant to guide park acquisition and development in a comprehensive and complementary fashion.

PARK SETTINGS

A critical component of a park, and of a park system, is the setting that it provides. A setting is the combination of a park's physical, social, and managerial characteristics. The park setting can be thought of as the general atmosphere or feeling of the park and often sets the tone for what people do and experience in the park.

One factor in meeting the public's needs is to provide a range of settings. This concept of diverse settings is found in many other recreation places. For example, preferences for campgrounds run the spectrum from luxurious to primitive, including full-service RV campgrounds, semi-developed federally managed sites, dispersed undeveloped sites along forest roads, and backcountry wilderness sites.

Just as all individuals do not enjoy a quality camping experience in the same type of setting, so too do individuals want different settings for their local parks. The park setting is influenced by a number of factors, including the number of people encountered, user group sizes, the degree of naturalness, and the number of structures and facilities in the park. Different combinations of these factors result in different settings, all of which appeal to different individuals.

The primary factors that influence a park setting are as follows:

Social	Physical	Managerial
• Residence location of users	• Distance from primary users	• Diversity of uses/activities
• Number of encounters with others	• Degree of naturalness	• Number of structures
• Typical group size	• Size	• Type of facilities
• Feeling of separation from adjacent land uses		

PARK EXPERIENCES

An experience is the psychological outcome for the person recreating in a park. Experiences can be thought of as the underlying reasons why people recreate, or their goals for visiting a park. In other words, the activities engaged in are simply a means to achieving desired outcomes, or experiences.

For the same reason that we want to provide a diversity of settings, we also want to provide opportunity for a diversity of experiences. This becomes possible when we think of structures, facilities, and overall park design as tools to provide those opportunities, rather than as ends in themselves. For example, we can plan a park bench in different locations to provide different experiences: tucking it in a grove of trees may allow for the enjoyment of nature and solitude; placing it along a busy path may allow for encountering neighbors; clustering several benches together may allow for meeting new people.

The diversity of experience opportunities throughout a system offers the following benefits: it removes the "cookie-cutter" design standards found in some park systems that often do not provide adequate opportunities and it allows people to more easily find the experiences they want and need. Because experiences are the direct link to achieving benefits, the plan focused upon them.

PARK CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

The previous discussion focused upon providing a diversity of park settings and experience opportunities. The possible combinations of these settings and experiences is infinite. In order to manage this diversity in an easily understood manner, it is necessary to create a classification system centered on types of parks.

The following classification system is based on national standards, but is refined to include more of the characteristics that define a park and its experience opportunities for Ravalli County residents. The system results from the two primary goals of the County park system: providing a diverse spectrum of recreation opportunities and protecting ecologically important resources.

As discussed earlier, recreation opportunities arise from experiences in given settings. The following classification system is arranged so that each park class encompasses a small range of settings and all experience opportunities. Taken as a whole, the system provides all identified experience opportunities in all identified settings; therefore, providing all identified recreation opportunities and the settings appropriate for conservation lands.

As discussed earlier, recreation opportunities arise from experiences in given settings. The following classification system is arranged so that each park class encompasses a small range of settings and all experience opportunities. Taken as a whole, the system provides all identified experience opportunities in all identified settings; therefore, providing all identified recreation opportunities and the settings appropriate for conservation lands.

The other component of the classification system is the experience opportunities provided in each class. Most experiences are not inherently confined to one type of setting or class. It is ideal to provide many experience opportunities in each class.

The park settings of each class can be described as follows:

Pocket Parks. Pocket parks are generally small and integrated with the adjacent neighborhoods they serve. There is a low number of structures and diversity of uses. They may provide trail linkages within the neighborhood. User groups are generally small in number and live in nearby residences.

Neighborhood Parks. Neighborhood parks are typically found in urban areas, and, as their name suggests, serve several neighborhoods in a community. They range in size from two to twenty acres, and provide a number of different uses and structures. They are somewhat separated from adjacent land uses, and tend to be altered from their natural state. They may provide trail linkages

between neighborhoods and to other parklands. Larger groups of people tend to use these parks, and the number of encounters with other users can be high.

Community Parks. Community parks, as their name suggests, serve residents of the entire community. They can vary in size from two to forty acres (depending largely on the size of the community), and typically contain a number of structures and opportunities for activities. They are generally separated from adjacent land uses, and can support large crowds. These parks may provide important trail linkages within the community and may also contain complete trail systems within their boundaries.

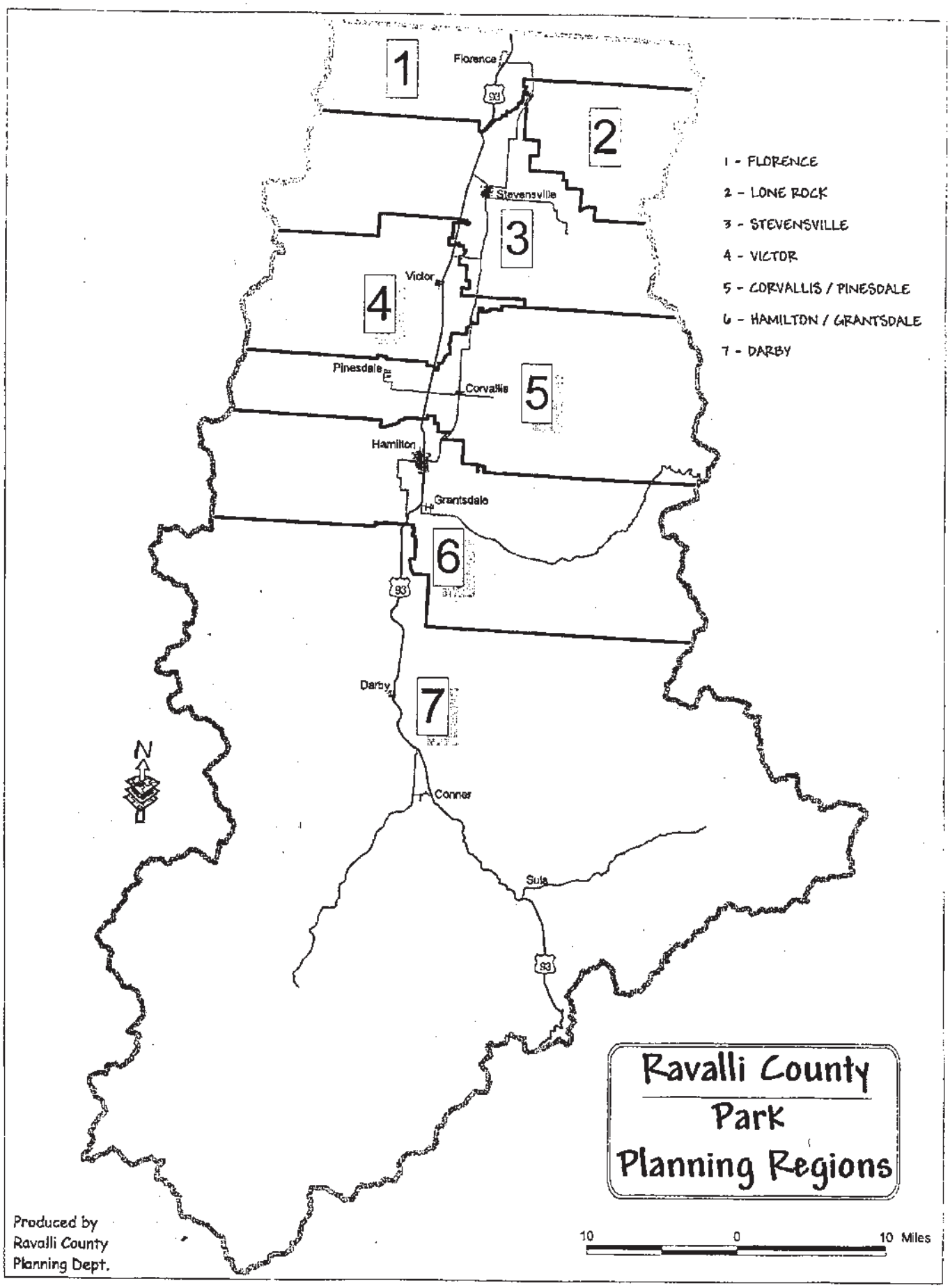
Conservation Parks. Conservation parks are characterized as being primarily in a natural state and/or protecting sensitive habitat or important natural features. There are no or few structures, a low diversity of activities, and few encounters with other users.

Regional Parks. Regional parks are generally located in sizable urban areas. They are large (at least forty acres), provide a wide diversity of opportunities, and serve a number of communities. They can attract large crowds, but also offer settings for small groups to see few others. They are very separated from adjacent land uses, and can be quite far away from their users. They should be linked to the adjacent communities by trail systems, and should also contain complete trail systems within their boundaries.

Regional parks in Ravalli County differ somewhat from the standard definition of the class due to the great abundance of opportunities provided by large federal and state lands in the area. If not for these lands, County regional parks would have to provide opportunities more typically found in wildland settings.

Trails. Trails refer to recreational paths, walkways and corridors which serve people traveling on foot, bicycle or horseback, and may also serve as wildlife corridors. Trails may be multi-use or single-use. They do not normally include roads, streets and alleys meant primarily for motorized vehicles; however, where their use is recreation-related, both sidewalks and on-street bicycle lanes can be included in the term “trail”. Trails may serve simply for travel to or from a recreational area, or they may serve a direct recreational purpose such as exercise, enjoyment of scenery and bird watching.

Parks and Inventory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3 - STEVENSVILLE
4 - VICTOR
5 - CORVALLIS / PINESDALE
6 - HAMILTON / GRANTSDALE
7 - DARBY
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RAVALLI COUNTY PARKS AND INVENTORY

Ravalli County owns approximately twenty-five parcels that are either dedicated as parks or used for that purpose. Approximately thirty parcels that are owned by homeowner associations, schools, communities, or other organizations serve as parklands.

For the purpose of park planning, the County has been divided into seven regions arranged in geographic order from north to south:

Region 1	Florence
Region 2	Lone Rock
Region 3	Stevensville
Region 4	Victor
Region 5	Corvallis/Pinesdale
Region 6	Hamilton/Grantsdale
Region 7	Darby

Each of the following chapters detail the respective regions by describing the parks and recreation available and development and maintenance responsibilities. Each chapter also includes non-County owned and maintained resources.

This inventory is the first attempt at a parkland inventory for the County in recent years. There may be other park resources that were not identified. One of the primary goals of the county will be to continue to gather information on park resources in an effort to complete this inventory for the future. (See implementation strategy)

Ravalli County
Park and Recreation Facilities

Region/ Name	Park Name	Section Township Range	Park Type	Acres	Owner
1	Florence Park	11-10-20	Community	15.0	County
Florence	Florence School K-12	11-10-20	Neighborhood	39.0	School
	Forest View Estates	11-10-20	Pocket	0.4	County
	Florence Walkway/Bike Path		Trail		MDOT
	Mountain Meadows Park		Neighborhood	3.3	County
2	Ambrose Community Park	4-9-19	Community	23.0	County
Lone Rock	Lone Rock School Park	4-9-19	Community	10.0	School
3	Creamery Park	27-9-20	Neighborhood	0.2	City
Stevensville	DeSmet Park	*	Pocket	*	City
	Dickerson Park	27-9-20	Pocket	0.3	City
	Father Ravalli Park	27-9-20	Neighborhood	1.9	County
	Lange Park	*	Pocket	*	County
	Lee Metcalf Wildlife Refuge		Conservation	2,800.0	US
	Lewis & Clark	*	Community	7.0	*
	River Park Commercial Village	21-9-20	Neighborhood	1.6	County
	St. Mary's Horizon Village	22-9-20	Neighborhood	2.7	County
	Stevensville River Park	22-9-20	Community	23.0	County
	Stevensville River Road	27-9-20	Pocket	1.6	County
	Stevensville School K-12	26-9-20	Neighborhood	25.0	School
	Stevensville Walkway/Bike Path		Trail		MDOT
	Stevensville West	22-9-20	Neighborhood	3.6	County
	Veterans Park	27-9-20	Neighborhood	0.3	City
	Wildwood Park Ranchettes	21-9-20	Neighborhood	8.5	Private
4	Big Creek Pines	17-8-20	Pocket	2.3	Private
Victor	Mittower Meadows "A"	17-8-20	Pocket	8.8	Private
	Mittower Meadows "B"	17-8-20	Pocket	1.3	Private
	Silverbow Meadows "A"/Baseball	6-8-20	Community	7.2	County
	Silverbow Meadows "B"	6-8-20	Community	2.8	County
	Victor Park	30-8-20	Community	0.7	Private
	Victor School K-12	30-8-20	Neighborhood	7.2	School
	Wildwood Park Acres	30-8-20	Pocket	0.9	County

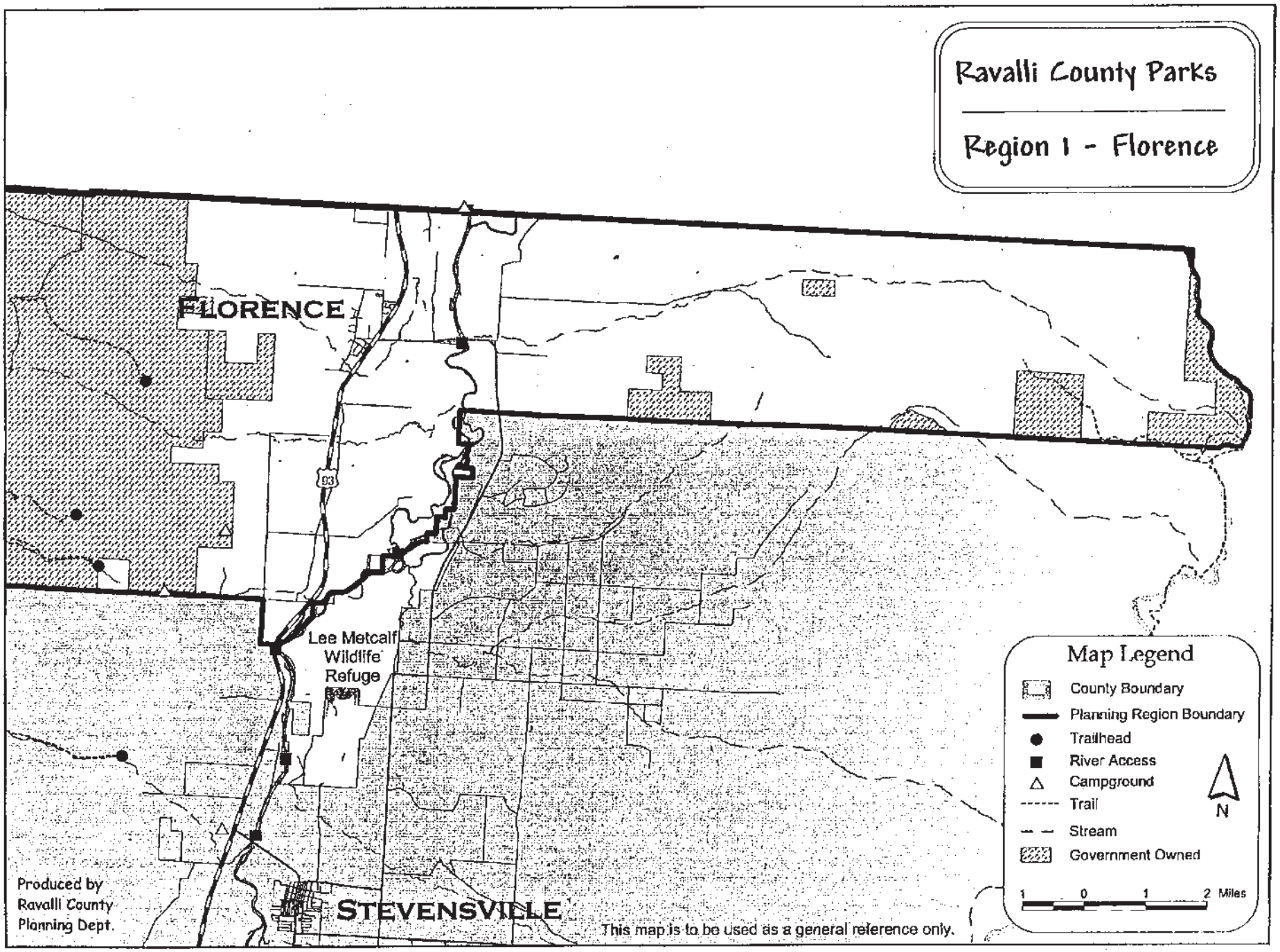
Ravalli County
Park and Recreation Facilities

Region/ Name	Park Name	Section Township Range	Park Type	Acres	Owner
5	Corvallis Community Center	33-7-20	Community	30.0	School
Corvallis/	Corvallis Estates	8-6-20	Pocket	2.9	County
Pinesdale	Corvallis High School	32-7-20	Neighborhood	40.0	School
	Corvallis Middle School	32-7-20	Neighborhood		School
	Corvallis Primary	33-7-20	Neighborhood	15.0	School
	Hawker Lane Estates	6-6-20	Pocket	4.4	County
	Pinesdale Academy	27-7-21	Neighborhood	*	City
	RC Allred Memorial Park	27-7-21	Community	*	City
	Summerdale Park	34-7-20	Neighborhood	1.5	County
	Teller Wildlife Refuge	*	Conservation	*	Private
	Woodside Walkway/Bike Path		Trail		MDOT
6	Antigone Acres "A"	32-6-20	Neighborhood	5.8	County
Hamilton/	Antigone Acres "B"	32-6-20	Neighborhood	2.0	County
Grantsdale	Big Sky Subdivision	30-6-20	Neighborhood	0.5	Private
	Bitterroot Aquatic Center	30-6-20	Community		School
	Blodgett Park	12-6-21	Community	15.4	County
	Canyon Creek Heights	27-6-21	Neighborhood	3.1	County
	Claudia Driscoll Park	25-6-21	Community	*	City
	Daly Elementary	31-6-20	Neighborhood	5.0	School
	Fairgrounds Ball Fields	30-6-20	Community	7.0	County
	Grantsdale Elementary	7-5-20	Private	3.0	School
	Haines Athletic Fields	25-6-21	Neighborhood	7.0	School
	Hamilton Golf Club	4-5-20	Community	158.0	County
	Hamilton High School	30-6-20	Neighborhood	67.0	School
	Hamilton Middle School	25-6-21	Neighborhood	3.0	School
	Hamilton Walkway/Bike Path		Trail		MDOT
	Harris Homes	6-5-20	Pocket	0.6	Private
	Heritage Park	30-6-20	Neighborhood	2.0	Private
	Hieronymus Park	24-6-21	Community	60.0	City

Ravalli County
Park and Recreation Facilities

Region/ Name	Park Name	Section Township Range	Park Type	Acres	Owner
6	Hillcrest #1	31-6-20	Pocket	0.3	County
Hamilton/	Hillcrest #3	31-6-20	Pocket	1.9	County
Grantsdale	Kiwanis Park	25-6-21	Community	2.0	City
(cont)	Legion Park	25-6-21	Community	0.5	City
	Pathfinder Subdivision	16-5-20	Pocket	3.6	County
	Ravalli County Fairgrounds	19-6-20	Community	54.0	County
	Riverside Park	25-6-21	Community	25.0	County
	Sawtooth Creek Ranch	3-5-21	Pocket	0.5	County
	Steve Powell Park		Neighborhood	22.0	City
	Stonegate Park	19-6-20	Neighborhood	1.8	Private
	Vester Wilson Athletic Field	30-6-20	Community	*	City
	Washington Elementary	25-6-21	Neighborhood	2.0	School
	Weber Estates	31-6-20	Neighborhood	7.5	Private
	Westview Junior High School	*	Neighborhood	5.0	School
	Westwood Village	25-6-21	Pocket	0.3	Private
7	Darby School K-12	10-3-21	Neighborhood	*	School
Darby	Darby South Park	14-3-21	Pocket	0.3	*
	Main Street Park	*	Neighborhood	*	Town
	River Park	*	Neighborhood	5.0	*
	Rodeo Grounds Park	10-3-21	Community	5.7	Town
	Tin Cup Park	14-3-21	Pocket	1.0	Town
	Waincrist Meadows	15-3-21	Neighborhood	1.1	County

Region 1 – Florence


Ravalli County Parks
Region 1 - Florence
FLORENCE
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Lee Metcalf Wildlife Refuge
STEVENSVILLE
Map Legend
County Boundary
Planning Region Boundary
Trailhead
River Access
Campground
Trail
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Produced by Ravalli County Planning Dept.
This map is to be used as a general reference only.

Region 1 – Florence

REGION DESCRIPTION

Florence is the northern entrance to Ravalli County, and due to the extraordinary efforts of area residents, boasts a highway lined with relatively new landscaping, walkways, and a "community friendly" commercial corridor.

Parkways and open space surround this community established some 125 years ago as a lumber and railroad dependant settlement. With the massive Bitterroot Range to the west and the rolling foothills of the Sapphires to the east, Florence sits astride the Bitterroot River and provides an easy commute for Missoula area workers.

As a growing "bedroom" community for Missoula employers, Florence faces a somewhat unique future in the Bitterroot. As housing costs drop in direct proportion to the distance from Missoula, demands for rural residential development increases in Florence. With new neighborhoods arising in areas such as Eight Mile and Hidden Valley, so too does the demand escalate for recreational opportunities and parkland. Florence's future will be tied to the need for "urban" parks as a possible town center develops, and to the need for dispersed recreational access to state, federal and corporate land.

PARKS AND RECREATION AVAILABLE

Community Parks

Florence Community Park. Florence Community Park is a fifteen-acre public park west of town, which has a tennis court, four baseball fields, soccer fields, a concession stand and restrooms. The community is currently working on funding for a playground area at the park. With the recent addition of approximately two acres there is adequate parking facilities.

Neighborhood Parks

Florence-Carlton School. The school district grounds consisting of thirty-nine acres contain a playground area, play equipment, track and football field with open turf areas. It serves as an important recreation site for nearby residents.

Mountain Meadows

The 3.3 acre County Park adjacent to the Mountain Meadows Subdivision has a gravel path and a water well but is otherwise undeveloped. The park abuts the Highway 93 bike-walk trail.

Pocket Parks

Forest View Estates. Forest View Estates is a one half-acre undeveloped public park with no existing facilities. There is approximately one 100 feet of road frontage with a 20-foot wide walkway easement. There is a community water system pump house in the center of the property.

Trails

Florence Walkway/Bike Path. An asphalt pathway extends from the Missoula County line to Florence where it winds through the community of Florence along US Highway 93 and is commonly used by walkers, skaters and cyclists. The property is owned by Montana Department of Transportation with an easement granted to Ravalli County. A local community focus group takes care of the maintenance.

Other Recreation Areas

Bass Creek Fishing Access. This recreational area consisting of approximately 12 acres is walk-in access only and is located just north of Stevensville on US Highway 93 along the Bitterroot River. This access is commonly used for picnicking, swimming, inner-tubing, and fishing. The access is day use only with no restroom facilities located on site. The area is owned and maintained by the Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

Chief Looking Glass Fishing Access. This recreational area consisting of 13 acres is located at the Missoula/Ravalli County line on Chief Looking Glass Road approximately six miles south of Lolo along the Bitterroot River. This access is commonly used for picnicking, swimming, inner-tubing, fishing, kayaking, canoeing and rafting. The site is trailer accessible and has restroom facilities located on site. The area is owned and maintained by the Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

Florence Bridge Fishing Access. This recreational area consisting of 12 acres is approximately one mile east of Florence along the Bitterroot River and is accessible from the walkway that winds through the community of Florence. This access is commonly used for swimming, innertubing, fishing, kayaking, canoeing

and rafting. The area is owned and maintained by the Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks. A restroom facility is located on site.

Poker Joe Fishing Access. This recreational area consisting of approximately 12 acres is walk-in access only and is located south of Florence just east of US Highway 93 along the Bitterroot River. This access is commonly used for picnicking, swimming, inner-tubing, and fishing. The access is day use only with no restroom facilities located on site. The area is owned and maintained by the Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

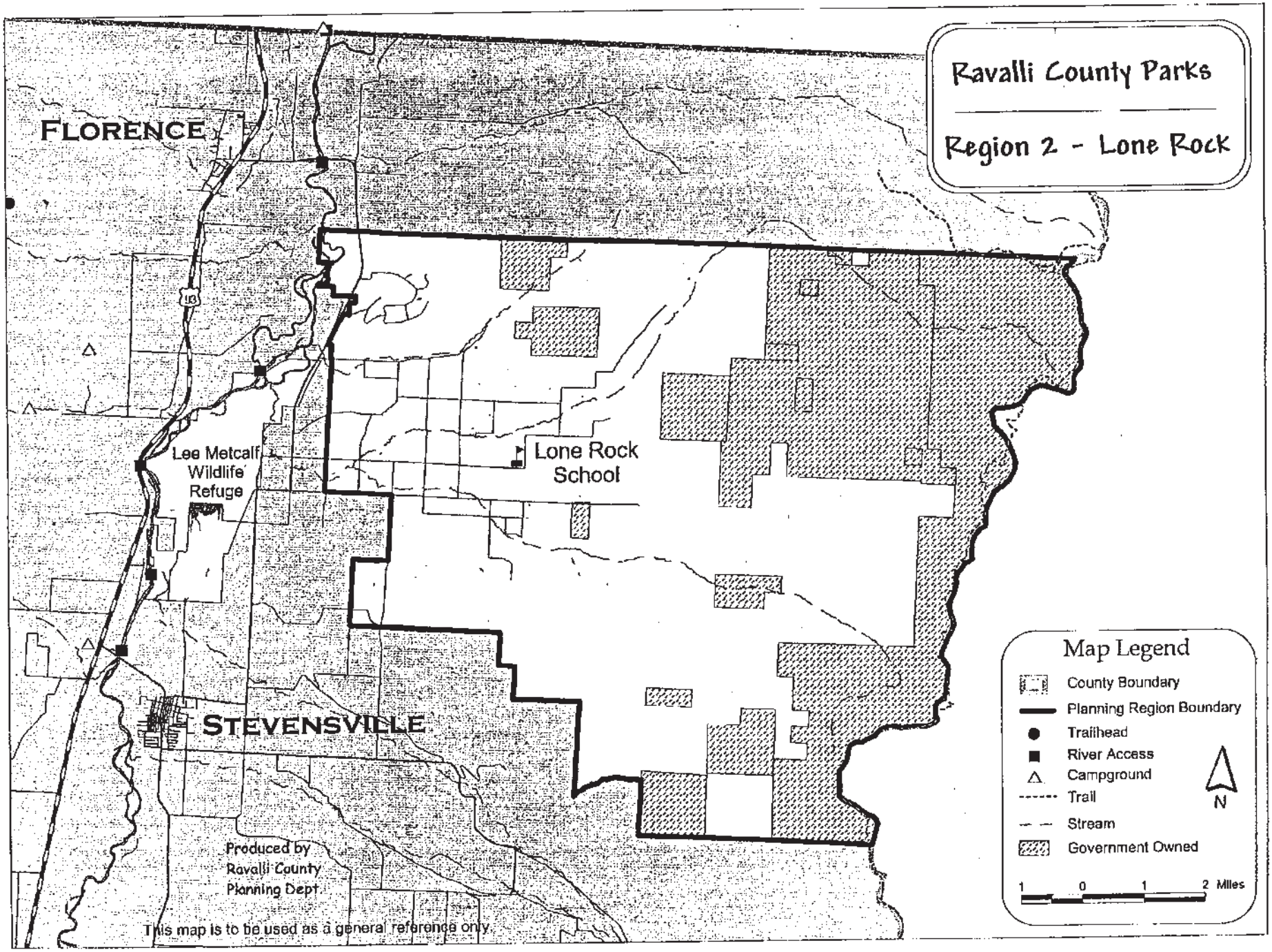
DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

Whereas the County holds responsibility for County parklands, it can also assist with development and maintenance of recreation areas managed by other organizations. The best way to further improve the area's parks is for the County and those organizations to solidify and strengthen their partnerships. The County will continue to offer limited financial and professional support to organizations willing to provide labor and share in capital expenses to develop and maintain the parks.

Specific groups that could help in park development and maintenance include homeowners' associations, park and recreation associations, baseball associations, Florence Civic Club and the Florence-Carlton School District.

The Florence Park District, which follows the Planning Region boundary, also includes the portion of Missoula County, which is included in the Florence School District. The Park District uses funding from mills levied against property for the purpose of park development and maintenance.

Region 2 – Lone Rock



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Region 2 – Lone Rock

REGION DESCRIPTION

The Lone Rock Park Planning Region occupies a northeast-central portion of the northern Bitterroot Valley. Bordered entirely on the east by federal land, its development potential is restricted by access and transportation opportunities. Consequently, Lone Rock will generally be faced with development pressures limited to residential in-fill on a large lot basis.

The need for "urban" park-type recreation should remain low, but some demand will occur for better access to state and federal recreational opportunities as agricultural lands are converted to residential use. As a "satellite" to the Florence area, commuters will be able to access employment opportunities in either the Bitterroot or Missoula Valleys. In general, the more urban areas of the County should serve Lone Rock well and lessen the demand for intense recreational development in this region. However, the area will experience demise in the amount of open vistas that currently characterize the area as pressure to develop former agricultural and timber lands increases.

PARKS AND RECREATION AVAILABLE

Community Parks

Lone Rock School Park. Lone Rock Community Park is a 10-acre parcel currently leased from the Lone Rock School District by the Lone Rock Park District. There is a concession stand, four baseball/softball fields and soccer fields. This land is adjacent to the elementary school, which has a gym that is used by the community when not in use by the school.

Ambrose Community Park. This 23-acre parcel owned by the Ravalli County Park -Lone Rock Division is located near Ambrose Creek and Sunnyside Cemetery Roads. The Lone Rock community is currently working on a development plan for this site.

Neighborhood Parks

Lone Rock Elementary. Lone Rock Elementary School has four acres including a playground complex with swings, slides, structures to play on and a gymnasium. It serves as an important recreation site for nearby residents.

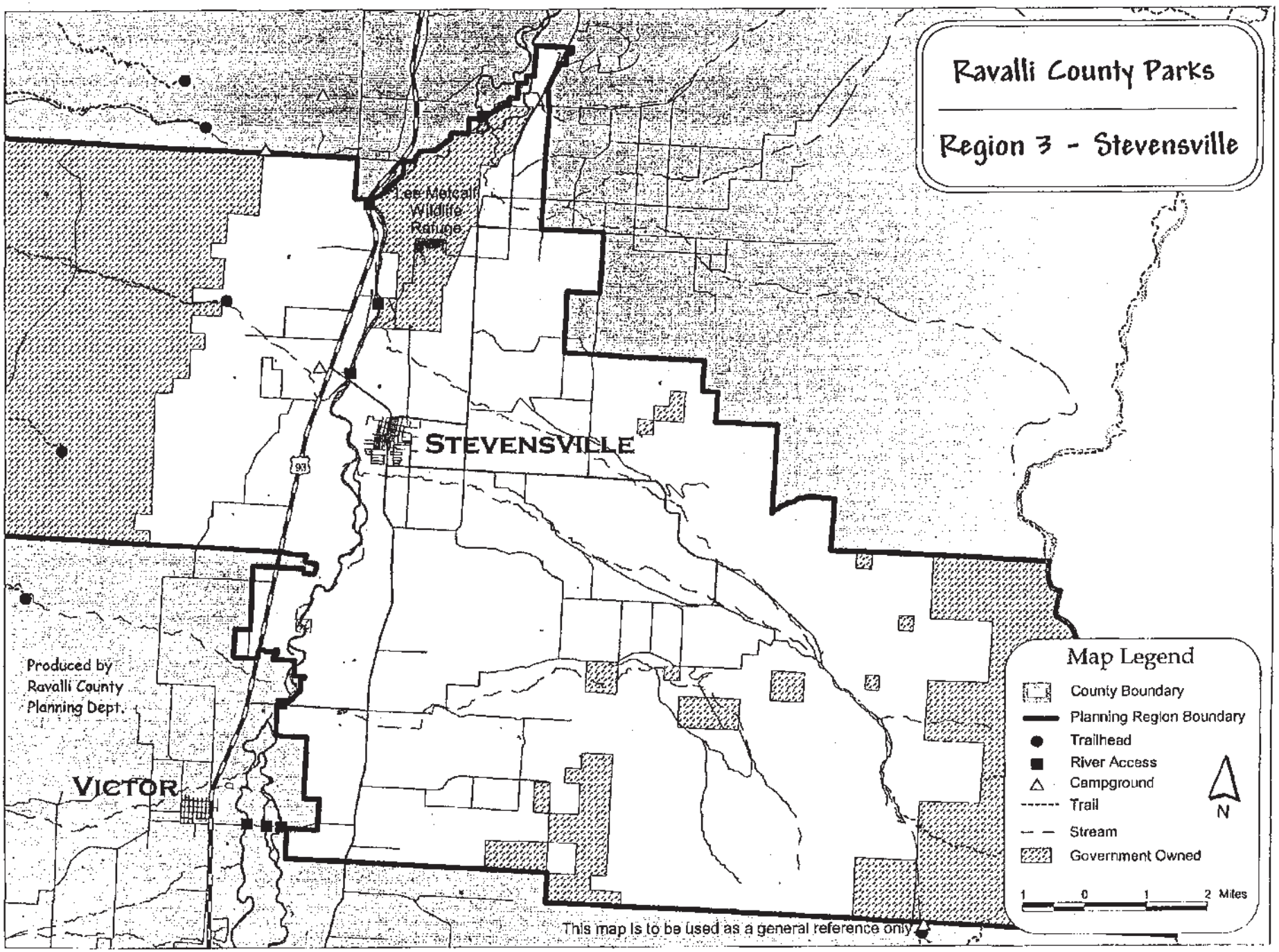
DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

Whereas the County holds responsibility for County parklands, it can also assist with development and maintenance of recreation areas managed by other organizations. The best way to further improve the area's parks is for the County and those organizations to solidify and strengthen their partnerships. The County will continue to offer limited financial and professional support to organizations willing to provide labor and share in capital expenses to develop and maintain the parks.

Specific groups that could help in park development and maintenance include homeowners' associations, park and recreation associations, baseball associations, and the Lone Rock School District.

Ravalli County Park -Lone Rock Division also uses funding from mills levied against property for the purpose of park development and maintenance.

Region 3 – Stevensville



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Region 3 – Stevensville

REGION DESCRIPTION

From a real estate perspective, Stevensville seems to separate the north end of Ravalli County from the south valley floor in terms of commuting to the Missoula area. Whereas working in Missoula is still an extremely viable option, the incorporated City of Stevensville also affords local employment options. As a result, Ravalli County recognizes the need to work with city officials to develop a recreational master plan that emphasis cooperation. This will help reduce a duplication of recreational services as both the region's urban core and rural areas experience residential and commercial growth.

As with Florence, the Stevensville district rises in the west along the crest of the Bitterroots and drops quickly to the valley bottom in an area dominated by the Bitterroot River and the water-oriented recreational opportunities it provides. To the east, Forest Service managed land along the Sapphires slopes into private land in the foothills and floodplain. The townsite, platted in 1879, has changed from a timber and agricultural focus to one of light commercial and service industries while striving to maintain it's historic downtown. However, as in other areas of the County, residential users are slowly usurping grounds formerly known for their rich agricultural production.

Stevensville, with an incorporated town center, can expect additional growth on an escalating basis. The need for rural and urban recreation opportunities will also increase as new residents arrive and former residents lose access to once open lands. This demand will increase as Highway 93 is rebuilt south from Florence, thereby decreasing travel time to Missoula's employment opportunities. Annexation of growth areas by the City will decrease the County's obligation to provide for urban-type parks in this region.

PARKS AND RECREATION AVAILABLE

Community Parks

Lewis & Clark. Lewis & Clark Park is a seven-acre developed park in town with playground, swimming pool, ball field, horseshoe pits, picnic tables, two shelters and rest rooms. Old tennis courts are currently being removed. The City of Stevensville maintains the park.

Stevensville River Park. Stevensville River Park consists of twenty three acres and is nicely developed with rest rooms, picnic areas, trails, pond, benches for wildfowl viewing and access to the river. The City of Stevensville maintains the park.

Conservation Parks

Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge. Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge is located along the Bitterroot River south of Stevensville. The refuge is 2,800 acres and provides visitors with opportunities for wildlife observation, photography, hunting, fishing, environmental education and interpretation. There are two miles of nature trails in the refuge's Wildlife Viewing Area. The Wildlife Viewing Area includes a half-mile wheelchair accessible path, which leads to the Bitterroot River. A County road (Wildfowl Lane) stretches through the refuge providing scenic views of the surrounding landscape and abundant opportunities to view wildlife on the refuge. The US Fish & Wildlife Service is responsible for the management and maintenance.

Neighborhood Parks

Creamery Park. Creamery Park is a charming little city-owned park consisting of approximately twenty-four hundred square feet and tucked between two buildings on Main Street in Stevensville with benches, shrubs, trees and a brick walkway.

Father Ravalli Park. Father Ravalli Park is a two acre park in the City of Stevensville that has heavy use for soccer. There are basketball hoops, older children's playground equipment and in the summer time restrooms are provided. The City of Stevensville maintains the park.

River Park Commercial Village. River Park Commercial Village, owned by the County is a long and narrow one-acre public park that sits adjacent to the Bitterroot River northwest of the Stevensville Bridge. This park is undeveloped with approximately 30 feet of riparian riverbank that provides open space value.

St. Mary's Horizon Village. St. Mary's Horizon Village Park is a beautifully groomed riparian private park adjacent to a creek. It is comprised of two and one half acres of ponds, walkways and a gazebo. It is mostly maintained by the homeowners' association.

Stevensville School. The school district grounds consist of twenty-five acres and contain a playground area, play equipment, track and football field with open turf areas. It serves as an important recreation site for nearby residents.

Stevensville West. Stevensville West is currently an undeveloped three and one half acre County owned public parcel covered mostly in knapweed; although, the parcel has a lot of potential for a park.

Veterans Park. Veterans Park is a small one quarter acre park on the north end of Stevensville that provides tables, benches and trees for residents and visitors in the downtown area. There is a well located in the corner of the park. It is owned by the City and maintained by veterans' groups.

Wildwood Park Ranchettes. Wildwood Park Ranchettes is a private undeveloped eight and one half acre wooded parcel with river access, which lies mostly in the floodplain.

Pocket Parks

Dickerson Park. Dickerson Park is a small park with a 20-foot wide unmarked easement between two houses in downtown Stevensville. The park is a small strip of grass maintained by the City with a basketball hoop.

DeSmet Park. DeSmet Park, a beautifully landscaped public area for picnicking was dedicated in 1991 to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the establishment of St. Mary's Mission, which is on the adjoining property. The City of Stevensville owns and maintains the park.

Lange Park. Lange Park is a tiny plot of grass owned by the City of Stevensville with a few trees located at the south end of Main Street.

Stevensville River Road. Stevensville River Road Park is a narrow strip of land adjacent to the Bitterroot River. Transfer of ownership of this land from the County to Fish, Wildlife & Parks is currently under negotiations.

Trails

Stevensville Walkway/Bike Path. This asphalt pathway winds along the Stevensville Cutoff Road and is commonly used by walkers, skaters and cyclists. The property is owned by Montana Department of Transportation and community volunteers take care of the maintenance.

Other Recreation Areas

Stevensville Bridge Fishing Access. This recreational area is approximately one mile northwest of Stevensville along the Bitterroot River and is commonly

used for swimming, innertubing, fishing, kayaking, canoeing and rafting. The area is privately owned.

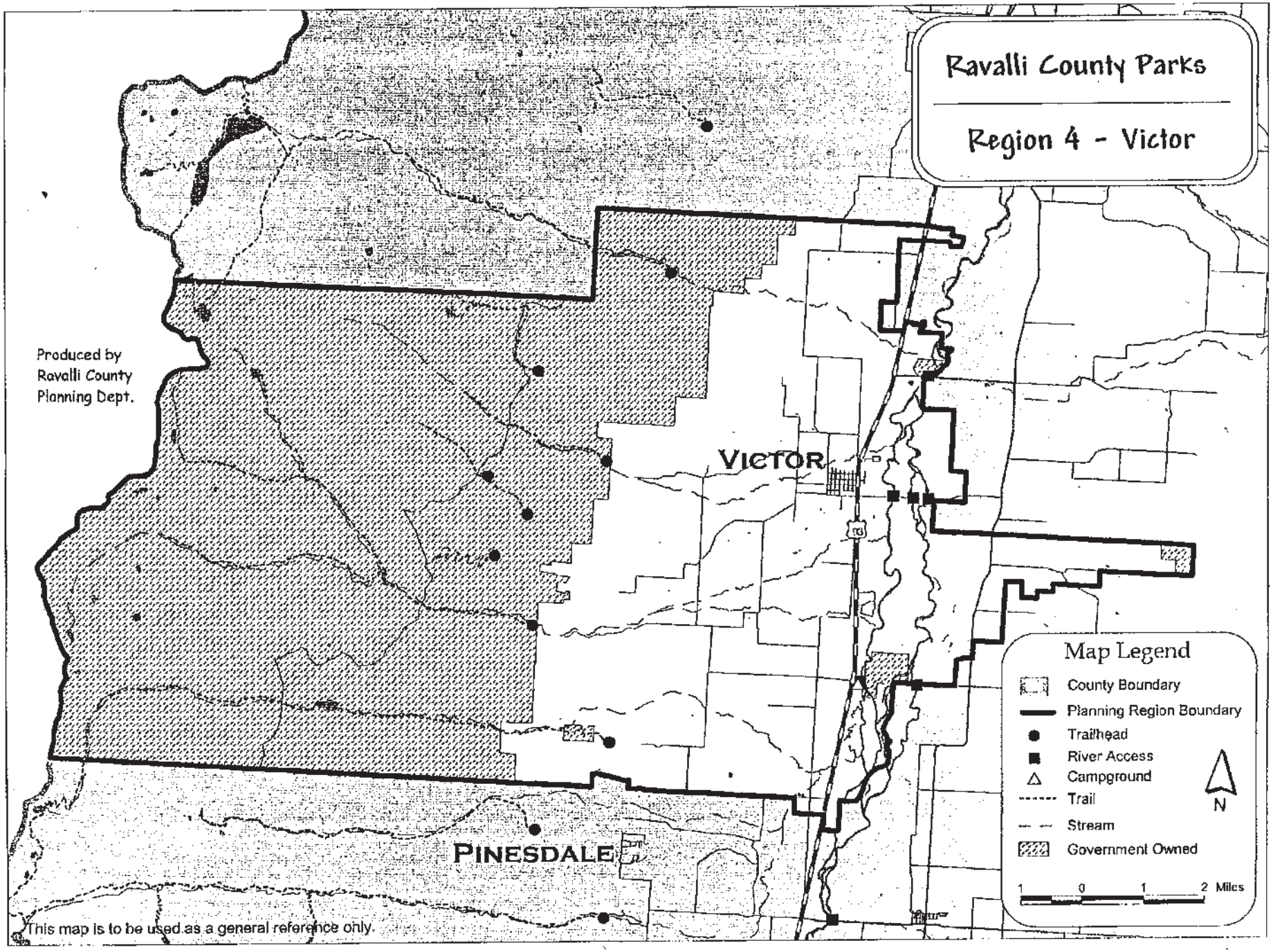
Whitetail Golf Course. This 9-hole course is located near the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge and offers plenty of wildlife and beautiful scenery. The course has greens that are small and difficult to read, tree-lined basically flat and narrow fairways and a pro shop. Tee times are only available on weekends and holidays.

DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

Whereas the County holds responsibility for County parklands, it can also assist with development and maintenance of recreation areas managed by other organizations. The best way to further improve the area's parks is for the County and those organizations to solidify and strengthen their partnerships. The County will continue to offer limited financial and professional support to organizations willing to provide labor and share in capital expenses to develop and maintain the parks.

Specific groups that could help in park development and maintenance include homeowners' associations, park and recreation associations, baseball associations, Veterans groups, Stevensville School District and the City of Stevensville.

Region 4 – Victor



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Region 4 – Victor

REGION DESCRIPTION

On the west-central side of the Bitterroot Valley, Victor occupies a prestigious, if small, niche in recreational opportunities. With a major gateway into the Bitterroot Wilderness area on the west, and with the Bitterroot River corridor on the east, residents are surrounded with scenic and recreational opportunities. Residents also have excellent access north to Stevensville and south to Hamilton for urban-type services.

With a somewhat limited amount of private land in the school district, development pressures for rural residential housing will grow in a generally manageable time frame. Unless the community is able to incorporate and provide urban amenities and services, the greatest demand seems to be one of protecting the rural nature of the area while preserving options for future growth. As a result, little urgent demand is expected for recreational amenities in addition to those currently found in the area. However, as US Highway 93 is expanded, Victor can anticipate additional commercial and highway-oriented development along its major transportation route. Increasing non-residential land uses will not result in an immediate increase in demand for park lands unless it is followed by an increase in residential density.

PARKS AND RECREATION AVAILABLE

Community Parks

Victor Baseball Park. Victor Baseball Park is a seven-acre park owned by Ravalli County with three ball fields and restroom facilities. The park sits along US Highway 93 south of Victor.

Victor Community Park. Victor Community Park, approximately three acres in size, is located in downtown Victor between 5th and Main Street and has beautiful shade trees, picnic tables, covered pavilions and a large turf area. There are swing sets and a volleyball net available June 1 through October 1. The grounds are in good condition and get heavy use during the summer. There is a small fee charged for private parties to help with maintenance. The Victor Garden Club owns and maintains the park.

Neighborhood Parks

Victor School. The school district grounds consisting of seven acres contain a playground area, play equipment, football field with open turf areas and baseball fields. It serves as an important recreation site for nearby residents.

Pocket Parks

Big Creek Pines. Big Creek Pines is a two and one half acre undeveloped private park located between housing and Highway 93 north of Victor.

Mittower Meadows "A". Mittower Meadows "A" is an eight-acre private park used as a common area bordering Highway 93 and Grace Lane in Victor.

Mittower Meadows "B". Mittower Meadows "B" is an undeveloped private riparian strip along Big Creek in the Mittower Meadows Subdivision consisting of approximately one acre.

Silverbow Meadows "B". Silverbow Meadows "B" is a County-owned undeveloped riparian area that consists of approximately two and one half acres and adjoins Bear Creek.

Wildwood Park Acres. Wildwood Park Acres, owned by the County is approximately one acre in size and is an undeveloped public wetland area with a five-foot wide walkway easement running east and west from Mountain View Drive along the north boundary of Lot 9 in the Wildwood Park Acres Subdivision.

Other Recreation Areas

Bell Crossing Fishing Access. This recreational area is just east of Victor on Bell Crossing Road along the Bitterroot River. The area is day-use only with no trailer access or restroom facilities on site. Commonly used for swimming, innertubing, fishing, kayaking, canoeing and rafting. The area is owned and maintained by the Department of Fish Wildlife & Parks.

Tucker Crossing West Fishing Access. This recreational area is approximately 3 miles south of Victor off of US Highway 93, along the Bitterroot River and consists of approximately 257 acres. The area is day-use only with trailer access and restroom facilities on site. Commonly used for swimming, innertubing, fishing, kayaking, canoeing and rafting. The area is owned and maintained by the Department of Fish Wildlife & Parks.

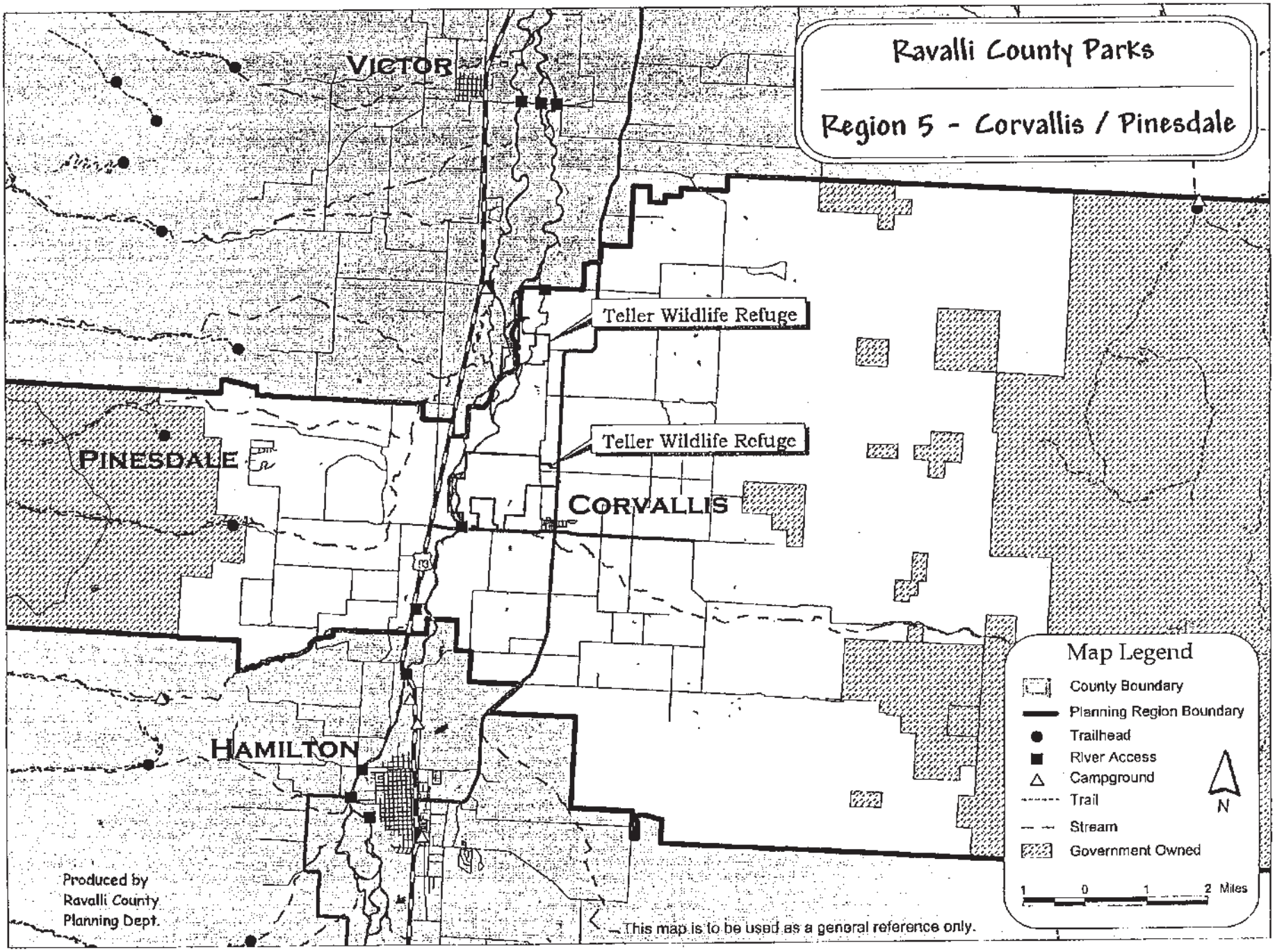
DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

Whereas the County holds responsibility for County parklands, it can also assist with development and maintenance of recreation areas managed by other organizations. The best way to further improve the area's parks is for the County and those organizations to solidify and strengthen their partnerships. The County will continue to offer limited financial and professional support to organizations willing to provide labor and share in capital expenses to develop and maintain the parks.

Specific groups that could help in the park development and maintenance include homeowner associations, park and recreation associations, baseball associations, Veterans groups, garden clubs, and the Victor School District.

Victor Park District also uses funding from mills levied against property for the purpose of park development and maintenance.

Region 5 – Corvallis/Pinesdale



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Region 5 – Corvallis/Pinesdale

REGION DESCRIPTION

While perhaps the most diverse district in terms of demand for park and recreational opportunities, the Corvallis/Pinesdale district also presents the greatest challenge. With one incorporated community on the west (Pinesdale) and one rapidly growing but unincorporated community on the east (Corvallis), this district has room for additional commercial, industrial and residential growth. Given its immediate proximity to Hamilton, growth pressures are expected to continue well into the next decade.

Second only to Stevensville in terms of districts with private land available for development north of Darby, Corvallis boasts a community sewer treatment plant that has spurred substantial growth in the last two years. As a result, subdivision activity and the demand for parks and recreation has also increased in this formerly agriculturally dominated region. Residential development is replacing apple production, farming and stock farms as the "growth industry" of the area platted in 1879.

Pinesdale is a small community platted in 1982. In a generally forested area, Pinesdale provides a home for employees who travel the length of the valley each day to work and to organized recreational opportunities. Growth in the town itself is expected to be limited, but residential development outside the incorporated boundaries may continue as people search for large lot homesites outside of urban areas.

PARKS AND RECREATION AVAILABLE

Community Parks

Corvallis Community Events Center. The Corvallis Community Events Center is a beautiful 30-acre parcel owned and maintained by the Corvallis School District. There are ball fields, a batting cage, soccer fields, a concession stand and open turf. The park offers an abundance of parking and is located on Eastside Highway across the street from the High School and Middle School. The Corvallis community regularly holds fundraising projects to complete the development, which is proposed to include playground equipment, a track and football field, lights, additional landscaping and a future building site for school expansion.

R.C. Allred Memorial Park. R.C. Allred Memorial Park is a five-acre park located in the City of Pinesdale with restrooms, two ball parks, and picnic tables. The park is owned and maintained by the City of Pinesdale.

Conservation Parks

Teller Wildlife Refuge. Teller Wildlife Refuge is a 1200-acre private wildlife refuge managed by the non-profit organization Teller Wildlife Refuge, Inc. It is spread out along three miles of the Bitterroot River just northwest of Corvallis and includes croplands, uplands and timbered river-bottom. The refuge is open to limited hunting, fishing and other nature oriented activities.

Neighborhood Parks

Corvallis High School. The school district grounds contains six tennis courts, a track and football field, softball and baseball fields, two concession stands, shade trees, a gazebo, benches, and plenty of open turf areas. It serves as an important recreation site for nearby residents. The school district currently leases approximately five acres where the softball and baseball fields are located.

Corvallis Middle School. The school district grounds contain a playground area, play equipment, and open turf areas. It adjoins the high school property, which consists of forty acres and allows access to those facilities.

Corvallis Primary School. The school district grounds consist of fifteen acres and contain a playground area, play equipment, basketball courts, baseball/softball fields, shade trees with picnic tables and open turf areas. It serves as an important recreation site for nearby residents and has heavy use in the summer for family reunions and picnics.

Pinesdale Academy. The Pinesdale Academy is a private school located among the trees on the westside of the valley in the City of Pinesdale that contains a playground area, play equipment, and picnic tables. It serves as an important recreation site for nearby residents.

Summerdale Park. Summerdale Park, deeded to the County in 1928 is a one and one half acre developed public park on Quast Lane just north of Corvallis. There is a covered shelter area, power hook-up and picnic tables. The property is mowed and irrigated by the adjacent landowner and managed by the Corvallis Women's Club.

Pocket Parks

Corvallis Estates. Corvallis Estates Park, owned by Ravalli County, is an approximately three-acre strip with trees bordering Gird Creek south of Corvallis off Martin Drive. There is a nicely mowed 20-foot wide walking easement for the public use. Adjacent property owners mow and maintain the area.

Hawker Lane Estates. Hawker Lane Park is four acres of slough and riparian area with Gird Creek running through the property. The park is southwest of Corvallis and includes a 20-foot wide walkway easement for public use off of McWilliams Drive. The park is owned by Ravalli County.

Trails

Woodside Walkway/Bike Path. This asphalt pathway winds along the Woodside Cutoff Road from Corvallis to the Woodside Bridge over the Bitterroot River and is commonly used by walkers, skaters and cyclists. The property is owned by Montana Department of Transportation and local volunteers take care of the maintenance.

Other Recreation Areas

Woodside Bridge Fishing Access. This recreational area consists of approximately three acres and is approximately one mile west of Corvallis along the Bitterroot River. It is commonly used for swimming, innertubing, fishing, kayaking, canoeing and rafting. A trailer access and bathroom facility is located on site. The area is owned and maintained by the Department of Fish Wildlife & Parks.

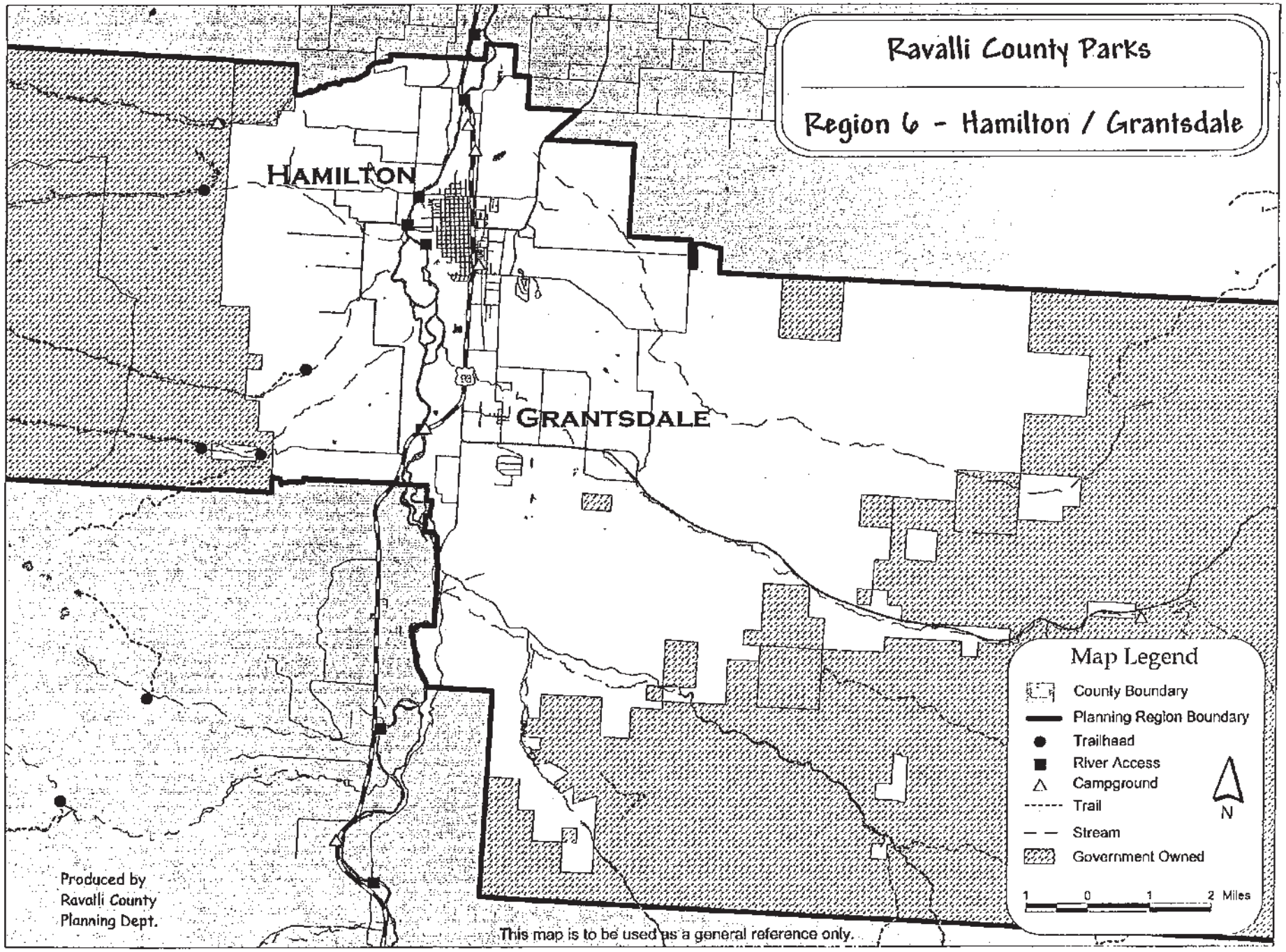
DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

Whereas the County holds responsibility for County parklands, it can also assist with development and maintenance of recreation areas managed by other organizations. The best way to further improve the area's parks is for the County and those organizations to solidify and strengthen their partnerships. The County will continue to offer limited financial and professional support to organizations willing to provide labor and share in capital expenses to develop and maintain the parks.

Specific groups that could help development and maintenance include homeowner associations, park and recreation associations, baseball associations, Veterans groups, women's clubs, Corvallis Civic Club, Corvallis School District, Town of Corvallis and possibly the Board of the Teller Wildlife Refuge.

Ravalli County Park District #2 also uses funding from mills levied against property for the purpose of park development and maintenance.

Region 6 – Hamilton/Grantsdale


Ravalli County Parks
Region 6 - Hamilton / Grantsdale
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Map Legend
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This map is to be used as a general reference only.

Region 6 – Hamilton/Grantsdale

REGION DESCRIPTION

As the most urbanized area within the valley, Hamilton/Grantsdale is the hub of the Bitterroot Valley. Not only are employment opportunities centered in this district (commercial, industrial, service and government industries dominate), so too are formal recreation opportunities. County fairgrounds, ball fields, high school and elementary fields and playgrounds are interspersed throughout the Hamilton area. In addition, the Bitterroot River bisects the City and provides access to floaters and anglers alike.

The geography of this region flows from the crest of the Bitterroots on the west to the Sapphires on the east, with virtually all of the private land centered on the flatter valley bottom. Federal lands dominate ownership in the area (68%) but Hamilton continues to be the largest urban area in the County despite these social and topographic constraints.

Like many western Montana communities, Hamilton was incorporated in the late 1800's as a timber and agricultural settlement. Commercial banking, rail service and general urban activities (churches, hotels, mills, etc.) served as the backbone of the community and provided a market for agricultural producers. In the early 1900's, the Hamilton/Grantsdale region was the center for irrigation activities in the valley and, as a result, irrigation waters today extend well beyond the confines of local streams and the Bitterroot River itself. Grantsdale did not incorporate and, today, generally serves as an adjacent bedroom community for Hamilton.

The Hamilton/Grantsdale region can expect continued residential and commercial growth well into the coming decades. However, with that growth will come additional annexation by the City of Hamilton. Consequently, Ravalli County and Hamilton are working together to develop comprehensive recreation plans for the urban area while the County looks to address rural area recreation opportunities.

PARKS AND RECREATION AVAILABLE

Community Parks

Bitterroot Aquatic Center. The new pool is owned by the Ravalli County Park District #2 and sits on approximately one acre owned by the Hamilton School District. The center is located just east of Hamilton off Kurtz Lane.

The Ravalli County Park District #2 uses funding from tax mills levied in the Corvallis and Hamilton School Districts for the purpose of pool development and maintenance.

Blodgett Park. Blodgett Park is a fifteen-acre park that lies between Highway 93 and the Bitterroot River north of Hamilton. The park is a day-use facility with picnic tables, benches, shade trees and river access. The park is owned by Ravalli County.

Claudia Driscoll Park. Claudia Driscoll Park, owned by the City of Hamilton, is located at the corner of Main Street and 10th. It has a sand volleyball court, playground equipment for younger children, walkways, shade trees and restroom facilities. Future development plans include an ice skating-rollerblade rink, basketball courts, picnic tables, and updated playground equipment.

Fairground Ball Fields. The ball fields are located on Fairgrounds Road just south of the Fairgrounds entrance and consist of approximately seven acres. The fields get heavy summer use with men's and women's baseball leagues. Bathroom facilities are provided seasonally.

Hamilton Golf Club. This 18-hole course offers spectacular views of the Bitterroot and Sapphire mountain ranges with beautiful mature trees lining the fairway. Gird Creek winds through the front nine holes feeding into several ponds and wetland areas. The back nine holes were added in the 1970's and supports greens, four ponds, a dozen sand traps, along with numerous wetland and native areas. The course is open from the first of March through the end of October.

The Golf Course has a full service Pro Shop in the Club House and a practice facility with driving range, putting and chipping greens, along with professional instruction. Breakfast, lunch and dinner can be served in the clubhouse or on the deck area and is open to the public.

This property is one hundred fifty nine acres and is owned by Ravalli County. It is currently leased and maintained by the Hamilton Golf Club.

Hieronymus Park. Hieronymus Park is an approximately sixty-six acre park that is mostly undeveloped with considerable wetland and riparian areas located on US Highway 93 north of Hamilton. Dogs are allowed if on a leash. The City of Hamilton owns and maintains the park.

Kiwanis Park. Kiwanis Park is a two acre park located on South Ninth Street in Hamilton adjacent to the Hamilton Athletic Field. There are picnic tables, benches and playground equipment. The Hamilton School District owns the property and negotiates with the City of Hamilton for maintenance.

Legion Park. Legion Park is a half acre park in the City of Hamilton on South Second Street and is known for its heavy use during the summer with "Lunch in the Park", which includes vendors and entertainment. There are swingsets, slides, younger children's playground equipment, a covered picnic area and restrooms. The City of Hamilton owns and maintains the park.

Ravalli County Fairgrounds. The Ravalli County Fair is over 108 years old. The fair is the largest event in Ravalli County and offers something for all ages. Keeping the old style country fair atmosphere is a priority. The fair is held every year, starting on the Wednesday before Labor Day and ending on Sunday. Rounding out the rest of the year, many community activities including car shows, auctions, rodeos, horse shows and car racing are held at the Ravalli County Fairgrounds. The property is approximately fifty-four acres and is located on Fairgrounds Road in Hamilton. Ravalli County owns and maintains the grounds.

Riverside Park. Riverside Park is a twenty-five acre park located on South Ninth Street in Hamilton just south of Kiwanis Park. The facilities are beautiful with walking paths that wind along the Bitterroot River. Recent upgrades include picnic tables and benches along the walking paths, a gazebo, handicap access, carved bears and umbrellas covering some of the tables in the summer. Dogs are allowed if on a leash. The City of Hamilton owns and maintains the park.

Vester Wilson Athletic Field. The Hamilton Athletic Ball Field was renamed in memory of Vester Wilson on April 25, 2001, and is located on Taulman Lane just east of Hamilton. There are three fields located at the baseball park. The large field is utilized by the Jr. Babe Ruth, American Legion, and the Men's Bitterroot Baseball Leagues. The two smaller fields are utilized by the t-ball, rookie, minor, and major leagues. The facility includes a concession stand and restrooms. Parking is limited.

Neighborhood Parks

Antigone Acres "A". Antigone Acres "A" is a County-owned one half-acre parcel in the Antigone Acres Subdivision off Golf Course Road. This property is undeveloped with a small pond and a few trees. The Homeowners' Association mows the property.

Antigone Acres "B". Antigone Acres "B" is a County-owned two-acre parcel in the Antigone Acres Subdivision off Golf Course Road. This property is undeveloped with a small stream, large grassy area and no parking access. The homeowners in the area maintain the property.

Canyon Creek Heights. Canyon Creek Heights is an undeveloped three-acre parcel owned by Ravalli County. There are trees, a creek and a dedicated road easement in the park. The park is west of Hamilton off of West Bridge Road.

Daly Elementary School. The school district grounds located on Daly Ave, east of Hamilton, contain twenty one acres, and include a playground area, play equipment and open turf areas that get heavy use for soccer. It serves as an important recreation site for nearby residents.

Grantsdale Elementary School. The school district grounds, which consist of approximately five acres are located in the Grantsdale community and contain a playground area, play equipment, and garden area. It serves as an important recreation site for nearby residents.

Haines Athletic Fields. The school district grounds contain a track, football field, a practice football field and softball fields, which also serves as a large open turf area. The property is approximately fifteen acres and is adjacent to the old Westview Jr. High School, which has basketball courts and tennis courts. Both serve as an important recreation site for nearby residents.

Hamilton High School. The school district grounds located east of Hamilton contain baseball and softball fields with dugouts and open areas to the south of the school on Kurtz Lane and consist of sixty-seven acres.

Hamilton Middle School. The school district grounds are three acres and located on South Fifth Street. There are basketball courts and a grassy area in front of the school. It serves as an important recreation site for children in the area.

Heritage Park. Heritage Park has two common areas owned by the Heritage Homeowners' Association. Both parcels are approximately one acre in size and are located within the subdivision off Fairgrounds Road.

Hillcrest #3. Hillcrest #3 is an undeveloped open grassy field that is approximately two acres and owned by Ravalli County. The property is located south of Hamilton off Golf Course Road.

Pathfinder Subdivision. Pathfinder Subdivision is a public park owned by Ravalli County that consists of approximately three acres in size with Skalkaho Creek running through it. The property has many trees and good potential, but it is currently undeveloped and inundated with weeds.

Steve Powell Park. Hamilton City Park. Twenty-two acres of undeveloped park on the east bank of the Bitterroot River. The Park has a walking-biking trail and a bridge across the Corvallis Canal.

Stonegate Park. Stonegate Park is a one and three quarter acre common area that is adjacent to Fairgrounds Road east of Hamilton. The park has a basketball court, play equipment, trees and a nicely mowed and maintained grass area. The property is owned and maintained by the Stonegate Homeowners' Association.

Washington Elementary School. The school district grounds are two acres located on North Fifth Street and contain a playground area and new play equipment. It serves as an important recreation site for nearby residents.

Weber Estates. Weber Estates is a private seven and one half acre undeveloped parcel that is mostly hillside with wetlands at the bottom located within the subdivision off Golf Course Road.

Pocket Parks

Harris Homes. Harris Homes is a one half-acre private park that is well maintained by the neighbors located off South Cooper Lane.

Hillcrest #1. Hillcrest #1 is an undeveloped public park owned by Ravalli County. It is a triangular piece that is approximately one quarter of an acre in size and sits between Hillcrest Dr, Park Ave and West Summit Blvd located south of Hamilton off Golf Course Road.

Sawtooth Creek Ranch. Sawtooth Creek Ranch is an undeveloped one half-acre parcel owned by Ravalli County that is heavily forested with rocky knobs. The property is located off Owings Creek Road west of Hamilton.

Trails

Hamilton Walkway/Bike Path. This asphalt pathway winds along the west side of US Highway 93 from Hamilton south to the Anglers Roost Bridge and is commonly used by walkers, skaters and cyclists. The property is owned and maintained by Montana Department of Transportation.

Other Recreation Areas

Demmons (Main Street Bridge) Fishing Access. This recreational area is located just west of Hamilton along the Bitterroot River on Main Street and is commonly used for swimming, innertubing, fishing, kayaking, canoeing and rafting. The facility is day-use only and has no trailer access or bathroom facilities. The area is owned and maintained by the Department of Fish Wildlife & Parks.

Anglers Roost Fishing Access. This recreational area is located south of Hamilton just west of US Highway 93 along the Bitterroot River. This access is commonly used for picnicking, swimming, innertubing, fishing, kayaking, canoeing and rafting. The access has camping and restroom facilities located on site at the Anglers Roost campground. The campground is privately owned.

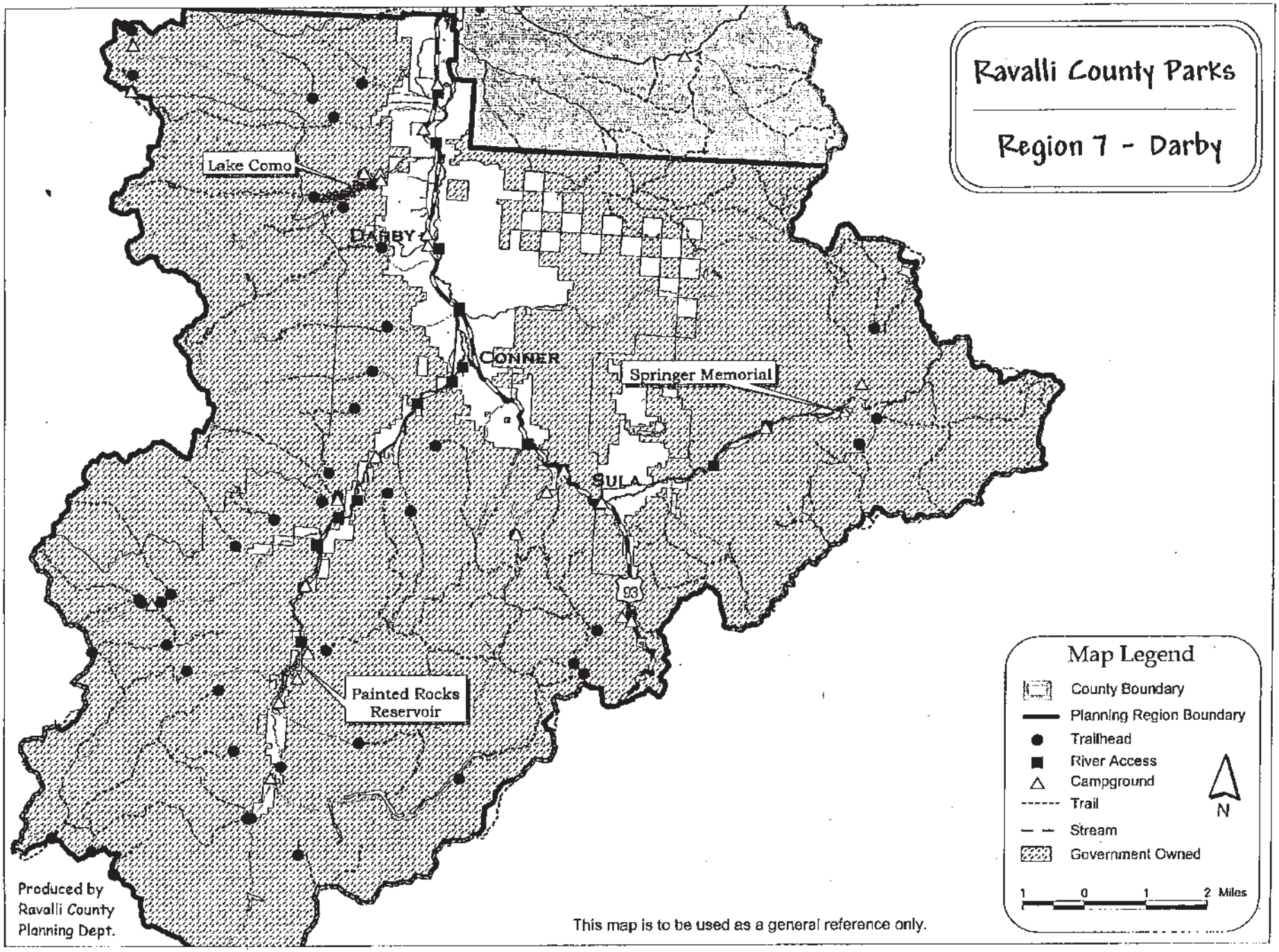
DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

Whereas the County holds responsibility for County parklands, it can also assist with development and maintenance of recreation areas managed by other organizations. The best way to further improve the area's parks is for the County and those organizations to solidify and strengthen their partnerships. The County will continue to offer limited financial and professional support to organizations willing to provide labor and share in capital expenses to develop and maintain the parks

Specific groups that could help in park development and maintenance include homeowner associations, park and recreation associations, baseball associations, Veterans groups, women's clubs, Hamilton School District and the City of Hamilton.

Ravalli County Park District #2 also uses funding from mills levied against property for the purpose of park development and maintenance.

Region 7 – Darby



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Region 7 – Darby

REGION DESCRIPTION

With only 11% of its land base in private hands, the Darby Region boasts a federally managed recreation oriented development pattern. While home sites abound, the demand for these homes is not generated by commuters to urban areas, but rather by those looking for seclusion and recreation. The former land base for timber management operations has been largely replaced by the small, but growing, service oriented incorporated Town of Darby. Virtually the entire west, south and east portions of the valley are federally or state controlled lands.

General growth in the region is expected to be residential in nature, with little demand for urban-oriented activities outside the Darby town limits other than the occasional tourism-oriented development. Conner and Sula, unincorporated communities south of Darby, will experience limited growth, but the primary demand seems to remain in rural areas. The Lost Trail Ski area on the southern-most boundary of Ravalli County will continue to attract day users.

PARKS AND RECREATION AVAILABLE

Community Parks

Rodeo Grounds Park. The Rodeo Grounds Park is a public five-acre parcel with pasture, stock water and portable restroom facilities located in the Town of Darby just west of US Highway 93. The Town of Darby is planning a skate board area in this location for the future. The park is owned and maintained by the Town of Darby.

Neighborhood Parks

Darby School. The school district grounds located just west of US Highway 93 on School Drive in the Town of Darby contain a playground area, play equipment, track and football fields, baseball fields, concession stands and open turf areas. It serves as an important recreation site for nearby residents.

Main Street Park. Main Street Park is a 90 by 120 foot public parcel owned by the Town of Darby and is located in downtown Darby. There are shade trees, playground equipment, benches and tables. Restrooms are available at the town hall when open.

River Park. River Park is a gated five-acre undeveloped parcel that has river access; although, the property was previously used as a dump and is currently inundated with weeds and junk.

Waincrist Meadows. Waincrist Meadows owned by Ravalli County is a one-acre public park in the Town of Darby that is partially developed with a gazebo, swings, trees, picnic tables and restrooms.

Pocket Parks

Darby South Park. Darby South Park is a small one quarter acre park with swings and picnic tables.

Tin Cup Park. Tin Cup Park located on Tin Cup Road just west of US Highway 93 is approximately one acre of grassy area with trees, picnic tables, and two fire pits. The park is owned and maintained by the Town of Darby.

Other Recreation Areas

Darby Bridge Fishing Access. This recreational area is currently undeveloped, but there are plans to develop it in the near future. The access is west of Darby along the Bitterroot River and is commonly used for swimming, innertubing, fishing, kayaking, canoeing and rafting. The area is owned and maintained by the Department of Fish Wildlife & Parks.

Wally Crawford Fishing Access. This recreational area consists of approximately two acres and is south of Hamilton along the Bitterroot River. It is commonly used for swimming, innertubing, fishing, kayaking, canoeing and rafting. A boat launch and bathroom facility is located on site. The area is day use only. The area is owned and maintained by the Department of Fish Wildlife & Parks.

Hannon Memorial Fishing Access. This recreational area consists of approximately fifty-eight acres and is south of Darby along the Bitterroot River. It is commonly used for swimming, innertubing, fishing, kayaking, canoeing, camping and rafting. A trailer access, bathroom and camping facilities are located on site. The area is owned and maintained by the Department of Fish Wildlife & Parks.

DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

Whereas the County holds responsibility for County parklands, it can also assist with development and maintenance of recreation areas managed by other organizations. The best way to further improve the area's parks is for the County and those organizations to solidify and strengthen their partnerships. The County will continue to offer limited financial and professional support to organizations willing to provide labor and share in capital expenses to develop and maintain the parks.

Specific groups that could help in park development and maintenance include homeowner associations, park and recreation associations, baseball associations, Veterans groups, Darby School District, the Town of Darby and the Bitterroot National Forest.

Implementation

Parkland Acquisition and the Subdivision Process

INTRODUCTION

Most parkland is dedicated during the subdivision of residential lands, as required by state law. While the specific requirements of these laws are subject to changes, there are several basic principals that will likely remain into at least the near future and around which policies can be shaped. The six basic policies discussed here are:

1) Accepting cash in lieu of parkland;
2) Dedicating land as common area instead of County parkland;
3) Protecting conservation lands by means other than acquisition;
4) Tracking parklands; and,
5) Acquiring suitable types of parks and conservation lands.

1) CASH IN LIEU OF PARKLAND

Current Montana Law (MCA 76-3-621) allows the Board of County Commissioners, in consultation with a subdivider and the Park Board, to determine whether the required dedication of parkland required by subdivision review will be land, cash, or a combination of the two. The amount of cash required is the fair market value of the unsubdivided, unimproved land that would have been dedicated.

On a case-by-case basis, the following criteria may be used to determine whether cash is a more appropriate donation than land:

Need for recreation land. In any planning region where the need for additional pocket, neighborhood, or community parkland is identified by this plan, or as a result of the proposed subdivision, land should be dedicated. Even if the size or location of the proposed dedication is not ideal for the type of parkland most needed, the dedicated park could potentially be used in future land exchanges. These exchanges would be used to obtain the lands best suited for park development and to facilitate trail connections (see policy entitled "Exchanging Parklands")

Conservation value. The conservation values of the land being subdivided should be examined. If the land has significant value in its natural state, or can be returned to a natural state that would provide value, then that land should be accepted as a parkland donation.

If these two criteria are not substantially met, or if other unforeseen opportunities arise, then cash in lieu of parkland is the appropriate type of donation.

2) DEDICATION AS COMMON AREA OR COUNTY PARK

If a parcel is set aside for parkland, the Ravalli County Subdivision Regulations allow the land set aside to be transferred to the homeowners' association as common area or dedicated to the County as parkland. There are positive and negative aspects about each choice. Each dedication will be evaluated on an individual basis, based on the following criteria:

Community value. Determination of the ownership of the park should consider the park's value to residents of the subdivision against the needs of the community, region or neighborhood. If the land is suitable for a community or neighborhood park, a non-motorized linkage to other parks or infrastructure, a parcel for future land exchange, or has valuable natural resources, it should be dedicated to the County. Parks that do or could provide potential trail linkages may be dedicated as common areas if, at a minimum, a public walkway easement is provided through the parcel.

Percentage of existing common areas. In some areas, most parkland is owned by homeowners' associations as a common area. This results in the exclusion of the general public from these lands and hinders the County in shaping a parks system, although there are times when common areas are appropriate. In areas where the County owns few parks and a need is indicated for parkland, the land should be dedicated to the county.

3) PROTECTING CONSERVATION LANDS

One way to conserve large tracts of ecologically important land is through conservation easements. A conservation easement leaves a parcel of land in private ownership but limits use of that land. A private or public organization will assist the owner by holding an easement, which may limit some rights to develop or harvest timber, mine, or otherwise use the land in a way that will harm the natural values identified for protection. Conservation easements have the following advantages over public ownership: the organization protects and manages the lands in cooperation with the land owner, the damage to the resource caused by large-scale public recreation on the lands is avoided, and the land remains on the tax rolls.

The Park Board, as one of the only County entities in a position to protect large tracts of privately owned sensitive lands, encourages the use of conservation easements. While the Park Board will not hold easements, it could help defray easement acquisition costs. Private land trusts, such as the Bitter Root Land Trust, or other organizations would then administer the easement.

4) TRACKING PARKLANDS

The Park Board continues to develop and maintain a comprehensive inventory of all parklands in the County. This inventory describes park size, facilities available, other characteristics, and location for each park. The inventory is updated to reflect changing conditions and the ongoing inventory process as staff time permits.

5) AQUIRING SUITABLE TYPES OF PARKLANDS

Current state law (MCA 76-3-621) gives the Board of County Commissioners the power to choose suitable locations for parks after consultation with the Park Board and subdivider. This Recreation Master Plan helps provide a means for initiating consultation with the Park Board.

Parkland acquisition or protection, through the subdivision dedication process, purchase, or land exchange, is a critical component of an effective parks system. Without appropriate land, it is difficult to provide the recreational opportunities and experiences required by County residents or to adequately protect important natural resources.

The County must thoughtfully consider each acquisition. The following questions help evaluate potential acquisitions, and are based upon the land's general location (rural or urban) and its classification. A proposed acquisition need not meet all listed questions to be acceptable. This list is meant to provide guidelines for making educated choices, and does not address all criteria, which might be evaluated for each park acquisition.

Preliminary Planning

Before the proposed site is evaluated, the following steps should be taken:

1. Determine the type of park most needed in the area (conservation, community, neighborhood, pocket or regional).

2. Determine the type of park (conservation, community, neighborhood, pocket or regional) the parcel would become.

3. Complete a site inventory.

Acquisition Criteria for Recreation Parks

If the parcel is intended to become a recreation park, it should provide a benefit to the area. The questions below can help determine the value of the parcel.

Basic Attributes

1. Is the land of an appropriate size and shape?

2. Is the character of the land (topography, drainage, soils, etc.) appropriate?

3. Does the land have inherent economic value comparable to the lands adjoining it?

4. Is this land suitable, upon development, to provide the recreation experiences needed in the area?

5. Would the use of this land (as guided by its classification) harm the natural environment?

Location

1. Is the land in an appropriate location?

2. Would this land contribute to the equitable distribution of parks in the planning region?

3. Is the land adjacent to other public agency sites?

Access

1. After dedication, would this land, upon casual observation, be easily identifiable as a public park?

2. Will the land be appropriately accessible to the public?

Developments

1. Is the necessary infrastructure (utilities, access, etc.) available in the appropriate form and at the scale needed?

2. Is the land free of infrastructure (high-tension power lines, sewage lagoons, etc.) that would limit appropriate park uses?

3. Is the land free of easements (drainage, effluent disposal, mineral extraction, motorized access, etc.) that would limit appropriate park uses?

4. Does the land have any special cultural or historical significance?

Hazards and Costs

1. Are there physical hazards, limitations or restrictions that would hinder the intended use of the land?

2. Would the benefits offered by this land outweigh the potential liabilities?

3. Would the benefits offered by this land outweigh foreseeable maintenance costs?

Contribution to the Park System

1. Does the land complement other nearby parklands?

2. Does the land serve as a linkage or corridor to other parklands?

3. Do non-motorized travel-ways exist between this park and residences, schools, and other parks and open space?

Harmonious Existence with Built Environment

1. Would the use of this land (as guided by its classification) conflict with adjacent land uses?

2. Do adjacent land use conflict with the intended use of this park?

Acquisition Criteria for Conservation Parks

If the parcel is intended to become a conservation park, it should provide for protection of important natural resources. The questions below can help determine the value of the parcel.

Physical Landform

1. Does the land contain a riparian or other wetland area?

2. Does the land contain unique geomorphic features?

3. Is the landform essentially in its natural state, or can it be returned to such a state?

Location

1. Is the land in an appropriate location?

2. Would this land contribute to the equitable distribution of parks in the planning region?

3. Is the land adjacent to other public agency sites?

Flora and Fauna

1. Does the land serve an important biological purpose in the area?

2. Is the majority of the vegetation native to the area or can it be returned to the area?

3. Is the habitat unique to the area?

4. Is/Are there a diversity of plant species on the site?

5. Are/Is there a diversity of animal species on the site?

6. Is the land of sufficient size and of high enough quality to provide self-sustaining habitat for species of limited mobility?

7. Does the land provide for wildlife linkages to other seasonal habitats?

8. Do any sensitive or rare plant or animal species live on or use this land?

9. Does the land buffer adjacent lands that contain sensitive or rare plants or animals?

10. Is the habitat largely unaltered from its natural state, or can it be restored to such a state?

Human Uses

1. Will human use of this land harm the natural resources?

2. If the land is intended to serve as a non-motorized linkage to other areas, is it suitable for such a purpose?

3. Does the land provide educational opportunities?

4. Is the land threatened by other uses?

Contribution to the Conservation Land System

1. Is the land in an area identified as having important resources?

2. Does the land link other conservation lands?

3. Does the land contribute to the diversity of conservation lands in the area?

Harmonious Existence with Built Environment

1. Does (or will) adjacent land uses degrade the naturalness of the land?

2. Will it be possible to control exotic plants, domestic animals, and other threats?

Developing and Maintaining Recreation and Conservation Parks

INTRODUCTION

While a framework for managing parks has been provided, a specific needs within each region must be identified and a policy is needed to meet those needs. Issues discussed below are:

1. Local-County partnerships;
2. Contractual agreements;
3. Development and maintenance priorities;
4. Equitable distribution of Park Board funding throughout the County;
5. Noxious weed management.

LOCAL – COUNTY PARTNERSHIPS

Given Ravalli County's large geographic area and dispersed population, having a centralized Park Department performing park development and routine maintenance could be inefficient, ineffective, and very complex. Instead, the Park Board has forged partnerships with local organizations, neighborhood associations, and schools interested in quality parks to secure and maintain parkland throughout Ravalli County.

In many of these partnerships, the County provides parkland, professional planning assistance, and some degree of funding. In turn, local organizations provide matching development funds in cash, donated materials, volunteer labor, and by agreeing to maintain the park. In some instances, especially in regions where there is little County parkland, the local organizations provide the land in the form of common areas, school lands, or private parcels. In these instances, the land will be accessible to the general public if the County has provided assistance and matching funds.

The Ravalli County Park Board may support other providers of recreation opportunities through land and/or cost share of capital improvements.

These partnerships do not end with the completion of initial development and the disbursement of Park Board funds. Rather, relationships are built with organizations and communities to monitor the state of the parks, provide technical and professional assistance with park issues such as maintenance,

vandalism, future planning, etc., and to reassess park needs as communities grow or change.

CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENTS

Some park developments and maintenance is beyond the abilities of local organizations and must be performed by skilled and organized professionals. Contracts may include well digging, electrical or plumbing installation, timber harvesting, landscaping, surveying, architectural drawings, or heavy equipment use.

The Park Board will support these contractual agreements to the extent that they meet the goals and criteria identified in this plan.

DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE PRIORITIES

Although the matching-funds programs have been very successful, the Park Board lacks funding to develop and maintain all parklands in the County. The only source of funds has been cash in lieu of parks when property is subdivided. State Law provides for mills for Park Boards, which may be used in the future as demand increases.

Development and maintenance of only one or two parks can often put a drain on a community or neighborhood resources. For these reasons, the Park Board has prioritized its funding based upon the class of parks and the type of project. Each region may have different needs that may not always follow these priorities. However, if projects from the same region compete for funds, preference will be given to the project that fulfills the Park Board's priorities.

Classes of Parks

The following classes of parks will receive development and maintenance priorities in Ravalli County.

1. Development and maintenance of one regional park to provide a wide range of recreational opportunities including a major sports park for all of Ravalli County.

2. Development and maintenance of neighborhood parks.

3. Maintenance and restoration of conservation parks.

4. Limit Exposure to pocket parks. Pocket parks should be the responsibility of subdivision homeowners.

Types of Parks

The types of projects funded are as important as the classes of the parks in which they are completed. Routine maintenance and upkeep of parks is difficult for organizations. It is easier to recruit volunteers or solicit donations for major facility improvements than it is to get assistance with grass cutting, tree irrigation, or other basic upkeep. The Park Board will, therefore, provide the greatest incentives to projects that deal with basic maintenance. When an organization has demonstrated that it can maintain the park in a quality condition, then the board will consider providing assistance with the construction of additional facilities.

Considering the individual needs of each park, proposed projects that substantially comply with the following criteria will have the highest priority. The criteria are listed in no particular order.

- Supported by additional funding from other agencies or organizations.
- Have a guaranteed source of continued funding if needed for the project.
- Increase disabled access.
- Provide additional recreation opportunities, as identified by citizen feedback, in the region, area or neighborhood.
- Increase the quality and/or amount of natural habitat.
- Involve extensive community or neighborhood participation and support.
- Reduce or minimize the County's liability.
- Require low maintenance.

EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF PARK BOARD FUNDS

The Park Board is concerned that funds are distributed equitably through the County. The following factors listed will be considered in this distribution:

- The need for park improvement or maintenance as partially reflected by subdivision activity in the region or area.
- The amount of funding recently allocated to the region or area by the Park Board.
- The length of time the neighborhood or community has had an unfulfilled need for park opportunities.
- The population served by recreational improvements (improvements to conservation lands serve the interests of the entire county).

NOXIOUS WEED MANAGEMENT

Eliminating noxious weeds on County lands and in other parklands is a high priority of the Park Board. Developing a weed management policy is beyond the scope of this plan, but the Park Board will work with the County Weed Board to develop a management plan, as many complex issues must be carefully considered. Future development of such a policy will help the Board best consider alternatives for individual sites.

Naming County Parks, Recognizing Donors, and Placing Memorials

INTRODUCTION

County Parks, as public spaces, are named. These names are either formally recognized by signs, exist with a locally known name, or some combination of the two. Park signs or plaques can serve to recognize important donors to the park's development or maintenance, or to memorialize an important member of the community.

NAMING COUNTY PARKS

Every park does not require a sign indicating its name. Signs can impress a feeling of formality, which may not be appropriate for every park. Signed names are appropriate at community parks, and may be appropriate at some neighborhood and pocket parks, or when there is a special need to identify the park as public land.

The Park Board has authority to name County parks, giving deference to the wishes of those developing the park, and/or to local residents. The guidelines below suggest ways of choosing names for placement on signs or for internal reference:

- Community's name (for community parks).
- Significant local geographical feature.
- Name of a prominent historical resident, interest, or event.
- Name of an organization that has developed and/or maintains the park.
- Name of the neighborhood or subdivision (for neighborhood parks)
- Name of an adjacent school.

RECOGNIZING DONORS

Ravalli County is generally able to contribute only a small share of the money and time needed for park development. Local organizations, residents, and businesses, who provide assistance, should be recognized. While the Park Board does not permit advertising in County parks, it recognizes proper recognition of donors, which the following guidelines help to address.

- If a number of donors are recognized for general park improvements and maintenance, one sign should be used.

- Any sign recognizing multiple donors should be of a similar size and shape as a sign that names a park or posts regulations.

- Signs recognizing donors should not be brightly colored and should not include business logos.

- Contribution meriting signed recognition will be recommended by those developing the park.

- Donors of specific facilities or structures (such as benches, water fountains, etc.) can be identified, if desired, by a small, unobtrusive plaque or engraving on or near the structure. This identification should not be brightly colored and should not include business logos. Standard specifications for the signs will be set by the Park Board. These plaques would recognize contribution for facilities added after the park has been established.

Park Board assistance with development of parks other than those owned by the County should be recognized in an appropriate manner.

PLACING MEMORIALS

Parks are visible, appropriate places to memorialize deceased citizens who have given special service to the community. Deciding whom to memorialize, and how to do so, requires serious consideration and reflection and should be guided by the following:

- A person who dies while performing a public service should receive priority for memorialization.

- Persons who have contributed exceptional services to their community should be memorialized.

- It is not recommended to change the name of an established park. New parks, which are named after a person, should be maintained in an acceptable fashion.

- Trees or benches, accompanied by a small plaque, are ways to memorialize a person within a park.

Potential Funding Sources

INTRODUCTION

To meet the park needs identified in this plan, adequate funds must be available. These funds may be obtained from a number of different sources, some of which may be more reliable and/or desirable than others. The Park Board encourages reliance on a diversity of funding sources.

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

Property Taxes. The Park Board's greatest potential source of funding is from County property taxes. This funding level fluctuates depending upon the number of mils allocated and the total assessed property value. Although there are currently no mills allocated to the Ravalli County Park Board Fund, the Board of County Commissioners have the authority to levy taxes up to two mills for Parklands so long as it is under the County spending cap.

Cash-in-Lieu of Park Dedication. Cash received in lieu of parkland dedication in the subdivision process is another large revenue source. The amount of money received each year can vary and is dependent upon several factors: the amount of land subdivided in the County, the value of land, and the state law that stipulates the amount of parkland required. As discussed elsewhere, accepting cash-in-lieu of parkland may cost County residents more in the long-term to later purchase parklands. Cash can be used for acquisition and capital improvements and for park maintenance. Cash-in-Lieu funds are limited by the fact that no more than 50% of the dedicated money can be utilized for park maintenance in accordance with state law. Cash in Lieu funds from 2009 to 2014 average $18,285.

Leases. The Park Board could receive funds from leasing of parkland or other land used for recreational purposes. Leasing parklands for non-recreational purposes can also be a revenue source; however, this will be done only when there is no immediate recreational or conservation demand for the land (see "Leasing Parklands").

Cooperative Agreements. Many public and private agencies share an interest in community park and conservation land projects. Cooperation in acquisition of funding can enhance the Park Board's budget. Cooperative agreements will be explored with the incorporated communities of Darby, Hamilton, Pinesdale, and Stevensville and the unincorporated communities of Conner, Corvallis, Florence, and Sula, the U.S. Forest Service, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Bureau of Land Management, Department of State Lands, and Montana Historical Society.

Grants. Occasionally federal or state grants are available for park acquisition or development. Applying for grants can be complex and time-consuming. The Park Board's best opportunity for obtaining this type of funding is to work with a professional grant writer.

Park Districts. A park district is an area (a neighborhood, community, or region) in which mils are levied against property for the purpose of park development and maintenance in that area. Funds are controlled by a locally elected Park District Board. A park district can be proposed either by petition or by the Board of County Commissioners, and must be approved by a majority of voters in the proposed district. A ceiling on the number of mils to be levied may be proposed during the vote.

The Park Board does not initiate the proposal of park districts to the Board of County Commissioners. However, if local residents are interested in forming such a district, the Park Board will provide professional assistance. Park Districts currently exist in Florence, Hamilton (Bitterroot Aquatic Center, Park District #2), Lone Rock (Ravalli County Park – Lone Rock Division), Stevi-West and Victor.

Bond Issues. Bond issues provide one-time funding for park development and maintenance by assessing a property tax. Bonds must be approved by a majority of voters.

User Fees. Park user fees ensure that those who benefit directly from parks pay more for their upkeep. User fees can be controversial, and can have positive and negative impacts on the community. User fees may also be implemented by individual Park District Boards. Considerable thought should be given before implementing user fees.

Advertising. Selling advertising space in County parks is discouraged. Parks are typically areas where one can escape the omnipresent marketing found in other public places.

Clearing Encroachments on County Parklands

INTRODUCTION

Many County parks are accessed by narrow walkways between developed housing lots. Also, parks are sometimes situated amongst lots in a fashion that does not clearly delineate their boundaries, making it difficult to discern these parks from adjacent private property. Some people may feel they cannot use these parks because of the "private" nature of the land. The lack of distinction between County parkland and private property seems to have several causes:

1. **Barricading of access.** Some access points and parks have been fenced and/or marked as private property.

2. **Storage or other inappropriate use.** This encroachment is usually in the form of woodpiles, parked vehicles or boats, or other storage.

3. **Lack of a visual boundary between parks and private property.** Some adjacent landowners maintain the parkland as they do their own property, usually in the form of mowed, irrigated turf grass. Sometimes there is no fence line, shrub line, or other delineation of the property boundaries. This can cause the parkland to appear to be private property.

While removing encroachments from public land is necessary, two factors should be considered: government interference with private property, even when the property illegally resides on public land, is a sensitive issue; and, some encroachments are more harmful than others. With these issues in mind, the following policies and assistance from the County Attorney will help remove encroachments from County parkland.

CLEARING ENCROACHMENTS

Parks on which there is encroachment will be identified through use of the Parklands Inventory and Classification, by visiting parks, and/or receiving complaints from the public. Three steps will occur before initiating formal action:

1. A thorough check to determine that the land is County owned parkland, and that no easements/leases exist that would allow the encroachment in question.

2. A visual inspection and photographic document of the park to determine if the encroachment indeed exists.

3. A determination as to the severity of encroachment and the immediacy of response needed.

The actions required are obviously quite different for each situation. General plans for removing encroachments are outlined below.

Barricading of Access

A few landowners have barricaded public access to County parkland by means of fences. These landowners may or may not be aware of the boundaries of the parkland. In either case, such hindrance of public access to public lands is unacceptable. After all steps have been taken to determine that the land is in fact owned by the County, and that the landowner does not have a legal right to barricade access, the following steps should be taken to remove the barricade.

1. Personally meet with the appropriate landowner.

2. Send a certified letter from the Park Board to the appropriate landowner(s). This letter will:
    - Inform of the location of the park in question (and show the boundaries of the park on a map).
    - Inform that barricading public access to the park is illegal.
    - Request meeting with landowner.
    - If the meeting does not result in a viable solution the Park Board may request that the landowner, within thirty days of receipt of the letter, remove the barricade and restore the property to a condition similar to that of the adjacent parkland.

3. Check for removal of the barricade after thirty days of receipt of the letter.

4. If the barricade has not been removed within thirty days, negotiate further with the landowner through the County Attorney's Office.

5. If the landowner does not remove the barricade, the County will have it removed, and the site restored. Costs may be billed to the appropriate landowner(s).

6. Design and place an appropriately sized sign that indicates the land is Ravalli County parkland.

Storage or Other Inappropriate Uses

Landowners who use adjacent parkland for storage or other personal use may be unaware that the land is in fact County-owned, or may simply find the land "convenient" for their uses. The following steps should be taken to clear these encroachments.

1. Personally meet with the appropriate landowner.

2. Send a certified letter from the Park Board to the landowner responsible for encroachment. This letter would:
    - Inform of the location of the park in question (and show the boundaries of the park on a map).
    - Inform that the Park Board feels this encroachment hinders public use of the park, and is illegal.
    - Request that the landowner, remove the encroachment within two weeks of receipt of the letter.

3. Check for removal of the encroachment after two weeks of receipt of the letter.

4. If the encroachment has not been removed within two weeks, telephone the owner responsible for encroachment.

5. If an agreement cannot be reached, then further legal actions should be pursued.

Lack of a Visual Boundary

Some landowners maintain County parkland in a manner similar to their own property (especially when the park is a narrow "trail" bordering their lot). While this maintenance is a benefit to the County, and certainly should not be discouraged, it sometimes makes the park appear to be private property (due to the lack of a visual border between the two properties). In this instance, the following steps should be taken to both encourage continued maintenance and to make the access and park boundaries more obvious to the public.

1. Send a letter from the Park Board to the landowner(s) adjoining the park and/or maintaining the park. This letter will:
    - Outline the location of the park in question (and show the boundaries of the park on a map).
    - Offer thanks and appreciation for maintaining the parkland and beautifying the neighborhood.

- State concern that the public may not realize the property is a park, and may thus be discouraged from using it.
- Offer to purchase low-maintenance landscaping materials (trees, shrubs, timbers, large rocks, etc.) for placement on the park to delineate the property boundary. These improvements could be installed/planted and maintained by the property owners currently maintaining the park, with Park Board funding when appropriate.

2. Meet with the landowners within 30 days after sending the letter. If one or more landowners are interested in the improvements, proceed with specific plans for the site. The landscaping design selected should be both low-maintenance and selected to fit the needs and character of the particular site and neighborhood.

3. If no landowners are interested in the improvements, consider placing an appropriate sign indicating the walkway and adjacent park is Ravalli County Parkland.

Leasing County Parklands

INTRODUCTION

While County parks are generally available for public use at no charge, there could be certain situations when leases for special uses or events are necessary, with the option of leasing parkland for just one day or an extended period of time. This could occur when one individual or group will receive much greater benefits from park usage than would the general public, and the general public has no immediate interest in the land.

TYPES OF LEASES

The following policies will guide the Park Board in granting leases for County parks. These policies differ if the proposed purpose of lease is for an optimal recreational use, is for non-optimal recreational use, or is for non-recreational use.

Recreational Uses

The Park Board should first determine if the proposed lease or special permit for recreational use would provide for the optimal use of the park. The determination can be guided by this plan, public comment, and staff assistance. If, after this guidance, uncertainty exists, then the use should be considered non-optimal. Different policies exist for optimal and non-optimal recreational uses.

Optimal uses

- The Park Board will consider incentives to the lessee to develop and maintain the land as proposed.
- The Park Board will consider a lease or permit for a length of time most desirable to the lessee.
- The land will be leased for a minimal fee to non-profit organizations. A fair rental amount will be charged to for-profit organizations.
- The lessee must have insurance that removes all liability from the County.
- A public hearing by the Park Board and the Board of County Commissioners must be held before any lease or permit is granted. Public comments will be taken regarding the above issues and any other relevant concerns.

- If the lease or permit is allowed to expire, the land must be reclaimed to its previous condition by the lessee at his/her expense prior to the end of the lease unless other arrangements are made with the Park Board.

Non-Optimal uses

- The proposed use must not substantially alter the landscape, nor may it harm the natural environment.

- The lease or permit must be proposed for renewal every year. If an optimal use of the land is proposed at a later date, then the lease for the non-optimal use will not be renewed.

- After the lease or permit expires, and is not renewed by decision of either party, the land must be reclaimed to its previous condition.

- The land will be leased for a minimal fee to non-profit organizations. A fair rental amount will be charged to for-profit organizations.

- The lessee must have insurance that removes all liability from the County.

- A public hearing with the Park Board must be held before any lease or permit is granted, and public comments taken regarding the above issues and any other relevant concerns.

Non-Recreational Uses

For all non-recreational uses, the following criteria should be met before granting a lease or special use permit:

- The proposed use must not interfere with a public interest in the land.

- The proposed use must not substantially alter the landscape or harm the natural environment.

- The lease or permit must be proposed for renewal every year. If an optimal use of the land is proposed at a later date, then the lease for the non-optimal use will not be renewed.

- If the lease or permit is allowed to expire, the land must be reclaimed to its previous condition by the lessee at his/her expense prior to the end of the lease unless other arrangements are made with the Park Board.

- The Park Board will charge fair-market value for the lease or permit. Revenue will be used for park planning, development, maintenance, or acquisition in the planning region where the funds are generated.

- The lessee must have insurance that removes all liability from the County.
- A public hearing with the Park Board must be held before any lease or permit is granted, and public comments taken regarding the above issues and any other relevant concerns.

Non-permitted Uses

For policies regarding non-permitted and undesirable uses of parkland, refer to the policy entitled “Clearing Encroachments on County Parks”.

Selling County Parklands

INTRODUCTION

Selling of dedicated County parklands is, rightly so, a difficult, intensive, and expensive process. However, there are instances where the sale of such parklands may be desirable. It is important to have a countywide policy to objectively determine the desirability or need for the sale of parkland.

SALE PROCEDURES

Ravalli County may attempt to sell parks individually or as a group. For any parks considered for sale, the following criteria will be considered:

1. **Lack of Conservation Value.** In the judgment of the Park Board, the park must hold no viable conservation value, and should be generally incapable of supporting flora or fauna important to the area.

2. **Lack of Recreation Value.** In the judgment of the Park Board, the park must hold little or no recreation or potential recreation value. Factors to consider include its use or potential use (even into the distant future) as: an active or passive recreation area, a trail, visual open space, or a noise or dust buffer from roads or other intensive land uses.

3. **Liability.** The park's cost (both in maintenance and in potential liability) must outweigh the benefit it provides or may provide to County residents.

4. **Local Support.** Residents in the park's immediate vicinity (as defined on a case by case basis) should be supportive of sale.

5. **Cost.** The value obtained from the sale, added to the projected long-term savings of not owning the parcel, must exceed the cost of disposing of the parcel.

The County Park Board does not have authority to sell park property. If the park in question meets the above criteria, then the Park Board will recommend that the Board of County Commissioners sell the land. If the Commissioners choose to sell the land, they will do so as dictated by Montana Code Annotated and other applicable statutes.

Exchanging County Parks For Other Lands

INTRODUCTION

It may sometimes be desirous to exchange County parklands for other lands to be used as parks. While a number of reasons may exist for exchanging parklands, the tool is probably best utilized for purposes of parkland consolidation.

The County acquires most parklands through the subdivision process. Consequently, due to parkland dedication laws, many of these lands are small in size (often less than one acre) and are best suited for pocket parks. While pocket parks are an important part of community park systems, they do not provide the opportunities presented by larger acreages.

It may be desirable, in neighborhoods or communities with an overabundance of pocket parks and a shortage of neighborhood or community parks, to exchange pocket parklands for more desirable parcels. Specifically, several small parcels could be exchanged for a larger parcel that would be used as a neighborhood or community park.

This same concept could be used for consolidating small parks into one larger conservation or active recreation park that would better protect sensitive lands or provide organized recreation opportunities.

EXCHANGE PROCEDURES

For any parks considered for exchange, the following criteria should be met.

1. **Net Gain in Opportunities.** In the opinion of the Park Board, the new land to be acquired should provide for more recreational opportunities or conservation values than those which will be lost from the lands given up. A general utilization plan for the new park should be developed to help determine this.

2. **Local Support.** Residents within one hundred fifty feet of the parkland must be supportive of the exchange. If more than 25% of the residents affected by the exchange protest the sale, the proposal will be dropped and not revisited until deemed appropriate.

The County Park Board does not have authority to exchange park property. If the proposal meets the above criteria, then the Park Board will recommend that the Board of County Commissioners commence with the exchange. If the

Commissioners choose to exchange the lands, they will do so as dictated by Montana Code Annotated and other applicable statutes.

Outside Influences on Parks and Conservation Lands

INTRODUCTION

The Park Board recognizes that many actions other than its own will shape park and conservation lands in Ravalli County. Being aware of these outside forces can help the Park Board plan and manage county lands. These influences are described below.

OUTSIDE INFLUENCES

State Subdivision Regulations. The primary way in which parkland is dedicated is through the subdivision process; the specifics of these dedications are detailed by state law. The Park Board will try to influence, in an appropriate manner, such legislation to best meet the needs of Ravalli County.

Rate of Growth. While population growth will usually create more parks, it will also create additional demands on existing parks until the new ones are developed. Stable or decreasing population will not result in additional parks and may cause a smaller budget, but may also allow the Park Board to focus its efforts on further developing existing parks.

Threats to Conservation Lands. Many lands in private ownership provide excellent ecological values. The degree of threat to those lands will influence the Park Board's urgency in permanently protecting them through conservation easements or cooperative management agreements.

Public's Recreation Preferences. The public's recreation preferences can and do vary as demographics change, communities grow or shrink, or fads come and go. The Park Board will be flexible when identifying and meeting changing needs, while keeping in mind the larger goal of long-term efficiency.

Budget. The Park Board's funding comes from cash-in-lieu payments in the subdivision process and from lease fees.

Local Interest and Resources. The foundation of the County park system rests on local organizations which perform on-site park management and which dedicate many dollars, materials, and hours of labor. The amount of local interest in parks, and the amount of local resources available to manage them, will have a great effect on the quality of the park system.

Ravalli County Growth Policy. Ravalli County does not currently have a Growth Policy.

Implementation Schedule

The following are goals for the next several years, contingent upon adequate funding being available.

Phase II

- Complete the master inventory of parklands available to the public and provide brochures and maps.
- Complete a detailed facility inventory for every park within Ravalli County.
- Conduct a needs assessment of park and recreation resources in each region.
- Identify other recreational opportunities not covered in plan.
- Sell or exchange unusable parklands.

Phase III

- Address park and recreation needs identified in Phase II for each region.
- Initiate park development projects for undeveloped and under developed parks.
- Coordinate with the County Noxious Weed Management Program to eradicate noxious weeds on County parklands.
- Complete an inventory of homeowners' association parkland.