

9. The County provides access to its preserves, and develops facilities and services for the public, consistent with respective preserve management plans. For example, consistent with its management plan, the Brooker Creek Preserve will eventually house an environmental education center in addition to its equestrian trail. The Weedon Island Preserve will eventually include a Native American cultural education center in addition to its canoe trail and boardwalks. [00-97]
10. Currently, there are 1,038.40 acres of recreational State of Florida lands, 15,677.14 acres of passive parkland, accessible preserve land and open space owned and managed by the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners; 5,826.09 acres of recreation and park lands owned by the 24 municipalities; and 8,085.96 acres of private recreational lands, for a total of 30,914.69 acres, or 29.66 acres for each thousand residents, of active recreation and passive use opportunities countywide. [00-97]
11. In November of 1985, residents within the unincorporated area of Palm Harbor passed a referendum to tax themselves 1/4 of a mill for the purpose of providing community recreational facilities. As of 1997, funds obtained from the Palm Harbor Recreation District have been used to fund the Palm Harbor Recreation Center, Sunderman Baseball Complex, Pop Stansell Park, the Palm Harbor Library and other related recreational land purchases.
12. Three areas within unincorporated Pinellas - County Palm Harbor, Seminole and Feather Sound - have created Municipal Service Taxing Units (MSTU) for the purpose of providing community recreational facilities. Three referenda to create a MSTU district in the East Lake Tarpon area have failed to pass.
13. In 1990, the Feather Sound Community Services District was established in the unincorporated Feather Sound area. An ad valorem tax of up to one mill can be levied on properties within the District for the acquisition, development and maintenance of recreational areas and greenspace. In 1993, the Feather Sound Community Services District purchased 10 acres of land for the development of a community park. In 1996, the Feather Sound District was in the process of obtaining permits for the park development.
14. Pinellas County continues to develop and enhance The Fred Marquis Pinellas Trail, which is a linear multi-use trail that ultimately will extend 47 miles and encompass approximately 342 acres. As of 2000, 34 miles of the Trail are in operation. The infrastructure sales tax extension includes monies to expand the County's system of bikeways and trails. [00-97]
15. In 2000, the Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners continue to coordinate with other local governments to connect the Pinellas Trail with the municipal community bicycle trails into a countywide consolidated network of facilities for non-motorized travel and recreation. [00-97]

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16. As of 2000, the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners has purchased 309 acres using Preservation 2000 funds to provide for additions to the Brooker Creek Preserve. Preservation 2000 funds have also been used to purchase an additional 56.8 acres for the McKay Creek Greenway/Pinewood Cultural Center. These funds are in addition to the at least \$166.4 million already spent since 1972 by the County for land acquisition. [00-97]
17. Pinellas County has long been accustomed to capitalizing on its beaches and parks. Today, however, it is becoming increasingly clear that some tourists are looking for something more unique. [00-97]
18. Pinellas County has a strong tourist base and is successfully developing a significant nature based tourism sub-component. It is estimated that our natural and recreational amenities draw over 4,542,1111 tourists to the County each year. [00-97]
19. Pinellas County has developed a comprehensive program for the management of its properties that is designed, as much as possible, to create and/or perpetuate a sustainable natural system. This is accomplished through the implementation of not only the Recreation and Open Space Element, but also the Natural, Historic and Cultural Resources Element, the Surface Water Management Element, the Future Land Use Element, and the Coastal Management Element. This comprehensive management program approach is what has allowed the County to create a framework and foundation upon which to build its nature-based tourism program. [00-97]
20. Consistent with this management approach and the desire to use the County's lands to instill a sense of environmental and cultural stewardship among residents and visitors, the County has made a commitment to add the Pinewoods Cultural Center, the Gulfcoast Arts Center, the Native American Interpretive Center at Weedon Island Preserve, and the Environmental Education Center at Brooker Creek Preserve to the offerings already available at the County's parks and preserves. [00-97]
21. Also complementing this intent, in 1998 the County entered into a first-of-its-kind partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to create the Pinellas County Environmental Foundation, allowing all the advantages of a not-for-profit foundation and facilitating the use of tax deductible contributions for conservation and land management purposes. This strategic partnership is also helping the county to forge equally important liaisons with other nationally-recognized scientific and conservation organizations, including the Smithsonian Institute. [00-97]
22. Pinellas and Hillsborough Counties recently initiated a unique intergovernmental relationship by accepting joint ownership of Old Gandy Bridge from F.D.O.T. The Friendship Trail, as the Old Gandy Bridge is now referred to, has been converted to a multi-use trail facility for many types of users, including cyclists, runners, in-line skaters and fishermen establishing a multi-use linkage to parks and communities in both Counties. The Friendship Trail opened in December of 1999. [00-97]

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23. In late 2001, in response to increasing citizen interest, the Board of County Commissioners directed staff to look at ways to address the growing demand for active recreation in Pinellas County. With adoption of the 2003 budget, the Board set aside specific monies to apply towards active recreation, with an emphasis on meeting unincorporated resident's needs and establishing creative partnerships to support the efficient provision of recreation. [03-33]
24. While the Board of County Commissioners has historically focused on providing passive regional parks and preserve lands for public enjoyment, the County's parks and preserves have also long served as locations for many kinds of active recreation such as biking, skating, pick-up games of football and softball, canoeing, and other non-passive activities. [03-33]
25. While the Board of County Commissioners is starting to explore how to best implement an active recreation program for unincorporated residents, and is attempting to foster the new partnerships and devise the equitable funding mechanisms to accomplish this, the integrity of the County's nationally recognized passive regional park and preserve system will continue to be protected as the backbone of the County's recreational and greenway network. [03-33]

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**RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT
GOAL, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES**

1. GOAL: TO ENSURE THE PROVISION OF SUFFICIENT PASSIVE PARKS AND OPEN SPACE AREAS AND THE PROTECTION OF THE COUNTY’S NATURAL RESOURCES THROUGH THE ACQUISITION, DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF A SYSTEM OF REGIONAL COUNTY PARK AND PRESERVE AREAS. [00-97]
- 1.1. Objective: Pinellas County shall continue to provide a system of regional County parks and preserves to adequately meet the needs of Pinellas County through the year 2010. [00-97]
- 1.1.1. Policy: Pinellas County shall continue to develop regional passive parks and preserves to maintain a minimum level of service standard of 9.0 acres of developed parkland and accessible preserves for every 1000 residents within the County through the Year 2010. [00-97]
- 1.2. Objective: Pinellas County shall continue to acquire open space, park and preserve acreage countywide. [00-97]
- 1.2.1. Policy: Pinellas County’s land acquisition and management program will focus on making parks and preserves available to all County residents, consistent with adopted park and preserve management plans. [00-97]
- 1.3. Objective: Pinellas County shall continue to design and develop parks, open space and related passive recreational facilities with a focus on the conservation, protection, restoration, management and interpretation of natural and cultural resources. [00-97]
- 1.3.1. Policy: Pinellas County’s land acquisition and multiple land use management efforts shall include a commitment to linking open space areas, and creating a network of greenways and greenspaces, which can be managed to support the protection, enhancement and restoration of functional and connected natural systems while providing unique, passive recreational opportunities, including nature-based experiences, for both residents and visitors. [00-97]
- 1.3.2. Policy: Pinellas County shall continue to recognize, preserve, protect, and interpret archaeological and historic sites that are listed on the official National Register or are of local historical significance within County parks and Preserves. [00-97]

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- 1.3.3. Policy: Pinellas County shall develop park areas utilizing a minimum of 80 percent native shrubs and trees. [00-97]
- 1.3.4. Policy: Pinellas County shall continue to design and manage its parks to protect and restore, where possible, native vegetative communities and wildlife habitat.
- 1.3.5. Policy: Pinellas County shall design and manage its park areas to include the protection of all flora and fauna identified as threatened, endangered, or species of special concern.
- 1.3.6. Policy: Pinellas County will evaluate the wildlife and habitat value of each of its parks to determine whether there are critically significant habitat areas within the parks requiring a greater degree of recognition or protection than is currently being provided. Activities in the park that may negatively impact the function of these critical areas will be avoided. Certain areas within the parks may be set aside expressly for the purpose of natural systems management. [00-97]
- 1.3.7. Policy: Pinellas County shall continue to implement multiple land use management practices within County parks and preserves to achieve the goals of the Recreation and Open Space Element as well as the Natural, Historic and Cultural Resources Element. [00-97]
- 1.4. Objective: Pinellas County shall continue to improve public access to County parks and other facilities including County beach access parks, multi-use trails and boat ramp facilities. [00-97]
- 1.4.1. Policy: Pinellas County shall, through continued cooperation with the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), improve physical access to park and recreation areas by automobile, bicycle, pedestrian, and public transportation.
- 1.4.2. Policy: Pinellas County shall continue to design and develop park facilities with access for the physically challenged.
- 1.4.3. Policy: Pinellas County shall continue to identify and improve existing facilities which have inadequate access for the physically challenged.
- 1.5. Objective: Pinellas County shall continue to develop educational programs and materials concerning the conservation, protection and restoration of natural, historic and cultural resources.

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- 1.5.1. Policy: Pinellas County shall continue to provide educational materials at existing and future County parks which support native vegetative communities and wildlife.
- 1.5.2. Policy: Pinellas County will implement all of the elements of the Comprehensive Plan in coordination so as to achieve a sustainable natural community and to support and promote the provision of nature-based and heritage-based tourism opportunities that contribute to environmental and cultural awareness and responsible stewardship among both citizens and visitors. [00-97]
- 1.6. Objective: Pinellas County shall continue to coordinate efforts with all levels of government and the private sector to increase the availability of public passive parklands and open space acreage to meet the adopted level of service standard. [00-97]
- 1.6.1. Policy: Pinellas County shall annually review and update existing intergovernmental agreements with local, state and regional governments for the operation and use of park and recreational facilities and the management of open space acreage.
- 1.6.2. Policy: Pinellas County shall continue to seek public and private resources to support the acquisition and development of County recreation, passive park facilities, and open space acreage through grant-in-aid programs or other assistance programs. [00-97]
- 1.6.3. Policy: Pinellas County shall continue the appointment of citizens to the Park Board to provide citizen advice regarding passive recreation opportunities and utilization of County parkland. [00-97]
- 1.6.4. Policy: The Park Board shall have the opportunity to review and make comments to the Board of County Commissioners regarding proposed uses or activities which are inconsistent with County policy in County parks. [00-97]
- 1.7. Objective: Pinellas County shall continue to encourage the provision of recreational opportunities and open space acreage by public agencies and private enterprise. [00-97]
- 1.7.1. Policy: Pinellas County shall continue to pursue incentives and enforce existing ordinances which require the provision of open space areas within future developed areas.

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- 1.7.2. Policy: Pinellas County shall continue to review and amend as necessary its existing zoning and other land development regulations to include provisions for recreation and open space acreage, based on locally determined criteria and standards that reflect environmental, recreational and aesthetic needs.
- 1.7.3. Policy: Pinellas County shall continue to explore and pursue various methods to obtain public and private resources to support the acquisition of recreation and open space acreage.
- 1.7.4. Policy: In order to enhance public recreation opportunities, Pinellas County shall coordinate with the Pinellas County School Board to determine the feasibility of making public school recreational facilities more accessible to the surrounding neighborhood.
- 1.7.5. Policy: As feasible and appropriate and consistent with Objective 1.7. (and in conjunction with such activities as redevelopment, revitalization, etc.), Pinellas County shall support the assemblage of land and assist in the development and improvement of neighborhood recreational facilities when accomplished in coordination with neighborhood associations and organizations specializing in the delivery of recreational services. [00-97]
- 1.8. Objective: By December 1998, the County shall have established a process for identifying and prioritizing coastal properties within the County for acquisition, consistent with the State's land acquisition program. [00-97]
- 1.8.1. Policy: The County's process for identifying and prioritizing coastal properties for acquisition shall consider, at a minimum, the following criteria:
- degree of environmental significance and pristine condition;
 - consistency with hazard mitigation requirements;
 - beach access and management opportunities; and
 - urban park and open space needs. [00-97]
- 1.8.2. Policy: The County shall actively coordinate and collaborate with other affected governments and agencies in achieving this objective. [00-97]

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2. GOAL: INCREASING AFFORDABLE ACCESS BY UNINCORPORATED COUNTY RESIDENTS TO ACTIVE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES, AND WORK AS A PARTNER WITH OTHER LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, AGENCIES, AND ORGANIZATIONS TO EFFECTIVELY LEVERAGE RESOURCES AND EXPERTISE FOR MUTUAL BENEFIT. [03-33]

2.1. Objective: Pinellas County shall assess active recreation needs and citizen priorities, including neighborhood-level priorities, as a means to determine the best strategies and funding mechanisms to support a long term investment in active recreation. [03-33]

2.1.1. Policy: Affordable access to active recreation by unincorporated residents will be a priority in developing active recreation strategies. [03-33]

2.1.2. Policy: In addition to looking at how and where to provide traditional amenities like playgrounds and athletic fields for organized sports, the County will also evaluate needs and opportunities for more non-traditional activities. [03-33]

2.1.3. Policy: Partnership opportunities will be a cornerstone of the County's active recreation program, and will include consideration of mutually beneficial interlocal and joint use agreements between the County and the School Board, adjacent municipalities, volunteer groups and other recreational service providers. [03-33]

2.1.4. Policy: Consistent with Recreation and Open Space Policy 1.3.6., the location of active recreation sites and activities will not conflict with the County's goals for protecting those habitats identified by Pinellas County staff as critical or significant, or impact those areas set aside expressly for natural systems management. [03-33]

2.1.5. Policy: The location of active recreation sites and activities, including neighborhood level parks and playgrounds, must be compatible with, and should complement, surrounding land uses. [03-33]

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