



CHAPTER 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides recommendations for developing and managing a park and recreation program in Amador County. These recommendations were developed from staff input, two community surveys, and a comprehensive analysis of park land conditions and needs.

Recommendations are organized into the following sections:

Section 5.1 discusses parkland issues and presents a concept for a park system.

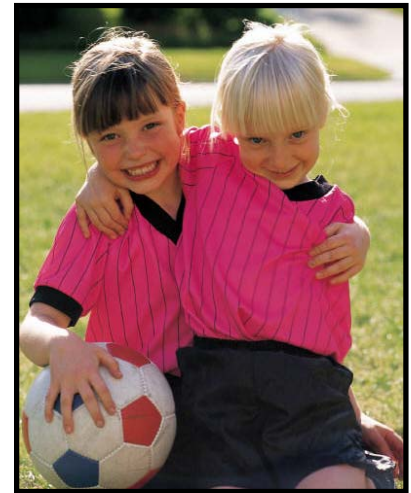
Section 5.2 recommends specific actions for each community or population center.

Section 5.3 presents recommendations for specialized facilities including indoor recreation spaces.

Section 5.4 presents park design standards that cities, the County and ACRA can follow when acquiring land and developing sites.

Section 5.5 summarizes recommendations for administration and management of a park and recreation program.

Section 5.6 offers recommendations for recreation programs and services.



5.1 PARKLAND PLANNING CONCEPT

Amador County is made up of a number of small cities and population centers. None are large enough to financially support a comprehensive park system or offer a variety of recreation programs and services. This is one of the reasons that a joint powers agreement was formed to create the Amador County Recreation Agency. This agency is still in its infant stage and establishing the roles and responsibilities it should assume.

The ideal park system for a community is one made up of a hierarchy of various park types, each offering certain types of recreation and/or open space opportunities. Separately, each park type may serve a primary function, but collectively, they meet the needs of the entire community. However, in Amador County, none of the communities are large enough to afford this type of park concept. In most instances a single park serves all functions.

The findings of the Needs Assessment indicated a desire for larger multi-use parks that could provide a wide range of facilities and activities including sport fields. Because Howard Park in Lone has the largest active-use park and the best sport fields, in some cases it is serving the entire County. This places a financial and maintenance burden on the City. In addition, many park users are required to travel some distance to use the park.

In the past, most parks in the existing communities were developed to a substandard size. They not only were costly to build and maintain, but limit the size and number of facilities they can offer. Based on these factors, the Plan recommends a five acre minimum size for parks. This size and other design standards are discussed in Section 5.2.

Based on the assessment of the existing park system, the park concept for Amador County is to achieve the following:

- Provide a neighborhood or community park within convenient walking distance of most residents. The walking distance is assumed a maximum of one half mile.
- Provide 10-15 acre multi-use community parks in communities or population centers exceeding 3,000 residents. These parks are to provide all of the facilities and services including sport fields for that community.
- Provide smaller five acre neighborhood parks in neighborhoods where no park exists. The basic purpose of these parks is to provide open space and passive park activities.
- Develop a sport field complex suitable for competitive play and tournaments.

The park system described on the following pages is based on the assumed rate of growth of 47,253 by the year 2030. However, recent subdivision activity suggests that the rate of growth may be higher than expected. If this occurs, additional parks will be needed.

5.2 PARKLAND RECOMMENDATIONS

City of Plymouth

Plymouth is a city of approximately 1,060 residents and has slightly over 29 acres of land. It also contains the Amador County Fairgrounds which occupies a sizeable portion of the community. The

Needs Assessment indicated a need for a 10-15 acre community park to provide a broader range of facilities and activities. Specific recommendations are:

- **Lodge Hill Park:** This is a 1.9 acre site located on a hill overlooking the Fairgrounds. In the center of the site exists an old lodge. Recently the Friends of Lodge Hill received a \$220,000 grant to upgrade the lodge building. Specific recommendations for this site include:
 - Refurbish the lodge for community events
 - Develop the site with irrigation, turf and more trees
 - Add a picnic shelter
 - Add a children's playground
 - Develop a paved pathway system through the park
 - Add four to six picnic sites.
- **Norm Waters Park:** This is a 25 acre natural open space site. No development should occur except to:
 - Develop an unpaved trail system through the site
 - Develop a small trailhead.
- **Begovich Park:** This is a very small (0.3 acres) park. Because of its size, no further improvements are recommended.
- **McGee Park:** This is a small (one acre) landscaped area. Because of its small size and development potential, no further improvements are recommended.
- **Public Pool:** This 25 yard six lane outdoor pool is located on the Fairgrounds. Because of the small population it serves, no additional aquatic facilities are recommended.
- **New Community Park:** A 15 acre community park is recommended for this community. It should contain one baseball/softball field, a soccer field, a large picnic shelter for group picnics, restroom building, and room for additional facilities as they become needed.

Amador City

With a population of 213, Amador City is the smallest city in the County. It owns an open area plus two very small parks. Specific recommendations are:

- **Culbert Park:** This is a seven acre natural open space site on a steep hillside. Its opportunity for a trails system is very limited. Because of the steep terrain, no improvements are recommended.

- **School House Park:** This is a very small (0.3 acres) park with a children's playground. Recently a state grant was awarded to the city in the amount of \$198,500 to upgrade the park and install a new playground. No other changes are recommended.
- **Pocket Park:** This site is downtown and contains a restroom building. Its primary purpose is for use by tourists. No changes are recommended.
- **New Neighborhood Park:** In the long term a small three to five acre neighborhood park will be needed in the City. It should contain a small multi-purpose sport field, a picnic area and a pathway system.

City of Lone

The City of Lone is the largest of the cities in Amador County, although a portion of the population is housed in the adjoining prison. Lone is fortunate in having Howard Park, a 90 acre site containing a wide variety of facilities.

- **Grover Park:** This is a two acre neighborhood park that is extensively developed. Specific improvements should be:
 - Replace the children's playground
 - Upgrade the baseball field for girls' softball use
 - Replace the backstop
 - Construct a half basketball court
 - Add a small water playground
- **Heath Knoll Park:** This is a small (0.2 acre) landscaped area. No improvements are recommended.
- **Perry Earl Park:** This is a two acre neighborhood park. No changes or improvements are recommended.
- **Howard Park:** This is the largest active-use park in Amador County. With the best sport fields in the County, many sport leagues from other parts of the community use this facility. By providing other large community parks in other communities, it should remove some of the use pressure from this park. Improvements needed at this park include:
 - Add more parking
 - Complete the expansion of the skate park
 - Add a restroom facility and extend potable water to the Arena

- **Train Park:** Add a safety fence between the edge of the park and the creek.
- **Oakridge Park:** Add a new playground and a half basketball court.
- **Schmidt Park:** No change or improvements are recommended.
- **New Neighborhood Park:** A five acre neighborhood park should be developed in the northern part of the community. Once completed, the City should be well served by parks for the near future.

City of Jackson

Except for Howard Park in Lone, the City of Jackson has the most extensive system of urban parks in Amador County. The 155 acre undeveloped Oro de Amador site offers many opportunities for further park development. In addition to this site, two additional neighborhood parks are needed in the community to adequately serve local neighborhoods.

- **Detert Park:** The playground should be upgraded.
- **Oro de Amador Site:** This large site contains mine tailings and as a result, it is unclear as to its suitability for park use. As a first step, an environmental evaluation should be made to determine if it can be developed as a park site.

If found suitable, the terrain and location make it highly desirable for a large multi-use community park, similar to Howard Park. Before developing any portion of the site, a master plan should be completed. Some of the facilities that should be considered for this site include:

- Sports field complex
 - Large group picnic area
 - Extensive trails system
 - Skate park
 - Indoor recreation center
 - Other specialized facilities
- **Woodside Park:** No changes or improvements are recommended.
 - **Petkovich Park:** This is in reality a downtown plaza. No changes or improvements are recommended.

- **Tailing Wheels Park:** This is a local open space area. Improvements should be limited to trails and a trailhead and refurbishing the two tailing wheels.
- **Fuller Field:** The two sport fields located on this site are owned by a church and leased to a private sports group. The lease expires in four years.
- **New Neighborhood Park #1:** Acquire and develop a neighborhood park in the Argonaut Heights Neighborhood.
- **New Neighborhood Park #2:** Acquire and develop a neighborhood park in the Jackson Highlands Neighborhood area.

City of Sutter Creek

Sutter Creek has a small tourist based economy. While the incorporated population is small (less than 3,000), a substantial portion of the community has developed to the south outside the city limits.

- **Bryson Park:** This is a small 1.5 acre neighborhood park that is predominately occupied by a baseball field. Specific improvements should include:
 - Remove one of the playgrounds and add swings to the other one
 - If room permits, expand basketball court to a full-sized court.
- **Minie Provis Park:** No change or improvements are recommended.
- **New Community Park:** Acquire and develop a 10-15 acre community park towards the south end of the community. Improvements should include:
 - Baseball and soccer field
 - Water playground
 - Group picnic area
 - Trail system
 - Individual picnic areas
 - Small skate park.

Volcano Community

The Volcano Community has three public areas but only one exists as a legitimate park. Because of its small population base, another new park is not recommended. With the anticipated development of a large multi-use park in Pine Grove, this new site can serve Volcano's specialized facility needs.

- **Soldier Gulch Park:** This is a memorial only and does not provide any recreation needs.
- **Volcano Memorial Park:** While large in acres (8.7 acres) the usable area is only about an acre in size. It contains a children's playground and small picnic area. No improvements or changes are recommended.
- **Amphitheatre:** This is a small outdoor amphitheatre that is used and maintained by the Volcano Theatre Company. No improvements or changes are recommended.



Pine Grove Community

Pine Grove is very short of usable park space. However, this may change in the near future with the Volcano Telephone Company purchase and dedication to the community of a 22.5 acre park site.

- **Pine Grove Community Park:** This small (0.5 acre) site is located directly in the heart of the community but is primarily a place for small children. No improvements or changes are recommended.
- **New Community Park.** If developed properly, this 22.5 acre site will serve the entire up-county area well. Before any development occurs, a master plan should be developed. Appropriate facilities could include:
 - Two baseball fields, one adult softball field and a soccer field
 - Large shelter building
 - Restroom
 - Group picnic area
 - Large paved area for special community events
 - Trail system

- Small skate park
- Water playground
- Large open multi-use area.
- Tennis Courts
- Parking (300 cars)

River Pines Community

River Pines contains one small neighborhood park. Improvements should include redevelopment of the entire park plus replacing the playground.

Fiddletown Community

This community contains a small neighborhood park and a community center building. No improvements or changes are recommended to either facility.

Camanche Village

Camanche Village contains several large-lot subdivisions near Camanche Reservoir. While low in residential density, there is enough population in the area to support a sizeable multi-use park. However, because of the low density, a series of small neighborhood parks would be expensive to develop and individually would not receive much use. The most efficient approach to meeting park needs in this area would be to develop one large multi-use park. Papoose Pond could meet this need.

Papoose Pond is a 17 acre park site containing a small pond in the center. Two tennis courts are found on the site but are in very poor condition. The site is owned by the local homeowners association but has not been developed or maintained. Rather than purchasing a park site, it is recommended that the County or ACRA



Papoose Pond, Camanche

enter into a long term lease to acquire development and management responsibilities of the site. The stipulation would need to be that the public in general would have access to the site. If this site cannot be acquired for public use, East Bay MUD owns a 20 acre site directly

south of the subject site. Development of either site should begin with a master plan. Appropriate facilities for the park could include:

- Replacement of the tennis courts
- Development of two multi-use sport fields
- Pier into the pond
- Picnic areas
- Picnic shelter
- Open grass areas
- Water playground
- Pathway system
- Parking for 35 cars.

Proposed Trail System: There are approximately 25 miles of easements for trails. It is recommended that a soft-surfaced trail system be developed within the Camanche area.

Amador County Rural Areas

- **Lions Park:** Lions Park was recently turned over to ACRA. Most of the site is subject to flooding during high water periods. Its greatest feature is its access and frontage on Sutter Creek. A large group picnic area and a restroom building are found at the lower end of the park. Improvements should include:
 - Entrance sign
 - Small open grass area
 - Individual picnic sites.
- **Molly Joyce Park:** This is a 71 acre site owned by the Sacramento School District. Originally the School District had plans to use it as an outdoor education site, but that has never occurred. About 41 acres of the site is located above the highway and slopes up to a park site at the top of the hill. An abandoned farmhouse is located near the road on the upper portion. The park, which contains approximately ten acres of land, has its access from a subdivision located at the top of the hill. The park element contains a soccer field, two baseball fields, and a restroom building. Its poor visibility from the street makes it vulnerable to vandalism.

About 30 acres of the site is located below the highway and is quite flat. Pioneer Creek runs along the back side of the site. Currently, ACRA is entering into a Memorandum of Understanding for the use of the entire site.

The park site offers a wide range of recreation opportunities. Before any development occurs, a master plan should be developed. Potential uses for this site could include:

- Extensive unpaved trail system

- Creation of a large group picnic area with a large shelter building suitable for outdoor events
- Development of a neighborhood park element on the lower section of the site
- Development of a multi-use sport field on the lower section
- Develop a Ropes Course

As a point of caution, because of the traffic on Highway 88, the two sites should be developed and used independently.

- **Pioneer Park:** This park is intended to serve the upper portion of the County. It contains two multi-use sport fields and an old playground. A small library is also located on the site. A large tract of BLM property is located directly across the road. Specific improvements to this park should include:
 - Develop a single-occupancy restroom building
 - Sod the sport fields
 - Replace the playground
 - Upgrade the lighting on the softball field
 - Work with BLM to develop unpaved trails on their property.

5.3 SPECIALIZED RECREATION FACILITIES



requirements.

While individual cities and the County have attempted to meet park needs, specialized recreation needs have not been addressed. The exception has been sport fields. In most communities, specialized facilities excluding sport fields are the last items to be developed because of their cost and maintenance

Until now, the population in Amador County has not been sufficient to warrant the development of facilities that cater to a specific interest group. As the County continues to grow, specialized facilities will become more feasible. Before any of the following items are developed, a financial feasibility study should be conducted to identify development and operating impacts.

Indoor Recreation Space

The surveys and the workshop meetings revealed considerable interest and expressed need for a multi-use indoor recreation center that would provide a gymnasium, meeting rooms, and other active recreation spaces. Currently there are small community centers at various locations in the County. Most are limited in size and designed primarily for meetings only.

Appropriate activity spaces for a recreation center that would serve Amador County should include a gymnasium, a large multi-use space that could be dividable into smaller spaces, two to three small meeting rooms, locker rooms, and a teen activity room. This building could also become the administrative center for ACRA. The cost to build such a facility could easily exceed \$2-3 million and have an annual net operating cost of \$100,000.

The difficulty with developing such a facility is that it will be expensive to build and maintain. It is our opinion that none of the cities nor the County itself could afford the cost. The only feasible way to develop such a center would be to finance it as a regional facility.

Teen Activity Center

The public workshop meetings and the youth survey revealed considerable interest in a central place for youth to gather. Activity spaces vary from sports facilities to basic lounging areas. Most often youth just want a place to "hang out." A difficulty in providing youth services in Amador County is that all of the population centers are fairly small in size. Providing a youth center in one location would limit its use for those without a means of transportation.

Several options are possible. One approach would be to acquire/lease a small place in each community. ACRA or some other organization could develop a youth program and visit each site on a scheduled basis; say once a week. The rest of the time the facility would be closed. While not providing a program in each community on a daily basis, it would offer a limited youth program at little cost.

Another option would be to have ACRA or some other organization sponsor an all-night party for youths in a specific community. This has been successful in other communities but requires a gym and other large space.

The third option would be for Amador County to partner with a youth organization and develop a centralized youth center. The National Boys & Girls Club Association has developed an excellent program.

Existing on donations, they have developed some major facilities and programs. It is recommended that ACRA invite a representative to explore the feasibility of developing such a center in Amador County. The disadvantage of this approach is that it would be a centralized facility and require most youths to travel to the site.

Meeting Sport Field Needs

The Needs Assessment (Chapter 4) revealed a need for youth baseball/softball, adult softball and soccer fields. Most of the need can be accommodated by the development of fields in new parks. The new parks spread throughout the County will provide an even balance of fields conveniently located to most sport teams.



While the existing fields and those new fields recommended above will provide ample space for practice, it is recommended that a sports field complex be developed that would be used for tournaments and league play. These fields would be maintained at a higher level. Some should be lighted.

Recommended facilities for a sports complex should include:

- Four youth baseball fields with 200' outfields
- Two adult softball fields with 300' outfields
- Three dedicated soccer fields accommodating both youth and adult soccer
- Parking for 450 cars
- Restroom/concession building
- Maintenance area
- Tournament office

An attempt was made recently to create an assessment to pay for the development of a sports complex. It was a joint effort between the Amador School District and an organized sports group. The measure failed.

If found suitable, it is recommended that a sports field complex be developed on the Oro de Amador Site in Jackson. Assuming the environmental concerns can be mitigated, this site could be well suited for sport fields. Approximately 30 acres will be needed to develop the fields listed above.

Management of the facility should be a joint effort between ACRA and a sports council representing the various field sports groups.

Aquatic Facilities

There are currently outdoor pools at Lone Junior High School, Amador High School in Sutter Creek, and in the Cities of Jackson and Plymouth. There are no pools in up-county.

Like recreation centers, swimming pools are expensive to develop and maintain. Several options exist for meeting aquatic needs:

- Develop one indoor pool in the County
- Develop one additional outdoor pool in Pine Grove
- Develop a major outdoor leisure pool complex in the County
- Develop several water playgrounds in the County.

An indoor pool is not recommended because of the climate and cost associated with their construction. An outdoor pool in Pine Grove is recommended because a sizeable population exists in the region, it is remote from the rest of the County, and a site is available.

A major outdoor leisure pool complex is not recommended because there is not ample population to support it. Several water playgrounds are recommended. They are not expensive to construct, can be located in small neighborhood parks and are heavily used by young children. They are a good option to building the more expensive outdoor pool. Recommended places where water playgrounds should be developed include: Lone, Sutter Creek and River Pines.

OHV (Off-Highway Vehicle) Park

Some discussion occurred in the lone area for an OHV park. These parks range from trail systems only to sites that contain competitive facilities. Grant money is available on a competitive basis for planning studies, land acquisition, development and maintenance operations. Approximately \$18 million in grant money is made available each year.

The challenge of an OHV Park is obtaining the land use approvals. If a group is truly interested in developing such a facility, it should apply for a planning grant to study the feasibility. Either a local city or the County would need to be the applicant.

5.4 PARK DESIGN STANDARDS

Neighborhood Parks

Description:

Neighborhood Parks are typically a combination playground and park recreation activities. They are generally small in size (less than five (5) acres) and designed to serve a local neighborhood area. In general they serve people living within one-half mile of the park. Typical facilities found in a neighborhood park



City Park, Lone

includes a children's playground, picnic areas, open grass areas for passive use, outdoor basketball courts, and multi-use open grass areas for practice field sports. Neighborhood parks in some of the smaller communities in Amador County may be the only park serving the area. As a result, they sometimes are called upon to provide a wider range of recreation opportunity.

- The typical neighborhood park user:
 - Comes from within a half mile of the park.
 - Arrives on foot or by bicycle.
 - Visits the park on a short time basis.

Site Selection and Development Guidelines:

- Optimum size is five acres, but can vary depending upon the availability of land. Where park sites are adjacent to schools they may be smaller in size. Under no circumstances should neighborhood parks be less than three acres.
- At least 50% of the site should be relatively level and usable, providing space for both active and passive uses.

- The site should have at least 200 feet of street frontage.
- Access to the site should be provided via a local street with sidewalks. Neighborhood parks fronting on arterial streets or major highways should be discouraged.
- Parking Requirements: A minimum of three spaces per acre of usable active park area is recommended. Generally, if on-street parking is available in front of the park, this guideline can be reduced by one car per 25 feet of street frontage.
- Active and noise producing facilities, such as tennis and basketball courts, should be located at least 100' from nearby homes or property zoned for residential use.

Features and Amenities to Consider:

- Open turf area for unstructured play
- General landscape improvements (including tree plantings)
- Children's playground
- Basketball (full or half) court
- Pathway connecting park elements
- Picnic tables
- Small picnic shelter
- Volleyball court
- Multi-use field for practice
- Interpretive signage
- Natural area/greenspace

Features to Avoid:

- Horticultural or annual plantings, unless sponsored and maintained by a neighborhood or community group
- Indoor recreation facilities
- Amenities that require staff supervision or highly specialized maintenance
- Restrooms

Community Parks

Description:

- A community park is larger than a neighborhood park (15 acres or more) and designed to provide a broader range of active and passive facilities and use areas. Most often they provide structured recreation facilities such as sport fields, although individual and family activities are also



encouraged. Community parks can also provide indoor facilities to meet a wider range of recreation interests. These parks serve a much larger area, and in Amador usually serve an entire community. Because of their size, they offer more activities, and as a result, require more support facilities such as parking, restrooms, and large group picnic facilities.

- Typical community park users:
 - Come from within one mile of the park or the community as a whole
 - Arrive by auto, bicycle or foot
 - Visit the park for one to three hours

Site Selection and Development Guidelines:

- Minimum site size should be 15 acres with the optimum at 20-30 acres.
- Due to their size requirements, the acquisition of community park sites should occur far in advance of need. Park development should occur when the area it serves becomes 50% developed.
- Whenever possible community parks should be located adjacent to schools.

- At least two-thirds of the site should be available for active recreation use. Adequate buffers or natural open space areas should separate active recreation areas from nearby homes.
- The site should be visible from adjoining streets and have a minimum of 400' of street or road frontage.
- Parking Requirements: Dependent upon facilities provided. Generally, 50 off-street spaces per ball field are required, plus five spaces per acre of active use areas.
- Permanent restrooms are appropriate for this type of park.
- Access to the site should be provided via a collector or highway with sidewalks and bicycle lanes.

Facilities and Amenities to Consider:

- Sport fields
- Children's playgrounds
- Restrooms
- Tennis courts
- Trail systems
- Group picnic areas
- Large picnic shelters
- Performance space, such as a stage area or band shell
- Skate park
- Special facilities such as an indoor recreation center or pool
- Water playground
- Community gardens
- Interpretive signage
- Natural area/greenspace

- Indoor recreation center or other indoor recreation space

Regional Day Use Parks

Description:

Regional Day Use Parks are recreational areas that serve the entire County and provide visitors with access to special features or facilities not typically found in the local community. They are usually large sites and generally include a wide variety of specialized facilities that can accommodate large group activities, such as special events and festivals. These parks may also focus on a mixture of active and passive recreational activities.

- Typical regional day use park users:
 - Come from throughout the County
 - Arrive by auto
 - Visit the park for two to four hours or more

Site Selection and Development Guidelines:

- The site generally exceeds 50 acres and should be sufficient to accommodate the park's unique features or amenities.
- At least 25% of the site should be developable.
- Access to the site should be provided via a highway or arterial street.
- On-street parking should be discouraged.

Facilities and Amenities to Consider:

- Open turf area for unstructured play
- Small children's playground
- General landscape improvements
- Event space for large group gatherings

- Expanded utility/electric service to support community events
- Extensive pathway system
- Large picnic shelters
- Permanent restrooms
- Off-street parking will depend upon facilities/programs offered
- Horseshoe pits
- Concessions, vendor space, or commercial lease space
- Water features
- Interpretive signage
- Natural open space
- Storage or maintenance buildings (If visible, these should be architecturally compatible with other park elements and any exterior work areas should be screened from view.)

Local Natural Open Space

Description:

Open Space for this study include undeveloped land in and around the existing communities. Local Natural Open Space is land primarily left in its natural state with passive recreation use as a secondary objective. It is usually owned or managed by a governmental agency and may or may not have public access. This type of land often



includes wetlands, steep hillsides or other similar spaces that cannot be developed. In some cases, environmentally sensitive areas are considered as open space and may include wildlife habitats, stream

and creek corridors, or unique and/or endangered plant species. For this study, farmland is not considered in the open space category.

- Typical open space users:
 - May come from throughout the County
 - Arrive by auto
 - Visit the site for several hours

Site Selection and Development Guidelines:

- Site size will be based on natural resource availability. Acreage should be sufficient to preserve or protect the resource.
- Alternative ways of preserving natural open space besides outright purchase should be considered, such as acquiring conservation easements, encouraging donations of land, land trades, etc.
- Emphasis for acquisition should be on lands offering unique features or have the potential to be lost to development.
- Areas difficult or impossible to develop should have a lower priority for acquisition because they may eventually be given to a public agency.
- An analysis should be made to determine if unique qualities and conditions exist to warrant acquisition.
- Development and site improvements should be kept to a minimum, with the natural environment, interpretive, and educational features emphasized.
- Natural open space areas should be managed and maintained for a sense of solitude, separation, or environmental protection.
- Parking and site use should be limited to the numbers and types of visitors the area can accommodate while still retaining its natural character and the intended level of solitude.

- Where feasible, public access and use of these areas should be encouraged, but environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from overuse.
- Decision to acquire open space should not be based on a desire to prohibit urban development.

Facilities and Amenities to Consider:

- Interpretive signage
- Off-street parking if a trail is located within the site
- Small shelter
- Picnic areas
- Trail and pathway system
- Trailhead or entry/ kiosk
- Viewpoints or viewing blinds
- Interpretive or educational facilities

Facilities and Amenities to Avoid:

- Turf areas
- Ornamental plantings
- Active use areas

Special Use Areas

Description:

- Special use areas are sites that are occupied by a specialized facility or fulfill a specialized purpose. Some uses that fall into this park type include boat ramps, landscaped areas, or single purpose sites such as a sport field complex or a community center. Fuller Field in Jackson is an example of a special use area.

- Typical users of special use areas:
 - May come from any part of the County
 - Arrive by auto, bicycle or foot
 - Time spent at the site will depend upon the facilities offered

Site Selection and Development Guidelines:

- Siting criteria will depend on the type of facility proposed.
- Prior to the development of any specialized recreation facility, such as a pool, recreation center, sports complex, etc., a detailed cost/benefit analysis and maintenance impact statement should be prepared.
- Size will depend upon the facilities provided.
- Site should front on a public street or highway.
- Parking Requirements: Depends on facilities provided.

Facilities and Amenities to Consider:

- Facilities and amenities will depend on the proposed activities and site use.

5.5 ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

Introduction

Until recently, park and recreation services were managed by the individual cities, Amador County and private sport groups. Park and recreation services were limited to minimal development of parks within the communities. Recognizing the unmet needs for park and recreation services, leaders in the County met to explore ways of improving the level of service.

The outcome of a series of meetings was the creation of a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) for the purpose of planning and operating a county-wide recreation agency. The new agency was called the *Amador County Recreation Agency (ACRA)* and included the cities of Amador City, Plymouth, Jackson, Lone, and Sutter Creek; the Volcano Community Services District; Camanche Community Services District; Amador County Unified School District; and Amador County. The stated purpose of ACRA was as follows:

“ACRA shall have as a specific purpose the planning, financing, and operation of recreation programs and facilities in Amador County benefiting the Members and all areas of Amador County. The goal is to maximize recreation opportunities for all the people in all the areas of Amador County”.

ACRA receives \$3.50 per capita from each member agency and has an operating budget of approximately \$117,000. Staff includes an executive director, a secretary/program director, several seasonal recreation aides, and a ¼ time maintenance supervisor. Some of the revenue for operations comes from fundraising activities.

At the current time, services provided by ACRA include some recreation programs, consulting services to local agencies and some park maintenance. Most park maintenance services are limited to county facilities.

The current JPA has several shortcomings. First, at any time, members of the JPA can resign from ACRA or refuse to pay the assessment. This action could create a significant reduction in the operating budget. Second, ACRA relies on fund raising efforts to supplement the budget. While fundraising has a public relations benefit, it takes considerable staff time that could be used for managing other services.

The current operating budget represents a cost of approximately \$3.48 per capita. However, it should be noted that ACRA is providing a very limited level of service. Most municipal agencies who provide a full range of park and recreation services budget at least \$100 per capita. If ACRA were to provide all of the needed services in Amador County, a budget of \$3.8 million would be needed.

The financial impact of offering park and recreation services

The major factors that determine the efficiency of a park and recreation program are 1) the ability to generate revenue from services rendered and 2) the cost to maintain facilities. While good design can help reduce operating costs, the greater impact usually comes from

facilities and activities that generate revenue. The chart below illustrates the potential revenue from three basic types of leisure services:



Financial Return for Services (based on the ratio of revenue to total budget)

Figure 5.1 on the next page illustrates the overall cost impacts of offering various levels of leisure services. Starting at the basic level of maintaining parks only (Level 1), very little revenue, if any, is created. At Level 5, which offers a comprehensive recreation program, significant revenue is created to help offset the operating cost. As a result, the net cost to an agency is minimal. For example, the City of Edmonds, Washington has a revenue rate for the entire Parks and Recreation Department of 60%. This means that for every dollar budgeted, it only costs the City approximately \$0.40.

The issue for ACRA is: *where does the Agency see itself in the future in terms of offering park and recreation services?* Currently, ACRA is at a level 1. While an operating budget may be higher at Level 3 or 4 than at Level 1, the net financial cost to the taxpayer may be nearly the same. This means that if ACRA were to raise recreation services to Level 3 or 4, the net cost may not be any more than Level 1 or 2.

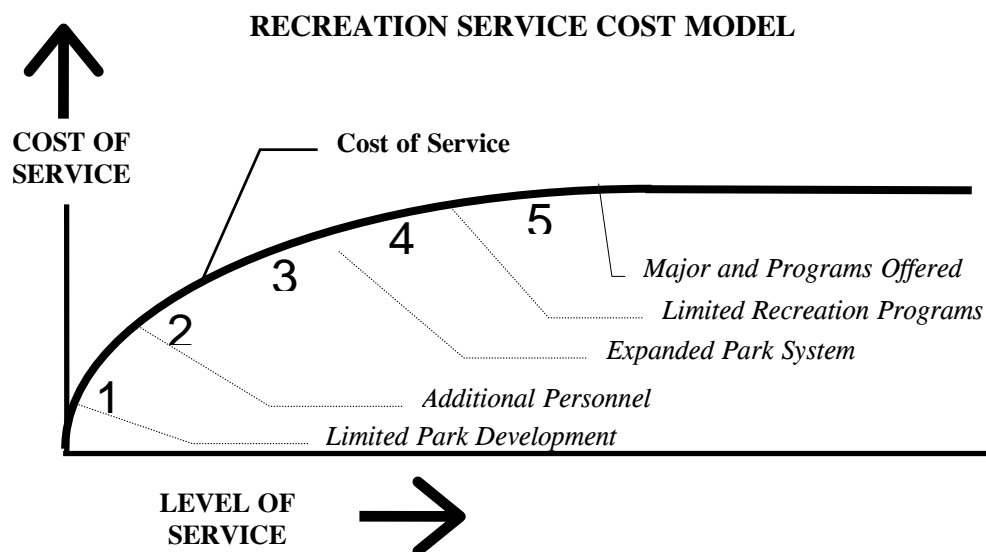


Figure 5.1 Comparison of Cost of Service to Level of Service

Recommendations

- **Create a more stable funding source:** The current operating budget significantly limits the level of service that can be offered. In addition, the resignation of one or more members of the JPA could have a major impact on the future financial stability of the organization. As a result, it is recommended that a county-wide tax assessment be generated for funding operations. See the next chapter for more specifics on this proposal.
- **Expand Services Offered:** In the long term ACRA should provide all of the park and recreation services for the member agencies. In the short term, ACRA should take on more responsibilities as agencies request it.
- **Maintenance Services:** ACRA should begin contracting park maintenance services to member agencies as requests occur. While this service will require more staff and equipment, contracts should be structured to offset this cost.
- **Recreation Program Services:** ACRA should be responsible for assessing park and recreation needs in the county, and help coordinate service delivery efforts with the various

organizations.

- **Promote ACRA and its Services in the County:** ACRA should make an effort to become more visible and prominent in the county. This will create an advocacy for park and recreation services and help create support for a tax assessment described earlier. Some of the actions ACRA should take are:
 - Offer special events that attract large numbers of participants and promote ACRA services.
 - Expand the number of recreation programs offered to both youth and adults.
 - Publish articles in the local newspapers and other publications promoting the benefits of park and recreation services.
 - Advertise special events and programs in the media.
 - Offer sustained, year round programs.
- **Promote park and recreation services:** To help promote the benefit of park and recreation services and make ACRA more visible, promotional and informational brochures should be developed. In addition, ACRA staff should make presentations to neighborhood and service groups, display information at community events, host special programs and in general, promote the benefits of recreation.
- **Encourage volunteerism:** Volunteers can not only provide much needed assistance but involve the public in programs as well. Potential volunteer projects could include:
 - Assist in administrative duties.
 - Conduct maintenance tasks.
 - Assist in special events.
 - Assist in recreation programs.
 - Offer internships to college students.
- **Prepare a marketing plan:** To efficiently offer services, the Department should develop a marketing plan that describes how services will be provided and how the services will be marketed.
- **Form partnerships:** ACRA cannot and should not provide all of the park and recreation services needed in the county. As a result, it should seek partnerships with other providers including sport groups to help meet the needs and distribute the responsibilities and costs.

- **Consider park dedication and development requirements:** California statutes gives the cities and the county authority to require the dedication of park land and imposition of park impact fees that are attributable to new development. Dedication is not limited to the dedication of land, but may also provide for money in lieu of land or some combination of land and money. Where private recreational facilities are provided, a system of credits can be considered. While not popular in the development community, the issue is, *“Who should pay for park improvements: the residents who already live in the county or the new residents moving into the area?”*

While ACRA does not have the authority to require development fees, it can enter into an agreement with the cities and the county to collect and hold the money for ACRA use.

- **Seek grants:** On behalf of the cities, the county and ACRA itself, state and federal grants should be aggressively pursued.

5.6 RECREATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES



Currently, ACRA offers a limited recreation program. Most of the youth sports groups manage their own programs. A privately managed adult softball program is offered in the Pine Grove area but is very limited in scope.

ACRA should consider expanding its range of recreation programs and services. Some of the roles

and responsibilities ACRA should assume are:

- **Program coordination:** While recreation programs and classes should be offered by a number of groups and agencies, ACRA should serve as the overall coordinator to assure that county needs are met. This could be done by creating a county-wide task force representing the various recreation providers and interest groups. ACRA's role should be to help establish this group and provide administrative support.
- **Specific programs offered by ACRA:** ACRA should provide recreation programs in the following areas:
 - Summer playground programs

- Limited senior programs
 - Youth programs
 - Special events
 - Special interest classes
 - Sport camps
 - Instructional classes
 - Outdoor/interpretive programs
 - Adult sports
- **Youth programs:** It is noted that a significant needs exists for youth programs and a place for youth to gather. Several options for developing a youth facility are discussed in Section 5.3 of this chapter. Some of the programs that should be considered include:
 - Drop in program for the youth to just “hang out”
 - Special interest programs and classes
 - Life skill classes
 - Limited recreation level sports
 - Tours and field trips
 - Job skill classes