

PARKS AND RECREATION

Community Vision 2028

“Recreational opportunities are one of the reasons we live here!” “We treasure this place we call home. The beauty of its land, lakes, rivers and forests ground us in our sense of place. We relish its spaces, its views, and the wildlife who share it with us. We want to preserve and protect it.” – Kezziah Watkins Report

Overview

Outdoor recreation is a significant aspect of the quality of life enjoyed by residents of Kootenai County. The quantity and quality of recreational opportunities available in the County are dependent on a variety of factors, including growth, funding, accessibility, and the quality of recreational facilities. Kootenai County owns 7 upland parks or recreational sites; manages 6.1 miles of Centennial Trail and 5 miles of unpaved trail; and maintains 27 marine recreational sites, most of which are owned by the County. In addition to the facilities owned, maintained, and managed by Kootenai County Parks and Waterways (<http://www.kcgov.us/departments/parkswaterways/>), there are approximately 245,136 acres of federal land in the County administered and managed by the U.S. Forest Service that provide outdoor recreational opportunities for the public.

Structure of the Parks and Waterways Advisory Board

Appointment of a Waterways Committee or Advisory Board is provided for in Idaho Code Section 67-7012:

“The County Commissioners of any county may appoint a waterways committee to serve without salary or wage in an advisory capacity relating to maintenance and improvement of waterways and expenditure of moneys deposited in the county vessel account. Members of this committee shall hold office at the pleasure of the Board of County Commissioners.”

Guidelines for the nine-member Parks and Waterways Advisory Board are as follows:

- To recommend long-range general direction and goals related to the County’s parks, trails, waterways, and waterways facilities.
- To act as a liaison with the public on matters concerning the County’s parks, trails, waterways, and waterways facilities.
- To recommend funding priorities for parks, trails, and waterways projects and programs.
- To investigate specific problem areas and potential fund requirements as may be assigned by the Commissioners.”

Recreational Sites and Facilities



Bayview, Lake Pend Oreille

The County’s Parks and Waterways Department is responsible for acquisition, development, maintenance, and management of numerous recreational sites the County. Included in these recreational sites are public marine facilities (docks, ramps, and restrooms) located on the County’s many lakes. Since 1994 the Parks and Waterways Department has made upgrading existing marine facilities a priority.

Kootenai County Parks and Waterways own approximately 60 acres as of 2007. Parking at many county recreational locations is insufficient during peak seasons. In the summer season, capacity of recreation areas such as beaches, campgrounds, and picnic areas is insufficient to meet demand. The County’s rapid growth in residential and commercial construction, along with an increase in population, is placing a burden on existing recreation facilities.

Currently, there is increased agency communication and cooperation for future planning efforts to provide both upgraded and

new recreational sites and facilities for the public. The Parks and Waterways Department has acquired a 10-acre parcel of land (Loch Haven) outside of Hayden as part of a donation and is beginning an engineering study and developing a park master plan for future park development. As part of its master plan, the Department would like the County to require developers to designate a portion of their project land base to public open space areas and trail systems. These trail systems could eventually interconnect with other developments and/or existing trail systems. The department is currently encouraging developers to donate open space to the County when in the planning stage of land development. This open space could be utilized for future pedestrian trails to interconnect communities in the county as the County continues to develop.



Kootenai County Fair Grounds

The County owns, manages, and maintains the 80-acre fairgrounds site on Government Way in Coeur d'Alene. The County Fairgrounds Board has been involved in feasibility studies for fairground improvements to accommodate more types of events than the existing facilities are currently capable of promoting and scheduling. The fairgrounds expansion would include indoor sports facilities and room for RV show facilities with more technological improvements such as power access for future events. The Fairground Board is working with an architect on plans for future expansion of the site.

Boating Facilities

Kootenai County has 44,000 acres of boatable surface area. Most county-owned or maintained recreational sites are recreational marine facilities. The increasing popularity of County waterways is reflected in the number of boats licensed, which has substantially increased in recent years.

Boat Registration

All boats using Idaho waters, except small, non-motorized craft, must have an Idaho boat license. Idaho requires an Idaho Certificate of Registration and validation stickers for boats to operate legally on Idaho waters. The only exceptions are: manually propelled vessels (e.g., canoes, rafts, and kayaks); float tubes (single inner-tube construction with or without a motor); sailboards; vessels properly registered in another state and using Idaho waters for 60 or fewer consecutive days; and vessels documented with the U.S. Coast Guard.

Funding

A percentage of boat licensing fees is used to fund boating facilities, while non-boating recreational areas are funded by the County's general fund. The County passed a resolution for implementation of user fees for Parks and Waterways, which requires daily launch fees (for County facilities) for vessels registered in Idaho and those registered out of state. Fees collected will be used to fund maintenance and improvements at marine facilities.

Plans for Expansion

The Parks and Waterways Department's planning and implementation of future improvements and acquisition of County marine facilities is assisted by the Waterways Advisory Board. This citizen advisory group advises the Board of County Commissioners on recreational issues affecting local marine facilities. Current expansion plans include significant improvements at existing marine facilities with a separate department plan to expand and improve County parks and trail systems. The Parks and Waterways Department has implemented long-range development plans since 1994 and has made improvements to existing boat dock facilities within the County such as the \$1 million dollar overhaul of the County public boat docks at Harrison.

Other Public and Private Recreation

Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation operates regional park facilities including Farragut State Park and the Old Mission State

Park at Cataldo. The Centennial Trail provides hiking, in-line skating, and cycling enthusiasts with over 30 miles of scenic trail along the Spokane River connecting Coeur d'Alene and Spokane. From I-90 north to the city of Hayden, U.S. Highway 95 includes trail improvements, and plans are under way for a trail along an abandoned rail corridor connecting U.S. Highway 95 with Farragut State Park. Public recreation facilities are also provided by the U.S. Forest Service and the cities within the County.



Centennial Trail

The (IDPR) Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (<http://parksandrecreation.idaho.gov/>) and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe have an agreement to cooperatively manage 73 miles of non-motorized, paved pedestrian trails on the rail-banked Union Pacific Railroad Wallace-Mullan branch line. The Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes traverses the Panhandle of Idaho and connects three counties (Benewah, Kootenai, and Shoshone) and numerous communities in the region. Approximately 40 miles of this trail lies within Kootenai County's southeast corner and provides the public with outdoor recreational opportunities. Scenic drives designated by the Idaho Transportation Department include the 38-mile-long Lake Coeur d'Alene Scenic Byway along Highway 97 from Wolf Lodge south to Harrison, and the 67-mile-long White Pines Scenic Byway along Highway 3 from I-90 south into Benewah County (22 miles are within Kootenai County). In addition, east of Coeur d'Alene, I-90 affords scenic vistas of Lake Coeur d'Alene and its surroundings environs.

The Kroc Community Center is located in the heart of Coeur d'Alene, which is a gathering place for the community. The center's facilities include a performing arts theater and chapel, competitive indoor pool, leisure water pool, multi-activity court gym, fitness facilities, classrooms, and event areas.

Conclusion

Population increase and tourism growth has created a greater need for more recreational sites with improved diversity of recreational opportunities. County-owned recreational sites are generally underdeveloped as regards facilities available to the public, although some sites have potential. Most County sites consist of a boat dock and/or launch, many on narrow road rights-of-way. Existing County recreational sites are predominantly small and would require site expansion for additional development. Acquisition of future park sites should become a priority before development limits expansion altogether. Parks and recreational areas should be designated as development occurs, so that the cost of creating parks and public lands of sufficient size can be properly managed. A variety of developed park facilities and recreational areas are necessary to meet the needs of a diverse population, and to allow for the best utilization of sites, enhancement of natural resources, and public access to recreational opportunities.

GOALS AND POLICIES

The goals and policies in this chapter are intended to articulate the community vision toward the region's parks and recreational activities and not to be regulatory, but provide specific guidance for the adoption and implementation of development regulations which will ensure conformity with the Plan.

GOAL 1: Develop quality County parks, greenbelts, and recreation facilities to meet the diverse needs of a growing population.

Policies and Implementation Strategies

PR-1 A. Create long-term management plans to improve, develop, and maintain County recreational facilities.

- PR-1 B. Acquire land for parks, recreational sites, and greenbelts to serve all areas of the County.
- PR-1 C. Encourage the development of funding mechanisms needed to achieve long-term parks and recreation objectives.
- PR-1 D. Maintain and make available to the public a site inventory and map of park recreational facilities.
- PR-1 E. Pursue opportunities to acquire access to land in order to promote public access, especially along shorelines.
- PR-1 F. Encourage bike paths adjacent to new road construction and reconstruction.
- PR-1G. Establish public park land acreage level-of-service standards.
- PR-1H. Support the development and planning of local, regional, and countywide pedestrian facilities.
- PR-1 I. Consider lands adjacent to manufacturing areas and the Coeur d'Alene Airport as possible park and open space opportunities or as transitional land use (i.e., land that provides a transition between different types of land uses).

GOAL 2: Secure waterfront and near-shore areas for public use and enhanced public enjoyment of county waterways.

Policies and Implementation Strategies

- PR-2 A. Pursue a variety of methods to acquire waterfront and near-shore property easements, such as conservation, transfer of development rights, and long-term leases, as well as outright purchases.
- PR-2 B. Promote development regulations that minimize congestion when designing and siting boat-launch areas.

GOAL 3: Promote coordination efforts with other recreation facility managers to expand available recreation opportunities to area residents and visitors.