



CHAPTER 2 COUNTY PROFILE

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This chapter provides a profile of Amador County, California, in the planning context of parks and recreation services. This profile includes a description of the region, natural resources, demographics, land use, and population projections.

Key Findings

The following key findings emerged from an evaluation of the planning context:



St. George Hotel, Volcano

- Amador County's land forms range from flat grasslands to mountainous peaks of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.
- Amador County is the smallest county in California in terms of land area and also one of the smallest in terms of total population.
- At one time, Amador County was one of the state's leaders in gold production.
- The county contains five incorporated cities and three unincorporated communities formed as community services districts. The five incorporated cities make up about 42% of the County's total population
- Amador County has a higher ratio of the senior population and a lower ratio of those 18 and under as compared to the State as a whole. These two population characteristics influence recreation needs and the ultimate outcome of the plan recommendations.
- The major determinant of future park and facility demand is population growth. However, population growth is expected to be slow in Amador County. The current estimated population is 38,133 and is forecasted to grow to 47,253 by the year 2030.

2.1 REGIONAL CONTEXT

Amador County is located southeast of Sacramento in the rural foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. It is the second smallest county in California in terms of size. On January 2005, the population of the county was estimated at 37,574, which also makes it one of smaller counties in terms of total population. The geography of this region ranges from flat to rolling open grasslands to mountainous peaks reaching nearly 9,000 feet above sea level.

Amador County is rich in history. The County is named for Jose Maria Amador, a soldier, rancher, and miner who in 1848 helped establish a successful gold mining camp near the present town of Amador City. Originally part of Calaveras County, Amador County was officially established in 1854. At one time the County was one of the state's leaders in gold production.



Figure 2-1
Regional Context

The County contains five incorporated cities including Jackson, Lone, Sutter Creek, Plymouth and Amador City. Lone is the largest city with an estimated population of 7,592 whereas Amador City is the smallest with a population of 216. In addition to the incorporated cities, there are three rural communities formed as community services districts.

2.2 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Demographic characteristics often provide insights into assessing recreation needs. The existing population base in Amador County serves as the foundation for park and facility demand. Factors such as age and income can significantly affect the level of participation and overall interest in recreational activities. Employment, education, and ethnicity can also play a role.



Table 2.1 illustrates population growth in Amador County as well as the incorporated cities.

**Table 2.1
Historical Population Growth 2000-2006
Amador County and Incorporated cities
As of January 1**

Year	2000	2004	2005	2006
Amador City	196	210	216	213
lone ⁽¹⁾	7,129	7,563	7,592	7,613
Jackson	3,989	4,142	4,260	4,350
Plymouth	980	1,077	1,068	1,060
Sutter Creek	2,303	2,507	2,725	2,944
Unincorporated Areas	20,503--	21,717	21,713	21,953
Amador County	35,100--	37,216	37,574	38,133

Source: U.S. Census; California Statistical Abstract

(1) Includes about 4,000 inmates of the Mule Creek State Prison

For the above six-year period, Amador County has shown an 8.6% increase or about 1.4% per year. Sutter Creek has shown the most growth of the incorporated cities with a rate of 27.8% over the six years. In general, growth has been fairly evenly distributed between the cities and the unincorporated areas.

Table 2.2 compares two of the population groups between Amador County and the State as a whole. As can be seen, there is a substantially higher ratio of senior population in Amador County than for the state as a whole. Conversely, there is a smaller population ratio of the under 18 group. In general, the older the population, the less they participate in active or competitive recreation activities. In contrast, youth tend to participate in recreation activities more frequently than any other age group and favor more active and competitive activities. These activities historically have included basketball, baseball/softball, soccer, and swimming. However, an emerging trend has been toward non-competitive extreme sports, including skateboarding, in-line skating, mountain biking, and rock climbing.

Young adults (ages 18-35) are also an active age group and typically form the core of adult competitive sports. Older adults (ages 35-65) typically have less time to devote to recreational activities and tend to have a more passive interest in recreation programs. They may, however, participate in parent/child activities or spend time as a spectator at youth events. Personal recreational time is at a premium and often limited to weekends and evenings.

Table 2.2
Age Distributions - 2004
Amador County and the State of California

Age Group	Amador County	State of California
Age 65 and over	17.9%	10.7%
Age 18 and under	18.2%	26.7%

Source: U.S. Census

2.3 POPULATION GROWTH

In most cities, significant population growth occurs because of new development and/or the annexation of existing developed areas. For Amador County as a whole, population growth will come primarily from in-migration from areas outside the region.

According to the Amador County Regional Transportation Plan, the population for the County is expected to reach **47,253** by the year 2025. This represents a population increase of 9,120 residents.

2.4 LAND USE

Amador County has a wide range of land forms that influence the distribution and use of its lands. For the most part, the County is part of the western foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The eastern portion of the County is mostly made up of the El Dorado National Forest which covers about 22% of the County. Shown below is a summary of the major land uses in Amador County.

Table 2.3
Land Use
Amador County

Land Use	% of County
Urban and Suburban	29%
Agriculture	36%
Timber (private)	8%
Federal Land	27%

Source: Amador County Community Assessment

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