

# Benzie County Parks & Recreation Director Feasibility Study



June, 2023



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# Executive Summary

The Benzie County Parks & Recreation Commission approached planners at Networks Northwest in winter, 2023 asking for assistance to assess the feasibility for the County to hire and maintain a Parks & Recreation Director. The impetus behind this goal is to have a thriving, sustainable collection of recreation sites throughout the area. Benzie County features an abundance of recreation offerings to its residents and visitors, yet the entities managing these sites are often not working as collaboratively as they could be; the intent, therefore, is to hire a Parks & Recreation Director to oversee this coordination amongst other potential goals and responsibilities described throughout this plan.

A key problem, as noted by the County's Parks & Recreation Commission, is that at the time of this writing there is little coordination between the various entities providing recreation facilities and programming in Benzie. There are actors at the federal, state, county, township, village, city, land conservancy, non-profit and private level, all working to make up a robust recreation culture. With the addition of a Parks & Recreation Director or Recreation Department, the County could play a key role in establishing collaborative relationships amongst all of these entities. Additionally, the County would then be in a stronger position to help expand and improve recreation opportunities throughout Benzie, greatly serving members of the public in doing so.

Therefore, this plan serves two main roles. First, it provides a technical understanding of the County's ability to hire and maintain parks & recreation staff. Second, it provides information useful to an eventual parks & recreation staff member to help this person carry out his or her role successfully in the early stages of this position's inception (Chapter 5).

The planning team from Networks Northwest arrived at the recommendations found in Chapters 3 and 4 by first, surveying recreation entities throughout Benzie to understand their perceptions around a proposed county recreation department. Second, the planning team interviewed 4 Michigan counties with recreation departments of varying sizes and makeups, in addition to interviews with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Michigan State University Extension. The planning team then reviewed each interviewee county's budget to understand their expenditures and revenues. The key recommendations and takeaways from this planning process can be found on the right side of this page.

## Key Recommendations and Takeaways

The cost to hire a Parks & Recreation Director with a base salary of \$75,000 with benefits is around \$112,000 annually.

Benzie County stakeholders in recreation were primarily wanting a new Parks & Recreation Director to assist with fostering collaborative relationships, grant writing/fundraising and expanding recreation options.

While costly to operate, other counties use campground rentals and park fees to generate revenue that offsets expenditures.

Multiple county parks & recreation directors recommended that a new Benzie Parks & Recreation Director not compete with existing recreation opportunities, if those opportunities are already affordable and widely accessible.

The Benzie County Parks & Recreation Commission should have ongoing communication with local municipalities on the strategic goals and benefits of a staffed Parks & Recreation Director at the county level if they hope to get buy-in across Benzie.

A candidate for the Parks & Recreation Director position should have 5-7 years of experience in management and a background in recreation, including knowledge in grant writing, facilities management, financial management and media relations.

# 1 Introduction

## The Uniqueness of Benzie

Benzie County is a unique recreation destination compared to other counties throughout Michigan, and even compared to nearby communities in the northwest Michigan region. This uniqueness draws from the fact that there are so many players in the recreation space within Benzie. There are federal actors (Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore); the State of Michigan manages lake and river access sites, campgrounds, forest lands and motorized trails; the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy manages nature preserves; the local units of government manage local parks and non-profit groups like Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes and Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail have mission-specific interests. These are all in addition to the many privately-owned cultural experiences found in Benzie.

Even youth sports programming can involve collaboration between entities. For example, the local youth soccer league is managed by MSU Extension's 4-H program on township-owned land. In essence, Benzie County has a successful and plentiful conglomeration of actors contributing to the area's rich natural and cultural assets. While this system seems to work well presently, the Benzie County Parks & Recreation Commission seeks to understand 1) how a staffed Parks & Recreation Director at the county level could enhance these collaborative partnerships, 2) gain a clear understanding of the organizational and budgeting requirements that such a position would entail, and 3) to have a cohesive document in addition to the Benzie County Recreation and Cultural Plan that a newly hired Parks & Recreation Director could use in gaining a clear picture of the county's various recreation offerings.

The following pages provide a brief summary of the important benefits that a County Parks & Recreation Director could provide in Benzie.

## What Can be Gained by Adding a Staffed Parks & Recreation Director Position

### Collaboration Across the County

Recreation does not start or stop at municipal boundaries. A county-wide Parks & Recreation Director can help to facilitate consensus-building amongst stakeholders, reduce redundancies and ensure that various entities are not working in silos. This work would help to reduce costs county-wide and ensure that recreation planning and implementation are taking place in a coordinated manner.

### Economic Impact

Described later in this report, Benzie County's tourism visitation is robust and is a key part of the area's local economy. A vibrant and well-marketed recreation program attracts visitors from both within and outside the county, which has direct and indirect benefits to local businesses. Events, tournaments and natural areas often generate revenue through hotel stays, dining, and other related expenditures. Additionally, well-maintained and accessible recreation infrastructure can increase property values, attract related businesses and bring in year-round residents and tourists.



## Improved Facility Management

A dedicated Parks & Recreation Director is useful in the management of recreational facilities by ensuring that maintenance is ongoing and incremental rather than reactive. For example, it is much more expensive to replace something that is completely broken than to consistently manage minor repairs. In addition, the Parks & Recreation Director can dedicate resources to adapting recreation facilities based on changes in user demographics (tennis courts to pickleball, for example) and can adapt scale to accommodate usage. Well-maintained and accessible facilities contribute to a safer and more enjoyable recreational experience for the community.

## Improved Community Health

Recreation plays a vital role in promoting physical and mental well-being. By having a dedicated Parks & Recreation Director, Benzie County can offer a wide range of facilities, sports programs and fitness classes that encourage active lifestyles specific to local demographics and recreation interests. This would help combat sedentary behavior, obesity and related health issues, ultimately leading to healthier and happier residents.

## Youth Development and Education

Recreation activities offer valuable learning experiences for children and adolescents. One cannot understate the importance of sports programs, educational experiences and exposure to nature for young people. A Parks & Recreation Director can develop and oversee youth programs that provide educational opportunities, skill-building activities and mentoring. These programs instill important values such as teamwork, leadership and discipline, preparing young individuals for future success.

# What Can be Gained by Adding a Staffed Parks & Recreation Director Position

## Community Engagement and Social Cohesion

Recreation programs provide opportunities for people to come together, socialize and form bonds. A Parks & Recreation Director facilitates community engagement by organizing events such as festivals, concerts and sports tournaments, creating a sense of belonging and the ability to form social networks among residents. This has the ability to foster stronger community relationships and encourages civic participation.

## Environmental Stewardship

Many recreational activities take place in natural settings, such as parks, trails and waterfronts. A Parks & Recreation Director can promote environmental conservation and sustainability by organizing clean-up initiatives, educational workshops, and eco-friendly practices within recreation facilities. This instills a sense of environmental responsibility and encourages residents to appreciate and protect their natural surroundings. Additionally, the public can often prove to be more supportive of ecosystem preservation when these places provide for forms of passive recreation such as hiking, jogging or bird watching.

## Seasonal Population

Benzie County, despite having a small rural geography, shifts drastically throughout the year. According to 2020 US Census data, the county's full-time population is 17,970. However, Benzie is a destination location for tourists year-round, and these visitation numbers increase dramatically in the summer months. The table and figure on the next page describe this phenomenon. Even in February, around 30% of Benzie's population is made up of overnight visitors. In July, the amount of overnight visitors is nearly double the number of full-time residents. This data highlights the immense contribution that tourism has on Benzie's local economy. It also provides some challenges. First, communities with large tourism visitation need to consider the importance of eco-tourism. This means managing natural resources in a way that is sustainable. Overvisitation, inattention to upkeep needs and inappropriate uses in certain natural areas can be detrimental to the longevity of the community's natural recreation assets. This will be an important concept for a Parks & Recreation Director to plan for in Benzie County. The director and the commission will need to assess Benzie's assets, their annual use and the need to expand or regulate access to certain areas in order to ensure that the places that make Benzie unique are successfully managed for years to come.

From the Seasonal Population Study for Northwest Lower Michigan:

“With a permanent population of 17,970, Benzie County is one of the smallest counties in the region in population. However, in the month of July, when accounting for the second-home owners and overnight visitors, Benzie County becomes the third-most populous county in the region. The substantial increase in population is primarily driven by visitors staying in accommodation businesses like campgrounds, hotels, and motels. Those staying in STRs also contribute to the boom in overnight visitors, but they only account for roughly 14% of the total overnight visitors in the month of July. For half the year, the overnight visitor population is larger than the permanent population and second-home population combined. Benzie County's seasonal labor force never accounts for more than 10% of the labor force at any point in the year and is aligned with the regional averages.”

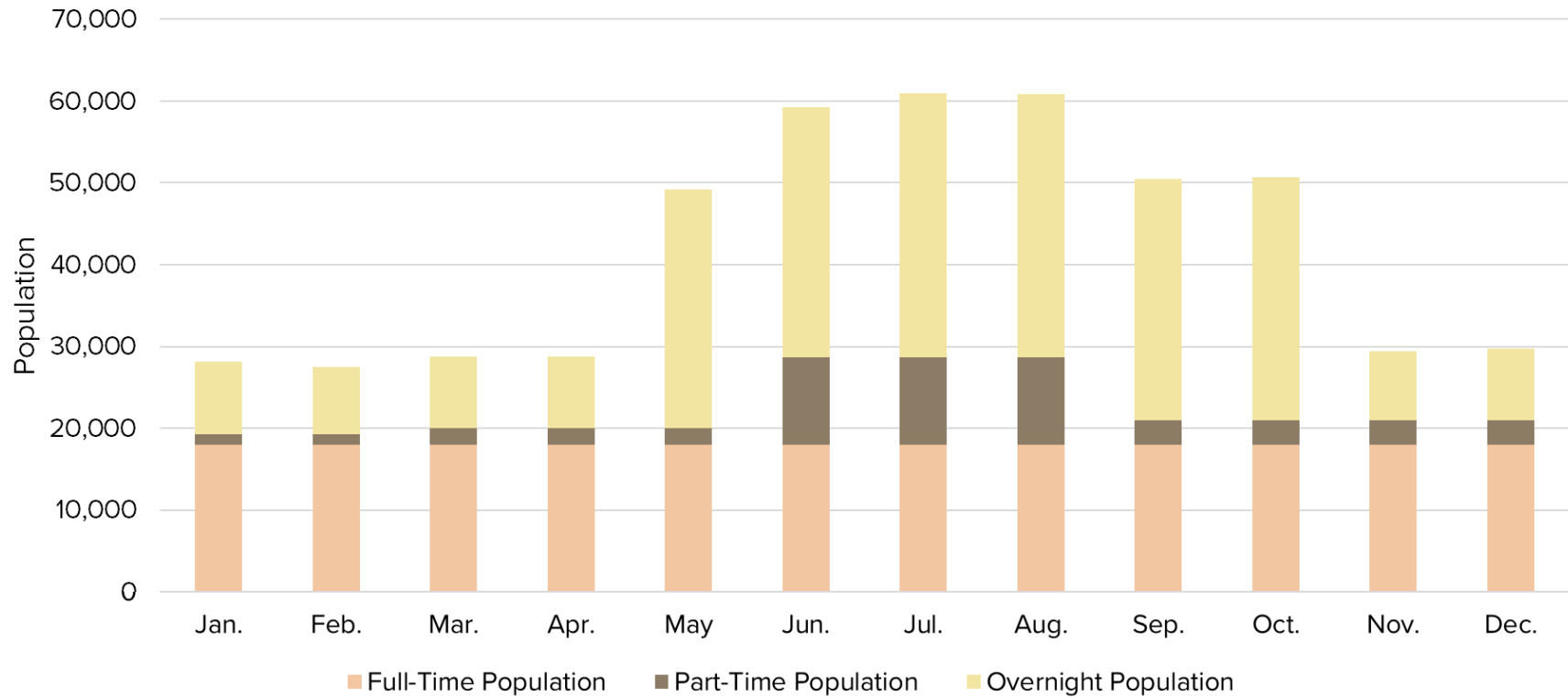
Source: Seasonal Population Study for Northwest Lower Michigan, 2022



### Seasonal Population, Benzie County

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Avg.
Full-Time Population	17,970	17,970	17,970	17,970	17,970	17,970	17,970	17,970	17,970	17,970	17,970	17,970	17,970
Part-Time Population	1,338	1,338	2,008	2,008	2,008	10,708	10,708	10,708	3,012	3,012	3,012	3,012	4,406
Overnight Population	8,804	8,226	8,755	8,845	29,251	30,600	32,227	32,136	29,513	29,713	8,409	8,717	19,600
Accommodations	7,227	6,530	7,204	7,196	25,994	26,340	27,687	27,487	25,836	26,270	7,066	7,244	16,840
Short-term Rentals	1,577	1,696	1,551	1,649	3,256	4,259	4,539	4,648	3,677	3,443	1,344	1,473	2,759
Total	28,112	27,535	28,733	28,823	49,228	59,278	60,904	60,814	50,495	50,694	29,391	29,699	41,975

### Population Breakdown, Benzie County





## 2 Out-of-Region Stakeholder Interviews

As part of this feasibility study, planners at Networks Northwest interviewed 4 counties with existing recreation departments (Bay, Emmet, Isabella, Marquette). These interviews sought to understand the day-to-day activities of these departments, their associated expenditures and revenues, the types of programs and facilities they manage and how this department fits into the county's organizational structure. This information, in addition to the subsequent budget analyses, helped form the recommendations to Benzie County found throughout this plan.

In addition to the 4 aforementioned counties, the planning team also interviewed 2 grant coordinators at the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, as well as an MSU Extension land use educator located in northwest Michigan. One of the primary roles played by those currently tasked with recreation facility management in Benzie County, namely local units of government, is the ability to apply for and manage grants. Many counties throughout the state, including those with a staffed Parks & Recreation Director, apply for DNR recreation grants for the county and for local municipalities. For this reason, the planning team wanted to ascertain from the grant coordinators themselves what they perceive as the benefits and drawbacks of having a Parks & Recreation Director at the county level. Similarly, the planning team sought an MSU Extension representative's input because of her experience researching and teaching on land use and governance topics throughout west Michigan's shoreline communities.

Please note that responses are paraphrased for readability, consistent formatting and to help focus key ideas.

## Key Takeaways

It is important to budget for off-seasons. Just because tourism visitation is down, you still have costs.

Bay County operates year-round facilities: golf course in the summer and ice arena in the winter, for example

The Recreation Director in Bay County is “big picture”, administrative oversight of a team.

Don't compete with services that are offered privately if those private services are reasonably affordable and of good quality.

### Please describe your role day-to-day as well as big picture/long-term.

I'm the Director of Recreation & Facilities for Bay County. I oversee the day-to-day operation of: Ice Arena, Golf Course, Community Center, pool, Campground, Fairgrounds and our maintenance team. My job is more administrative, oversight, big picture than not. I have managers at each one of my locations to oversee specific staff, programs, etc.

### What is your background? How did you get to your current professional position?

I have a Bachelor of Science in Political science and a masters of science in Administration. I have worked for Bay County for nearly 20 years in various capacities.

### How many staff work in your department and what are their roles? What are your hiring requirements for those positions (i.e. what are you looking for)?

In the recreation side of my department we have 10 full-time staff along with around 20 part-time staff members. We also have many summer/temporary staff members.

### What programs, facilities and services does your department provide?

**Ice Arena** – This facility has 2 sheets of ice for anything from public skate, to adult and youth hockey leagues, tournaments, learn to skate lessons, figure skating, speed skating, summer camps, hourly ice rental, birthday parties, etc.



Source: Bay County Area Recreation Plan, 2019-2023

We own and operate a public golf course – 18 holes. We organize outings, leagues and tournaments here.

**Community Center** – fitness classes, fitness center, room rentals, basketball leagues, volleyball leagues, badminton, pickleball leagues/open play/lessons, drop in, location for baby showers, wedding showers and graduation parties. We host a summer recreation day camp each year as well.

**Pool** – the municipal pool is used for open swim, swim team practices and swim lessons

**Pinconning Park and Campground** – This space offers camping

opportunities, including 6 rental cabins, access to the Saginaw Bay, day passes for swimming, a boat launch for water access, trails, gazebo and pavilion rental.

Fairgrounds – The county fairgrounds feature walking trails, the annual County Fair, a horse and livestock barn and a dog park.

Do you have a collaborative relationship with a range of entities (local units of government, volunteer organizations, Michigan State University Extension, State of Michigan, etc.)?

We mainly coordinate with local sports associations and granting agencies. We don't have a lot of just open park land that Bay County owns and operates. That is mostly handled by the City of Bay City and other local municipalities. We do a collaborative county-wide recreation plan each year for the State of Michigan requirements for grants.

What sort of budgetary items would a community creating a recreation department overlook or not consider initially?

One thing I tend to remind people is not to forget about off-season budgeting. For example, you might have very few campers in the dead of winter, but you still have costs during that time when you may not have an influx of revenue. Or at the Civic Arena; it pays to stay open in the summer months because that reduction of revenue helps to cover the continued costs of having a building. Spend time thinking about your off-season.

In terms of having a recreation department at the county level, what works well and what is challenging?

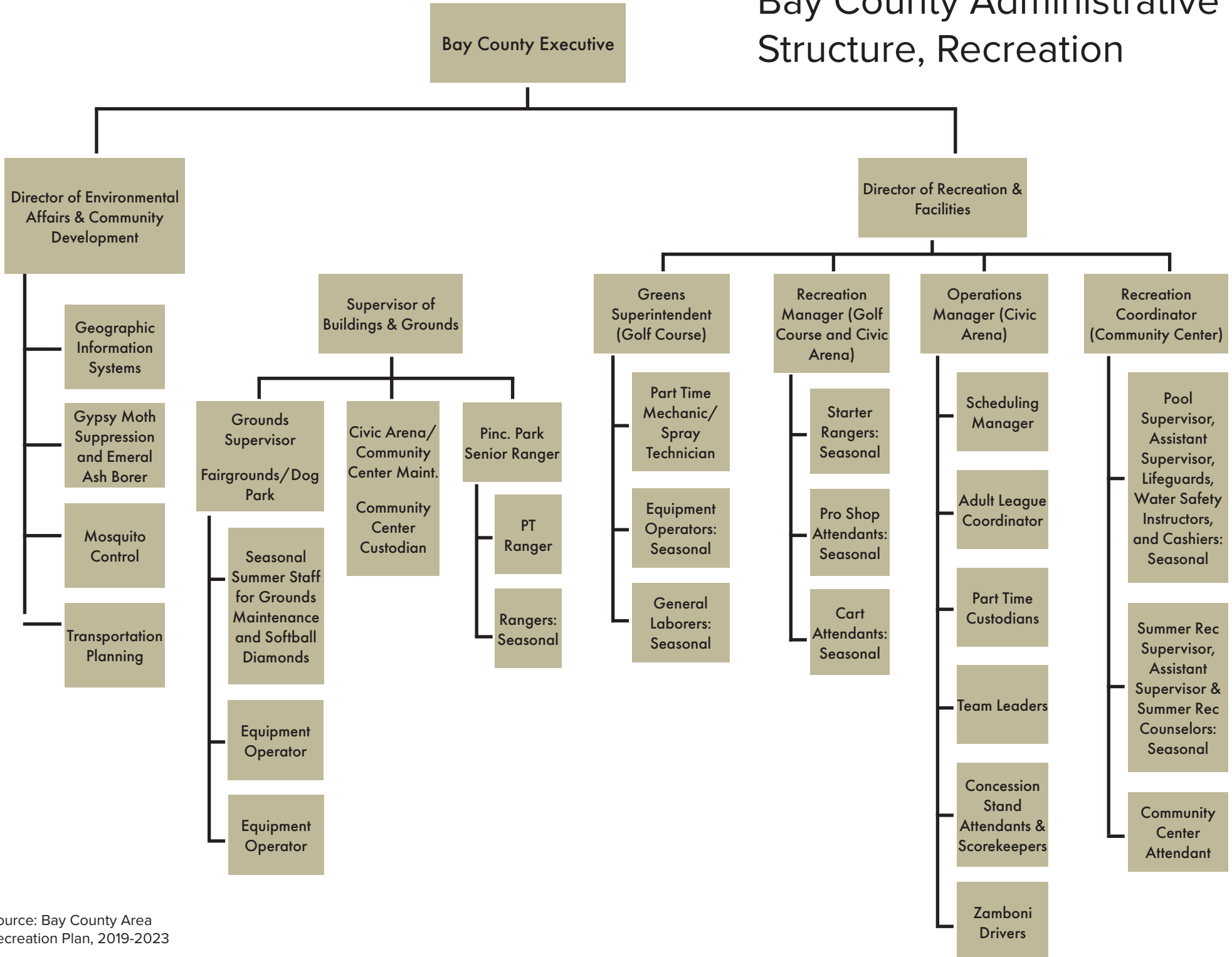
Recreation is not a statutory required service, but it pays off in spades. Economic Development, being an attractive community to live and raise your kids in, and the list goes on. But the challenge is always funding. A lot of recreation departments are primarily made up of parkland. So, it is maintenance, grass cutting, programming and grant writing for playscapes and such. Most of my recreation department, or at least a good chunk of it, is inside a recreation building. So, on top of funding for staffing, programming, etc., there is building maintenance and replacement: new gym floors, new chiller units, etc. That is a challenge: convincing the board that these investments are needed and necessary.

What recommendations would you make for a county starting a recreation department?

Evaluate what you have, make a plan for what you want, and talk to the constituents to determine what they are looking for. There is some value to "build it and they will come" but you want to know what the people want. Also, I would advise not to create competition when there is private industry offering the same service - assuming that private service is satisfactory and affordable. As mentioned before, spend significant time thinking about your off season.

It is our job as government officials to provide services to our constituents. It is our job to do it in the most economic and efficient way possible. But, ultimately, it is not our job to turn a massive profit. I hear a lot of people tell me to "run it like a business". But we are not a business. We are a governmental service to our community. And there is just a difference there. We should attempt to break even. But it isn't the goal to provide recreation to pad the general fund.

# Bay County Administrative Structure, Recreation



Source: Bay County Area Recreation Plan, 2019-2023

# Emmet County

Interview with Ryan Bauman,  
Director of Parks & Recreation, Emmet County

## Key Takeaways

Emmet County's Parks & Rec Department has 5 full-time staff members and 24 seasonal workers.

Job duties shift by season. Summer is responding to immediate needs, winter is for planning.

Emmet County's rec department has revenues and expenditures balance at about \$1.2 million in general fund allocations (expenditures) and facility usage (revenues).

### Please describe your role day-to-day as well as big picture/long-term.

I'm the Director of Parks & Recreation. My job consists mainly of managing daily activities. These may include the department budget, staff, finances, facility projects, capital improvement projects and planning for the upcoming busy season. I often utilize winter as the planning season, which may also include some programs and events. During the summer it is managing facilities and the high use of the recreation sites; fall consists of taking inventory and planning for next year's budget, and looking ahead to the next projects. Rather than having time to plan, summer is more reactionary day-to-day and responding to immediate needs.

### What is your background? How did you get to your current professional position?

Before this I worked with the Boy Scouts as a district director. I started that work out of college. It mostly consisted of coordinating events and programming and recruiting. I ran 4 summer camps. I started with Emmet County in 2019.

### How many staff work in your department and what are their roles? What are your hiring requirements for those positions (i.e. what are you looking for)?

We have 5 full-time staff members, which include myself, 1 person for grounds and maintenance, 2 park managers (1 for a campground and one for a dark sky park) and 1 program coordinator. Similar to the first question I answered, each of these positions' duties shift by season - winter is planning, summer is responsive to immediate needs.

During the summer, we hire 24 additional seasonal members. These mainly consist of general park attendants to cut grass, to clean cabins and facilities, a gift shop attendant and custodial workers. We post all positions on Indeed and the county website. We struggled to hire during COVID. Recently, we understood that we needed to hire at a more competitive rate, so we reviewed a wage grid to become more competitive in the labor market. After that study, our 2021 hiring was better in terms of returning staff year to year (around 75%). If you can consistently get the same seasonal employees to return you save on the costs of training needed, as they already have the institutional knowledge.

### What programs, facilities and services does your department provide?

We have 1 campground, 1 dark sky preserve, the county fairgrounds, a historic lighthouse/museum and gift shop, Crooked River Loch, as well as 1 unstaffed park. Most of our programming takes place at our dark sky park - the Headlands. We often host experts in the field (telescopes, sky events, educational programming, outreach to the community). These events are free and we provide a program schedule on the county website.



At Camp Petosega we host an ice fishing event, the Father’s Day pancake breakfast, a 5k run, Halloween weekends and a fly fishing event. Our partnerships in the community help to pay for events. The County Parks and Recreation Department (admin) is funded by the county (\$250,000) with the cost of all facilities, programming and staffing at \$1.1 million for 2022. This comes from the county general fund.

Where does the revenue come from? What are you charging for?

We generate revenue from our parks through facility rentals and campsites, etc. Programs are free. We consider programs a service to the community.

Do you have a collaborative relationship with a range of entities (local units of government, volunteer organizations, Michigan State University Extension, State of Michigan, etc.)?

We have many collaborative partnerships. We collaborate with the City of Petoskey on the Easter Egg scramble at the county fairgrounds. We coordinate with the Top of Michigan Trails Council. We host an event with the Friends of Oden Fish Hatchery. We have a tree and plant sale with the Emmet County Conservation District, to name a few.

What sort of budgetary items would a community creating a recreation department overlook or not consider initially?

The amount of facility upkeep and the true cost to maintain everything. It’s important to keep up on capital improvements, and it can be expensive.

In terms of having a recreation department at the county level, what works well and what is challenging?

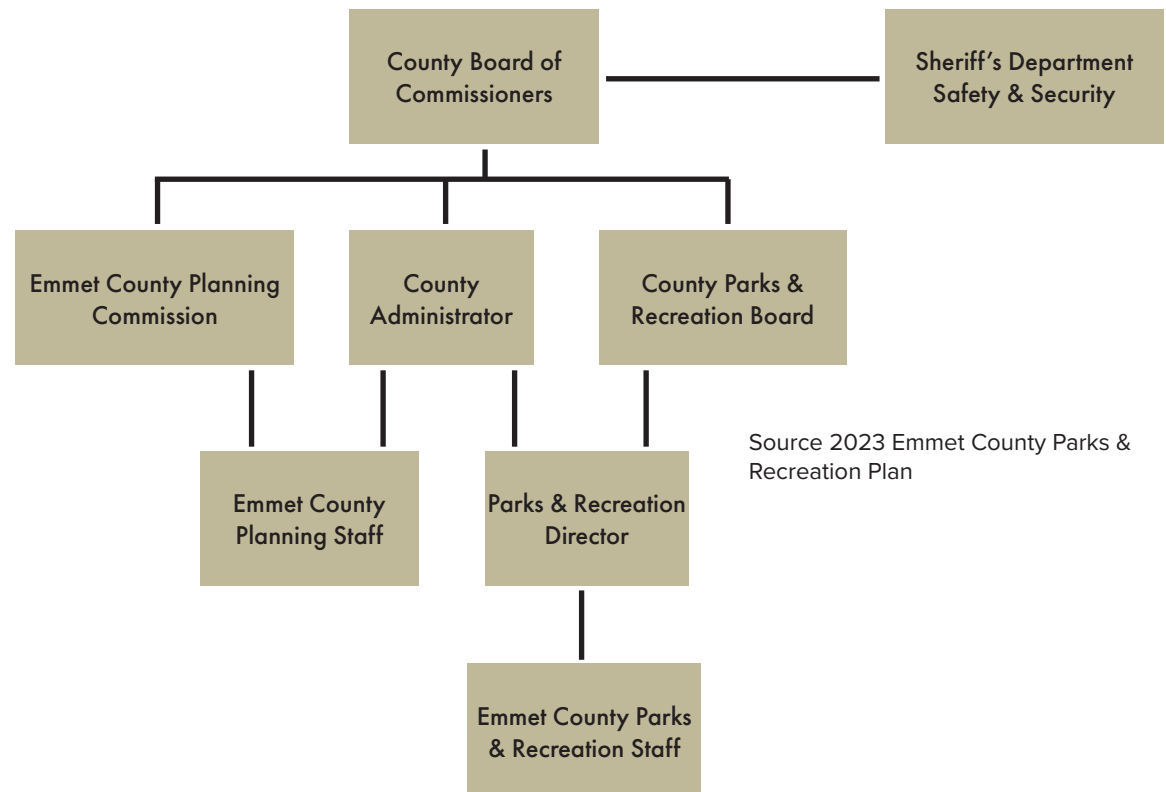
At the county level there are more departments and people, which is a positive because tasks are more specialized.

Everyone is on the same page. One of the challenges is meeting local zoning standards, as it can be difficult to make sure all boxes are checked for recreational uses. Boards and committees can be cumbersome at times.

What recommendations would you make for a county starting a recreation department?

Have an approved recreation and master plan for 2 reasons: 1) to get access to Michigan Department of Natural Resources grants and 2) to have a clear, concise priority list of tasks.

## Emmet County Administrative Structure, Recreation



Source 2023 Emmet County Parks & Recreation Plan

# Isabella County

Interview with Sue Ann Kopmeyer,  
Director of Isabella Parks & Recreation, Isabella County

## Key Takeaways

Grant writing is a critical skillset for a Parks & Recreation Director or department to have.

The Parks & Recreation Director, especially when he or she has a staff, needs to be a strong administrator.

The new director in Benzie should review the recreation inventory and strategically plan what is still missing and what could be improved (strategic planning right away).

### Please describe your role day-to-day as well as big picture/long-term.

Isabella County's Parks & Recreation Commission draws from various other commissions: planning commission, road commission and drain commission. The 10 commission board members are appointed by the County Board and are people who are pro recreation, who see the value in park usage and support initiatives/funding – they're participation also helps to spread collaboration to other aspects of the community. They are people who have a vested interest in parks and recreation.

As the director, I present to the Parks Commission and they present to the County Board of Commissioners. When we recently hired a new parks director (I'm retiring), the Parks & Recreation Commission conducted the interview, along with the chair of the county commissioners and the county administrator.

My and my department's roles on a day-to-day basis include managing fees and charges, administering policies and procedures, writing tickets (in

by-laws) for violations, budgeting, master planning, project management, grant writing and communication with the county board. For a millage, I also have to put together the details, promote it to a wide audience and educate the public on its specific contents. We also do a lot of risk management in terms of training seasonal staff and finding speakers for more technical trainings. The director and the park staff work together on hiring for jobs, with the director having final approval.

Our department also needs to consistently compare our fee schedules to other communities to make sure they are consistent.

Ultimately, the director needs to meet the budget, manage and make cuts when needed.

### How many staff work in your department and what are their roles? What are your hiring requirements for those positions (i.e. what are you looking for)?

We have: the Parks Director (full-time); Parks Supervisor (full-time); Assistant Parks Supervisor (full-time); Maintenance Coordinator (full-time); Administrative Coordinator (full-time); Administrative Assistant (full-time); Administrative Assistant (part-time, year round); Office Assistant (part-time, year round). We also have around 40 seasonal staff. Camping is huge for operations. It's similar to running a hotel in the summer season. Many staff needed and you need to have competitive wages to retain good employees year to year.

Grant writing experience became necessary and an important position. DNR money takes time and is often not enough to cover the full cost of projects.

What programs, facilities and services does your department provide?

We manage 2 modern campgrounds and 1 rustic campground. The city and townships, university, and tribe mostly provide the programming for members of the community. We avoid duplicating their work as it would be competing. We co-manage a privately owned facility that hosts an ice rink and indoor basketball court. The land is owned with county, city and township buy-in through a collaborative agreement.

We groom trails for skiing, pick up trash, provide maintenance, etc. We also maintain the community's rail trail. There is a gate attendant at 4 parks. We also have pocket parks and 1000 acres of land.

Do you have a collaborative relationship with a range of entities (local units of government, volunteer organizations, Michigan State University Extension, State of Michigan, etc.)?

We have various partnerships in the community. We regularly communicate with the land conservancy, the nature center, CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area). We coordinate on the Chippewa River and work with various committees. We have regular communication with the city, townships, the Commission on Aging, our volunteers, the Community Foundation (funding, partnerships). There is an ongoing need to foster public-private partnerships for investment on projects. We work with the tribe, conservation districts, the health department, emergency management, villages, the visitors bureau, the chamber of commerce, the local community college (trainings and webinars), Central Michigan University, neighboring counties, MParks and the Michigan Association of County Parks. How you market partnerships is important in terms of garnering funding. You also need more than just volunteers to operate successfully.



Source: Isabella County Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan

# Isabella County Administrative Structure, Recreation

What sort of budgetary items would a community creating a recreation department overlook or not consider initially?

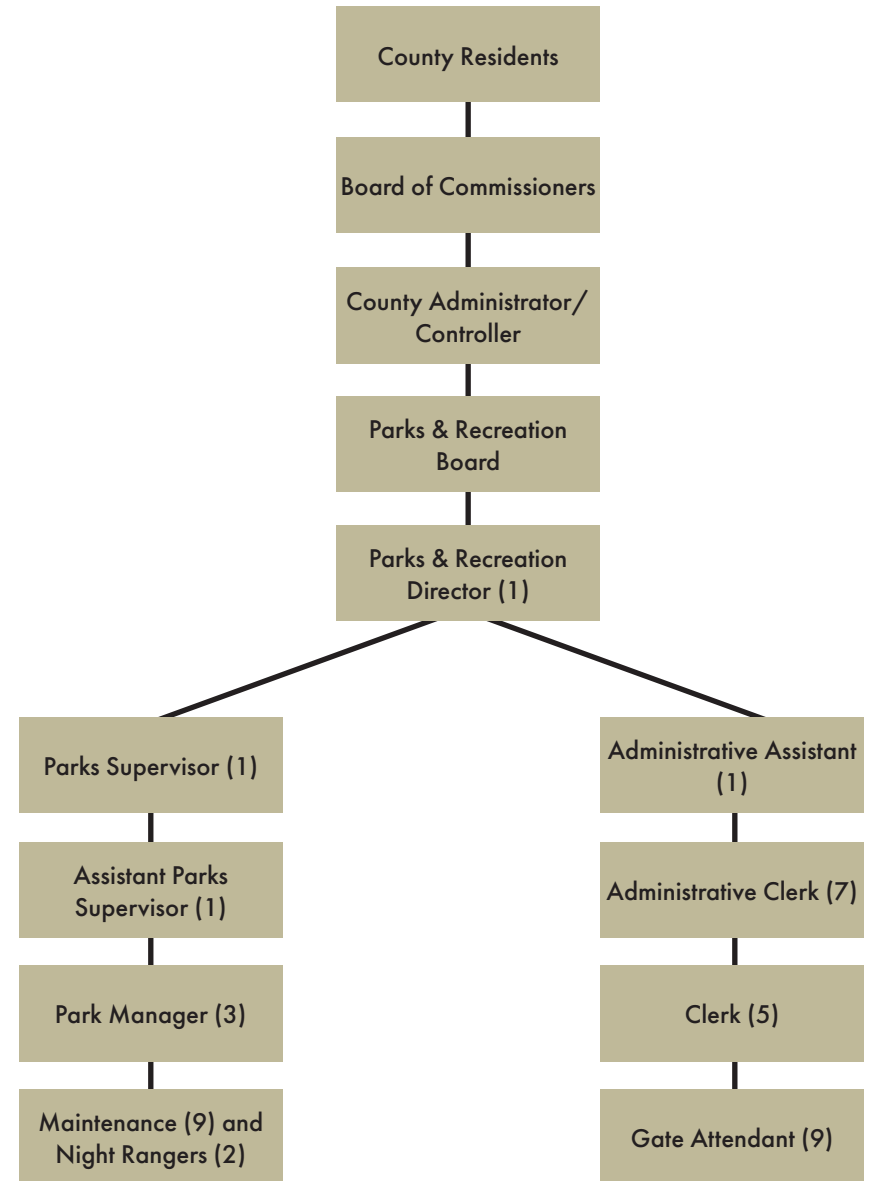
Our funding source comes from park revenue and a park millage of around \$700,000. Campsites have a high cost for operations but can also generate revenue.

In terms of having a recreation department at the county level, what works well and what is challenging?

One drawback is that there is not as much money from the state as the local units receive – revenue sharing affected this. Many counties started going to millages because of this change. A benefit of housing recreation at the county level is that it encompasses a large area and a greater diversity of recreation groups, allowing for more potential partnerships on projects.

What recommendations would you make for a county starting a recreation department?

A new director should do a feasibility study of land and what could go there and whether it could generate revenue (e.g. a golf course, campground, etc.). There should be a lot of strategic planning up front. Figure out what you want – do you want to create sports leagues? Do you want more parks? Is there a greater need to expand programming? What do you want to offer the community? Take an inventory of what is and is not being offered by other entities and look for opportunities to collaborate. Ultimately, create a funding source. Really, listen to what people want, build partnerships, implement. Understand what each local community provides and owns and how you can help.



Source: Isabella County Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan

# Marquette County

Interview with Thyra Karlstrom,  
Planning Manager, Marquette County

## Key Takeaways

1 full-time position is better than 2 part-time positions. Make wages competitive to ensure retention.

Coordinate with local units of government. Do not compete with their facilities or services.

Figure out small ways to offset the cost of sites that do not generate revenue (timber sales, for example).

### Please describe your role day-to-day as well as big picture/long-term.

We have sort of a unique structure in Marquette. Our recreation is actually within the planning department. Our planning department holds forestry, recreation and community development. There is no full-time recreation director, per se. The planning department oversees these activities.

### What is your background? How did you get to your current professional position?

I'm a trained planner and that's what I've been throughout my career.

### How many staff work in your department and what are their roles? What are your hiring requirements for those positions (i.e. what are you looking for)?

We have a full-time planner/recreation coordinator (50% is dedicated to facility management and operations, 50% for coordination/collaboration). There's seasonal labor. This includes 2.5 full-time equivalent campground staff. We also have a senior planner, the planning director and we anticipate hiring another planner. I would say in staffing that grant application and management can be often overlooked. This work takes a lot of time, but is worth it.

### What programs, facilities and services does your department provide?

Marquette County owns and operates a campground with 75 sites, which takes up much of the recreation focus during the summer months; we have a small harbor refuge (summer) and Sugarloaf Mountain natural area. We have some departmental shifts we hope to make. First, we are shifting to work more on collaboration. A lot of the summer months are spent managing and maintaining the harbor and campground. During the off-season we take more time to focus on regional collaboration.

The choice to hire a recreation coordinator/planner was promoted by the adoption of our master plan. Our planning documents are deeply rooted in community input. We know how important natural assets and recreation are to the community.

We've found that state grants are incredibly valuable, but the requirement of the 5-year recreation plan has discouraged coordination between the various municipalities. A joint recreation plan would be an incredible opportunity to get all of the municipalities on the same page. There are many different players but to this point there hasn't been strong coordination.

Our local leaders, fortunately, recognize how important recreation tourism is to the local economy. For example, tourism visitation at Sugarloaf has skyrocketed and we needed \$400,000 to build a new parking lot.



Do you have a collaborative relationship with a range of entities (local units of government, volunteer organizations, Michigan State University Extension, State of Michigan, etc.)?

Collaboration is key for the management and operations of facilities. Some examples for us: the Great Lakes Conservation does trail building; we work with the Marquette County Rec Tourism Network. We've applied for an MDARD grant to work with all the local units of government. We work at the local government level to discuss recreation tourism and to help them coordinate regionally and identify their recreation needs;. Additionally, we help connect local units of government to groups who can help them get the work done. We coordinate with the Big Bay Stewardship Council, which focuses on a sustained economy through natural recreation. One important aspect of our work is making sure the County doesn't propose something that is redundant with local plans, services or facilities.

Our department often reaches out to the State of Michigan for advice on facilities management and grant coordination. We communicate with the regional planning commission and Travel Marquette (visitors bureau). The visitors bureau helps with brochures and advertising for the campground. The visitors bureau also shares visitation data with us. Last year we coordinated with the state, trails organizations and other community groups to start the "Respect Marquette" campaign to help with tourism stewardship.

What sort of budgetary items would a community creating a recreation department overlook or not consider initially?

Grant writing. Tech equipment (trail counters, campground reservation software, wifi, promotion and marketing, for coordinating role). Trail counters are important. You should also have technology available to support local units.

In terms of having a recreation department at the county level, what works well and what is challenging?

The county level is ideal for local municipality coordination and with other organizations throughout the community; this allows for recreation to cross political boundaries more easily. It's important to look for a dedicated revenue source (millage, etc.). For example, our timber sale proceeds help to offset expenses such as managing facilities. Sugarloaf earns no revenue and this helps compensate that.

One challenge of having recreation at the county level is that it is a large geographical area and this can make it difficult to manage facilities and work on coordination. The travel and time to get places can be a challenge. For us in Marquette, there is some difficulty finding contractors to travel to a remote location. Many of our facilities often do not produce revenue and it can be difficult to get DNR grants because of the point system they use at county level (the system doesn't consider impoverished communities inland).

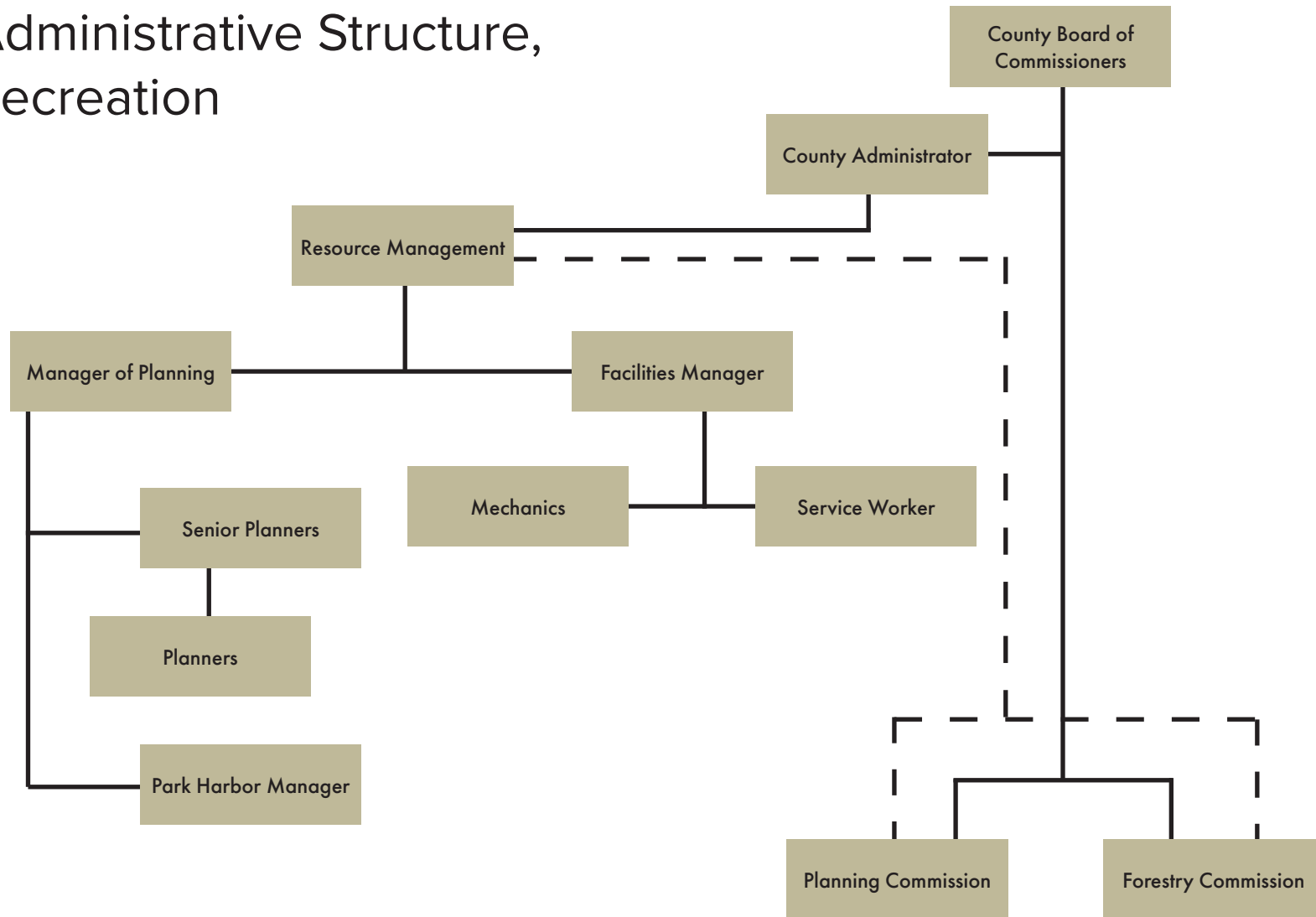
What recommendations would you make for a county starting a recreation department?

Have a strong master plan and recreation plan updated; not just state requirements but to serve as a road map. What are the recreation priorities? Be sure to have a dedicated source of funding for the position(s). Leverage what all the municipalities are doing rather than competing with them. We have found that a seasonal park manager position didn't work as well as our new full-time position of planner/recreation coordinator does now.

It is important to secure year-round positions that are attractive. Retention is critical. You may consider sharing positions. Is there another position in the county that a part-time position could be shared with, especially for something administrative? This works better than having multiple part-time positions.



# Marquette County Administrative Structure, Recreation



Source: Marquette County Recreation  
Plan, 2020-2024

# Michigan DNR

Interview with Alex Galloway and Riley Millard, Grant Coordinators,  
Michigan Department of Natural Resources

## Key Takeaways

County's are more equipped for specialization and the ability to apply for and manage recreation grants.

County-wide recreation is especially important for trail development.

Community input is an important consideration for DNR grants.

### What is your role specifically in terms of your relationship with local units of government?

We work with all of the applicants for the MDNR grants park systems. This involves coordination with all levels – county, township, village, city. We're really looking for grant applications to be consistent with the public sentiments cited in each community's 5 year recreation plans. The DNR wants to see project prioritization and that the grant application meets the goals of the adopted recreation plan.

### What differences have you seen in working with counties that have a dedicated recreation department versus those that do not?

Counties usually have dedicated staff for parks and recreation. The local levels more often have shared responsibilities (public works director). In other words, the county staff can be more specialized in certain aspects and the county also has more resources to leverage. This means greater impact projects. Counties also tend to have more expansive networks. Trails, for example. They can look beyond just a local focus and can think more regionally.

At the local level, especially for rural counties with a small population, there is just lower capacity. In smaller villages there may be 5 or 6 people without technical expertise trying to write the recreation plan or a grant application, which can be less efficient than having a dedicated grant writer. Often, elected officials will handle these projects and if there's turnover it can slow down processes.

It also seems difficult for local units to connect with different levels of government (state, federal) and other agencies – part-time clerks/staff don't have time to coordinate, write letters and write grants. In contrast,

counties can afford engineering staff, planners, etc. – there's more consistency from paid staff.

### Who do you most often deal with for grants and rec plans at the local level when there is no dedicated recreation department?

Elected officials, administrator, city manager. It needs to be somebody with signatory power. Sometimes we'll see a disconnect between the signatory/elected official and the planning commission/volunteer plan writers, but not always.

### What advantages and disadvantages do you think there are in having recreation planning at the county level instead of the local level?

A person in a professional position can take dedicated time to seek various funding and collaboration opportunities – high turnover, volunteer positions often don't have the skill or time to get a lot done. This is true for trails in particular; planning county-wide is much more useful. It's more regional in scope and more connections to non-profit trail groups and other important entities.

As I said before, rural townships can have difficulty with capacity or a lack of familiarity in grant writing. They may need to export task to consultants and there is a lack of time to manage projects. Officials at the local level have many roles, but little specialization.

### If Benzie were to hire a Recreation Director, how could they work with you?

We would really enjoy working with a new director. The DNR likes to have a kickoff meeting to discuss opportunities. This person should also connect with MParks on programming. They should feel free to reach out to the DNR grant coordinators with any questions.

## Key Takeaways

Recreation does not stop at municipal boundaries. A county-wide approach is necessary.

The commission needs to thoroughly communicate the benefits of a Parks & Recreation Director to the local municipalities.

If recreation goes to the county level, the county needs to ensure that funding and programming is spread across the entire region, and not just to lakefront communities.

### What differences have you seen between counties that have most of their planning at the local level and those that have it at the county level?

It's really an issue of scale and connectivity. Townships can't be effective in dealing with the system as a whole in terms of recreation. When people visit Benzie County, township borders mean nothing – they may visit 3 different locations, or 10 municipalities in one day. It's seamless from their perspective.

### What can you say about collaboration? Why is it important? How can a centralized planning model foster collaboration?

For trails and tourism it is more important to have a county, collaborative perspective. There are a couple of options the county government can go with: in one scenario the county may say 'this is important for everyone so we'll foot the bill for the service'. Alternatively, they may say, 'We'll pay for some of it and we want some funding from the local municipalities to help and to encourage buy-in'. From county to county this can vary a lot –

from a nominal to significant amount. If townships pay-in they have to see the value and see what they're getting – this also increases participation, which is necessary for success. The county Parks & Recreation Director needs buy-in from the local municipalities.

Especially in lakefront counties, there can be political issues that deal with how equitable county decisions are – or exactly who does this position serve? A county Parks & Recreation Director needs to be cognizant of not having all efforts go to the lakefront areas and instead be beneficial to the whole geography of the county. This will be difficult and will occur over time – one grant for one trail, for example, may occur on the water. There will need to be strong communication to all types of municipalities about why such a decision was made. In Mason County, for example, there is the ongoing trope that "Ludington gets everything". So, work to make sure there isn't a lakefront versus non-lake front divide. Make sure that recreation programming, funding and site access is as equitable as possible.

Ultimately, you often need staff to do actual implementation. Plans that are written by volunteers often are not implemented. In other communities I've seen tasks that should go to a dedicated role instead passed to the county administrator. Benzie County is asset rich and they need someone at the heart maintaining, protecting and preserving the assets in a coordinated manner. The role is to provide recreation to residents and tourists (more assets, more marketing). Benzie is a very unique community - the population doubles in the summer – so there needs to be consideration for ecotourism and managing overuse.



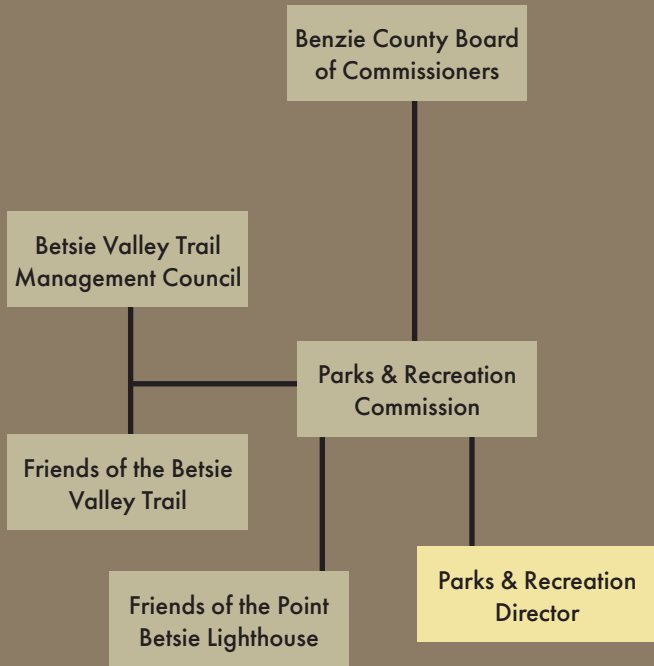
### **3 Budget & Organizational Structure Recommendations**

This chapter provides sample organizational structures and budgets for the Benzie County Parks & Recreation Commission and the Board of Commissioners to consider in its contemplation of staffing for recreation. This chapter includes 3 scenarios. The first scenario is for the immediate-term and may be the only step Benzie wants to take in hiring. This involves only hiring a Parks & Recreation Director.

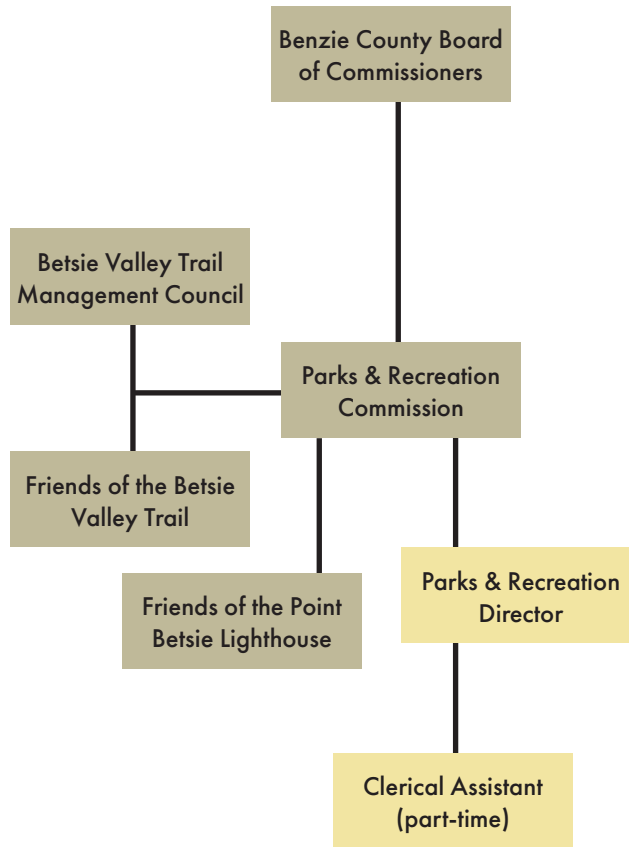
The planning team estimates that for salary, training, supplies, travel and more, that Benzie should budget \$114,190 - \$116,837.50 for a start-up. While the cost of supplies may decrease slightly (as you do not need to buy a new computer every year, for example), the County should expect to need around \$110,000 to cover the salary and benefits of a Parks & Recreation Director position. This number is based on a \$75,000 annual salary, which was extrapolated by comparing county Parks & Recreation Director wages from similar counties in Michigan. This salary estimate is competitive and increases the likelihood that Benzie will attract and retain a talented administrator, communicator, planner and implementor for this position.

This chapter also includes 2 hypothetical scenarios. These hypothetical medium and long-term budgets and structures are based on the discussions with the 4 counties reviewed in the last chapter. They make certain assumptions about Benzie County's trajectory as a prominent recreation player. These scenarios are only meant to help the commission consider what the future role of Benzie is as it pertains to recreation. The immediate-term scenario is most relevant to this report.

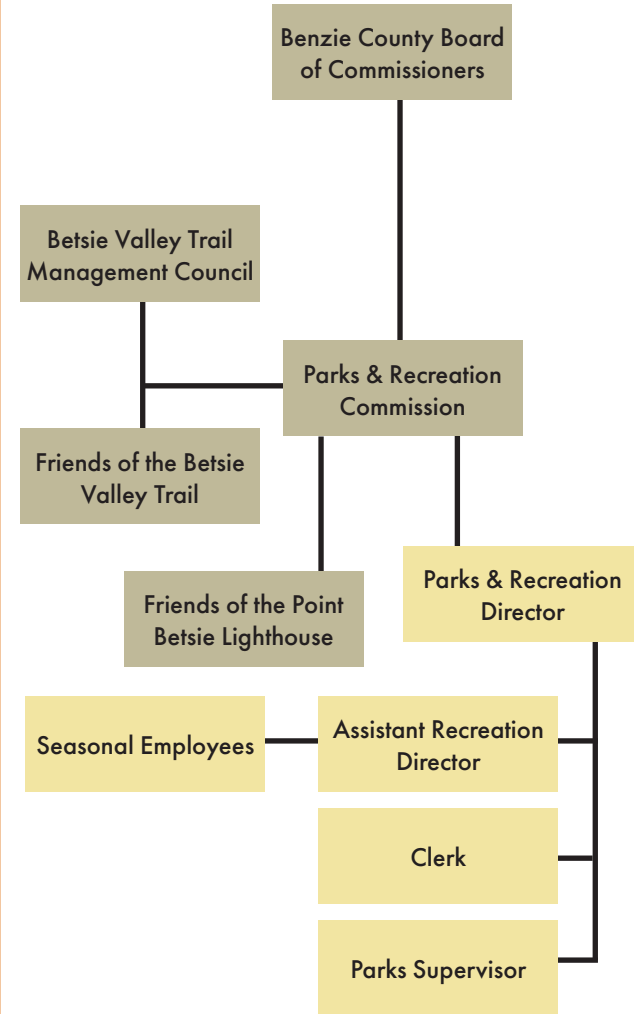
# Immediate-Term



# Medium-Term (hypothetical)



# Long-Term (hypothetical)



## Years 1 - 5 budget (Parks & Recreation Director Only Option)

Parks & Recreation Director	
Salary	\$75,000
Fringe Benefits (30% of wages)	\$22,500
Retirement Contribution (8% of wages)	\$6,000
Training/ Education	\$100 - \$1,000
Membership(s) (mParks for example)	\$250 - \$1,000
FICA (7.65%)	\$5,737.50
<b>TOTAL SALARY COSTS</b>	<b>\$109,587.50 - \$111,237.50</b>
Facilities, Supplies & Travel	
Telephone/Cell Phone (BYOD reimbursement)	\$500
Office Supplies (startup cost, this should be reduced for subsequent years)	\$1,500
Computer	\$500 - \$1,200
Printing & Postage	\$300
Advertising	\$100
Department Vehicle Option	
Auto Insurance	\$1,600
Gasoline (est. 50 miles/week)	\$400
Personal Vehicle Option	
Travel Reimbursement (.655/mile) (est. 50 miles/week)	\$1,703
<b>TOTAL MISC COSTS</b>	<b>\$4,603 - \$5,600</b>
<b>Total Cost to Hire and Maintain Parks &amp; Rec. Director</b>	<b>\$114,190 - \$116,837.50</b>



# Years 6-10 Sample Budget (Growing the Department)

In this hypothetical scenario, Benzie County now plays a more active role in assisting various actors, including local units, with programming, grant writing and cost-sharing for park maintenance. Some of the local units with fewer resources may have contracts with the County to help with grant applications, equipment, sports leagues and educational opportunities. At this point, Benzie County may also access funding to acquire additional parkland for the community with passive recreation opportunities (hiking, fishing, bird watching, for example). Because of the growing number of administrative tasks, the County Parks & Recreation Director can use the assistance of a part-time Clerical Assistant. This person may handle online portals (sports program sign-up, facility rentals, etc.), manage contracts and other basic office functions.

Parks & Recreation Director	
Salary	\$75,000
Fringe Benefits (30% of wages)	\$22,500
Retirement Contribution (8% of wages)	\$6,000
Training/Education	\$100 - \$1,000
Membership(s) (mParks for example)	\$250 - \$1,000
FICA (7.65%)	\$5,737.50
<b>TOTAL SALARY COSTS</b>	<b>\$109,587.50 - \$111,237.50</b>
Clerical Assistant - Part-Time	
Salary Estimate Equal to \$25/hour and 25 hours/week	\$26,000
FICA (7.65%)	\$1,989
<b>TOTAL SALARY COSTS</b>	<b>\$27,989</b>
<b>Total Salary Costs to Staff a Parks &amp; Recreation Director and a Clerical Assistant</b>	<b>\$137,576.50 - \$139,262.50</b>

## Years 10+ Sample Budget (The County as Recreation Provider)

Under this hypothetical scenario, Benzie County has expanded its role as a recreation player in the community. While the Parks & Recreation Director’s main roles have remained largely the same, the growth in land, facilities, programming and funding demands require the addition of certain staffed positions. In this scenario, Benzie County owns and manages a campground and 3-5 parks. The County now takes an active role in programming: this may include youth and adult sports leagues, guided hikes, educational experiences and various festivities. The County has a working relationship with each local unit of government, private businesses, the land conservancy and many others. Each year, the County applies for Michigan DNR grants and is active in seeking grants from other entities as well. Because of this robust amount of work, the County now needs an Assistant Parks & Recreation Director, a full-time office Clerk, a Parks Supervisor and a steady amount of seasonal employees to help at the parks and campground in the summer months. The next two pages show a sample budget for these types of salaries and wages.

Parks & Recreation Director	
Salary	\$75,000
Fringe Benefits (30% of wages)	\$22,500
Retirement Contribution (8% of wages)	\$6,000
Training/ Education	\$100 - \$1,000
Membership(s) (mParks for example)	\$250 - \$1,000
FICA (7.65%) - Employer Expenditure	\$5,737.50
<b>Parks &amp; Recreation Director Total Costs</b>	<b>\$109,587.50 - \$111,237.50</b>
Assistant Director	
Salary	\$50,000
Fringe Benefits (30% of wages)	\$15,000
Retirement Contribution (8% of wages)	\$4,000
Training/ Education	\$100 - \$500
Membership(s) (mParks for example)	\$250 - \$1,000
FICA (7.65%) - Employer Expenditure	\$3,825
<b>Assistant Director Total Costs</b>	<b>\$73,175 - \$74,325</b>

# Years 10+ Sample Budget (cont.)

<b>Clerk - Full-time</b>	
Salary	\$45,000
Fringe Benefits (30% of wages)	\$13,500
Retirement Contribution (8% of wages)	\$3,600
Training/Education	\$100 - \$500
FICA (7.65%) - Employer Expenditure	\$3,442.50
Full-time Clerk Total Costs	\$65,642.50 - \$66,042.50
<b>Parks Supervisor (part-time, year-round)</b>	
Salary Estimate Equal to \$30/hour and 25 hours/week	\$39,000
FICA (7.65%)	\$2,983.50
Training and Education	\$250 - \$500
Part-time Parks Supervisor Total Costs	\$42,233.50 - \$42,483.50
<b>Seasonal Employees</b>	
Costs determined by need	
<b>TOTAL SALARY COSTS FOR PARKS DEPARTMENT</b>	<b>\$290,638.50 - \$294,088.50</b>



## 4 Sample Job Descriptions

This chapter provides 3 sample job descriptions for the County to consider and alter in its effort to hire a Parks & Recreation Director, and other staff as needed down the road. The job descriptions were largely borrowed from Isabella County, which just recently hired a new Parks & Recreation Director to its County staff. In reviewing Isabella and Emmet County’s parks director job duties, there are a few key features of a potential applicant that Benzie should consider.

First, this person should have a robust background in recreation management. Benzie’s recreation assets and needs are expansive, the area is desirable and for the salary suggested in the previous chapter, should attract a competitive field of applicants. Therefore, Benzie should expect that the right person have at least 5-7 years of experience managing recreation programs, facilities and others assets. For example, Emmet County’s director spent years running Boy Scouts camps and programs, including recruiting, budgeting and marketing.

Second, the Parks & Recreation Director should have a strong understanding of budgets and their management. As the department grows in its offerings, it will be important for a director to understand how the relationship between each recreation asset’s expenditures and potential revenues. This person should have strong experience in grant writing, as this will be a key aspect of the job.

Finally, because this person will be responsible for building collaborative relationships and regularly communicating with members of the public, he or she should have strong communication skills. This consideration in addition to the need for grant writing should prompt the County to require various writing samples during its interview process, and interview the candidate multiple times to ensure they have quality written and verbal communication skills.

## Position: Parks & Recreation Director

### GENERAL SUMMARY

Oversees the operations of the County Parks and Recreation Department through planning, developing and administering a comprehensive program to manage park lands, facilities, projects and recreation programs. Manages administrative and support functions through community partnerships. Responsible for all financial management of the department.

### ESSENTIAL DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The intent of this job description is to provide a representative summary of the major duties and responsibilities performed by incumbents of this job. Employees may be requested to perform job-related tasks other than those specifically presented in this description.

- Works to accomplish the objectives set forth in the Benzie County Recreation and Cultural Plan.
- Generates a collaborative relationship between the various recreation actors in Benzie County including federal, state, local, non-profit and for-profit entities.
- Organizes and engages volunteers to support programming and educational initiatives in the community.
- Researches grants and other funding sources to support park projects and activities.
- Works with the Parks and Recreation Commission to establish the goals and objectives of the department and develops policies to assist in directing operations and attaining those objectives. Responsible for long-range planning of operations including land acquisition, site development, special projects and analysis of potential for park usage, programs and special events.
- Oversees the financial management of the department. Creates and maintain financial reports and records.
- Prepares, monitors and maintains departmental budget and project budgets. Monitors expenditures and revenues.
- Oversees all developmental and improvement projects, including working with contractors, departmental staff and others in the planning and supervising of such projects. Prepares cost estimates and makes recommendations on projects to the Parks and Recreation Commission.
- Maintains and promotes cooperation with various groups, other government agencies, organizations, individuals and other County Departments.
- Oversees media relations and coordinates promotional projects. Supervises all media/promotional materials and presentations for department events, initiatives and programming.

- Coordinates the acquisition of park lands as directed by the Parks and Recreation Commission and approval of the Board of Commissioners.
- Performs other duties as assigned.

## MINIMUM ENTRANCE QUALIFICATIONS

### Education and Experience

- Bachelor's degree in Parks & Recreation Management or related field.
- Seven (7) years of progressively responsible experience in parks and recreation management, fiscal management, knowledge of natural resources, demonstrated experience in long range planning and implementation and the development of administration programs.
- Any equivalent combination of training, education, and experience that provides the required skills, knowledge and abilities.

### Licenses or Certifications

- Valid driver's license.

## PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS

- Certified Parks and Recreation Professional.
- Master's degree in Parks and Recreation Management.

## COMPETENCIES FOR SUCCESSFUL PERFORMANCE OF JOB DUTIES

### Knowledge of:

- Park systems, including facilities and programs.
- Grant writing and management.
- Modern office equipment, procedures and applicable software packages.
- Planning, development and implementation of park operations.
- Departmental policies, procedures, goals and objectives.
- Principles and practices of employee supervision.

- Principles and practices of budget preparation and management.
- Long and short term planning techniques.
- Effective marketing and promotions.
- Funding resources on acquisition projects.

Skill in:

- Program and project management.
- Organization and time management.
- Creating and maintaining a variety of records and reports.
- Establishing and maintaining effective working relationships.
- Written and verbal communication.
- Organizing and conducting meetings.
- Leadership and coordination.
- Strategic planning.
- Delivering presentations and public speaking.
- Creating and supervising a marketing plan.
- Critical thinking, problem solving and decision making.

WORK ENVIRONMENT/CONDITIONS

The work environment and exposures described here are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

Work Environment	Seldom or Never	Occasionally	Frequently or Often
Office or similar indoor environment			X
Outdoor environment		X	
Street environment		X	
Construction site		X	
In the community (homes, businesses, etc.)		X	



## Position: Clerical Assistant - Parks & Recreation

### GENERAL SUMMARY

Performs business and some clerical tasks to support assigned area. Such duties include general office support, project support, computer work, use of other office equipment and research assistance. Core duties will include a broad variety of responsible tasks.

### ESSENTIAL DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The intent of this job description is to provide a representative summary of the major duties and responsibilities performed by incumbents of this job. Employees may be requested to perform job-related tasks other than those specifically presented in this description.

- Provides general clerical support, including utilizing word processing to prepare monthly reports, statistical data, informational materials and other documents, typing a variety of materials and maintaining related records on programs and services.
- Performs various data entry functions and organizes filing systems.
- Performs general office duties, including establishing and maintaining filing systems, preparing newsletters and correspondence, scheduling, answering phones and providing information to the public.
- Requisitions purchase orders, requests pricing, orders materials.
- Maintains office supplies, which includes determining inventory levels, evaluating new office products, placing orders for supplies, verifying receipt of supplies and troubleshooting equipment malfunctions.
- Performs other duties as assigned.

### MINIMUM ENTRANCE QUALIFICATIONS

#### Education and Experience

- High school diploma or equivalent.
- One (1) year of customer service, money handling, filing, and general office experience.
- Any equivalent combination of training, education, and experience that provides the required skills, knowledge and abilities.

#### Licenses or Certifications

- Valid Driver's License.

## COMPETENCIES FOR SUCCESSFUL PERFORMANCE OF JOB DUTIES

### Knowledge of:

- Departmental policies and procedures.
- Modern office equipment, procedures and applicable software packages.
- File management standards and numbering systems.
- Proper business English.
- Financial accounting system.
- Data input processes.

### Skill in:

- Organization and time management.
- Following oral and written instruction.
- Meeting scheduled deadlines.
- Data entry and maintenance.
- Establishing and maintaining effective working relationships.
- Written and verbal communication.
- Reading, analyzing and interpreting standards, policies, procedures and regulations.
- Developing and writing reports, policies and correspondence.
- Customer service.

## WORK ENVIRONMENT/CONDITIONS

The work environment and exposures described here are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

Work Environment	Seldom or Never	Occasionally	Frequently or Often
Office or similar indoor environment			X
Outdoor environment		X	
Street environment		X	
Construction site		X	
In the community (homes, businesses, etc.)		X	

## Position: Parks Supervisor

### GENERAL SUMMARY

Supervises, schedules & participates in all aspects of parks maintenance & operations, including the maintenance of facilities & equipment. Supervises and coordinates full-time & seasonal employees, alternative labor sources, contractors & vendors.

### ESSENTIAL DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The intent of this job description is to provide a representative summary of the major duties and responsibilities performed by incumbents of this job. Employees may be requested to perform job-related tasks other than those specifically presented in this description.

- Supervises, schedules, trains and oversees the work of maintenance workers, park rangers and other designated staff.
- Assists in identifying, planning, prioritizing and scheduling repairs and improvements to park facilities and equipment with an emphasis on safety and security for visitors and staff.
- Coordinates projects and planning with the Director.
- Participates in the repair, maintenance and construction of facilities and equipment.
- Prepares specifications, contacts vendors and makes recommendations to the Parks & Recreation Director for major purchases of supplies and equipment following County Purchasing Policies.
- Obtains supplies and materials as needed while staying within budget and following County Purchasing Policies.
- Investigates acts of vandalism, accidents/incidents, theft, etc. Prepares accident/incident reports and works with law enforcement authorities. Enforces Park Rules & Ordinance.
- Performs administrative functions, including developing and updating procedures, checklists and budget recommendations and tracking and maintaining records of maintenance of equipment and facilities.
- Performs other duties as assigned.

### MINIMUM ENTRANCE QUALIFICATIONS

#### Education and Experience

- Bachelor's Degree in Parks and Recreation, Parks and Leisure Services or a related field.

- Five (5) years of supervisory experience and experience in park and/or campground operations. Knowledge in at least one of the following: Construction, plumbing, electrical, landscaping/horticulture, engineering.

Any equivalent combination of training, education, and experience that provides the required skills, knowledge and abilities.

#### Licenses or Certifications

- Valid Michigan Driver's License.
- Current Michigan Commercial Pesticide Applicator Certification.

#### COMPETENCIES FOR SUCCESSFUL PERFORMANCE OF JOB DUTIES

##### Knowledge of:

- Mechanical, plumbing, electrical, construction and landscaping, depending on area of assignment.
- Modern office equipment, procedures and applicable software packages.
- Principles and practices of employee supervision.
- Facility operations and regulations.
- The safety precautions associated with the job.
- Basic engineering principles.
- Pesticides and their application.
- Generally accepted construction techniques and codes.
- Industry best practices and innovations.
- Park Rules & Ordinance.

Skill in:

- Preparing construction drawings and site plans.
- Establishing and maintaining effective working relationships.
- Written and verbal communication.
- Leadership and coordination.
- Organization and time management.
- Customer service.
- Working collaboratively.
- The operation of associated tools, machinery and equipment.
- Procuring materials and supplies.
- Preparing clear and concise reports.

WORK ENVIRONMENT/CONDITIONS

The work environment and exposures described here are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

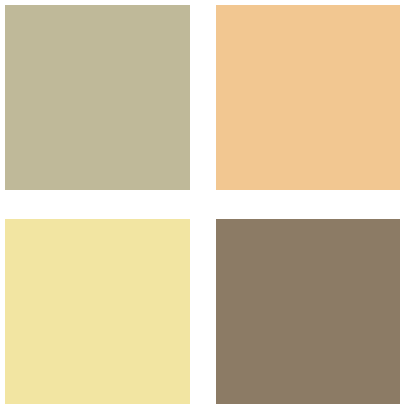
The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

The position involves heavy physical demands, such as exerting up to 100 lbs. of force occasionally, and/or up to 50 lbs. of force frequently, and/or up to 20 lbs. of force constantly to move objects.

Work Environment	Seldom or Never	Occasionally	Frequently or Often
Office or similar indoor environment			X
Outdoor environment			X
Street environment		X	
Construction site		X	
Shop environment			X

# 5 On the Job - Helpful Resources

## Benzie County Stakeholder Survey



To help the Benzie County Parks & Recreation Commission, as well as a new Parks & Recreation Director understand the perceived recreation needs throughout Benzie, the planning team surveyed key recreation entities to garner their input. Networks Northwest sent a survey to 43 entities in Benzie, which included public, private and non-profit actors. Of these, 25 responded to the open response survey. All unedited responses can be found in Appendix A. The following questions were asked:

- What is your organization’s role? In general and/or specific to parks and recreation.
- Who do you serve? Within Benzie County?
- What recreational services, facilities, or opportunities for recreation do you provide?
- Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not?
- What gaps do you see in providing park and recreation opportunities in Benzie County?
- How could the establishment of a County Parks and Recreation department support your organization and further recreation availability in the County?
- What would you like to see from a County Parks and Recreation department?

Most Common Responses to “How could the establishment of a County Parks and Recreation department support your organization and further recreation availability in the County?”

Community engagement

Collaboration

Facility improvements

Fundrasing efforts/Grant writing

Programming

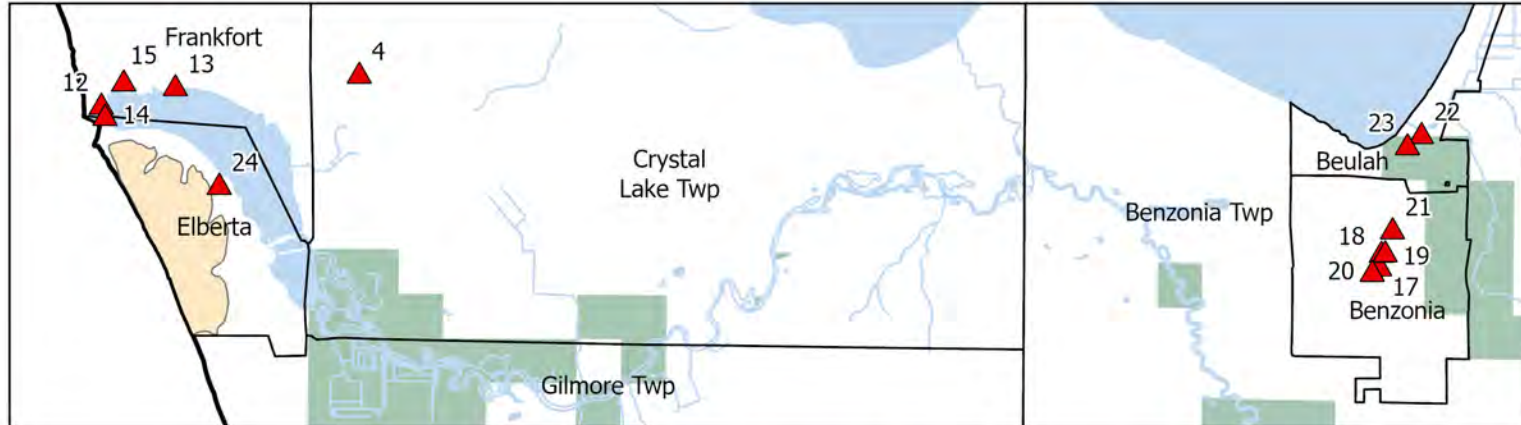
Data gathering

Community input

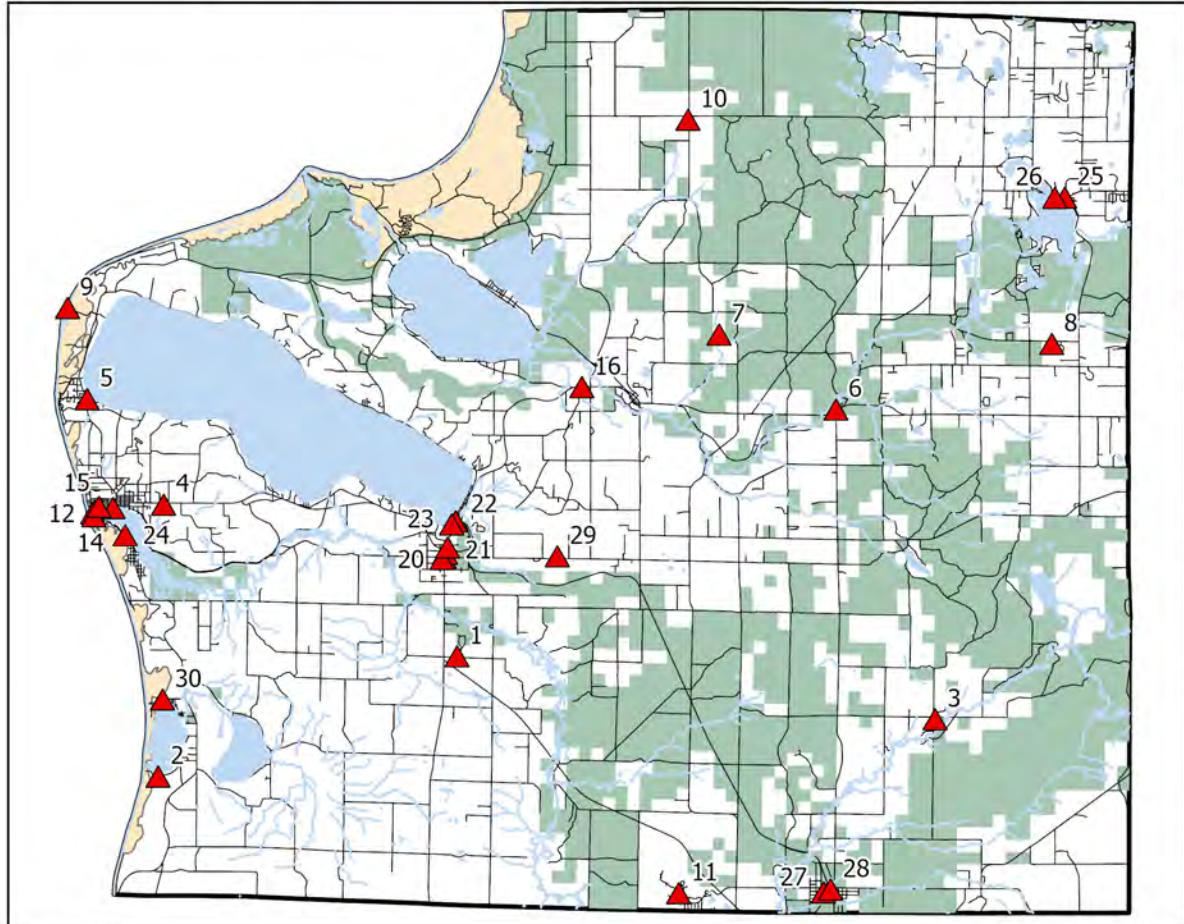
Expand recreation opportunities

## Recreation Inventory & GIS Mapping

In addition to the stakeholder survey, the planning team also mapped all of Benzie’s recreation and cultural sites using Geographic Information Systems (GIS). This data includes location, ownership and all of the available amenities at each site. The inventory list was provided by the County Parks & Recreation Commission. The provided GIS data can be used for various purposes. First, it can be used by those planning for the county’s recreation by understanding spatially where amenities may be clustered or lacking. The data can also eventually be used in a web format to give residents and visitors a detailed description of Benzie’s recreation and cultural sites in an easily accessible format. Finally, the county and its eventual Parks & Recreation Director can use the database to track maintenance needs or any other site information it sees as necessary. The next page shows an example of how this data appears in GIS, using the county’s cultural sites. Benzie’s full recreation inventory list can be found as Appendix B.



Benzie County Cultural Sites



**Legend**

- ▲ Benzie Cultural Sites
- Hydrography
- Roads
- Benzie Lakes
- Critical Dune Areas
- Public Land
- Benzie County Boundary



## Benzie County Cultural Sites

Site Number from Map (page 36)	Site Name	Ownership	Site Details
1	Benzie Manistee Tribal Outpost and Community Center	Grand Traverse Band	Tribal housing and administrative center
2	Watervale Historic District	Private	Historic waterfront resort
3	Historic Wallin School	Private	Two room school and clubhouse
4	Frankfort Gateway Arch	City of Frankfort	Scenic entry to city
5	Congregational Summer Assembly	Private	Summer resort association with Crystal Lake beach, recreational facilities and summer events
6	Platte River State Fish Hatchery	MDNR	Salmon hatchery; open to public at scheduled times
7	Cheneniah Bible Camp	Private	Summer camp
8	Lake Ann Elementary School	Benzie Central Schools	School with playground
9	Point Betsie Light House	Benzie County	Historic Lighthouse and museum; open in summer
10	Drake School	Benzie County Historical Society	One Room schoolhouse, open for summer events
11	Michigan Legacy Art Park	Private non-profit	Hiking trail with outdoor sculptures
12	Marquette's Death Historical Marker	City of Frankfort	Historical marker
13	Benzie Shores District Library	District library	Public library on Betsie Bay shore
14	Elizabeth Lane Oliver Center for the Arts	Non-profit	Art gallery and event space in former Coast Guard building
15	Garden Theater	Private non-profit	Restored movie house
16	Cherry Bowl Drive in Theater	Private	Drive-in theater; open summers
17	Benzonia College Historic Marker	Non-profit	Historical marker
18	Mills Community House	Non-profit	Historic college building with ballroom and event space
19	Benzonia Public Library	District library	Public Library in Mills Community House
20	Benzie Area Historical Museum	Benzie County Historical Society	County museum in historic Congregational church building
21	Crystal Lake Elementary School	Benzie Central Schools	Elementary school; scheduled for closing in 2024
22	Darcy Library of Beulah	Darcy Library Board	Public Library in village of Beulah
23	Beulah Depot Trailhead	Village of Beulah	Rebuilt train depot with Betsie Valley trailhead and restrooms
24	Carferries on Lake Michigan Historic Marker	Village of Elberta	Historical marker
25	Almira Township Library	Almira Township	Public Library
26	Almira Historical Museum	Almira Historical Society	Museum with artifacts from Lake Ann area
27	Betsie Valley District Library	District Library	Public library
28	Thompsonville Diamond Crossing Historical Site	Village of Thompsonville	Historic site and proposed park development area
29	Benzie Central Jr. Sr. High School	Benzie Central Schools	High school with athletic fields and gymnasium
30	Camp Lookout	Private	Summer Camp

# Recreation Literature Review

This literature review was prepared by students in Michigan State University's Urban Planning program as part of their final practicum project. While its findings did not necessarily lead to the recommendations found in this report pertaining to a Parks & Recreation Director, the intent is that a director or the commission can use some or all of these sources for such efforts as: grant writing, local decision-making, educational efforts and fundraising campaigns.



The purpose of this literature review is to understand how parks and recreation are beneficial to residents. The review focuses on how organized green spaces would benefit rural counties like Benzie. It also reviews the physical and mental health benefits, the environmental ramifications, and the economic benefits parks can have for residents.

The following is a literature review on public parks and other organized greenspaces, their benefits, and their impact on a community. Organized parks can benefit communities and its residents in ways such as improvements in physical health, mental health, and a greater sense of community and the social connection. Parks can allow your residents to live longer, be happier, and cause them to want to stay in your region for the foreseeable future.

## Physical Health Benefits

Parks and other types of organized green spaces not only increase tourism and the aesthetic beauty of your county or region but have also been shown to have positive physical and mental health effects on the residents (Ambrey, 2016). This is why parks should not just be looked at as an investment in the tourism industry, but as an investment in your region. Promoting better physical and mental health across your community has many positive benefits for both the individual and the community, as healthier community members are more likely to help improve your community. The longer life expectancies that result also have many positive impacts on your region's residents and the community at large. Green spaces have been shown to

reduce the occurrence of many diseases for area residents, specifically a dramatic downtick in the rate of respiratory diseases (Gascon et al., 2016).

Another study showed the risk of developing type 2 diabetes was significantly lower in areas where 40% or more of the area was considered green space (Astell-Burt et al., 2014). Physical activity has been shown to affect several other positive health outcomes, including reductions in the incidence of type 2 diabetes, with particularly strong impacts among those at highest risk (Helmrich, Ragland, and Paffenbarger 1994; Manson et al. 1992). One study associated moderate exercise with a reduction in diabetes incidence of 40 to 60 percent over three to four years for high-risk populations (Williamson, Vinicor, and Bowman 2004). Physical activity has similar effects on cancer incidence, particularly colon cancer, associated with a 30 to 40 percent reduction, and breast cancer, associated with a 20 to 30 percent reduction (Kampert et al. 1996; Lee 2003; Sternfield et al. 2009). All of these factors then lead to lower hospital bills and a more active, healthy workforce.

Parks also benefit residents by giving them an enjoyable, well maintained area to exist within nature. Park access is associated with increased levels of physical activity across several studies. Evidence shows that proximity to and use of parks, green space, and tree cover correlate with greater levels of physical activity (Eichinger et al. 2015; Pretty et al. 2005). Parks and green spaces generate more benefits when they are accessible and when users have a general sense of safety inside of these parks.

When parks are perceived as unsafe, users miss out on the positive outcomes of green spaces (Williams et al. 2020). Research shows that parks that are well maintained are safer, encourage community building, and promote civic trust (MacCleery, McConville, and Hammerschmidt 2021). Empirical evidence suggests that perceptions of park quality are positively associated with park use and subsequently with higher rates of physical activity among those with positive park perception (Bai et al. 2013).

Green spaces provide better, more enjoyable areas to undertake physical activities, as well as providing areas to perform physical activities that could not be done without them (Coombes et al., 2010; Toftager et al., 2011; James et al., 2015). Having the facilities for events like this could also draw in larger events looking for locations capable of hosting them.

Some ways you can encourage the use of your park for physical activity and for your community to gain all the benefits it brings are through maintaining your parks, keeping them safe to use, and community outreach. People's perceptions of safety and their willingness to use a space can be affected by the design and maintenance of a park. It is well documented that architectural design of built and natural environments that maximize visibility, encourage activity, and improve accessibility can reduce crime and the fear of crime (Stanley 1977). The distribution of amenities such as lighting, call boxes, signage, and other features can eliminate deserted areas and reduce senses of loneliness (MacCleery, McConville, and Hammerschmidt 2021). Further, lack of maintenance contributes to the perception of unsafety. The presence of garbage, damaged equipment, and damaged trees deter park users, and on a 2020 survey, respondents did not feel safe visiting parks with these concerns (Lopez, Kennedy, and McPhearson 2020). Strong evidence also suggests recreational programming and outreach and communication activities have significant impacts on usage and rates of physical activity in parks. Rigorous research on the impact of marketing training for park staff and funds for outreach shows that dual approaches that combine park improvements and outreach campaigns significantly impact physical activity in parks and green spaces (Cohen et al. 2013; Hunter et al. 2019). Overall, encouraging physical activity in your parks can have many positive effects on your community and its residents as shown by these many studies.

## Mental Health Benefits

Parks and green spaces can also greatly help the mental health of residents. Green spaces and nature reduce stress and mental disorders directly improving public health (Ward Thompson et al., 2012; Annerstedt et al., 2012). Studies have also shown that purposely spending time in green space has been linked to better mental health and increased vitality (Van den Berg et al. 2016). These positive mental health effects caused by these areas can be gained from any sort of park, large or small. A study using images of small parks to gauge perceived likelihood for restoration (positive impact on mood) found that the share of ground surface covered by grass, visible tree cover, and park size were most correlated with restorative impact (Nordh et al. 2009). This anecdotal evidence suggests smaller parks may retain some of the positive impacts on mental health and well-being and social connectedness of larger parks. Another important aspect of good mental health is having strong social connections with other people in one's life. Humans are very social creatures, so good connections with others and their community can be essential to staying mentally healthy. Lower levels of parks or other green spaces have been shown to be linked with greater feelings of loneliness, and the perception by residents of a lack of social support from their peers (Maas et al., 2009). This can lead to the development of more mental issues beyond this, such as depression. Communities with higher levels of green space and tree cover have lower usage of mental health services and treatments, controlling for demographics and economic status (Nutsford, Pearson, and Kingham 2013; Taylor et al. 2015). This study demonstrates that, on average. Communities with more parks have less need for these mental health services as they are generally more mentally healthy.

## Public/Social Benefits

Parks also provide great areas for assembly through their ability to be used by anyone. This can include anything from casual get-togethers between friends, the hosting of community events, or even larger-scale events that draw in visitors from around the state and country. Evidence suggests that parks positively affect social cohesion and sense of belonging (a critical measure in surveys of social cohesion), and engagement with park spaces can facilitate attachment to communities (Peters, Elands, and Buijs 2010). For example, statistically significant relationships were found between recreational and walking space availability and community satisfaction in rural Iowa (Payne and Schaumleffel 2008). While this can lead to better overall mental health for your residents, as explored above, strengthening social connections and a sense of belonging among your community can cause people to want to stay in the area longer and help it grow (Peters, Elands, and Buijs 2010). How parks are activated can also significantly impact their contribution to social health.

Environmental education programs, volunteer programs, and community-led stewardship are associated with increased levels of social capital (Krasny et al. 2015). In the survey this study used, social capital was defined as features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (Krasny et al. 2015). The questions given to residents discuss social trust, informal socializing, diversity of friendship networks, civic leadership, and associational involvement, and eliminated faith-based engagement, giving and volunteering, conventional politics participation, protest politics participation, and equality of civic engagement (Krasny et al. 2015). Parks can also allow young people to connect with other individuals from different cultures they may have never met otherwise (Seeland et al., 2009), further solidifying parks and green spaces as places that encourage social interaction and stronger community bonds.

The benefits of park planning and design in maintaining community relations mentioned in various studies are worth examining. Benzie County has a large population of seniors and children, and more families come to the area each summer because of the popularity of the area's water programs. This is why green space and parks are relevant to public participation and

social stability. Green spaces are inclusive and allow people to feel a sense of belonging, so green building in Benzie County would allow the county residents to build relationships and promote healthy socialization (Julian D, et al. 2019).

Finally, creating more parks and inhabitable green space is one good way to fight against social inequality. Many of the health benefits we will discuss are contingent on community access to park space and on the quality of that space. Unfortunately, park spaces are inequitably distributed. Policies, procedures and decisions for parks and green space have been designed to concentrate quality parks and park programming in predominantly white and higher-income neighborhoods, leaving people of color and low-income residents lacking the same quality of amenities as white people (Yañez et al. 2021). Not every household has equal access to quality green spaces, and in fact, access is often constricted along racial and socioeconomic lines. Formerly redlined communities have the least access to green space (Nardone et al. 2021), communities that are still in large part inhabited by minorities. Building more parks, and nicer parks, would go a long way in combating these inequalities.

## Environmental Benefits

Connecting with nature during their travels can lead them to appreciate it more and become invested in protecting it (Brajcich, 2022). This can result in more money being put into the community from the outside to protect the environment and better equip its residents with ways to do so. Money from tourism can also be pumped directly back into protecting the nature which draws people in, and in many cases is required due to lack of funding (Brajcich, 2022).

Parks also allow residents to better connect with the nature around them. While they may already be surrounded by nature, a lack of paths, boat docks, bathrooms, and other amenities can be discouraging for more casual nature enthusiasts. The addition of these to areas previously not looked at as an ideal nature getaway spot can also create new locations to visit, exercise, and relax in that one may have never thought of before. Physical activity is associated with improvements to measures of health such as mood and self-reported well-being, and these factors can be increased even more when exercising in a more natural environment. One study

compared participants who exercised while viewing images of nature with those who exercised without such exposure and found that activity benefits, such as resistance to disease, increased stamina, and longer overall lifespans, are stronger when in or viewing natural surroundings (Pretty et al. 2005). Volunteering on environmental projects in your local parks has been shown to be linked with increasing one's connectedness with nature, which has many positive mental and physical health benefits, as detailed above (Molsher and Townsend, 2015). Individuals have also been shown to have gained greater sense of self through natural environments, which can mean becoming more in tune with your own feelings, values, and goals in life (Peters et al., 2016).

### Economic Benefits

Parks and green space can also have useful economic benefits to the communities they are in as well. Increased economic activity can be spurred on by more visitors coming to the area where the parks are, but the parks also directly benefit residents.

Increased investment in green spaces has been shown to lead to rises in property values in the surrounding community (Troy and Grove, 2008). This is due to green spaces being viewed as aesthetically pleasing, as well as something that is physically and mentally healthy to live near. The physical and mental health benefits of green space also help the economy, as healthier workers take less time off of work and are more motivated, increasing productivity for businesses in the area (Barton et al., 2009; Chalquist, 2009). These less thought-about effects on the economy are just as in building a strong solid economic base for your community, and do well to show that creating parks or designated green spaces is not simply an investment in the tourism industry. Environmental tourism can also have positive effects on your region's population, and the environment that is being visited. In total, wildlife tourism now supports nearly 22 million jobs around the world and contributes more than \$120 billion to global GDP (Brajcich, 2022). While tourism can be a great boost to an economy, healthy regions also do well not to entirely rely on it. For a region like Benzie, tourism may spike in the warmer, summer month, while dipping down low during the cold months, which can outnumber the warm months in a northern state like Michigan. For people that work in the tourism industry,

their jobs are only viable for a certain number of months, and after the season has ended, many are left without income (Ingram, 2020). While it may not be as extreme of a shift in Benzie County as it would be elsewhere, any kind of seasonal jobs need to be accounted for when structuring a healthy economy.

### Tourism Industry in Michigan

According to the Michigan Economic Development Corporation & Networks Northwest, the tourism industry significantly impacts a community's economy. The tourism industry provides employment opportunities for people in many sectors, including hospitality, transportation, and entertainment. Tourism generates revenue for the government through taxes, such as sales tax, hotel tax, and other fees. In addition to promoting local businesses, tourism can also improve the economy of local communities, as well as improving public infrastructure and services funded by tourism revenue.

In 2021, visitation in Michigan exceeded over 117 million people. There was a significant increase in visitor activity this year. This is 93% of the total visitors we had in 2019. We are seeing numbers returning to what they were before the pandemic, which is very promising for Michigan's tourism industry. A total of \$24.0 billion was spent by tourists alone this year. When combined with capital expenditures and governmental support, the total economic impact on the state of Michigan reached a staggering \$43.1 billion. A total of 298,818 jobs were sustained and \$3.0 billion in tax revenue was generated this year due to tourism.

According to the seasonal population study from Networks Northwest (Figure 9), Benzie County welcomes, on average, roughly 235,000 tourists every year. Benzie County has a full-time population of approximately 18,000 residents year-round. This estimate of permanent residents is sourced from the 2020 census. This number inflates to roughly 60,000 during the summer months. There is a substantial increase in activity during the summer months among part-time residents; this group comprises approximately 10,000 residents who have second homes in the area. The basis for this estimation was calculating the number of seasonal homes located in the region provided by the United States Census Bureau. Using census data is the most precise way to calculate population estimates but transitory populations are much harder to count as they are difficult to



record with surveys. The most accurate and efficient way to estimate this group's population is by surveying many lodging options in the area, such as hotels, campgrounds and short-term rentals. This study reports that Benzie County receives an average of 30,000 tourists each month from May to October. Although this methodology has proven to be the most practical way of gathering this specific information, for a place like Benzie County the actual total of visitors may be higher.

People are believed to stay overnight in Traverse City, then drive down to Benzie for the amenities offered such as beaches, dunes and recreational activities.

### Summary

Parks and other types of organized green spaces, are extremely beneficial to any community as they can improve the physical and mental health of residents, as well as bringing them closer together through the strengthening of social capital. Parks can also bring people closer to nature in an inviting and safe way, as well as boost the local economy through increased tourism, the hosting of large events, and the improved health of the community.

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# Appendix A - Benzie Stakeholder Survey Results

## Benzie Area Chamber of Commerce

**What is your organization's role? In general and/or specific to parks and recreation.**

Providing information to residents & visitors of Benzie County

**Who do you serve? Within Benzie County?**

Primarily, our Members that choose to be a part of our organization. Secondly, as a community resource for information about the area.

**What recreational services, facilities, or opportunities for recreation do you provide?**

None, we are a source of information. Formerly, the Benzie Area Convention & Visitors Bureau shared space in our building. In 2020, the Benzie CVB merged with Traverse City Tourism and all operations moved to Traverse City.

**Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not?**

We collaborate with organizations that operate within the guide of our Mission & Vision statements. Specifically speaking to Parks & Recreation, we collaborate with Frankfort-Elberta Chamber of Commerce & the Crystal Lake Community Business Association.

**What gaps do you see in providing park and recreation opportunities in Benzie County?**

Mainly communication and overall representation. Often times I get calls to rent pavilions, etc. when the caller is not sure of WHO the operating entity is for the park in question. The Chamber did do a survey back in 2020 to cultivate a list of all parks in the County and their respective managing organizations. Here is the link: <https://www.benzie.org/living-in-benzie-county/>

**How could the establishment of a County Parks and Recreation department support your organization and further recreation availability in the County?**

A County department would be able to get all of the entities on one page with regards to park maintenance, safety concerns, and overall compliance with local & State codes.

**What would you like to see from a County Parks and Recreation department?**

Oversight for the managing entities and perhaps stepping in when they are not able to meet standards.

# Elizabeth Lane Oliver Center for the Arts

**What is your organization's role? In general and/or specific to parks and recreation.**

We are an arts education and exhibit center, with a range of arts and culture programming encompassing visual media, writing, music, cooking, and children's art classes.

**Who do you serve? Within Benzie County?**

All residents of Benzie County and beyond, drawing from Leelanau County, Traverse City, Manistee, etc. We have programming for children and adults of all ages and demographics.

**What recreational services, facilities, or opportunities for recreation do you provide?**

Arts and Crafts classes of all kinds, a full ceramics studio, yoga and wellness studio, photography studio, art gallery and meeting spaces.

**Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not?**

We collaborate with the Benzie Shores District Library, Benzie Area Historical Society, Interlochen, local businesses, etc. We are always looking for other ways to collaborate, especially with other nonprofits.

**What gaps do you see in providing park and recreation opportunities in Benzie County?**

ADA accessible trails, educational and interactive exhibits showcasing local geology or wildlife, public art displays such as murals or sculptures would create a sense of place and community.

**How could the establishment of a County Parks and Recreation department support your organization and further recreation availability in the County?**

It would be interesting to collaborate with a Parks and Rec dept to create public art installations or murals. We could also work with them to offer outdoor painting, wellness, or photography classes.

**What would you like to see from a County Parks and Recreation department?**

Community engagement to create active use of parks.

# Northwest Education Services (North Ed)

**What is your organization's role? In general and/or specific to parks and recreation.**

North Ed is the intermediate school district that supports Benzie County schools. We provide Career and Technical Education as well as Special Education Services. With respect to the parks and recreation department, we would be more of a support through the use of students and staff from our programs. Additionally, the local schools' support would be mirrored by the ISD.

**Who do you serve? Within Benzie County?**

K-12 Career Tech students and special education students in Benzie Central Schools, Frankfort Alberta Schools, and other students that lie within the Benzie County footprint.

**What recreational services, facilities, or opportunities for recreation do you provide?**

We provide a cadre of services for our students in work placements and program use of parks and rec.

**Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not?**

We serve a five-county region so all K-12 public, private, parochial, and charter schools within Benzie, Leelanau, Antrim, Grand Traverse, and Kalkaska Counties.

**How could the establishment of a County Parks and Recreation department support your organization and further recreation availability in the County?**

Supportive, distant partnership relationship. Mainly the relationship would be through Benzie County Schools.

# Crystal Mountain

**What is your organization's role? In general and/or specific to parks and recreation.**

We are a Four Seasons Resort that has a focus on ski, golf, spa, fitness, recreation, food and beverage and lodging.

**Who do you serve? Within Benzie County?**

We serve the Midwest and Benzie County.

**What recreational services, facilities, or opportunities for recreation do you provide?**

Ski, golf, fitness, indoor pool, outdoor pool, rock wall, adventure course/zip line, mountain biking, downhill mountain biking, archery, archery tag, laser tag, fat tire biking, snow showing, cross-country skiing, pickleball, tennis, alpine slide, chairlift rides, hiking, running, swim lessons, kids crafts, team building/adventure events, and walking.

**Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not?**

We collaborate with local vendors and vendors outside our state for events at the mountain.

**What gaps do you see in providing park and recreation opportunities in Benzie County?**

Additional hiking trails, biking trails, soccer, baseball, softball, kids programming, fat tire biking trails, snowshoeing, events, etc.

**How could the establishment of a County Parks and Recreation department support your organization and further recreation availability in the County?**

Collaborate on specific events and bring more events within the county for recreation.

**What would you like to see from a County Parks and Recreation department?**

More collaboration.

**Please let us know if there is anything else we should know!**

I would be interested in learning more about the recreation programming of Benzie County.

# Village of Beulah

**What is your organization's role? In general and/or specific to parks and recreation.**

Chairperson Parks and Recreation

**Who do you serve? Within Benzie County?**

Patrons of.....  
Benzie Rails to Trails Bike and Pedestrian Pathway, Beulah Public Beach, Beulah Public Boat Launch, Beulah Village RV Camping Park, Beulah Village Boat Docks, 7 Public Parks within the Beulah Village Limits

**What recreational services, facilities, or opportunities for recreation do you provide?**

Benzie Rails to Trails Bike and Pedestrian Pathway, Beulah Public Beach, Beulah Public Boat Launch, Beulah Village RV Camping Park, Beulah Village Boat Docks, 7 Public Parks within the Beulah Village Limits

**Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not?**

Also Community Summer Concerts, Community Fall and Winter Festivals, 4Th July Fireworks, Organized Pickle Ball and Tennis Days, Car Show, Community Down Town Halloween

**What gaps do you see in providing park and recreation opportunities in Benzie County?**

Beulah Boosters and Crystal Lake Boosters  
As with most.....Money to support and improve

**How could the establishment of a County Parks and Recreation department support your organization and further recreation availability in the County?**

Additional Fundraisers, Additional Volunteer Recruitment---  
Organizational help---We current have Fantastic Volunteers and Coordinator but is completely unpaid and as with anything of this magnitude is time consuming and takes a lot of energy!!

**What would you like to see from a County Parks and Recreation department?**

A Degree or Certification in Therapeutic Recreation. Also a Business background with APPROPRIATE Experience; rather than just theory.

Additional Fundraisers, Additional Volunteer Recruitment---Organizational help



# The Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail

**What is your organization's role? In general and/or specific to parks and recreation.**

Owned by the DNR and operated by Benzie County via the BVT Management Council. The Friends of the BVT is nonprofit which advocates, promotes and encourages the development and successful operation of a recreational trail on a former railroad corridor in Benzie County.

**Who do you serve? Within Benzie County?**

All Citizens of Benzie County without restriction including the disabled, and in a wider scope all people who wish to use the trail from Michigan and beyond.

**What recreational services, facilities, or opportunities for recreation do you provide?**

Services include a paved trail from Frankfort to 3 miles shy of Beulah at which point it is crushed limestone surface to Beulah. From Beulah to Thompsonville the trail is rough gravel with some sandy spots. Our intention is to pave this latter section, to which end we are applying for grant money. Activities on the paved section include walking, running, strollers, roller blades, scooters, bicycles, bikes w training wheels and Joy2Ride (rides for disabled on adapted trikes). From Beulah to Thompsonville recreation is limited to run, walk, mountain/gravel bike and snowmobile in winter. conditions. Limited to the hardest riders only.

**Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not?**

Collaborate with Joy2Ride. We have built storage for their equipment. Collaborate with Thompsonville Area Revitalization Project as our plan to pave is a major aspect of their revitalization and a link to a crossroads of trail systems to central Michigan. Collaborate with SMARTrails in Manistee County linking to southwestern Michigan. In talks with EcoSEEDS of Traverse City to provide mutually beneficial services. In contact with and cooperate with TART and the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail. We are in a collective of trails organized by MTGA

## The Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail (Cont.)

**Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not? (Cont.)**

seeking funding from State Legislators. Believe we will eventually be collaborating with the SB National Lakeshore to extend the trail north of Frankfort. Collaborate with Crystal Lake Property Owners Association. Collaborate with all governmental entities which abut our trail.

**What gaps do you see in providing park and recreation opportunities in Benzie County?**

With regard to trails we believe that every effort to connect first class, well developed trails into a well planned network throughout Michigan should be made. Eventually we hope to be able to tour the state on trails with minimal interaction with vehicular traffic. Within Benzie County we hope to add spurs from BTV to Crystal Mountain Resort in Thompsonville and from Elberta to the Elberta Lake Michigan Beach. We endorse the development of the Elberta Beach facilities (ongoing). We would like to link ourselves to the eventual Benzie County Aquatic facility by a spur depending on its location.

**How could the establishment of a County Parks and Recreation department support your organization and further recreation availability in the County?**

We are cooking along pretty well now, but I can imagine a time when the organization is large enough with ideas to progress on so many fronts that a professional County Parks and Rec Dept administrator would be helpful.

**What would you like to see from a County Parks and Recreation department?**

Assistance with applications for funding, oversight of planning, help with statistics gathering and technical aspects of surveys, benefit/cost analysis, economic impact, etc.

**Please let us know if there is anything else we should know!**

We are not professionals but much of what we are doing requires professional advice and hands on assistance. There is a limit to what a volunteer can, wants to or has the time to achieve.

# Village of Honor

**What is your organization's role? In general and/or specific to parks and recreation.**

Village government works to improve the opportunities for recreation for village residents among other goals. We have a small park within Village limits and hope to repurpose the former Platte River School Building gym for community use. There is a Parks sub-committee under Village government.

**Who do you serve? Within Benzie County?**

The citizens of Honor.

**What recreational services, facilities, or opportunities for recreation do you provide?**

We maintain a small roadside park for gatherings.

**Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not?**

We collaborate with the Honor Area Restoration Project (HARP) and would like to have more interaction with Homestead Township and Benzie County governments.

**What gaps do you see in providing park and recreation opportunities in Benzie County?**

There is very little opportunity for indoor recreation.

**How could the establishment of a County Parks and Recreation department support your organization and further recreation availability in the County?**

A county wide organization would bring strength to efforts to provide indoor recreation by providing more input and assistance with funding sources.

**What would you like to see from a County Parks and Recreation department?**

A dedicated group working to define and accomplish goals to increase recreational opportunities for all ages.

**Please let us know if there is anything else we should know!**

There have been efforts made by groups to preserve the Platte River School gym. Lack of resources have prevented these efforts from being fulfilled. A coordinated County-wide group might be better able to accomplish this goal and find other resources to provide recreation for Benzie County residents and visitors.

# Homestead Township

**What is your organization's role? In general and/or specific to parks and recreation.**

We have 2 parks - one on/near property, one newly acquired 52 acre Platte River Park

**Who do you serve? Within Benzie County?**

Residents and Property owners of Homestead Township

**What recreational services, facilities, or opportunities for recreation do you provide?**

Parks

**Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not?**

Honor Area Restoration Project (HARP)

**What gaps do you see in providing park and recreation opportunities in Benzie County?**

There are none. Each township provides opportunities along with the State of Michigan and the Federal Government. Benzie County does not need a director of Parks and Recs. Benzie County does not own park properties.

**How could the establishment of a County Parks and Recreation department support your organization and further recreation availability in the County?**

It wouldn't. Benzie County Townships are independent of Benzie County. In the recent past Benzie County departments have not been supportive of township ordinance enforcement so I am not sure how Benzie County would help our needs. We have an incredible working relationship with MR Consulting and Lisa Leedy. They serve our township well.

**What would you like to see from a County Parks and Recreation department?**

ABSOLUTELY NOT! There are no county parks or recreation facilities in Benzie County. NO more tax payer dollars.

**Please let us know if there is anything else we should know!**

This is an absolute waste of tax payer dollars. There are no county parks no recreation facilities. Creating something for nothing that exists.

# Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation and Benzie Area Chamber of Commerce

**What is your organization's role? In general and/or specific to parks and recreation.**

GTRCF Mission: We invest in the people and places of our region and steward community assets for lasting impact. My role is Donor Engagement Director.

My former role was as Executive Director of the Oliver Art Center in Frankfort.

Benzie Area Chamber of Commerce Mission: To attract, support, and represent the business community and improve social and economic development in the Benzie Area. My role is Board Chair.

**Who do you serve? Within Benzie County?**

GTRCF: I serve our donor partners and non-profit partners.

Chamber: I serve our business members and community at large.

**What recreational services, facilities, or opportunities for recreation do you provide?**

GTRCF: Funding, professional development support, networking, collaborative leadership  
Chamber: serves as the catalyst for a thriving economy and to be the one-stop for business in the community; networking, professional development support

**Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not?**

GTRCF: we serve 5 counties and hundreds of non-profit partners  
Chamber: we work with the county commissioners, area businesses, the neighboring chambers and visitors bureaus; we are a member of the Northern Chamber Alliance - we would like to work closer with the commissioners and EDC

# **Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation and Benzie Area Chamber of Commerce (Cont.)**

**What gaps do you see in providing park and recreation opportunities in Benzie County?**

Accessibility; funding; oversight; community input

**How could the establishment of a County Parks and Recreation department support your organization and further recreation availability in the County?**

On the side of the Chamber, it will enhance the area and potentially draw visitors; from the standpoint of the CF, it will enhance the community and help steward assets for a lasting impact

**What would you like to see from a County Parks and Recreation department?**

Programming, advocating for environmental/recreation causes; collaboration with like-minded orgs in the area; maintenance of green spaces

## Advocates for Benzie County

**What is your organization's role? In general and/or specific to parks and recreation.**

To advocate for issues and initiatives which will help to "Build a Better Benzie"; to work with other groups and facilitate conversation in response to needs in the community.

**Who do you serve? Within Benzie County?**

Broad-based constituency, hoping to generate community support for initiatives.

**What recreational services, facilities, or opportunities for recreation do you provide?**

None. But we have been actively involved in trying to find a reuse for the Platte River School Building, including the gym, which could contribute to a county-wide recreation program.

**Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not?**

We are actively supportive of the housing initiative, particularly the Frankfort Housing Commission and the Frankfort Area Community Land Trust.

**What gaps do you see in providing park and recreation opportunities in Benzie County?**

We need a large vision of what is possible and the funding to make it happen. With tourism growing in the area, the county needs to be actively pursuing expanded recreational opportunities, both in terms of facilities and programs which would address the year-round population and the seasonal residents. It would be wonderful to see the Platte River building converted into a community center for the county with diverse recreational opportunities- everything from basketball and pickleball to craft groups, card-playing, and a host of other activities for all ages. A recreational vision which would include Senior Resources, the schools and churches, the Gateway Council and the National Lakeshore would benefit all concerned.



## **Advocates for Benzie County (Cont.)**

**How could the establishment of a County Parks and Recreation department support your organization and further recreation availability in the County?**

I don't envision County Parks and Recreation supporting us, but rather we would be happy to support such a department in improving the life of the community.

**What would you like to see from a County Parks and Recreation department?**

A county-wide master plan for year-round recreational offerings, then the leadership to pass a millage to support it.

**Please let us know if there is anything else we should know!**

I am not convinced the plan for an aquatic center makes sense given the size of the county and our year-round population. Merging with Betsy Hosick would make sense. With the number of active senior citizens in the county, the need for exercise and physical therapy will continue to grow.

# **Benzie Wellness and Aquatic Center**

**What is your organization's role? In general and/or specific to parks and recreation.**

Integrating indoor wellness/fitness/rec programs + spaces for all – called out in Benzie County Parks + Rec Master plan

**Who do you serve? Within Benzie County?**

All age groups, abilities, residence status (year round, seasonal, visitor), economic strata within Benzie County as well as visitors to Benzie County.

**What recreational services, facilities, or opportunities for recreation do you provide?**

The program options are almost endless! a. Indoors (planned) i. Aquatics– 2 pools. Shallow warm water/therapy/social/teaching. Lap pool/teams/swim skills + water safety for school PE curriculum + others who need it, scuba, small craft classes, water polo, synchro, Master's + youth rec leagues, family swim nights, etc.) ii. Fitness – cardio, strength training, free weights, movement studios, indoor walking track iii. Full size gym – basketball, court sports, volleyball, indoor soccer, etc iv. Child watch so families w/young children can enjoy this community asset! v. Therapy/rehab b. Outdoors (planned) i. Fitness court/outdoor classroom ii. Playground for child watch iii. Connectivity to BVT + Academy Park (ball field, skating rink, 4 tennis courts) c. Outdoors (providing) – Free swim skills/water safety program for local elementary age school children (Bellows Beach) and pier safety program @ Frankfort's Lake Michigan beach

**Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not?**

Health/Wellness/Fitness: Munson Healthcare, Paul Oliver Memorial Hospital, Betsie Hosick Health & Fitness Center, CrossFit Dunes, Mary Free Bed Rehab, Benzie Lofts

Recreation/tourism industry: GTB YMCA, Paine Aquatic Ctr, Crystal Mtn Resort, Harbor Lights Resort, Crystal Lake Adventure Sports, Stormcloud Brewing Company, Ironman 70.3 Michigan, FBVT, Natl Fitness Campaign + Priority Health (outdoor fitness court), DNR, MEDC (recreation as infrastructure + placemaking), RDA

Transportation: Benzie Bus

School Districts: Benzie Central Frankfort-Elberta Area

## Benzie Wellness and Aquatic Center (Cont.)

**Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not? (Cont.)**

Service organizations: Benzie Senior Resources, local Rotary Clubs, local Chambers of Commerce, American Red Cross, Great Lakes Water Safety Consortium, Special Olympics, Networks Northwest

Government: Benzie County BOC, Benzie County Parks & Recreation Commission, Benzie County EDC, local government entities, US Coast Guard, National Park Service

Others not yet collaborating with (but would like to): Local scout troops + other youth programs, veterans groups, disease-related groups (people w/Parkinson's), etc.

**What gaps do you see in providing park and recreation opportunities in Benzie County?**

Year-round (indoor) opportunities accessible to all, public safety surrounding water + programming for all ages!

**How could the establishment of a County Parks and Recreation department support your organization and further recreation availability in the County?**

Help coordinate efforts, help w/public funding opportunities (SPARK grants example), help Benzie County "walk the walk" re call for indoor (year round) facilities + programs. Assist w/demographics/demand analysis vis a vis county needs.

**What would you like to see from a County Parks and Recreation department?**

Staff who can operationalize vision in master plan + "herd the cats" – get individual organizations to collaborate. Work with local govt entities to expand rec sites (Beulah beach for swim lessons – need insurance policy upgrade). Often we don't know what one another is doing and we could most likely increase the impact of our projects by partnering.

**Please let us know if there is anything else we should know!**

BWAC is in conversation w/Benzie Central schools re Crystal Lake Elementary School site – opportunity for big picture thinking re connectivity + placemaking w/ Benzie Corners concept. We hope to move beyond the notion of a transaction to an opportunity for community transformation.

# Village of Benzonia

**What is your organization's role? In general and/or specific to parks and recreation.**

We have been supporting and improving Academy Park and it's secondary park on the west side of US-31 in Benzonia

**Who do you serve? Within Benzie County?**

The Village of Benzonia

**What recreational services, facilities, or opportunities for recreation do you provide?**

Tennis and Pickleball courts, Basketball courts,, Baseball diamond ,and a playground equipment including ADA assessable equipment, Pavilion with picnic tables, and an ice rink in the winter.

**Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not?**

The Cottage Pros (business) volunteers the labor for the creation of the ice rink

# Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy

**What is your organization's role? In general and/or specific to parks and recreation.**

Land protection (acquisition), and Stewardship (trail and access infrastructure maintenance and development, and invasive species control), achieved with conservancy staff and volunteers. We have a history of working with Benzie County, the Parks and Recreation Board, and the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund specifically on the acquisition, development and maintenance of the Railroad Point properties.

**Who do you serve? Within Benzie County?**

We have a five county service area which includes Benzie County and we have been working with local units of government and the State to help them acquire and manage Natural Areas, Nature Preserves, and public access within the county.

**What recreational services, facilities, or opportunities for recreation do you provide?**

We own and manage 15 Nature Preserves or Sanctuaries within Benzie county offering over 6000 acres for a variety of passive recreational opportunities to the public. Additionally, we've been involved with the acquisition and/or management of 5 natural areas owned by local units of government. We offer management of these natural areas, recreational plan development, and sign design and install. We also offer assistance with the development and advocacy of Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund applications for the acquisition and/or development of natural area.

## Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy (Cont.)

**Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not?**

We collaborate with a variety of governmental agencies working in the natural resources space as well as local units of governmental, the State of Michigan, local organizations, local contractor, and volunteers.

A couple of organizations that we haven't worked with but see opportunities to do so include the Betsie Valley Trail and Grow Benzie.

**What gaps do you see in providing park and recreation opportunities in Benzie County?**

The County now owns a number of Parks and Natural Areas whose use has continued to increase over the years to the point that there is now a need to provide increased maintenance of the grounds, facilities and Natural Areas to insure that these assets are not degraded or harmed and the user experience continues to be enjoyable and valued by the public.

Funding for these needs and future development of the properties remains a gap.

**How could the establishment of a County Parks and Recreation department support your organization and further recreation availability in the County?**

Having this position filled gives us the confidence to know that projects we collaborate on will be adequately supported. It would provide a consistent point of contact to relay information and ensure needed actions will be carried through. It could help offset the time and energy GTRLC and its volunteers currently spend managing properties in Benzie County.

**What would you like to see from a County Parks and Recreation department?**

Engaged in the stewardship of County owned properties and improvement of recreations assets on those properties. Engage with users to develop assets with community needs in mind and volunteers on the property to meet management goals. Maintenance of current facilities.

**Please let us know if there is anything else we should know!**

We're excited by the prospect and think it's a much needed addition.

# Benzie Conservation District

**What is your organization's role? In general and/or specific to parks and recreation.**

BCD mission  
active with the county as a contractor on projects  
a holistic view of caring for natural resources  
limited role with parks and rec, interested in natural resources  
grassroots on the ground for landowners, connect the public to federal programs, grants

**Who do you serve? Within Benzie County?**

Public land owners, the general public, have worked with private businesses in the past but not often  
County's natural resources (land water forest, etc.)  
Units of government, state agencies  
A broad view of who they work for and with...  
5-year survey to find natural resource concerns, outdoor rec  
Education on natural resource concerns

**What recreational services, facilities, or opportunities for recreation do you provide?**

One nature preserve - hinckle preserve  
resource for education - lots of hikes, webinars, book club, get people out to enjoy the assets in Benzie county

**Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not?**

State agencies (egle, dnr, etc.)  
Lake associations, watershed groups, Grow Benzie, CRA, Schools, Congressional Summer Assembly (property association),  
  
Will collaborate with anyone, works with county and local townships but looking at how they can work more closely with each other, the opportunity to do more. Limited parks and rec partnership



## Benzie Conservation District (Cont.)

What gaps do you see in providing park and recreation opportunities in Benzie County?

lot tied to funding, personally with Benzie is information is hard to find (what is there, what can be done). also personal - maintenance and upkeep and management oversight is a common discussion points

How could the establishment of a County Parks and Recreation department support your organization and further recreation availability in the County?

thoughts - neat places that the county owns or jurisdiction places you can bring your family and friends but ecologically as important, carrying for the resource with public use in mind but done responsibly that values natural resources that are there, bring people to be interested in what makes these places special

Protection of resources, being able to use those sites as educational sites, getting people out to Benzie County Parks

What would you like to see from a County Parks and Recreation department?

Resources put towards caring for natural resources (BCD can help with this), have rare and sensitive features but high priority invasive species, go beyond parks maintenance (picking up trash, trimming trees) such as reforestation and invasives

Keeping a holistic approach - what do we have, what are the needs, and threats, think beyond parking and garbage removal

BCD can and would love to be a resource

Please let us know if there is anything else we should know!

BCD and County partnership opportunity - established org, care for natural resources, BCD would need to do some examination of their own org but this is a possibility.

Concern about department of 1, would make sense to be lumped with another group for facilities, oversight, and opportunity to collaborate with parks and rec county on natural resources (land protection, invasives, species protection)

# Benzie County Central Schools

**What is your organization's role? In general and/or specific to parks and recreation.**

We are a PreK-12 school system serving students in Benzie County.

**Who do you serve? Within Benzie County?**

PreK-12 students approximately 1238 students

**What recreational services, facilities, or opportunities for recreation do you provide?**

We have extracurricular activities- sports, SEEDS programs, Nordic Rocks, etc  
We have gyms, track, trails, weight room, etc

**Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not?**

We collaborate with many community partners.

**What gaps do you see in providing park and recreation opportunities in Benzie County?**

We have many communities within our county. Not all have access to quality playgrounds, basketball courts/tennis courts, paved walking trails, etc

**How could the establishment of a County Parks and Recreation department support your organization and further recreation availability in the County?**

It would promote more physical activity for students/families/residents

**What would you like to see from a County Parks and Recreation department?**

Playgrounds, courts, paved trails

# Frankfort-Elberta Chamber of Commerce

**What is your organization's role? In general and/or specific to parks and recreation.**

Frankfort-Elberta Area Chamber of Commerce strives to promote the civic, commercial, educational, and industrial welfare of Frankfort-Elberta and the surrounding area.

**Who do you serve? Within Benzie County?**

Our Chamber members and tourists in Benzie and beyond.

**What recreational services, facilities, or opportunities for recreation do you provide?**

We promote and manage several events in the area during Spring a Summer and Fall. We promote all recreational facilities and activities in our area to the tourists that contact us or come into our office.

**Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not?**

TC Tourism, Benzie Chamber of Commerce and other non profits in the area.

**What gaps do you see in providing park and recreation opportunities in Benzie County?**

Seems to be an interest in creating an aquatic center and event facility.

**How could the establishment of a County Parks and Recreation department support your organization and further recreation availability in the County?**

Join Chamber, promote their organization's activities and events, etc. Receive free booth spaces at Chamber events to promote their organization. Collaborated events.

**What would you like to see from a County Parks and Recreation department?**

Recreation activity programs, athletic leagues, special events, arts programs, and environmental education programs. Including places and activities for health and well-being that are accessible by persons of all ages and abilities.

# Village of Elberta

**What is your organization's role? In general and/or specific to parks and recreation.**

We are a Lake Michigan coastline Municipality. Being located on Lake Michigan and Betsie Lake we have many recreation opportunities within the village limits. Elberta has and Parks and Recreation Commission and a current 5 Year Recreation Plan.

**Who do you serve? Within Benzie County?**

The residents of the Village of Elberta, tourists/ general public

**What recreational services, facilities, or opportunities for recreation do you provide?**

Penfold Park - ADA Kayak Launch, parking and pavilion along with ADA restrooms, small watercraft boat launch and also serves as a trail head for the Betsie Valley Trail.  
Waterfront Park - Playground equipment, ADA parking and paved walking path and port-a-potties, Exercise equipment, Amphitheater, Fishing deck and pavilion.  
Elberta Beach - Spring 2023 ADA parking, pathway and restroom, Lake Michigan access by foot.  
Elberta Dunes South Natural Area - Parking, hiking trails, viewing platform and benches.

**Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not?**

Betsie Valley Trail  
Always willing to collaborate on anything with Frankfort or other organizations.

**What gaps do you see in providing park and recreation opportunities in Benzie County?**

More collaborations between villages, townships, cities that share coastlines, waterways and the Betsie valley trail.

**How could the establishment of a County Parks and Recreation department support your organization and further recreation availability in the County?**

It would be a tremendous help to our understaffed (2 DPW) village to have help with upkeep or monitoring of the recreation areas in the village.

**What would you like to see from a County Parks and Recreation department?**

Any help would be appreciated.

# Village of Honor

**What is your organization's role? In general and/or specific to parks and recreation.**

We have a small park and are looking to develop a community center for year round recreational opportunities.

**Who do you serve? Within Benzie County?**

The citizens of Honor.

**What recreational services, facilities, or opportunities for recreation do you provide?**

A park with picnic areas, open space and swing sets is within the Village.  
HARP is the driving force behind developing a 52 acre riverfront park in Homestead Township, adjacent to the Village limits.

**Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not?**

I am a member of Honor Area Restoration Project, Advocates for Benzie County, Benzie Senior Resources Advisory Council, Sleeping Bear Gateway Council and the Honor Village government.  
We would like to be more involved with Benzie County Parks Commission

**What gaps do you see in providing park and recreation opportunities in Benzie County?**

A lack of indoor all season venues for activities. A dearth of opportunities for youth sports other than baseball.

**How could the establishment of a County Parks and Recreation department support your organization and further recreation availability in the County?**

Coordination between local municipalities would provide more support for shared facilities. Funding as a County budget item and influence applying for grants would be a huge asset.

**What would you like to see from a County Parks and Recreation department?**

A well organized focused government committee.

# Weldon Township

**What is your organization's role? In general and/or specific to parks and recreation.**

Governing body for Weldon Township

**Who do you serve? Within Benzie County?**

Anyone who chooses to use the Day Use Park

**What recreational services, facilities, or opportunities for recreation do you provide?**

Betsie River Day Use Park and hiking trail

**Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not?**

Village of Thompsonville

**What gaps do you see in providing park and recreation opportunities in Benzie County?**

There is an information gap amongst all of the facilities available in Benzie County.

**How could the establishment of a County Parks and Recreation department support your organization and further recreation availability in the County?**

A County Parks and Recreation department would be able to coordinate activities between the various facilities in townships and villages

**What would you like to see from a County Parks and Recreation department?**

publicity either printed or on line planned activities to highlight available opportunities

# Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

**What is your organization's role? In general and/or specific to parks and recreation.**

We care for the Sleeping Bear Dunes so all that may experience their heritage.

**Who do you serve? Within Benzie County?**

We serve about 1.5 million visitors a year. About a third of our 72000 acres are in Benzie County.

**What recreational services, facilities, or opportunities for recreation do you provide?**

All sorts of outdoor recreation: hiking, paddling, hunting, fishing, camping, beach-going, skiing, snowshoeing, bicycling, sightseeing, museums, ranger talks, etc.

**Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not?**

many groups

**What gaps do you see in providing park and recreation opportunities in Benzie County?**

launch sites on the upper Platte River, bike trail along M-22

**How could the establishment of a County Parks and Recreation department support your organization and further recreation availability in the County?**

help us coordinate more closely with the county

**What would you like to see from a County Parks and Recreation department?**

actively promote healthy outdoor recreation



# Colfax Township

**What is your organization's role? In general and/or specific to parks and recreation.**

We currently have no parks within our township but do have the Rails to Trails pathway. We also have a rustic campground (Grass Lake Campground) with 15 camping sites, a day area/pavilion. The campground is on the Betsie River.

**Who do you serve? Within Benzie County?**

We serve our residents which lie on the East side of Thompsonville Highway/Co Rd 669 to the Grand Traverse County line, South to the Manistee County line, and North to the south side of Aylsworth Road. We have a very large area of state land within our township.

**What recreational services, facilities, or opportunities for recreation do you provide?**

Grass Lake Campground  
Rails to Trails passes through our Township  
Betsie River winds throughout the Township

**Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not?**

We collaborate with the DNR regarding the campground--they own the campground but the township runs it.  
With no real public spaces within our township, there are not a lot of options or offerings

## Colfax Township (Cont.)

**What gaps do you see in providing park and recreation opportunities in Benzie County?**

TARP has presented a very nice proposal to revitalize the water tower park in Thompsonville, just across the street from the township hall. I think this would be a great offering as the trails are improved and hopefully used more. It would be nice to see a true trailhead with nice parking, restrooms, an area map, a designated picnic area apart from the camping area, maybe horseshoe pit, volleyball pit, plenty of bike racks to lock bikes to for those that may use the trails to travel here and want to grab a bite to eat or a beverage.

The gaps seem to be people with the time and interest to apply for grants to fund this sort of project.

**How could the establishment of a County Parks and Recreation department support your organization and further recreation availability in the County?**

If this person were interested in and good at grant writing, that would certainly be a plus. Also having some experience in the development process/stage would be nice, but most importantly in maintaining and improving all parks currently in the county--minor upgrades to keep them nice and usable until more funds are available to provide overhauls.

It would also be great to see some of the parks marketed--the Honor and Thompsonville parks and the Benzonia ball park would all benefit from some advertising to host various tournaments and activities. Using the parks we have and making improvements will make them more enticing, bringing money to the communities and to the parks/ball fields.

**What would you like to see from a County Parks and Recreation department?**

Access and Communication with ALL townships and areas. Regular reports, maybe quarterly meetings to highlight plans/prioritization/ideas for funding/ideas for future goals for the public park areas as a whole throughout the County, not just park by park or township/city

# Benzie County Sheriff's Office

**What is your organization's role? In general and/or specific to parks and recreation.**

We are a Law Enforcement Organization.

**Who do you serve? Within Benzie County?**

All citizens of Benzie County

**What recreational services, facilities, or opportunities for recreation do you provide?**

We educate individuals in the area of Boaters Safety, ORV Safety, Firearm Safety, Snowmobile Safety, and Bicycle Safety to name a few.

**Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not?**

DNR, MSP, National Park Service

**What gaps do you see in providing park and recreation opportunities in Benzie County?**

We have a great number of local parks and open areas for lake access but could use more state and local funding for enforcement.

**How could the establishment of a County Parks and Recreation department support your organization and further recreation availability in the County?**

I don't know. I think there are too many twp., and city parks that don't want the county having influence.

**What would you like to see from a County Parks and Recreation department?**

We don't need one.

# Benzonia Township

**What is your organization's role? In general and/or specific to parks and recreation.**

We are a township municipality containing two villages, one fire department and one township owned park.

**Who do you serve? Within Benzie County?**

The people of Benzonia Township

**What recreational services, facilities, or opportunities for recreation do you provide?**

A municipal park containing a dog park, disc golf area, ball fields, picnicking facilities (including 2 pavilions), and restrooms.

**Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not?**

The township collaborate with the Benzie County Parks and Rec when possible. We could use more concerning expanding the facilities and updating most of the equipment.

**What gaps do you see in providing park and recreation opportunities in Benzie County?**

We need help in updating our playground equipment. Spring of 2023 we hope to begin work on a (one mile) walking trail around part of the park, which will be unpaved because we cannot afford to get that done when completed. That expense will be budgeted at a later date. The walking trail is important to our township because the public cannot walk the Betsie Valley Trail with their dogs because they are not allowed. We will have waste bags on the trail and signs to encourage the public to use them when they walk their dogs on the park trail. We have also been asked many times over about a pickleball court at the Park.

## **Benzonia Township (Cont.)**

**How could the establishment of a County Parks and Recreation department support your organization and further recreation availability in the County?**

A department could access grants for us to pay some of the expenses needed for the park.

**What would you like to see from a County Parks and Recreation department?**

Collaboration for more funding.

**Please let us know if there is anything else we should know!**

We have two pavilions at the park currently and there are many, many residents and group who use those during the good weather. Benzonia Township is also currently researching putting two pickleball courts at the park. There is room and we will see if we can find the money for construction.

# Benzie Manistee Snowbirds Snowmobile Club

**What is your organization's role? In general and/or specific to parks and recreation.**

We maintain 160 miles of recreational snowmobile trails in 3 counties, Manistee, Benzie and Leelanau.

**Who do you serve? Within Benzie County?**

We partner with Betsie Valley Trails maintaining the BVT in Fall and Winter. Our trails are Trail 3 South to Brethren in Manistee County, North to Maple City in Leelanau County Trail 395 to Benzonia Trail 391 to Crystal Mountain - Trail 39 to Turtle Lake Trail 37 connecting to Mesick in Wexford County Landis Loop

**What recreational services, facilities, or opportunities for recreation do you provide?**

Trail Maintenance, brushing, signing, winter time grooming. Installing and seasonally opening and closing gates

**Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not?**

Betsie Valley Trails  
Friends of Betsie Valley Parks and Recreation  
DNR  
Benzie County Sheriff

**What gaps do you see in providing park and recreation opportunities in Benzie County?**

Liaisons and partnerships in trail development

**How could the establishment of a County Parks and Recreation department support your organization and further recreation availability in the County?**

Getting local townships the shared information on moving recreation planning partnerships forward

**What would you like to see from a County Parks and Recreation department?**

Work with Commissioners, County, County Road, Townships and Communities

## MSU Extension - Benzie 4-H

**What is your organization's role? In general and/or specific to parks and recreation.**

Michigan 4-H is the largest youth development organization in the state, and offer a large range of topics and interest areas for youth to explore through hands-on, experiential learning. Benzie 4-H has been the sponsor of Benzie Area Youth Soccer program since the 1980s, we handle the registration of youth players, screening of volunteer coaches, team assignments, field preparations, equipment purchases and maintenance, game schedule, etc. We use the soccer fields at Grace Memorial Park in Benzonia and Almira Township Park in Lake Ann. Our program starts the Saturday after Labor Day and runs through the end of October, approximately 8 weeks of youth soccer.

**Who do you serve? Within Benzie County?**

Our soccer program serves youth age 5 (4-H age) thru 12-13 (Grades K thru 8), however 4-H, as an organization serves youth ages 5-19. We serve Benzie county primarily, but we do have youth from Grand Traverse that come to play in our Fall league.

**What recreational services, facilities, or opportunities for recreation do you provide?**

We provide 8 weeks of 4-H soccer programming for youth ages 5 to 12/13. We focus on life skills like team building/teamwork, sportsmanship, nutrition, soccer skills, and more.

**Who do you collaborate with? Are there other organizations you could collaborate with, but are not?**

We have our own internal Soccer Advisory Committee and we work with Benzie Central High School athletics to make our program a feeder program to the upper levels. We are also exploring collaborations with other private area schools such as Benzie Christian Academy. We'd like to help Frankfort establish a soccer program for upper levels after their players age out of our co-ed program. We also are talking with PVCC in Arcadia about putting in soccer fields for use.



## MSU Extension - Benzie 4-H (Cont.)

**What gaps do you see in providing park and recreation opportunities in Benzie County?**

There seems to be a lot of different organizations that run different sports, it would be great to have a central organization to help manage and maintain facilities and be a public facing resource for parents/families to connect to all these other organizations/opportunities for youth in the area.

**How could the establishment of a County Parks and Recreation department support your organization and further recreation availability in the County?**

A county parks and rec department would be great for helping manage, maintain and improve facilities, possibly expand programming opportunities through 4-H (we have been asked to add a Spring Soccer season for a few years now, but haven't been able to due to field availability issues/conflicts), and just being a general information for the public.

**What would you like to see from a County Parks and Recreation department?**

Help manage a schedule or event calendar for sporting fields, help maintain and improve facilities and equipment, and be able to give parents/families information about the various sports leagues available to participate in and how to get involved in supporting these local organizations.



# Appendix B - Recreation Inventory

Site Name	Ownership	Park Type	Fee	Lighting	Parking	Signage - Directional	Signage - Educational	Utilities/Hook-ups (Camping)	Rustic Camping	Potable Water	Restrooms (flush toilets)	Portable Toilet	Outhouse (Pit Vault)	Shower Facility	Garbage Receptacle	Picnic Table	Benches	Fire Pit	Grill	Bike Rack	Emergency Phone	Water Access	Beach	Pier/Fishing Platform	Canoe/Kayak Launch	Boat Launch	Boat Parking	Fish Cleaning Station	Picnic Shelter/Pavilion	Beach House	Band Shell	Dog Park	Pet Waste Disposal Station	Viewing Platform	Trailhead (Water, Land)	Trails (off pavement)	Bike Lane (Road Shoulder)	Mountain biking	Playground Equipment	Baseball/Softball Field	Tennis Court	Pickleball Court	Volleyball	Soccer Field	Football Field	Shuffleboard	Ice Arena	Skate Park	Disc Golf	Basketball	Veterans' memorial																		
Almira Township Park	Almira Township	58-Acre community park			X					X	X						X			X									X						X	X			X	X	X		X	X						X																			
Almira Township Lakefront Park	Almira Township	Community park on Ann Lake			X					X	X					X	X					X	X						X																																								
Ransom Lake Natural Area	Almira Township	229 acre Scenic area with trails			X	X							X				X					X													X	X																																	
Cedar Run Creek Natural Area	Long Lake Township	Nature trails and lake frontage in Benzie and Grand Trav. Counties																																	X	X																																	
Lake Ann State Forest Campground and Pathway	MDNR	Campground and Ann Lake boat launch	X		X	X			X	X			X			X	X					X					X	X							X	X																																	
Ann Lake Access Site	MDNR	Boat Launch			X																					X																																											
Stevens Lake Access Site	MDNR	Boat Launch			X																					X																																											
Davis Lake Access Site	MDNR	Boat Launch			X																					X																																											
Pearl Lake Access Site	MDNR	Boat Launch			X																					X																																											
Brooks Lake Access Site	MDNR	Boat Launch			X																					X																																											
Herendeene Lake Access Site	MDNR	Boat Launch			X																					X																																											
Lime Lake Access Site	MDNR	Boat Launch			X																					X																																											
Pearl Lake Access Site (Wagner Road)	Benzie Road Commission	Boat Launch																								X																																											
Bronson Lake Access Site (Oakley Road)	Benzie Road Commission	Boat Launch																								X																																											
Memorial Park	Benzonia Township	30 Acre community park		X	X	X				X						X	X												X				X	X									X								X		X																
Zada Price Park	Benzie County	Roadside Park Boating Access			X		X									X	X					X				X	X	X																																									
Railroad Point Natural Area	Benzie County	220 Acre waterfront natural area			X	X	X											X				X	X		X											X																																	

# Recreation Inventory (cont.)

Site Name	Ownership	Park Type	Fee	Lighting	Parking	Signage - Directional	Signage - Educational	Utilities/Hook-ups (Camping)	Rustic Camping	Potable Water	Restrooms (flush toilets)	Portable Toilet	Outhouse (Pit Vault)	Shower Facility	Garbage Receptacle	Picnic Table	Benches	Fire Pit	Grill	Bike Rack	Emergency Phone	Water Access	Beach	Pier/Fishing Platform	Canoe/Kayak Launch	Boat Launch	Boat Parking	Fish Cleaning Station	Picnic Shelter/Pavilion	Beach House	Band Shell	Dog Park	Pet Waste Disposal Station	Viewing Platform	Trailhead (Water, Land)	Trails (off pavement)	Bike Lane (Road Shoulder)	Mountain biking	Playground Equipment	Baseball/Softball Field	Tennis Court	Pickleball Court	Volleyball	Soccer Field	Football Field	Shuffleboard	Ice Arena	Skate Park	Disc Golf	Basketball	Veterans' memorial
Sagaser Nature Preserve	GTRLC	Protected woodland. No facilities																																																	
Trapp Farm Nature Preserve	GTRLC	Natural Area. limited facilities			X																													X	X	X															
Betsie Valley Trail	MDNR and Benzie County	23 mile non-motorized rail-trail				X	X										X																																		
Homestead Dam	MDNR	Scenic site River Access			X	X	X						X		X							X				X																									
Betsie River Access (River Road Benzonia Township)	MDNR	River Access Site			X																	X			X	X																									
Betsie River Access (US31)	MDNR	River Access Site			X	X																X			X	X																									
Betsie River Access (Grace Road)	MDNR	River Access Site			X	X																X			X	X																									
Crystal Lake Boating Access	MDNR	Major Boating Access site			X	X	X						X			X	X					X			X	X								X		X															
Dead Stream Access	Benzie Road Commission	Kayak Landing No Facilities																																																	
Platte Lake Road End (Lake Street)	Benzie Road Commission	Lake access, no facilities																																																	
Crystal Lake Road-End Access (White Ave)	Benzie Road Commission	Lake access, no facilities																																																	
Crystal Lake Road-End Access (White Ave.)	Benzie Road Commission	Lake access, no facilities																																																	
Crystal Lake Road-End Access (McKinley St.)	Benzie Road Commission	Lake access, no facilities																																																	
Crystal Lake Road-End Access (Alden St.)	Benzie Road Commission	Lake access, no facilities																																																	
Crystal Lake Road-End Access (Nichols Road)	Benzie Road Commission	Lake access, no facilities																																																	





# Recreation Inventory (cont.)

Site Name	Ownership	Park Type	Fee	Lighting	Parking	Signage - Directional	Signage - Educational	Utilities/Hook-ups (Camping)	Rustic Camping	Potable Water	Restrooms (flush toilets)	Portable Toilet	Outhouse (Pit Vault)	Shower Facility	Garbage Receptacle	Picnic Table	Benches	Fire Pit	Grill	Bike Rack	Emergency Phone	Water Access	Beach	Pier/Fishing Platform	Canoe/Kayak Launch	Boat Launch	Boat Parking	Fish Cleaning Station	Picnic Shelter/Pavilion	Beach House	Band Shell	Dog Park	Pet Waste Disposal Station	Viewing Platform	Trailhead (Water, Land)	Trails (off pavement)	Bike Lane (Road Shoulder)	Mountain biking	Playground Equipment	Baseball/Softball Field	Tennis Court	Pickleball Court	Volleyball	Soccer Field	Football Field	Shuffleboard	Ice Arena	Skate Park	Disc Golf	Basketball	Veterans' memorial									
Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore	National Park Service	National Lakeshore on Lake Michigan. Multiple sites	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X		X				X	X					X	X	X	X																						
Platte Township Open Space	Platte Township	80 acre Open space																																																										
Garey Lake Trail Camp	MDNR	Equestrian campground	X		X					X			X			X		X																																										
Michigan Shore-to-Shore Trail	MDNR	Cross-state equestrian trail																																																										
Betsie River Day Use Park	MDNR	River access			X																	X		X																																				
Betsie River pathway	MDNR	Hiking and cross-country ski trail			X																																																							
Fred's Landing	MDNR/BCRC	Canoe/kayak access to Betsie River			X																	X		X																																				
Dair Mill Access site	MDNR	Betsie River Access			X																			X																																				
Misty Acres, The Borwell Preserve	GTRLC	Farm and natural area			X																	X																																						
Inland Township Park	Inland Township	Community Park			X																							X																																
Paquette Roadside Park	MDOT	Roadside Park			X					X			X			X																																												
Point Betsie Road-End Beach	Benzie Road Commission	Small Public Beach adjacent to Lighthouse															X					X	X																																					
Big Platte Lake Public Access	MDNR	Lake Access Boat Launch			X								X									X			X																																			
Little Platte Lake Public Access	MDNR	Lake Access Boat Launch			X								X									X			X																																			
Spruce Road End Little Platte Lake	Benzie Road Commission	Little Platte Lake access; no facilities																																																										



# Recreation Inventory (cont.)

Site Name	Ownership	Park Type	Fee	Lighting	Parking	Signage - Directional	Signage - Educational	Utilities/Hook-ups (Camping)	Rustic Camping	Potable Water	Restrooms (flush toilets)	Portable Toilet	Outhouse (Pit Vault)	Shower Facility	Garbage Receptacle	Picnic Table	Benches	Fire Pit	Grill	Bike Rack	Emergency Phone	Water Access	Beach	Pier/Fishing Platform	Canoe/Kayak Launch	Boat Launch	Boat Parking	Fish Cleaning Station	Picnic Shelter/Pavilion	Beach House	Band Shell	Dog Park	Pet Waste Disposal Station	Viewing Platform	Trailhead (Water, Land)	Trails (off pavement)	Bike Lane (Road Shoulder)	Mountain biking	Playground Equipment	Baseball/Softball Field	Tennis Court	Pickleball Court	Volleyball	Soccer Field	Football Field	Shuffleboard	Ice Arena	Skate Park	Disc Golf	Basketball	Veterans' memorial
Lake Township Park	Lake Township	Community Park at mouth of Platte River			X	X	X		X	X						X	X		X			X	X			X							X																		
Turtle Lake Access Site	MDNR	Lake Access			X							X										X			X																										
Grace Road End Lake Michigan	Gilmore Township	Lake Michigan Overlook			X																	X																													
Elberta Historic Waterfront Park	Elberta Village	Community Park on Betsie Bay			X	X	X		X	X						X	X					X	X						X	X		X	X	X																	
Elberta Beach	Elberta Village	Lake Michigan Beach			X								X	X								X	X	X																											
Penfold Park	Elberta Village	Community Park on Betsie Bay			X	X					X					X	X					X			X				X						X	X															
Elberta Community Bldg and Park	Elberta Village	Community center and park			X						X					X																																			
Elberta Tot Park	Elberta Village	Mini Park																																																	
Anderson Park	Elberta Village	Mini park																																																X	
Elberta Dunes South Natural Area	Elberta Village	58 acre natural area with Lake Michigan Shoreline			X	X	X																X																												
Maley Park	Village of Honor	Village park with artesian spring			X	X										X	X		X										X																						
Platte River elementary School	Benzie Road Commission	Closed Elementary School for development or demolition																																																	
Memorial Park	Village of Honor	Mini park with Veterans' Memorial																																																	
Burnette Park	Village of Lake Ann	Village park							X	X					X	X																																		X	
Thompsonville Community Park	Village of Thompsonville	Village Park			X				X				X			X			X																														X		
Bargerstock Field	Village of Thompsonville	Baseball/softball fields		X	X				X	X						X																																			



