

Monterey County

# Parks Department Strategic Plan

April 2015



*Includes*

**Vision**

**Mission**

**Guiding Principles**

**Goals**

**Measures of Success**

**Strategies**

**Park Profiles**



*Prepared for the County of Monterey Parks Department by Management Partners*



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# Introduction



This strategic plan sets forth a vision for County parks, the mission of the Parks Department, principles for guiding decisions, six broad multi-year goals, and strategies for achieving each of the goals. It is intended to serve as a roadmap for the department.

A Board of Supervisors Ad Hoc Committee, composed of Supervisors Simon Salinas and Dave Potter, was appointed to guide the process. Management Partners was engaged to assist the County of Monterey with the development of this strategic plan. Significant stakeholder engagement was part of the process, including an online park user survey, an employee focus group, many interviews, and discussions with the County Administrator's Office and Parks Department managers.

## The Monterey County Park System

The Monterey County Parks Department is comprised of eight parks that offer a variety of amenities, programs and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. They are described below.

- *The North County Parks* include Jacks Peak, Manzanita Park, Royal Oaks Park and Toro Park. The North County Parks are primarily day-use parks, offering a place for visitors to enjoy the outdoors and be active. In general, North County Parks have few revenue-supported operations and rely on contributions from the General Fund.





- ***South County*** has San Lorenzo Park, which offers educational programming about Monterey County's history as well as camping amenities. While this park has a number of revenue-supported programs, it relies primarily on the General Fund.
- ***The Laguna Seca Recreation Area*** includes Laguna Seca Park, Laguna Seca Track, and the Laguna Seca Rifle and Pistol Range. The entire recreation area offers a world-renowned racetrack, with County-managed camping amenities and a rifle range in close proximity. Although the rifle range is self-sustaining, the park and track operations have been less self-sufficient over time.
- ***The Lake Resort Parks*** include Lake Nacimiento and Lake San Antonio. Both lakes are funded through an enterprise fund. Although these operations are intended to be self-sustaining, both lakes have relied on General Fund contributions for ongoing support, especially in recent years as a result of the drought.

The County has recently acquired several park properties that were considered during the strategic planning process.

- ***New County Assets*** include Marks Ranch (which has been incorporated as part of Toro Park), Fort Ord, and East Garrison's Lincoln Park. These properties have recently been acquired by the County and are expected to be brought under Parks Department management in the next few years, adding operational responsibilities for the department.

*Individual Park Profiles:* The park profiles included in Attachment A provide a description of each park's amenities, strategic issues, a list of existing partnerships, and considerations for individual park management plans. As management plans for each park are developed, the park profiles will be a useful resource.



## Strategic Challenges

The Parks Department is facing significant financial and operational challenges. Decreasing revenues and increasing costs have limited the ability of the Parks Department to fully fulfill its stewardship of the County's park system. The drought has compounded problems of decreasing revenues because of the impacts on Lake San Antonio and Lake Nacimiento. Due to the challenges facing the Parks Department, the County will have difficult choices about what to fund, how to keep facilities open and with lower net costs, what fees will be charged, whether to keep all parks open or on a more limited schedule, how to support deferred needs, and how to reconcile competing interests among park users, stakeholders, and neighbors.

### *The two lakes are driving many of the Parks Department's budget problems.*

Nearly half of the Parks Department budget is allocated to the lakes, even though the County has six other parks and several newly acquired properties. As long as the lakes require significant subsidies from the County's General Fund, resources for other parks will be limited. The lakes are far from the main population centers in Monterey County. Lake Nacimiento is in San Luis Obispo County which means that Monterey County tax dollars are supporting recreational activities outside its County boundaries. Tax revenue generated from Lake Nacimiento includes both transient occupancy and sales taxes and all such revenue goes to San Luis Obispo County.

*General use versus special use parks require different strategies.* The general use parks, such as Toro and Jacks Peak, are intended to be accessible and open to the public for a variety of recreational uses. Special use parks, such as the Laguna Seca Recreation Area which serves people interested in automobile and motorcycle racing, are focused on specific users. The lakes are also special-use parks. Funding strategies should recognize the different types of parks, with the costs of special use parks and events fully paid for by user fees.

### *Financial sustainability first requires a detailed understanding of costs.*

Budgets for the individual parks likely understate the actual costs for the parks because cost accounting is needed to capture all direct and indirect costs for each park. Cost accounting will also be helpful for setting fees. Budgets should be modified to differentiate between one-time and ongoing expenditures and revenues to aid in management and policy decisions.



***Capital investments will be needed for long-term sustainability and viability of the parks.*** A comprehensive assessment or inventory of capital and deferred maintenance needs for the parks will help guide investments. Additionally, documented maintenance management procedures and a system to plan for regular maintenance, along with comprehensive documentation of the condition of assets will improve efficiency of maintenance operations. Currently, the department is heavily reliant on employees' personal recollections of maintenance needs and tasks performed.

***Changing demographics will create different demands on the parks.*** Hispanics and Latinos comprise 55% of the population within the County and by 2060 are expected to be at 69% of the population. Changing demographics influence the demand for park programs and services. It will be important for the County to understand what these demographic shifts will mean for the use of the parks, particularly as individual management plans for each park are developed.

***Management and business systems need attention and investment.*** Constrained resources have limited investment in technology and business systems within the department. A technology plan for the Parks Department would guide investments in systems that will improve efficiency of operations, such as a computerized maintenance management system, a cost accounting system by activity center for each park, and portable electronic devices to allow work orders or messages to be received by employees in the field. Informed decision making at the administrative and policy levels will require these tools, both in the short and long term.

***Recently acquired properties have largely come with unfunded responsibilities.*** Marks Ranch, land within former Fort Ord, and East Garrison Lincoln Park (part of the former Fort Ord) are now the responsibility of the County without a funding stream to offset the County's obligations. The agreement with the developer of East Garrison places the responsibility to provide recreational programs to the neighborhood on the County. Plans will be needed to manage these properties safely and appropriately.

***Marketing and business development is needed to increase fee-paying park users and partnerships.*** The department previously had a modest marketing program but discontinued it due to budget constraints. The foundation for marketing Monterey County to tourists is already in place, given numerous publications and marketing efforts found in newspapers, magazines, and other media across the country, as well as the efforts of the Monterey County Convention and Visitors Bureau. The County may be able to





capitalize on these existing efforts with a goal of increasing visitation (particularly at the lakes) and participation in fee-supported activities. It can also be the source for marshaling volunteers, “friends,” businesses and other agency support for the system.

***Staffing optimization is needed so the right mix of positions are in place to do the work.*** A number of tasks carried out by park rangers could be performed by lower cost staff, by vendors, or through technology. Some tasks could potentially be performed more cost-effectively by other partners, freeing full-time staff for other critical tasks.

***Staff satisfaction is important for generating commitment to solutions and continuous improvement.*** Employee survey responses, focus groups, and other staff contacts suggest that morale is low. Some of the reasons cited were financial instability, deteriorating infrastructure, inadequate technology, communications, leadership, and uncertainty about the future. Morale can affect turnover and staff effectiveness. It will be important to create strategies to support employees’ professional development, greater communication, and engagement in the future of the department.

***Increased collaboration with other County departments and other park agencies may produce efficiencies.*** The Parks Department has carried out most maintenance and capital projects itself, and there may be opportunities for greater collaboration with other County departments. Public Works and Parks have collaborated in some areas and there may be ways of strengthening those partnerships. Expertise in other County departments and outside agencies could be helpful to the Parks Department.

***Competing Interests.*** There are a variety of competing interests pertaining to the parks. Several examples are provided below.

- Keeping all parks and facilities open seven days a week at an increasing cost to the General Fund and/or by reducing maintenance and service levels *versus* funding some parks and either closing or limiting hours, or contracting with outside parties or agencies to reduce General Fund costs.
- Keeping fees and charges low to make the parks accessible to all individuals *versus* recovering actual costs for providing programs and/or facilities to limit the impact on the County’s General Fund.
- Maintaining Toro Park with its current uses *versus* establishing new recreation uses such as sports facilities, off-leash dog areas, and special events.



- Preserving Jacks Peak Park in its natural environment *versus* introducing revenue generating activities and/or concession type activities.
- Improving the Laguna Seca raceway facilities and increasing the number of special events in compliance with use permit and environmental regulations *versus* maintaining the status quo.

## Monterey County's Strategic Initiatives

Monterey County has five Countywide strategic initiatives that provide a foundation for the Parks Department strategic plan. A healthy park system can be a strategic point of leverage to help the County accomplish its broader mission. The County's strategic initiatives are:

1. *Economic Development*: Through collaboration, strengthen economic development to ensure a diversified and healthy economy.
2. *Administration*: Promote an organization that practices efficient and effective resource management and is recognized for responsiveness, strong customer orientation, accountability and transparency.
3. *Health and Human Services*: Improve health and quality of life through County supported policies, programs, and services; promoting access to equitable opportunities for healthy choices and healthy environments in collaboration with communities.
4. *Infrastructure*: Plan and develop a sustainable, physical infrastructure that improves the quality of life for County residents and supports economic development results.
5. *Public Safety*: Reduce violent crime and homicides, create a safe environment for people to achieve their potential, leading businesses and communities to thrive and grow.



# Project Approach



This strategic plan is the result of a collaborative effort involving an Ad Hoc Committee of the Board of Supervisors, members of the Parks Commission, executive staff, Parks Department employees, and park users. Information was gathered through the following methods.

- **Interviews.** Fifty-one interviews were conducted by Management Partners to hear observations about strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the parks system. Interviewees included all five members of the Board of Supervisors, one member of the Parks Commission, 12 employees of the Parks Department, 10 other County staff, and 23 external stakeholders representing various organizations.
- **Parks tour.** A two-day tour of all County parks was conducted to obtain an overview of the parks, including needed facility improvements, partnerships, visitors, marketing efforts, future opportunities, and other issues.
- **Employee focus group.** To gather the perspectives of Parks Department employees, a focus group was conducted. Thirteen randomly selected line staff members provided input about strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the Parks Department.

*This strategic plan is the result of a collaborative effort involving an Ad Hoc Committee of the Board of Supervisors, members of the Parks Commission, executive staff, Parks Department employees, and park users.*

**51** Interviews conducted with stakeholders and employees

**1** Parks tour conducted

**13** Parks Department staff members participated in the employee focus group



- **Document and data review.** Numerous documents and data points were reviewed pertaining to the Parks Department and each park, including performance indicators, budgets, organization charts, and reports.
- **Employee survey.** Management Partners designed a confidential survey to offer an opportunity for Parks Department employees to give their opinions about each of the County parks and their ideas and suggestions for the department's future. Forty-nine employees responded to the survey. Approximately 63 full-time employees work in the department.
- **Park user survey.** Management Partners designed a confidential survey to offer park users an opportunity to give their opinions about the County's individual parks and overall park system. The survey was available in both English and Spanish. A total of 1,321 individuals responded to the survey. The County advertised the user survey widely through many groups, its own website, and newspapers.
- **Review of industry best practice literature.** Management Partners conducted a thorough review of emerging trends and best practices in the area of parks and recreation management.
- **Workshop and Ad Hoc Committee Direction.** A workshop with the Ad Hoc Committee and executive staff of the Parks Department staff and other County departments was held to discuss the environmental scan, goals and strategies. Participants provided important input for the strategic plan.

**49** Parks Department employees responded to the employee survey, representing 78% of the staff

**1,321** Individuals responded to the park user survey



Monterey County  
Park System and  
Parks Department

# Vision



*A vision sets  
direction for the  
future.*

The Parks Department will be fiscally sustainable, well managed, continuously improving, with diverse, well-trained employees.





Monterey County  
Parks Department

# Mission



*The mission states  
the purpose of the  
Parks Department.*

The Monterey County Parks Department maintains stewardship over a system of county parks. These outdoor recreation resources will be managed in an entrepreneurial, financially sustainable way to preserve, promote, and interpret the natural environment, encourage healthy recreation activities, inform people about the richness of Monterey County's history and provide recreational opportunities that will create lifelong memories that will build family and communities.



## Monterey County Parks Department

# Guiding Principles



*Principles serve  
as a guide for  
decision making.*

This strategic plan establishes six principles to guide decision making for the County's park system. The purpose of establishing principles is to provide a framework for the goals and strategies that follow, and to serve as a guide for County leaders as decisions are made about the park system and resources. These principles are intended to become effective upon adoption of the strategic plan.

## Guiding Principles

1. *The County will establish General Fund contribution goals for both the Parks Department and for each park and will manage to those goals.* These will be broad policy targets that may change over time. The actual contribution will be determined annually, based on a variety of factors, such as competing priorities, return on investment of new expenditures, allocations for critical improvements (such as ADA requirements), and revenues.



2. *The County will seek new partnerships with public and private parties, including other park agencies, educational institutions, businesses and non-profit organizations.* The objective will be to reduce reliance on the General Fund while being able to serve the public through park facilities.
3. *Full cost recovery will be expected for all special purpose parks and activities.* Cost recovery will include all direct and indirect costs. If full cost recovery is not possible, decisions may need to be made to privatize a facility, close or reduce operations of a park, or not allow events to be held. Fees charged may vary among parks and facilities, depending on the cost of providing the services. All fee decisions will be transparent and well-substantiated.
4. *One-time revenues will support one-time costs.* Ongoing revenues will be used for ongoing expenditures and one-time revenues will be used for one-time expenditures. Budgeting will be done accordingly.
5. *The County will assume new parklands or facilities only if there are new ongoing revenues to support ongoing operations and maintenance or there is an outside operator available to assume fiscal responsibility for the park.* A management plan will be developed and approved by the Board of Supervisors before any new parklands or facilities are acquired.
6. *Innovation and continuous improvement within the Parks Department are both expected and encouraged. A successful and effective Parks Department organization requires skilled and committed employees.* The Parks Department embraces new ways of delivering high-quality park services, uses performance measures to aid management decisions, utilizes technology to increase efficiency, institutes best business practices, plans for the future, and creates new reasons for people to enjoy our parks. The County recognizes the importance of skilled employees and a diverse workforce, and supports robust communication and ongoing professional development for the future benefit of the park system.





# Goal 1. Financial Sustainability



*Ensure long-term financial sustainability of the County parks system through a balance of fee and non-fee supported uses and activities, an asset management plan, and effective financial information systems.*

The following strategies are intended to help achieve the goal of financial sustainability over the next five years. Priorities for implementation will be determined on an annual basis.

## Strategies

1. Fully implement a cost accounting system within the Parks Department to identify all direct and indirect costs as well as fee and non-fee supported programs for each park, facility and special event.
2. Develop General Fund subsidy priorities after accounting for full costs and understanding how much the market will bear.
3. Develop options for cost reductions for specific park facilities until such time as an agreement with an outside partner is established or revenues increase.
4. Establish a transparent and clear methodology for setting fees that is consistent with best management practices, accounting for all costs (e.g., direct, indirect, replacement costs), and establishing fees to capture those costs.



5. Improve the department's fee collection methods to ensure consistency with cash and financial management governmental accounting policies and procedures.
6. Establish a contracts manager function with appropriate staffing to manage contracts and ensure compliance for all partnerships, contractors and concessionaires.
7. Review each existing agreement to determine compliance with terms and conditions, operational subsidies and other performance factors. Create an action plan for each agreement as needed to ensure performance, which could include seeking new partners, renegotiating terms and conditions, and/or seeking financial participation from partners in making investments in facilities. Engage other County departments, such as Purchasing, the Resource Management Agency (RMA) and County Counsel in assisting with this strategy.
8. Collect funds owed by special event sponsors or contractors, and ensure payments are made before allowing further events by these same contractors.
9. Expand the real property manager function within the County to support the Parks Department; review existing leases and payments for park facilities and assets to determine appropriate rent levels and compliance with terms and conditions.
10. Collaborate with the Parks Foundation and other non-profit organizations to increase the role of philanthropy in building and sustaining the Monterey County park system.
11. Seek grants and financial partnerships to help pay for infrastructure improvements, including water and wastewater systems, within the parks.





## Goal 2: Park Assets and Infrastructure



*Maintain park assets and infrastructure to ensure a safe park environment, reduce future costs, and support increased park usage*

The following strategies are intended to help achieve the goal of maintaining park assets and infrastructure. Priorities for implementation will be determined on an annual basis.

### Strategies

1. Collaborate with Public Works and other departments to identify options to address infrastructure maintenance, replacement and development needs.
2. Establish an inventory and tracking system for all park assets, related amenities, utilities and infrastructure. Develop a description of each amenity, its purpose, condition and repair needs, including an assessment of aesthetics and design issues that may impact future use, safety, access, equipment and replacement costs.
3. Determine whether the existing condition of any park asset warrants closure to the public while improvements are made.
4. Develop a five-year (short-term) and ten-year (long-term) capital improvement plan based on established criteria, including public





safety and employee safety, park usage, expected revenue and availability of funding; update the plan annually.

5. Develop an asset management and maintenance management plan based on criteria similar to that contained in the capital improvement program. Include maintenance standards that will assist the department in determining staffing and operating costs associated with each park.





## Goal 3. Partnerships



*Strengthen existing partnerships and create new ones to enhance cost-effective management of park assets and increase revenue.*

The following strategies are intended to help achieve the goal of strengthening partnerships for the parks. Priorities for implementation will be determined on an annual basis.

### Strategies

1. Create general guidelines and specific criteria for public-private partnerships as they relate to use of and access to the County parks system. These should include policies to ensure a balance between use of parks by specific groups and the general public; volunteer programs; operational performance; compliance with County terms and conditions; and monitoring of contracts or agreements.
2. Identify new partnership opportunities and contact potential partners (including public-public partnerships, other park systems, private for-profit firms, and private non-profit groups). Partnerships could range from health care provider sponsorships, to naming rights, to staff cross-training between agencies, to full management of some County park assets by outside parties.
3. Create robust volunteer, internship, docent and “adopt a park” programs and identify tasks that volunteers could do to enable paid staff to attend to other critical tasks.



## Goal 4. Marketing



*Market the park system to attract more park visitors, expand community support and awareness and increase revenue.*

The following strategies are intended to help achieve the goal of marketing the park system. Priorities for implementation will be determined on an annual basis.

### Strategies

1. Engage the California Parks Company (CalParks) to expand parks marketing services while creating a comprehensive marketing program.
2. Update and reinvigorate the Parks Department website to make it user-friendly and informative to generate increased interest in the parks and events.
3. Create a comprehensive, professionally-produced marketing strategy for the County's park system, engaging private partners to underwrite the effort. Collaborate with the Spanish and other media, Health Department, Monterey County Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Chamber of Commerce, agriculture industry, and others in the tourism industry.
4. Create a brand for the County's park system and Parks Department



that clearly identifies the entire park system as a special asset of the County. Use the brand consistently in signage, promotions, and all aspects of marketing the parks.

5. Create a marketing plan for annual passes tailored to both businesses and individuals; improve the use of local media and social media, and reach non-English speaking communities.
6. Evaluate the return on investment for marketing strategies and campaigns. Establish performance metrics and measure results.
7. Evaluate existing methods used to obtain feedback from park visitors, make improvements to visitor feedback methods, and use that information to inform marketing, event planning, and other decisions.
8. Create and implement a plan for improving signage to help publicize amenities at the parks and to make it easier for the public to find park entrances.
9. Empower and train staff to market the County's parks.





# Goal 5. Operational and Staff Effectiveness



*Provide reliable leadership, effective operational and financial management, support for an engaged and committed workforce, and accountability for results.*

The following strategies are intended to help achieve the goal of operational and staff effectiveness. Priorities for implementation will be determined on an annual basis.

## Strategies

### Personnel-Related Strategies

1. Hire a director with demonstrated success in leading a large, diverse and complex park system such as Monterey County's, with the skills to move the park system forward. Empower the new director to create partnerships, advocate for the park system, use entrepreneurial approaches, and be an effective executive team member.
2. Engage employees in active ways so they can be a vital part of the changes needed to create future successes of the County park system.
3. Actively focus attention on building a diverse workforce to better reflect the County of Monterey's population.
4. Develop a rotational assignment system to ensure adequate staff coverage throughout the park system (including skills needed in all parks), and foster a system-wide and team view of the park system among staff.
5. Evaluate the department's organizational structure and modify as needed to improve reporting relationships, management effectiveness and communications with staff.



6. Determine appropriate classifications for Parks Department employees. Identify tasks that are being performed by higher paid employees that could be appropriately carried out by lower paid staff, contractors or volunteers, and thereby free up staff time to do other work. Determine optimum staffing for providing law enforcement services, which could include a combination of safety and non-safety employees.
7. Create clear work assignments, standards, expectations and professional development plans for each employee, including identifying requirements for promotions. Support ongoing training for all employees in needed skills, including customer service and diversity. Establish a method of tracking employee progress towards goals and evaluate performance annually.

### **Operations-Related Strategies**

1. Strengthen the role of the Parks Commission in representing residents, providing advice about ways to achieve financial sustainability, engaging park stakeholders in creating management plans, and providing advice to the Board of Supervisors and staff about priorities for implementation of the strategic plan.
2. Create or update park policies and procedures to improve work standardization and efficiencies in park operations, with priority placed on improving financial controls and correcting inefficient use of staff.
3. Assess current practices pertaining to volunteers driving County vehicles, and create procedures consistent with County risk management requirements.
4. Review data being collected as part of the County's Managing for Performance program on a quarterly basis and utilize the data to make management decisions.
5. Create an organized system of capturing crime and other public safety information, and review statistics monthly with Sheriff's Department to identify trouble spots and collaboratively establish action steps.
6. Conduct an information technology (IT) assessment and create an IT plan for the Parks Department. Prioritize operational efficiencies in the plan through automation of tasks that are now labor-intensive. Determine what is needed to add Wi-Fi to selected areas within the parks.
7. Make quarterly progress reports for the first two years and annual reports thereafter on the implementation of the strategic plan to the County Administrative Officer, Board of Supervisors, Parks Commission, and Parks Department staff.



## Goal 6. Individual Park Management Plans



*Develop management plans for each park property with the goal of optimizing financial sustainability and providing a safe and enjoyable environment for park users.*

The following strategies are intended to help achieve the goal of establishing management plans for each park. Priorities for implementation will be determined on an annual basis.

### Strategies

1. Prepare interim management plans for each park within one year. Develop a longer-term plan within three years for each park.
2. Determine the County's full cost of operating and maintaining each park as a baseline for park-specific management plans.
3. Develop new or enhanced methods of increasing revenue and recovering costs for each park, such as fees that fully cover costs, partnerships, special events, ecotourism, concessions, contracts, and retail opportunities.
4. Establish measures of success from a financial and user perspective for each special event. Conduct an analysis following completion of an event to determine to what extent it met the measures of success.
5. Identify opportunities and constraints pertaining to each park and





create a vision and set of expected uses for each park. Engage the community and park users in identifying interests and priorities, alternative uses and opportunities to increase financial sustainability.

6. Clearly establish who “owns” each management plan and who is accountable for its implementation. The plan should state the role of each staff person in the park’s success.
7. Identify what will be required to make infrastructure improvements to bring each park up to desired standards. Create a timeline and funding plan.





# Implementation



This strategic plan is designed to guide the Monterey County Parks Department in its effort to deliver on its mission over the next five years, with a focus on financial sustainability. Each strategy identified as part of this plan will be prioritized with a timeline attached. In addition to implementation deadlines, the County has identified preliminary indicators of success.

## Indicators of Success

The following indicators of success will serve as a starting point for the County to identify quantifiable measures to assess future progress on the implementation of this strategic plan. More specific measures of success will be a useful tool for accountability for the Parks department. These indicators can and should be refined during implementation.

### Goal 1. Financial Sustainability

#### *Indicators of Success*

- Understanding of costs with valid projections of future costs.
- Reduction, over several years, in the General Fund contribution for operations.
- Increased revenues as percent of budget.





## Goal 2. Park Assets and Infrastructure

### *Indicators of Success*

- Comprehensive understanding of deferred maintenance needs and infrastructure renewal obligations.
- Progress in meeting deferred maintenance needs by a percent (to be established) each year.
- Inclusion of parks in Countywide Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) plan.

## Goal 3. Partnerships

### *Indicators of Success*

- New partners engaged for some parks responsibilities.
- Long-term operating agreements in place for the lakes.
- Volunteer program that increases capacity or reduces County costs.
- Multi-year agreements for special events that fully cover costs.
- Contractor compliance with all terms of agreements.

## Goal 4. Marketing

### *Indicators of Success*

- Increased number of visitors (target to be established).
- Successful implementation of Reserve America (online reservation system).
- Agreements with outside parties to participate financially in marketing the County's parks and/or within their publications.
- Increased non-General Fund revenues (target to be established).

## Goal 5. Operational and Staff Effectiveness

### *Indicators of Success*

- Increased diversity in the department workforce.
- Assistance by Public Works for asset maintenance and infrastructure improvements.
- Improved employee morale (assessed through survey)
- Understanding of customer interests regarding the parks.
- Professional development plans created for each Parks employee.

## Goal 6. Individual Park Management Plans

### *Indicators of Success*

- Creation of a management plan for each park within three years of adoption of the strategic plan.
- Management plans that are specific and are used for decision making.



## Attachment A: Park Profiles

Profiles have been prepared for each park. Table 1 summarizes the components of each park profile.

*Table 1. Components of a Park Profile*

Park Profile Component	Definition
<b>Park Characteristics</b>	Includes acreage, opening year, and nearby cities.
<b>Park Amenities</b>	Summarizes park resources and assets.
<b>Strategic Issues</b>	Lists issues that are important to consider as the County develops goals and strategies for each park. This may include organizational needs, operational challenges, and important background information.
<b>Considerations for Management Plan</b>	Lists potential park-specific action items that could be utilized to address organizational challenges and integrated into a park-specific management plan.
<b>Partnerships</b>	Lists the park's existing partnerships with third-party organizations and agencies.

### Important Note

*Each profile provides a snapshot of the issues facing each park based on information from County staff, but it is not a comprehensive portrait and no methodical inventory of needs has been done.*



*A. North County Parks***Jacks Peak Park****Park Characteristics***Acreage:* 525 acres*Opening year:* 1977*Nearby cities:* Monterey, Seaside, Carmel-by-the-Sea, Pebble Beach, Pacific Grove**Amenities**

- ✓ Natural preserve
- ✓ Nearly 8.5 miles of riding and hiking trails
- ✓ Spectacular vista points
- ✓ Self-guided nature trail
- ✓ Fossils from the Miocene epoch

Jacks Peak Park overlooks the spectacular Monterey Peninsula. A natural preserve, the park's 525 acres of ridge top is set amidst native Monterey Pines. The preserve features almost 8.5 miles of riding and hiking trails that wind through cathedral-like forests. The abundance of breathtaking vistas, trees, flowers, and wildlife found at Jacks Peak make it the destination for nature enthusiasts.

**Strategic Issues**

- Jacks Peak Park currently has no allocated staffing. Prior to FY 2011-12 there was a budget for some staff services.
- The park's revenues and expenditures have not been consistent over the last five years, making it necessary to periodically rely on contributions from the General Fund to cover operational costs.
- Park usage data is not available partly because there is no staffing at park entrances to collect fees (fees are paid according to an honor system).
- Based on recent onsite observations, the park shows signs of deferred maintenance. The number of dead trees, branches and pine needles suggest the need for a tree/forestry plan.
- In FY 2013-14, the Friends of Jacks Peak, a local community group, installed interpretive panels to guide visitors.
- There are competing interests regarding the use of the park, including preserving it in its current natural state versus adding active uses that would generate revenue to support park operations.



### Considerations for Management Plan

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- Explore a collaboration with the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District to operate the Park.
- Discuss options for developing a forestry management plan and determining the regional connection of this park to other parks (e.g., trail network), developing an interpretative plan, and capitalizing on the fact that Monterey Pines in this park are a unique asset.
- Increase the involvement of partners such as the Friends of Jacks Peak, California Department of Forestry, and other potential partners to boost visitation and raise funds for capital improvements

### Partnerships

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- The Friends of Jacks Peak
- California Department of Forestry (*potential partner*)
- Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (*potential partner*)





## A. North County Parks

## Manzanita Park



### Park Characteristics

**Acreage:** 464

**Opening year:** 1991

**Nearby cities:** Prunedale, Castroville,  
Salinas, Aromas, Watsonville

### Amenities

- ✓ Ball fields
- ✓ Trails (hiking, bicycle)
- ✓ Organized youth sports
- ✓ Bicycle Motocross (BMX)

Manzanita Park is operated through a concession agreement with the North County Youth Recreation Association (NCYRA). NCYRA is responsible for the development, operation, and maintenance of 56 acres of Manzanita park grounds and structural facilities on the premises (12% of total park acreage). The Monterey County Parks Department is responsible for the water well and infrastructure, as well as the oversight of some park volunteers.

The general public may enter the park from sunrise to sunset to enjoy the ball fields and the numerous hiking and bicycle trails throughout the park, but are limited to non-motorized or pedestrian access to areas that do not conflict with scheduled events.

### Strategic Issues

- Staff estimates that the facility is programmed at 70% capacity through NCYRA sanctioned events.
- Manzanita Park brings in no revenue for the Parks Department; it is minimally supported by the General Fund.
- The park is mostly program-driven, with the general public having limited access to this park outside of NCYRA-sanctioned events and programs. At this time, the entrance gate for vehicle access is open only during their scheduled events which vary throughout the year. Some members of the public have pressed the County to expand public access to this park.
- Based on recent onsite observations, restrooms and picnic tables need improvement.



### Considerations for Management Plan

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- Explore collaborations with another public agency.
- Increase park accessibility to the general public.
- Identify options for new revenue sources (e.g., paid parking lot, park entrance fees or other alternatives).
- Identify options for a secondary access to the park for general public use. Determine the costs, constraints and potential benefits.

### Partnerships

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- The North County Youth Recreation Association (NCYRA)



*A. North County Parks***Royal Oaks Park****Park Characteristics***Acreage:* 122*Opening year:* 1966*Nearby cities:* San Juan Bautista,  
Aromas, Prunedale, Castroville,  
Watsonville**Amenities**

- ✓ Softball field
- ✓ Playground equipment
- ✓ Basketball
- ✓ Volleyball
- ✓ Tennis courts
- ✓ Hiking trails
- ✓ Picnic areas
- ✓ Youth camping

Located in north Monterey County, Royal Oaks Park was established in 1966 and is the oldest park in the Monterey County Parks system. This 122 acre day-use facility is situated in a small valley studded with Coast Live Oaks. Royal Oak's country setting makes it an ideal place for family outings. The park facilities include a softball field, playground equipment, basketball, volleyball and tennis courts, and miles of hiking trails.

**Strategic Issues**

- Unlike many other County parks visited during a site tour, Royal Oaks Park is well maintained and appears to have few deferred maintenance issues.
- Key maintenance activities may be missed without formal maintenance management plans.
- There is a deficit between revenues and expenditures at this park with the gap filled by the County's General Fund.

**Considerations for Management Plan**

- Evaluate options for reuse of the ranger house to include a live-in volunteer or maintenance staff person.
- Identify partnership opportunities with nearby businesses as a way to offset some of the costs of this park.
- Assess aging facilities and determine maintenance and upgrade needs.





## A. North County Parks

## Toro Park



## Park Characteristics

**Acreage:** 4,756

**Opening year:** 1971

**Visitation**

FY 2011-12: 104,071

FY 2012-13: 121,433

FY 2013-14: 147,238

**Nearby cities:** Salinas, Seaside,  
Monterey, Chualar, Carmel Valley,  
Marina

**Amenities**

- ✓ 20+ miles of hiking trails
- ✓ Equestrian staging area
- ✓ Riding trails
- ✓ 2 softball fields
- ✓ Playgrounds
- ✓ Horseshoe pits
- ✓ Mountain biking
- ✓ Volleyball courts
- ✓ Youth camping
- ✓ Environmental education center

Located 6 miles from downtown Salinas and 13 miles from the Monterey Peninsula, Toro Park offers a peaceful and pastoral setting that is perfect for family outings or group functions such as weddings, corporate picnics and family reunions. The park was first opened to the public in 1971 and its 4,756 acres provide a home for many types of wildlife including rare birds, deer, coyote, and mountain lions. The park facilities include an equestrian staging area and riding trails, two softball fields, playgrounds, horseshoe pits, mountain biking, volleyball courts, and over 20 miles of hiking trails.

The County received a grant from the Wildlife Conservation Board to acquire two parcels of Marks Ranch that will be integrated into Toro Park. The first parcel, purchased in 2010, is 624 acres; the second parcel, purchased in 2012, is 113 acres. Once a major egg production facility, Marks Ranch ceased operations more than 30 years ago and has remained virtually untouched and in private hands as grazing land until it was purchased by the Big Sur Land Trust (BSLT) in 2007.





## Strategic Issues

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- Toro Park has relatively high usage rates.
  - *Weekend (Entire Park)*: On weekends, group areas are booked at nearly 100% capacity between May and October and at 85% capacity over the course of the entire year
  - *Weekday (Entire Park)*: On weekdays, group areas are booked at approximately 25% capacity
  - *Youth Overnight Area (YONA)*: Overnight area is booked at approximately 80% capacity on weekends and 10% capacity on weekdays
- Despite Toro Park's high usage rate and popularity among County residents, it is heavily dependent on the General Fund.
- Toro Park has minimal staffing levels for daily and event operations, making it difficult to collect fees for Park usage. Staff have suggested an additional full-time, dedicated ranger and buildings/grounds staff.
- Day-use and group picnic areas are popular for park celebrations and generate revenue (Mother's Day and Easter generally reach full capacity).
- Outside parties have discussed the development of a pump track and ball fields at Toro Park.
- The Spartan Race, an obstacle race coordinated and managed by a nationally renowned organization, has generated revenue for Toro Park, but the agreement is not long term.
- The number of K-12 students served in the Toro Park environmental and heritage education program has been increasing. In FY 2011-12 the program served 2,460 participants and in FY 2013-14 it served 3,830 participants.
- The *Save Toro Park* group has advocated on behalf of Toro Park and its users and to limit user fees.
- The new Marks Ranch property carries with it some responsibilities that must be assigned and funded, as follows:
  - No County dollars have been allocated to manage, operate or maintain the new Marks Ranch asset. Due to the agreements and the established relationship between the Parks Department and BSLT, all new partnerships will have to be a joint venture.
  - Marks Ranch is not yet officially open to the public, however it can be accessed through Toro Park's back country trails.
  - Because Marks Ranch is a wildlife corridor, it carries additional habitat management responsibilities. The Parks Department and Big Sur Land Trust (BSLT) have an ongoing cooperative relationship to carry out the goals of the Marks Ranch Management Plan; funds for improvements are currently not in the Parks Department budget.
  - Additional funds from the General Fund will be required for Marks Ranch to be opened to the public, even for passive recreation. Before it is opened, the County should determine the exact source of funding.



### Considerations for Management Plan

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- Harness the energy of community groups for marketing and promotions.
- Seek opportunities for promoters to hold additional events to increase revenue (full cost recovery).
- Determine what tasks volunteers could be engaged in and create a volunteer program; identify the costs of managing the program and savings that could be achieved through use of volunteers.
- Develop facility use agreements with those public agencies using Toro Park facilities.
- Identify proposed uses, associated costs, funding sources and partners to manage Marks Ranch.

### Partnerships

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- The Parks Foundation
- Spartan Race
- Camp Quien Sabe sponsored by the City of Monterey
- Big Sur Land Trust



*B. South County Park***San Lorenzo Park****Park Characteristics***Acreage:* 200*Opening year:* 1976**Visitation***FY 2011-12:* 68,448*FY 2012-13:* 73,426*FY 2013-14:* 48,034*Nearby cities:* King City, Greenfield, Soledad, Coalinga, Paso Robles**Amenities**

- ✓ Monterey County Agricultural and Rural Life Museum (MCARLM)
- ✓ Walking trails, picnic areas, playground and gazebo
- ✓ Horseshow pits, volleyball courts softball areas, and putting green
- ✓ 3 facility rentals
- ✓ 90 shaded campsites
- ✓ Internet kiosk and laundry facilities

San Lorenzo Park is located in King City along the Salinas River at the base of the Santa Lucia Mountains. The park offers a shaded campground with 90 sites available for tent camping, recreational vehicle (RV) hook-ups and pull-through sites. Amenities include laundry facilities, a putting green, an internet kiosk, and three group facilities for rent. For daily visitors San Lorenzo offers picnic areas, a gazebo, playgrounds, horseshoe pits, volleyball courts, softball areas, and a walking trail along the banks of the Salinas River.

San Lorenzo Park is also home to the Monterey County Agricultural and Rural Life Museum (MCARLM), which acquires, preserves, and interprets artifacts, equipment and buildings related to Monterey County's agricultural heritage.

**Strategic Issues**

- Between FY 2009-10 and FY 2013-14, San Lorenzo Park has required a General Fund contribution each year to support ongoing operations and maintenance. Since the Parks Department does not do full cost accounting, it is not known to what extent the park depends on the General Fund.
- There are likely opportunities for the park to become more self-sufficient, by either increasing the number of users or increasing usage fees.
- Because it has more facilities than other County parks, San Lorenzo Park faces additional risk and costs if maintenance is deferred.





- There was a significant drop in the number of visitors recorded for FY 2013-14 (a 41% decrease) but the reasons for this are not clear and merit attention.
- The Monterey County Agricultural and Rural Life Museum (MCARLM) is a unique asset in the region and could be more widely promoted if resources were available.
- Staff reports that local groups that have historically used the DeAnza Building for meetings have found alternative sites outside the County system to be much less expensive and suitable for their events. These groups have also expressed frustration with County systems for rental reservations.
- Similar to Royal Oaks Park, San Lorenzo Park appeared fairly well maintained and had fewer deferred maintenance issues than other parks. This was attributed to staff members who “take pride in their park.” The existing practice of transferring staff from one location to another to address vacancies may undermine staff ownership of each park and further affect staff morale. Again, without formal maintenance management plans, key maintenance functions may be missed as well.

### Considerations for Management Plan

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- Determine if this park can be self-supporting by increasing fees on a full array of amenities.
- Develop and implement long-term maintenance plans for current facilities, with special emphasis on the historic assets in the park.
- Collaborate with nearby businesses to fund marketing of this park. Create a marketing plan.

### Partnerships

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- The King City Rotary Club partnered with the local Young Farmers group to rebuild the barbeque pit at the DeAnza building a few years ago.
- The Monterey County Agricultural and Rural Life Museum (MCARLM)



*C. Laguna Seca Recreation Area***Laguna Seca Park and Track****Park Characteristics**

**Acreage:** 542 acres (*for the total recreation area*)

**Opening year:** 1981

**Nearby cities:** Monterey, Seaside, Salinas, Marina

**Amenities**

- ✓ RV and tent camping
- ✓ Bike trails
- ✓ Trackview Pavilion (Red Bull Energy Center)
- ✓ Event space for a number of special events
- ✓ World-renown raceway with 11-turns and 2.238-mile road course

In 1974, Monterey County acquired 542 acres formerly part of Fort Ord from the federal government to create the Laguna Seca Recreation Area. The Laguna Seca Park offers a serene view of the Salinas Valley with campsites interspersed within the broader Laguna Seca Recreation Area. Campsites provide a clean, friendly environment with both RV and tent camping available.

In addition to camping facilities, the Laguna Seca Recreation Area is home to the world-famous Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca, as well as a number of special events that draw significant crowds. Events have included the following:

- Sea Otter Classic Sports Festival (bicycling and outdoor sports festival),
- Cherry's Jubilee (car and motorcycle festival),
- Spirit West Coast (Christian music festival)
- Laguna Seca Days (music festival)
- NorCal High School MTB Championship (bicycling event)

Under a concession agreement, the County and the Sports Car Racing Association of Monterey Peninsula (SCRAMP) have the joint duty to operate and maintain the existing raceway and park facilities from the proceeds of the track rentals. In addition, SCRAMP produces 5 major racing events per year.



## Strategic Issues

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- The Laguna Seca Track is unlike other North County parks in that its users are specific to automobile and motorcycle racing. The maintenance of Laguna Seca track operations requires a substantial investment in infrastructure. The degree to which this operation should be supported by General Fund tax revenue is an important policy discussion.
- There is no clear distinction between operational costs associated with the park budget and the raceway budget.
- The costs associated with deferred maintenance and required capital improvements for the raceway have not been inventoried and calculated. With the track usage estimated at 90% capacity, there is a high demand on the infrastructure.
- The SCRAMP agreement does not cover costs of needed capital improvements to ensure long-term sustainability of the track operation. The County is working with the Barrett Sports Group (BSG) consulting firm to determine possibilities for an improved agreement for the racetrack.
- Rentals of the lakebed are estimated at 30% capacity, and RV and campsites are only 40% capacity. A strategic issue is why the numbers are so low and what will it take to increase use and income. Staff report that the campsites are in disrepair.
- The Trackview Pavilion (Red Bull Energy Center) has a full kitchen and barbeque that can be rented for private events and is only at 50% capacity. This offers an opportunity to increase use and income.
- Although the racetrack is famous and draws crowds for large events, the amenities are sparse. As a point of comparison, the Sonoma Raceway has recently invested in a number of improvements, including skyboxes, restrooms and seating throughout the track, while Laguna Seca relies heavily on ground seating.
- Strategies should be developed to increase revenue and visitation within the framework of existing use permit and noise restrictions.

## Considerations for Management Plan

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- Segregate park costs from raceway costs, track them properly, and use the cost information to aid in management decisions.
- Develop a marketing plan, paid for by the private sector and/or users, and fully implement the reservation system, to increase usage of the Trackview Pavilion and campground.
- Provide effective oversight and contract management of the racetrack operator.
- Consider creating an enterprise fund for the Laguna Seca raceway to segregate funds between the for-profit, fee-supported operation and the adjacent park to accurately account for the operational costs of both assets.
- Create a long-term plan for the track operation with the expectation of achieving full cost recovery for the County. Include costs of infrastructure improvements needed to make the raceway competitive with other tracks. Include those and all other costs in an operating agreement with a private operator.

## Partnerships

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- Sports Car Racing Association of Monterey Peninsula (SCRAMP)





*C. Laguna Seca Recreation Area***Laguna Seca Rifle Range****Park Characteristics**

- ✓ Part of the Laguna Seca Recreation Area

**Amenities**

- ✓ Safe shooting environment year-round
- ✓ 15 rifle stalls
- ✓ 20 pistol stalls
- ✓ Ammunition for purchase
- ✓ Various target frames
- ✓ Group rental available

Laguna Seca Rifle and Pistol Range offers a safe shooting environment year round. The range includes 15 rifle stalls and 20 pistol stalls with various target frames. Ammunition can be purchased through the Parks Foundation at the range counter. Paper and reactive steel targets are available. The range can be reserved for groups and local law enforcement agencies for rifle and shotgun shooting. There is a separate adjacent public safety range used exclusively (primarily for hand guns) by local law enforcement agencies.

**Strategic Issues**

- Special events have the potential of drawing a broader audience. Last year, the Rifle and Pistol Range held the first annual "Great Pumpkin Shoot," in which patrons used pumpkins donated from local benefactors as targets in sporting competition.
- The firing range has had some progress creating social media platforms with the help of a marketing specialist.
- Outside analysis has identified potential environmental concerns that will require attention and investment.

**Considerations for Management Plan**

- Identify the costs of future environmental remediation.
- Develop a plan to provide for environmental stewardship of this property.
- Create long-term agreements with local law enforcement agencies and other user groups that will result in full cost recovery of the range operation.
- Examine opportunities to increase amenities at the range to raise revenue, such as expanding hours, creating a snack bar and increasing the amount of ammunition and targets sold.



- Use social media and other marketing strategies to highlight the rifle range and increase public utilization, with marketing paid for by fees charged to users.

### Partnerships

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- The Parks Foundation
- Local law enforcement agencies



*D. Lake Resort Parks***Lake San Antonio****Park Characteristics****Acreage:** 7,000\***Opening year:** 1967**Visitation**

FY 2011-12: 269,352 (both shores)

FY 2012-13: 254,751 (both shores)

FY 2013-14: 96,815 (both shores)

**Nearby cities:** San Miguel, Paso Robles,  
Templeton, Cambria**Amenities**

- ✓ RV hook up available
- ✓ 1,000 campsites (some along the shore)
- ✓ Water sports and activities (canoe, wakeboard, skiing, motorboat, fishing, swimming)
- ✓ Trails (walking, biking)

\*The Parks Department manages 7,000 acres (recreation facilities located along the lakefronts) of the 13,427 total San Antonio Recreation Area.

Lake San Antonio is Monterey County's premier freshwater recreation area. Located just 20 miles inland from California's beautiful Central Coast, Lake San Antonio typically offers year-round activities including picnicking, camping, fishing, hiking, swimming, boating and waterskiing. When Lake San Antonio is at full capacity, it is 16 miles long and has about 100 miles of shoreline. The location of the lake is a rural setting among oak-studded hillsides. It features one of the state's largest camping facilities, with over 1,000 camp sites. The lake's appeal includes excellent bass fishing, availability of shoreline camping on the North Shore, and minimal intrusion of man-made structures obstructing the view shed.

Water levels at Lake San Antonio are contingent upon a variety of factors including the annual weather cycle, the need to recharge groundwater to the Salinas Valley, and the need to maintain adequate Salinas River flows to comply with state and federal fish habitat requirements.

Since May 2011, the California Parks Company (CalParks) has been engaged by the County to operate Lake San Antonio and Lake Nacimiento.





## Strategic Issues

- Lake San Antonio operates as part of the lakes resorts enterprise fund. Outside revenues were intended to cover all operational and capital improvement costs related to the lake. To date, sufficient revenue has not been produced and to cut costs, the County has reduced staffing and service levels, reduced capital investments, and increased its contribution from the General Fund to support operations.
- Located in the South County region, Lake San Antonio is quite far from the main population centers of Monterey County and is utilized by individuals and families with an affinity for boating, fishing and camping. The Monterey County Parks Department does not have visitor data to demonstrate the degree to which these County assets are used by County residents versus residents of San Luis Obispo County (or other counties). Nevertheless, the lake resort enterprise fund has received substantial General Fund contributions to cover its operational deficit for the past few years. The degree to which this operation should be supported by General Fund tax revenue is an important policy discussion.
- Lake San Antonio has been severely impacted by the drought and resulting low water levels. The north shore of the lake has been entirely closed for camping and boating as a result of low lake levels.
- Facilities and amenities along the south shore of Lake San Antonio show the effects of deferred maintenance.
- In FY 2013-14, the north shore of Lake San Antonio added a new event called Lighting in a Bottle (LIB) during the Memorial Day holiday weekend. The festival focuses on art, musical entertainment, and a diverse mix of activities including classes and workshops focused on healthy lifestyles. According to staff, the event was a success. The event organizers wish to consider a longer-term agreement, but it will compete with the biggest weekend for park usage, Memorial Day, which is a big revenue generator by itself.
- Lake San Antonio (south shore) hosts the Wildflower Triathlon Festival, which is an annual event that combines triathlon racing and a family friendly festival. It continues to grow in participation.
- The resort area is kept open even during months when there are no patrons. The operation could close during periods of low patronage to reduce costs.
- Staff estimate that south shore campsites are at 25% to 30% capacity during peak season, while north shore campsites are typically booked at 60% capacity.
- Before CalParks took over operations in May 2011, Monterey County had contracted with another vendor to operate many lake resort amenities and make capital improvements as needed. There had been concerns and dissatisfaction with the manner of operation and proper maintenance of the parks, which prompted a lawsuit and the County's decision to buy out the contract for \$22 million. It appears that the cost is being financed by a charge to the Parks Department budget, but it is unclear whether the County conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the condition of the lakes and their unfunded capital liability that was to be inherited from the contractor by the Parks Department.
- An invasive mussel species, the Quagga Mussel, remains an issue for Lake San Antonio and Lake Nacimiento. Parks Department staff continue to work collaboratively with the Agricultural Commissioner's Office, the Monterey County Water Resources Agency, and San Luis Obispo County Public Works Department on a regular inspection program to detect and reduce the invasive mussel species. This program was taken on by the Monterey County Parks Department without sufficient and sustainable supplemental funding.



### Considerations for Management Plan

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- Develop a plan for eliminating the General Fund subsidy of this park and manage within available staffing. Considerations could include:
  - Closing Lake San Antonio until the drought ends and lake levels rise;
  - Reducing Lake San Antonio operations to a minimal level (“back to basics”);
  - Closing Lake San Antonio resort during months when there are no or few patrons;
  - Increasing collaboration with The California Parks Company (or another private company) for the operation and management of Lake San Antonio; and,
  - Creating new uses that are fully cost covering.
- Conduct a staffing analysis for Lake San Antonio.
- Increase marketing efforts and develop closer ties with the greater Paso Robles community to attract more special events and increase visitation and revenue.
- Expand the existing marketing campaign to non-lake dependent reasons to visit the park (such as hiking or off-road bicycling).
- Assess the costs of installing automated pay stations throughout lake facilities and create a schedule to install them if revenue exceeds costs.
- Create new reasons to visit the park, other than using the lake, to reduce reliance on boating activities and water levels.

### Partnerships

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- Monterey County Agricultural Commissioner
- Monterey County Water Resources Agency
- San Luis Obispo County Public Works Department
- The State of California Department of Boating and Waterways (DBAW)
- Southern Monterey County Rural Coalition
- The California Parks Company (CalParks)



*D. Lake Resort Parks***Lake Nacimiento****Park Characteristics****Acreage:** 5,000**Opening year:** 1958 (transferred to County in 1966)**Visitation**

FY 2011-12: 350,993 (boating)

FY 2012-13: 329,064 (boating)

FY 2013-14: 334,758 (boating)

**Nearby cities:** San Miguel, Paso Robles, Templeton, Cambria**Amenities**

- ✓ 165 miles of scenic shoreline
- ✓ Water sports and activities (canoe, wakeboard, skiing, motorboat, fishing, swimming)
- ✓ 350+ campsites
- ✓ Lodge accommodations
- ✓ Year-round general store and seasonal restaurant on water's edge

Lake Nacimiento sits within the Coastal Mountains of San Luis Obispo County. When at full capacity, the Lake is 18 miles long and surrounded by a 165-mile shoreline of mountains, river canyons, oak and pine forests, spring waterfalls and abundant wildlife. The lake is a destination for water sport enthusiasts, with options for canoeing, water skiing, wakeboarding, bass fishing and swimming.

A year-round general store and seasonal restaurant are located right at the water's edge. The full service marina features 120 rental boat slips, available yearly, monthly, weekly or daily. A rental fleet offers everything from family pleasure boats, pontoon/patio boats, to ski and deck boats. Lodge accommodations and over 350 campsites are available. Lake Nacimiento is also a multi-use facility operated for flood control and water conservation purposes.

Since May 2011, the California Parks Company (CalParks) has been engaged by the County to operate Lake San Antonio and Lake Nacimiento.



## Strategic Issues

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- Lake Nacimiento operates as part of the lakes resorts enterprise fund. Outside revenues were intended to cover all operational and capital improvement costs related to the lake. To date, sufficient revenue has not been produced and to cut costs, the County has reduced staffing and service levels, reduced capital investments, and increased its contribution from the General Fund to support operations.
- Located within the boundaries of San Luis Obispo County, Lake Nacimiento is quite far from the main population centers of the County and is utilized by individuals and families with an affinity for boating, fishing and camping. The Monterey County Parks Department does not have visitor data to show the degree to which these County assets are used by Monterey County residents versus residents of San Luis Obispo County (and other counties). Nevertheless, the lake resort enterprise fund has received substantial discretionary contributions to cover its operational deficit for the past few years. The degree to which this operation should be supported by General Fund tax revenue is an important policy discussion.
- Since the Parks Department does not do full cost accounting and since there are significant deferred maintenance and infrastructure needs, it is unlikely the budget fully reflects an accurate picture.
- Although the lake is currently at 20% capacity due to drought conditions, it still offers a range of boating and other recreational opportunities.
- Although the condominiums overlooking the lake offer a wonderful location for visitors, the facilities show signs of deferred maintenance.
- Lake Nacimiento relies on sewer lift stations, septic tanks and a treatment system, some of which are in need of repair or improvement to comply with future Regional Water Quality Control (RWQC) standards and to reduce risk of failure.
- The County receives a significant amount of revenue from boat rentals, but boats in the current fleet are being used past their replacement lives.
- Like most campsites throughout the County's park system, Lake Nacimiento sites reflect soil erosion due to the lack of ground maintenance.
- An invasive mussel species, the Quagga Mussel, has continued to remain an issue for Lake San Antonio and Lake Nacimiento. Park Department staff have continued to work collaboratively with the Agricultural Commissioner's Office, the Water Resources Agency, and San Luis Obispo County Public Works Department to continue a regular inspection program to detect and reduce the invasive mussel species. This program was taken on by the Monterey County Parks Department without sufficient and sustainable supplemental funding.

## Considerations for Management Plan

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- Develop a plan for eliminating the General Fund subsidy. Examine contracting with The California Parks Company (or another private company) for the complete operation and management of Lake Nacimiento as one option.
- Institute cost accounting and capture all costs (direct and indirect) for the lakes. Examine fees charged on the basis of a complete understanding of County costs.
- Create new reasons to visit the park, other than using the lake, to reduce reliance on boating activities and water levels.





- Increase marketing efforts and develop closer ties with the greater Paso Robles community to attract more special events and increase visitation and revenue.
- Install and implement automated pay stations throughout lake facilities.
- Expand the existing marketing campaign to spotlight lake facilities and increase revenue levels.
- Initiate discussions with San Luis Obispo County regarding their interest in this property and discuss potential partnerships for joint marketing and cost sharing where there are shared interests (e.g., public safety).

### Partnerships

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- Monterey County Agricultural Commissioner
- Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB)
- Monterey County Water Resources Agency
- San Luis Obispo County Public Works Department
- The State of California Department of Boating and Waterways (DBAW)
- Southern Monterey County Rural Coalition
- The California Parks Company (CalParks)



*E. New Park Assets***Fort Ord***Photos by Presidio of Monterey County Public Affairs*

Under the adopted Fort Ord Base Reuse Plan and associated Implementation Agreement, Monterey County is obligated to accept ownership of about 2,800 acres of land within the former Fort Ord for roads, trails, habitat parcels and development. Over 1,300 acres is designated for habitat management and open space that will be managed and maintained by the County. Another 300 acres of land is held by the Successor Agency (former Redevelopment Agency lands) which may also be transferred to the County. The Resource Management Agency (RMA) has contracted with a firm to create an open space management plan.

- **Travel Camp Property.** In December 2012 the County took over ownership of the 145-acre property known as the Travel Camp property and the County is obligated to manage and maintain the property including issuing permits for activities of low impact use. The property is currently rented by the Parks Department for small events on a regular basis. The property includes approximately 52 acres of land available for limited development; the remaining 93 acres are to be maintained as habitat management areas. The County will be responsible for new land management, maintenance, and enforcement responsibilities related to public access trails, open space, and habitat areas in accordance with the adopted Habitat Management Plan (HMP) and draft Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP).
- **Fort Ord Habitat Management Area (HMA) Lands.** On July 28, 2014, the County began taking ownership of some of the Fort Ord HMA lands starting with the transfer of 800 acres. Implementation will involve specialized training and equipment, fire management activities, resource planning and significant facility improvements.



## Strategic Issues

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- The Monterey County Resource Management Agency has indicated it is the lead agency for the Fort Ord property. The role of the Parks Department will need to be determined.
- There has been no budget allocation or assignment of staff for land management activities on Fort Ord other than limited trash collection by existing County staff from nearby park units.
- The County is obligated under the various plans and agreements to perform certain habitat restoration and management activities. Not providing funding will put the County at risk of being out of compliance with the plans and agreements.
- At such time the trails are open to for public use, it will be necessary to provide resources to ensure visitors stay on existing open trails, obeys all laws, and do not impact habitat. Not performing these critical activities could pose a significant risk to the County and result in damage to the lands.
- The public has expressed an interest in using open space areas in the former Fort Ord for recreation and to access the Fort Ord National Monument lands.
- The East Garrison project currently under construction is expected to result in significant demand for trails and recreational opportunities. Because of liability exposure, the County needs to develop an adequate plan and allocate appropriate personnel if trails and support facilities (parking and restrooms etc.) are opened. In addition, appropriate signage needs to be installed and maintained.
- The acquisition of Fort Ord Habitat Management Area Lands would be a new, large unbudgeted liability for the County.

## Considerations for Management Plan

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- Create a budget and support structure for this new property.
- Seek outside partners to offset the County's costs of managing this newly acquired property.
- Set priorities for implementation within the management plan that is underway to address the various obligations and responsibilities of the County in relation to the Fort Ord property acquisition. Recognize that funding changed with the loss of Redevelopment.
- Create a plan for the former Ft. Ord Travel Camp property to be self-sufficient in its operations.

## Partnerships

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- Fort Ord Reuse Authority (FORA)
- Successor Agency (former Redevelopment Agency lands)
- Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (potential partner)



*E. New Park Assets***East Garrison Lincoln Park**

East Garrison (EG) is a private development adjacent to the Fort Ord lands (Travel Camp). The first phase of development within the East Garrison subdivision started a year ago. The eight East Garrison parks included in the master plan will be phased in. A community facilities district (CFD) has been created to pay for the maintenance of the parks, with the developer being responsible until the time that fees from the CFD are sufficient to pay for maintenance costs. The Monterey County Resource Management Agency is responsible for handling the CFD and associated maintenance contracts once the parks are built. The County Parks Department is responsible for park programming for Lincoln Park, the first park to be developed, which is atypical for a county park system.

***How the developer describes East Garrison***

The master plan for East Garrison includes eight parks, so every home is within easy strolling distance of a place to play and relax. Lincoln Park, due for completion in Phase I, is a magnificent 6.5 acre green space with amenities for leisure and sports. A baseball diamond, soccer field, climbing structure and tot lot are complemented with beautifully landscaped open space, trails, barbecue/picnic areas and more. Two neighborhood parks are also planned for the early phase:

- Eleanor Roosevelt Park features a gazebo and concert lawn.
- Cordell Hull Park is designed with a basketball court, playground and grassy playfields.

Just beyond the community's boundaries are a variety of active and leisure pastimes. Take a hike or a bike ride on the thousands of acres of preserved natural habitat of the adjacent BLM (Bureau of Land Management) Lands or the nearby Fort Ord National Monument.





## Park Maintenance and Recreation Programming

The County has a number of park maintenance, operations and programming obligations outlined in the service agreements for East Garrison. For example, the agreement states:

- Recreation program management will be provided by the Parks Department and funded by the General Fund. This is not a typical program provided by County parks.
- Lincoln Park (6.8 acres) is the first park to be developed within the subdivision. It will be owned and maintained by the East Garrison Community Services District (Public Works Department for now). It will be funded with the CFD Special Tax.
- There are special conditions that are a part of EG development that have been applied to the development permit, such as the provision of utilities from EG into the Fort Ord Travel Camp property.

The East Garrison requirement to provide parklands, the associated planning, design, development, maintenance and operation details have been in the works for several years. Any substantial changes or revisions (with either the park design or agreement) may need approval from the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

## Strategic Issues

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- Since the East Garrison development and the Fort Ord Travel Camp properties are adjacent to one another there will be various opportunities and constraints, as well as potential land use issues that may require attention.
- It will be important to determine how to provide recreation programming at a level sufficient to meet the County's obligations without incurring additional General Fund costs.

## Considerations for Management Plan

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- Create a budget and support structure for this new property.
- Seek partners to carry out the County's obligation at low or no cost to the County General Fund. *(Note: maintenance of the park will be paid for by a community services district, while recreation programming will remain a County obligation.)*
- Develop a park master plan so as to set forth a vision, expected uses and future capital and maintenance requirements for this park.



## Attachment B: Park User Survey Results

To inform the strategic planning process, Management Partners prepared a survey to offer park users an opportunity to provide their opinions about the County's individual parks and overall park system. The survey was not intended as formal poll or perfect cross section of a given population of parks users; rather the goal was to elicit information and comments from users which could then serve to inform the development of the strategic plan and provide guidance for decision makers. This Attachment provides a summary of highlights from the park user survey results.

### *Highlights of Survey Results*

- Most respondents indicated the main reason they visit most Monterey County Parks is because of the location and proximity to their residence.
- Most respondents visit the parks once or twice a year with the exception of those who visit Toro and Manzanita Parks. They do so three and nine or more times a year, respectively.
- Most park user respondents travel less than 30 miles to get to each park. Respondents who visit San Lorenzo Park, Lake San Antonio, and Lake Nacimiento travel between 30 and 100 miles.
- Park user respondents generally gave a positive assessment of each park's attributes.
- Respondents believe the largest threats to the Monterey County Parks system are:
  - Ongoing financial stability (high risk)
  - Lack of capital (infrastructure) investment (high risk)
  - Deteriorating park infrastructure
  - Lack of park amenities
- Many respondents contributed ideas for increasing revenue as well as lowering costs. These included suggestions about different types of parks passes, strategies to attract new users, creating new partnerships, and maintenance and operational changes.



### Respondent Profile

This section provides general profile information as provided by the respondents to the survey.

Table 2. Age and Gender

Age		Gender	
25 and under	3.1%	Male	37.7%
26 to 64	82.0%	Female	59.4%
64 and over	14.9%	Decline to state	3.0%

Table 3. How would you identify yourself from the following categories?

User Category	
General parks user	90.8%
Monterey County Parks vendor or corporate partner	0.6%
Other parks system vendor or corporate partner	0.4%
Hospitality and Tourism Industry	1.4%
Other	6.7%

Table 4. Home Zip Code

Zip code	Responses	Percentage
93908	176	13.4%
93906	127	9.7%
93901	125	9.5%
93907	90	6.8%
93940	90	6.8%
93933	45	3.4%
93955	28	2.1%
93905	26	2.0%
93950	26	2.0%
93924	24	1.8%
Other <sup>1</sup>	260	19.8%
Declined to state	298	22.7%

<sup>1</sup> Zip codes with less than 24 responses.



### *Parks System Assessment*

This section provides the results of the assessment based on respondents' general park experience with the Monterey County Park system

*Table 5. Please indicate how important the following areas are in determining your overall experience of parks*

	Not at All (1)	Not Very Important (2)	Somewhat Important (3)	Very Important (4)	Weighted Average
Park safety	0.4%	2.0%	17.1%	<b>80.5%</b>	3.78
General park condition	0.0%	0.7%	26.3%	<b>73.0%</b>	3.72
Trails (e.g. hiking, biking, walking, equestrian)	0.8%	3.8%	20.9%	<b>74.5%</b>	3.69
General amenities (e.g. restrooms, shelters, picnic tables)	0.2%	4.5%	36.4%	<b>58.9%</b>	3.54
Passive open space (e.g. wildlife areas, preserved natural habitat)	1.5%	8.2%	29.5%	<b>60.8%</b>	3.50
Staff availability and responsiveness to users	3.6%	20.7%	<b>42.6%</b>	33.1%	3.05
Playgrounds	12.2%	18.4%	<b>37.3%</b>	32.0%	2.89
Campgrounds (e.g. amenities, sites)	10.0%	25.8%	<b>38.1%</b>	26.1%	2.80
Scheduled programs for children or youth	14.8%	26.4%	<b>34.8%</b>	24.1%	2.68
Specialty programs or features (e.g. shooting range, museums)	19.4%	30.0%	<b>31.9%</b>	18.6%	2.50
Marinas	19.8%	<b>32.1%</b>	29.0%	19.1%	2.47
Sports fields	23.0%	<b>29.7%</b>	24.7%	22.5%	2.47
Scheduled programs for adults	18.2%	<b>38.1%</b>	30.9%	12.9%	2.38
Availability and use of technology (e.g. wireless access, online/website tools, interactive learning tools)	31.3%	<b>33.6%</b>	22.6%	12.6%	2.16





*Table 6. Please provide your overall assessment of the Monterey County Parks system in each of the following areas:*

	Very Poor (1)	Poor (2)	Satisfactory (3)	Good (4)	Excellent (5)	Unsure or N/A	Weighted Average
Passive open space (e.g. wildlife areas, preserved natural habitat)	0.5%	1.9%	18.8%	<b>38.8%</b>	35.4%	4.6%	4.12
Trails (e.g. hiking, biking, walking, equestrian)	0.9%	3.8%	17.8%	<b>36.4%</b>	35.2%	5.8%	4.07
General park condition	0.7%	4.6%	22.0%	<b>50.5%</b>	21.2%	0.9%	3.88
Park safety	0.7%	5.3%	24.6%	<b>45.7%</b>	21.4%	2.3%	3.84
General amenities (e.g. restrooms, shelters, picnic tables)	1.5%	9.4%	30.2%	<b>42.9%</b>	14.6%	1.4%	3.61
Playgrounds	1.0%	5.2%	28.3%	<b>33.9%</b>	9.6%	22.0%	3.59
Campgrounds (e.g. amenities, sites)	0.9%	6.0%	23.0%	27.3%	8.3%	<b>34.4%</b>	3.55
Marinas	1.2%	4.3%	16.2%	20.4%	5.6%	<b>52.3%</b>	3.52
Sports fields	2.6%	5.7%	26.9%	25.7%	6.8%	<b>32.2%</b>	3.42
Staff availability and responsiveness to users	3.0%	13.0%	26.3%	<b>27.2%</b>	12.6%	17.8%	3.40
Specialty programs or features (e.g. shooting range, museums)	2.4%	7.6%	16.4%	14.9%	8.3%	<b>50.3%</b>	3.38
Scheduled programs for children or youth	2.6%	8.8%	14.8%	13.6%	6.0%	<b>54.1%</b>	3.25
Scheduled programs for adults	2.6%	7.8%	14.8%	12.5%	3.5%	<b>58.8%</b>	3.16
Availability and use of technology (e.g. wireless access, online/website tools, interactive learning tools)	6.6%	10.2%	17.6%	10.0%	2.9%	<b>52.6%</b>	2.84



### *Threats and Opportunities*

This section reports the results of survey questions that asked respondents their views about threats and opportunities to the Monterey County Parks system.

*Table 7. To what extent do you believe the following pose a risk to the future of the Monterey County Parks system?*

	No risk (1)	Low risk (2)	Some risk (3)	High risk (4)	Unsure or N/A	Weighted Average
Ongoing financial sustainability	1.1%	4.8%	34.1%	<b>51.8%</b>	8.2%	3.49
Lack of capital (infrastructure) investment	2.0%	7.1%	36.2%	<b>45.4%</b>	9.4%	3.38
Deteriorating Park Infrastructure	1.7%	10.3%	<b>46.1%</b>	35.1%	6.9%	3.23
Lack of park amenities	8.2%	28.7%	<b>37.2%</b>	19.6%	6.3%	2.73
Climate change	16.4%	<b>28.4%</b>	27.6%	18.8%	8.8%	2.54
Competition from parks, destinations, or similar amenities other than Monterey County	12.9%	<b>42.0%</b>	25.5%	11.6%	8.0%	2.39

To elicit comments regarding opportunities for the parks system, the following question asked respondents to provide comments in an open-ended or narrative format: “Please comment on the following opportunities the Monterey County Parks Department could pursue to improve the current parks system: public private partnerships, innovative ventures, partnerships with other park systems, districts, or land trusts, or other.” To present the major themes of the responses, the narrative responses have been reorganized based on major topics and themes as outlined in the following sections.

Respondents provided the following ideas regarding opportunities for the Monterey Parks system.

*Sponsorship of Park Functions and Facilities.* Private organizations could sponsor different park functions and facilities for a negotiated level of advertisement.

- Trails
- Camping
- BMX
- Equestrian
- Specific facilities (such as the Laguna Seca Shooting Range)

*Events and Fundraisers.*

- Racing events (running, biking, boating)
- Festivals
- Private event venues (company social events and launch meetings, weddings)
- Contests and sports leagues
- Petting zoo, painting/art workshop, fitness event, stargazing



- Educational opportunities with schools, districts, universities, or foster children

#### *Business Ventures*

- Become a vendor for outdoor equipment and camping equipment with private partnerships
- Restaurants in parks

#### *Grants*

- Community Foundation for Monterey
- Joint funding for natural preservation
- Grants available from agricultural companies

*Potential Partners.* Many respondents provided the names of potential partners with the parks system.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| • Big Sur Land Trust  | • Monterey County Social Services events         |
| • Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Boys & Girls Clubs                           | • Monterey Off Road Cycling Association          |
| • Camping World/Good Sam – outdoor equipment vendor partnership         | • Monterey Peninsula Foundation                  |
| • Chambers of Commerce  | • Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District      |
| • Cities and Regional Parks for programming                             | • National Jet Boat Association                  |
| • Cities of Monterey, Salinas, Seaside                                  | • Northern California Youth Rugby Association    |
| • County Wellness Program   | • NRA – gun clubs                                |
| • Cross country teams   | • Palo Corona to model after success             |
| • Department of Parks, Department of Education, Resource Management Act | • Park service clubs                             |
| • Garland Ranch   | • Point Lobos                                    |
| • Health related groups – event sponsorship                             | • Rancho Cielo – contract maintenance services   |
| • International Hot Boat Association                                    | • Reserve America                                |
| • Laguna Seca Shooting Sports Association                               | • San Benito County                              |
| • Local agricultural companies – grants and facility sponsorship        | • School districts                               |
| • Local ecology and sustainability groups                               | • SCRAM – expand partnership                     |
| • McKinnon, El Dorado, Northridge Elementary Schools                    | • Shasta, Whiskey Town Lake, Trinity lake        |
| • Military – to use or obtain unused facilities                         | • Social Media: Facebook, twitter, or Instagram. |
|   | • The Carmel Valley Park System                  |
|   | • Ventana Wilderness Alliance                    |

Some respondents expressed their concerns about possible partnerships:

- Past arrangements have not been effective at monetizing the parks for the County – access was not equitable, and the arrangements have been one-sided.
- Profits should not guide actions – public interest should guide interest.
- The park brand should belong should Monterey County Parks, not the partner entity.
- The level of involvement and authority of the partner entity should be clearly defined.
- The priority of the partner entity should be clearly aligned with park priorities.
- The length of partnerships should be clearly aligned.
- The arrangement should be mutually beneficial and equitable – County should not lose out.
- The role of Monterey County Parks Department and partnering entity should be clearly stated.



*Efficiency and Effectiveness*

- Create a park advisory board.
- Hire a community coordinator to organize and promote community awareness and engagement. For example, a responsible park user campaign could lower maintenance needs.
- Hire a volunteer coordinator to organize and promote volunteer groups for parks operations.
- Hire an event coordinator to manage and promote private events.
- Plan for the long-term (as opposed to year-to-year).
- Create a clear and efficient events permit attainment process and procedure.
- Look to peer organizations for guidance on operational effectiveness.
- Contract services (specifically mentions Rancho Cielo).
- Monitor current costs.
- Implement an integrated trails system – connect trails between parks.
- Coordinate with cities for programming.
- Establish and enforce park rules.
- Manage trails exposure to users to control maintenance needs.

*Lowering Costs*

- Maintenance
  - Use volunteers from schools, colleges, families, juvenile/adult offenders who need restitution.
  - Partner with groups
    - Backcountry Horsemen of California (BCHC) can maintain horse trails.
    - Ecology or sustainability groups can maintain nature.
  - Water less – California is in a drought.
  - Share maintenance costs with other parks.
- Operations
  - Limit hours of operation.
  - Transfer museum operations to the County Library.
  - Create internship programs and leadership opportunities for local students.
  - Host volunteer driven activities, events, and marketing campaigns.
  - Engage in volunteer horse patrol.
  - Share rangers and other staffing with peer agencies where appropriate.
- Staffing and compensation evaluation
  - Reevaluate staff compensation.
  - Explore alternative sources of staffing. For example, contracting with the Sheriff's department may be more cost effective than employing park rangers.

