

Orange County Parks Strategic Plan

October 2007

ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

JANET NGUYEN
First District

BILL CAMPBELL
Third District

JOHN M.W. MOORLACH
Second District

CHRIS NORBY
Fourth District

PATRICIA C. BATES
Fifth District

COUNTY OF ORANGE

RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

BRYAN SPEEGLE
Director

ORANGE COUNTY PARKS

Parker Hancock
Director

Scott Thomas
Project Manger

prepared by

County of Orange, Resources and Development Management Department

Orange County Parks Project Team (past and present):

Scott Thomas, Project Manager

Rich Adler

Steve Bonhall

Mike Brajdic

Mark Denny

Jeff Dickman

John Gannaway

Juan Gutierrez

Bob Hamilton

Parker Hancock

Mike Hentzen

Harry Huggins

Thomas Klems

Linda Mayer

Leslie Ray

Rob Selway

Jenny Stets

Kevin Thomas

Consultant Team:

Mark Sillings, Project Manager, Moore Iacofano Goltsman, Inc.

Pat McLaughlin, Principle, Moore Iacofano Goltsman, Inc.

Daniel Iacofano, Principle, Moore Iacofano Goltsman, Inc.

Jim Pickell, Principle, Moore Iacofano Goltsman, Inc.

Esmeralda Garcia, Project Manger, Moore Iacofano Goltsman, Inc.

Andy Pendoley, Project Manager, Moore Iacofano Goltsman, Inc.

Diane Caballero, Project Associate, Moore Iacofano Goltsman, Inc.

Tom Altmayer, Altmayer Consulting

Ron Hagan, Active Public Enterprise

Mark Duda, Responsive Management

foreword

In 2005, the County of Orange Board of Supervisors launched the Strategic Plan process with the recognition that OC Parks needed to clearly define its vision, mission and goals for the coming decade and beyond. Stewardship of open space, funding for capital projects and maintenance and identifying our core function were key matters that OC Parks set out to examine to most effectively operate its system of regional parks and to best serve its customers.


The following Strategic Plan, nearly two years in the making, reflects the extensive input from county residents, Board members, dedicated staff, park advocates and other stakeholders. We appreciate the many hours volunteered by participants in workshops during the process—this input is evident throughout this document. People from divergent interests worked together to envision the best future possible, and to assist in formulating the plan of “how to get there.”

Public surveys conducted as part of the Strategic Plan revealed a high level of public satisfaction with their regional park facilities and recreational opportunities. Still, OC Parks will strive to assure that the continued energy and resources dedicated to parks operation and management will result in maintaining quality parks into the next generation, as well as protecting the cultural, historical and natural resources of which we are entrusted.

The intensive community input process helped define our future vision and mission and provided goals and strategies related to our continued areas of responsibility - such as public safety, cultural and historical resources, regional recreation, natural resource management and environmental stewardship, funding, and trails. In addition, the County gained insight from the public forums into areas of mutual interest with our potential partners in resource stewardship and recreation. This valuable input is revealed and incorporated into the plan.

I look forward to implementing the Strategic Plan, and sharing the journey with our valued employees and stakeholders.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Parker Hancock". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Parker Hancock
Director, OC Parks

acknowledgements

Orange County Board of Supervisors:

District 1

Honorable Janet Nguyen, Supervisor
Andrew Do, Chief of Staff
Matthew Harper, Policy Advisor

District 2

Honorable John M.W. Moorlach, Supervisor, Vice Chairman
Mario Mainero, Chief of Staff
Rick Francis, Deputy Chief of Staff

District 3

Honorable Bill Campbell, Supervisor
Matt Petteruto, Chief of Staff

District 4

Honorable Chris Norby, Supervisor, Chairman
Eric Norby, Chief of Staff
Jessica O'Hare, Deputy Chief of Staff

District 5

Honorable Patricia Bates, Supervisor
Justin McCusker, Chief of Staff
Eileen Takata, Executive Policy Advisor

Lou Correa, Former First District Supervisor
James W. Silva, Former Second District Supervisor
Thomas W. Wilson, Former Fifth District Supervisor

County Executive Office:

Tom Mauk, County Executive Officer
Rob Richardson, Assistant to the CEO
Alisa Drakodaidis, Deputy CEO
Bob Franz, Deputy CEO, Chief Financial Officer
Patti Gorczyca, CEO/Office of Finance
Anil Kukreja, CEO/Budget

RDMD Executive Management:

Bryan Speegle, RDMD Director
Parker Hancock, Director of OC Parks
Steve Danley, Director of Administration
Polin Modanlou, Assistant to RDMD Director
Rick LeFeuvre, Agricultural Commissioner
Bob Wilson, Director of Internal Services

Tim Neely, Director of Planning & Development Services

Ignacio Ochoa, Director of Public Works

Mary Anne Skorpanich, Director of Watershed & Coastal Resources

Stakeholder/Technical Advisory Committee Members:

Ed Amador, Canyon Land Conservation Fund

Thomas Anderson, Amigos de Bolsa Chica

Gavin Archer, Stantec – Principal, Archeo/Paleo

Paul Arms, Bolsa Chica Land Trust

Enrique Arroyo, California State Parks

Stephanie Barger, Earth Resource

Meghan Barron, Inside the Outdoors

Denny Bean, Friends of Coyote Hills

Connie Bean, Newport Bay Naturalists & Friends

Captain Deana Bergquist, OCSD/Harbor Patrol

Virginia Bickford, CA Cultural Resource Preservation Alliance

Ron Bowers, City of Fullerton

Penny Bradshaw, Amigos de la Colina – President

Betsy Bredau, Sierra Club

Phil Brigandi, Orange County Archivist

Richard Broming, Rancho Mission Viejo

Elisabeth Brown, Laguna Greenbelt, Inc.

Gary Brown, Orange County Coastkeeper

Tim Brown, PB&R Commissioner

Ilsa Byrnes – SJC Historical Society

Paul Carlton, Sierra Club

Jim Carr, Friends of Harbors, Beaches & Parks

Honorable Melody Carruth, City of Laguna Hills

Jae Chung, US Army Corps of Engineers

Debra Clarke, Cleveland National Forest

Eduardo Cisneros, Latino Health Access

Dr. John Cooper, CSUF – Geological Science

Robert Dale, La Habra Vital Community Task Force

Sandra Day, Santa Ana Canyon Historical Council

Pete DeSimone, National Audubon Society

Don Dobmeier, Orange County Historical Commission

Mickie Donoff

Jim Donovan, National Park Service

Grace Dove

Keith Eckstein, SHARE Mountain Bike Club

acknowledgements

Jack Eidt, Endangered Habitats League
Penny Elia, Sierra Club
Chris Elliott, Irvine Neighborhoods
Dee Erman, Office on Aging, Sr. Citizens Advisory Council
Robert Everakes Orange County Zoological Society
Stephen Faessel, Orange County Historical Commission
Cori Farrar, US Army Corps of Engineers
Belinda Faustinos, Rivers & Mountains Conservancy
Mary Fegraus, Laguna Canyon Foundation
Richard Fisher, Richard Fisher and Associates
John Ford, Irvine Park Railroad, Inc.
Leah Fraser, Latino Health Access
J.J. Friis, OCMS – President
John Fullerton, Boy Scouts of America O.C. Council
Sherman Gardner, Goldrich & Kest Industries
Pamela Galera, City of Anaheim
Sgt. David Ginther, OCSD/Harbor Patrol
Rick Goacher, Orange County Planning Commission
Mary Ellen Goddard, Orange County Historical Commission
George Ellis, Lennar – Orange Coast Homebuilding
Alfredo Gonzalez, The Nature Conservancy
Melanie Goss, Cemetery Angels
Barbara Gossett, Caltrans Bicycle Planning
Peter Green, Bolsa Chica Conservancy
Shirley Grindle
Pamela Harrell, OC Docent League – Chair
Ray Heimstra, Orange County Coastkeeper
Dr. Julia Hoigaard
Steve Holden, OCMS - Director
Owen Holmes, California State University, Fullerton
Steve Horn, Irvine Park Railroad, Inc.
Bob Hunt, Silverado-Modjeska Recreation & Parks District
Sarah Jayne, California Native Plant Society
Tricia Johnson, Sensor Development Inc.
Jayne Jones, Trails4All
Brenda Kalb, Equestrian Coalition of O.C.
Chris Keithley, USA Technologies
Jeff Kermode, ETI Corral 357
Lori Kiesser, Newport Bay Naturalists & Friends
Manny Kiesser, Sierra Club

Ron Kietzer, California State Parks
Celia Kutcher, California Native Plant Society
Mechelle Lawrence, Mission SJC – Executive Director
Julie Lee, Bowers Museum – Collections Manager
Tish Leon, Latino Health Access
Mark Levy, Silverado-Modjeska Recreation & Parks District
Tom Livengood, Amigos de Bolsa Chica
Sherri Loveland, OC Interfaith Coalition of the Environment
Marni Magda, Wild Heritage Planners
Lyn McAfee, Nature Reserve of Orange County
Lori McCammon, ETI Corral 357
Pilar McCoy, CPRS District X
Kristine McGovern, Equestrian Coalition of OC
Rod Meade, County Consultant NCCP
Jim Meyer, Trails4All
Jim Miller, OC Public Works
Paul Miller, SHARE Mountain Bike Club
Andrea Murray, CSUF – Anthropology
Bill Neill, CNPS
Ann Nespa, Cemetery Angels
Larry Netherton, Urban Land Institute
Bryan Nickel, Regional Recreational Trails Advisory Committee
Greg Nord, OCTA
Jane Norgen, OCMS – Director
Michael O’Connell, Irvine Ranch Conservancy
Stephanie Pacheco, Coalition for The Great Park
Beth Padon, PCAS
Joyce Perry, Native American Representative
Chay Peterson, Canyon Land Conservation Fund
Linda Plochoki, Modjeska Foundation President
Charlotte Pritchard, League of Woman Voters
Gregg Rankin, OCHS – President
Mike Recupero, Recupero & Associates
Bill Rhin, South Laguna Civic Association
Julie Roach, Casa Romantica
David Robertson, Sunset Beach Community Association
Mark Roeder, County Certified Paleontologists
Barbara Rosenbaum, League of Woman Voters
Joe Ross, League of Woman Voters, Capo Bay Area
Claire Schlotterbeck, Friends of Harbors, Beaches & Parks

acknowledgements

Melanie Schlotterbeck, Friends of Harbors, Beaches & Parks
Theresa Sears, Friends of Harbors, Beaches & Parks
Naeem Siddiqui, DFG
Dan Silver, Endangered Habitats League
Sara Siren, Stantec
Stephanie Smith, Inside the Outdoors
Trish Smith, The Nature Conservancy
Alice Sorenson, Regional Recreational Trails Advisory Committee
John Sorenson, OCMS – Director
Bryan Starr, Building Industry Association of OC
Alexia Swanepoel, Amigos de Bolsa Chica
Roger Taylor, Bicycle Association of South OC
Tracy Theodora
Pat Thies, Sunset Beach Community Association
Don Thomas, Friends of Orange County Zoo
Scott Thomas, National Audubon Society
William Thomas, Parks and Recreation Commissioner
Tina Thompson, Volunteer – OC Parks
Doug Traub, Huntington Beach Conf & Visitors Bureau
Karl Warkomski, City of Aliso Viejo
Jean Watt, Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks
Gary Watts, California State Parks
Peter Wetzell, Orange Park Association
Rick Wilson, Surfrider
Dick Zembal, OC Water District

OC Parks Commission:

Larry Luera, First District
Stephan Andranian, Second District
Matt Cunningham, Third District
Dick Davenport, Fourth District
Brian Probolsky, Fifth District
Honorable Debbie Cook, Coastal Cities Representative
Honorable Don Bankhead, Inland Cities Representative
Honorable Cathy Green, Former OC Parks Commissioner
Jerry King, Former OC Parks Commissioner

Orange County Historical Commission:

Paul R. Simons, Chair, Fourth District
Tish Leon, First District

Christ Thai, First District
Craig Clements, Second District
Margrit Kendrick, Second District
Esther Cramer, Third District
Pamela Harrell, Third District
Adam Probolsky, Third District
Steve Adamson, Fourth District
Margaret Salisbury, Fourth District
Bill Grundy, Fifth District
J. Donald Tryon, Fifth District
Doris Walker-Smith, Fifth District

Participating OC Parks Staff (Current and Former):

John Acevez
Tony Amaro
Jesse Avila
Lisa Babilonia
Carroll Baldwin
John Banua
Joy Barnes
Stanley Bengtson
Doug Berry
Marlene Brajdic
Ed Bridges
Mike Brogan
Larry Brown
Lonny Bubert
Leonard Campos
Jamie Carsey
Griselda Castillo
Mike Chen
Greg Cispono
Doug Condon
Ryan Cordero
Gene Corey
Manny Correa
Corinne Coward
Marcy Crede-Booth
Jane Dam
Forrest Despain

acknowledgements

Gina Drury
Marshall Duell
Sam Edwards
Eleazar Escobedo
Scott Fegly
Paula Fields
Rudy Figueroa
Tommy Gallegos
Randy Garcia
John Garofalo
Sara Girard
Tony Gonzales
Lynn Gron
Chris Hill
Angeline Huang
Rich Huffnagle
William Hsu
Cirilo Jimenez
Wayne Johnson
Wida Karim
Donna Krucki
Leticia Lara
Gabe Lopez
Lamont Lynch
Tom Maloney
Vicky Malton
Dario Martinez
Phil Martinez
Shaun Martinez
Tom Martinez
Rick Maturino
Everardo Mena
Shelly Meneely
Sherri Miller
Mike Miniaci
James Mugica
Ralph Mugica
Ron Nadeau
Cathy Nowak
Eddie Ontiveros

Fletch Perkins
Don Pifer
Joanne Quirk
David Raya
Mike Rees
Bill Reiter
Paul Reyes
Andrea Richard
Ed Robb
Gloria Robinson
John Robinson
Ryan Robinson
Dave Rogoff
Ernie Romero
Rudy Romero
Steve Sanders
Kristy Samayoa
Angeline Santiago
Robert Saucedo
Joanne Scharnberg
Dan Scharton
Ernie Seidel
Josephine Sevilla
Jim Simkins
Ron Slimm
Scott Smith
Sue Stoffel
Mike Stowell
Robert Sustaita
Joanne Taylor
Cathy Terrace
Matt Tratz
Bobbie Tumolo
Jackey Velasquez
Tom Wallstrom
Denise Weems
Jeff Wermers
Rebecca Westurn
Clay Whisenant
Joanette Willert

Diane Wollenberg

Other County of Orange Staff (current and former):

Gerhard Bombe
Susan Brodeur
Barbara Brown
James Campbell
Mike Cirino
Steve Dunivent
Juan Gonzalez
Bill Hisey
Nina Hull
Mary Kazungu-Waterworth
Greg LePore
Nadeem Majaj
Larry McKenney
Alicia Raish
Dave Rudat
Marilyn Thoms
Tobias Tobler

Community Forum Participants:

Leanne Morgan Agran
Dennis Baker
Susan Balger
Carol Bankhead
Irene Barnett
Jennifer Bauman
Brian Baumer
Nancy Beamish
Tom Beamish
Mike Beanan
Al Benoit
Anita Bennyhoff
Gary Berger
Harry Beutel
Shirley Bloom
Lasilo Bodai

acknowledgements

William R. Boehmke Jr.
Nicole Bonuso
Bob Borthwick
David Bowman
Kristin Weaver Bowman
Richard Bozek
Bob & Irene Brace
Scott Breeden
Guinevere Breeding
Arnold Brett
Kelly Broberg
Edie & Mary Brooks
Dean Brown
Peter Bryant
Vince Buck
Marlene Burnett
Jon & Linda Cannon
Honorable Carolyn Cavecche
Debbie Cavers
Tony Cellenti
Pamela Chana
Dave & Barbara Chittenden
Gail Cochlin
Jerry A. Collamer
Robin Cook
Jim Crawford
Tom Croom
Bob Cunningham
Wayne Curl
Tom Davidson
Pat Dempsey
Kristi DeSpain
Steve Eaton
Jim Engle
Alexandra & Bob Everakes
Jeff Everson
Laurie Everson
Sal Failla
Sean F. Feller
Ray Flanders

Mike Forkert
Megan Galway
Deborah Garcia
Monica Giles
Jane Gothold
Peter Green
Shirley Greene
Tim Hawkins
Dennis Hayden
Pat Hearle
Mike Hearst
Chris Heusser
Lyn Harris Hicks
Helen Higgins
Joe Hodulik
Martin Hoffman
Ron Holowenski
Steve Hunt
Deborah Johnson
Siggy Johnson
Debbie Karimoto
Kim Kawasaki
Pam Keller
Polly Kennison
Al King
Henry Koerper
James Kropp
Susan Krum
Marshall Krupp
Dale Kurata
Tom & Barbara Lamere
Brian Lamers
Peter Leon
Joan Leon
Debbie Louis
Anthony Mack
Gary Magill
Ty Malhiot
Gloria Maloney
Laurie Marine

Larry Marsh
John Martin
Ann McCormick
Karen Lang McNabb
Chuck McNeas
Phil McWilliams
Jan Mecklenburg
Thomas Miller
Alex Mintzer
Celso Morrison
Esther Munoz-Ross
Sara Murrieta
Donna Nichols
Jane O'Brien
Carl Overmyer
Chris Padon
Pamela Passow
Matt Patwell
Marty Poort
Paul Pudenz
Jim Puliese
Bob Rees
Win Rhodes
Tony Richards
Alice Ritchie
Shirley Ritchie
Harry Rockey
Christine Rosenow
Bruce Rubin
Ed Sangio
Marsha Saracco
Jody Schless
Bob Schmette
Britton Jacob Schram
Kathleen Shada
Kathleen Sharfield
Susan Sheakley
Peter Shloss
Paul Simons
Dr. Robert B. Sinclair

acknowledgements

Jeff Sinn
John & Nancy Skinner
Gene Sottosanto
Robert Staples
Steve & Sylvia Steinhardt
Lynn Strand
Estell Strauss
Ben Strauss
Glen & Julie Stroud
Laura Thomas
Daniel Thomas
Bill Thomas
Bill Tovatt
Chris Toy
Russ Uppman
Robert Utermohler
Robert E. Vargas
Neil Vitello
Fritz von Coellen
Martha Wetzel
Michelle Williams
Carolyn Wood
Justin Wood

contents

ORANGE COUNTY PARKS STRATEGIC PLAN

Executive Summary	13		
I. Introduction	25	IV. Goals and Strategies	71
Process Overview	26	Recreational Opportunities	71
Strategic Plan Organization	34	Natural Resources Stewardship	73
II. Existing Conditions and Opportunities	39	Cultural and Historic Resources Stewardship	74
Community and Stakeholder Perspectives	40	Access and Connections	76
Park Facilities Analysis	47	Public Communication and Education	78
Funding and Financial Analysis	51	Collaborative Leadership and Partnerships	80
Separate Department Feasibility Study	55	Organizational Effectiveness	81
Strategic Issues and Priorities	58	Financial Discipline	83
III. Strategic Plan Framework	61	Public Safety	85
Elements of the Strategic Plan Framework	61	V. Performance Measures	89
Values, Vision and Mission	63	The Balance Scorecard Approach to Management	89
OC Parks Strategic Plan Goals	64	The Strategy Map	90
Overview of OC Parks Strategic Plan Goals and Strategies	65	OC Parks Balance Scorecard	93
		The Balanced Scorecard Metric Definitions	97
		The KPI to Strategic Plan Framework Goal Matrix	99

VI. Glossary of Key Terms 103

VII. Appendices Vol. I (separate documents)

Appendix A

Strategic Financial Plan Report

Appendix B

Separate Department Feasibility
Study

Appendix C

Community Forums Summary
Report

Appendix D

Park Facility Analysis

Appendix E

Opinion Survey of Orange
County Residents

Appendix F

Park Visitor Survey

Appendix G (See Appendix I)

OC Parks Facility Information

Appendix H

Public Meeting Wallgraphics
and Summaries

VIII. Appendices Vol. II (separate document)

Appendix I

Facilities Inventory Assessment

executive summary

ORANGE COUNTY PARKS STRATEGIC PLAN

The Need for a Strategic Plan

This is the first Strategic Plan ever prepared by Orange County Parks (OC Parks).

Those involved in directing, advising on or using OC Parks services, from the Board of Supervisors to community stakeholders to public agencies and others have expressed a need to confirm OC Parks' future direction, including the organization, funding and other resources needed to successfully achieve the Mission of OC Parks.

OC Parks originally undertook the strategic planning process to address three key issues:

1. The Core Business of OC Parks – What is OC Parks doing now and how or whether that should change in the future? What should be emphasized, improved, and what should OC Parks look to others (either independently or in partnership) to provide?
2. Stewardship of Open Space – How should OC Parks manage and provide use of the 39,000 acres of wilderness parks and open space under its purview? How can resource protection be balanced with public access?
3. Funding Regional Parks -- What is the current capacity of OC Parks to fund current operations along with future improvements and their associated operating costs? Within this framework, what should be priority pursuits for and use of funds?

Since the 1960s, the long-term development and management of this extensive regional park system has been guided by the Resources Element and the Recreation Element of the County's General Plan. These elements, along with the Transportation Element as it refers to trail development and implementation, have provided direction and guidance, which can be synopsized as follows:

- Provide a system of regional parks of significant size and character not otherwise provided by local city parks
- Provide a regional recreation network with park sites that respond to diverse recreational interests
- Provide a public regional riding and hiking trail system with linkages to open space and recreation facilities and with other trail systems
- Preserve, conserve and maintain open space

- Preserve and raise awareness of the County’s cultural and historic heritage, including buildings, structures, objects, scientific collection, sites and districts
- Develop and implement a trails and bikeways plan that meets recreation and non-motorized transportation needs

The recent strategic planning process has validated and thoroughly reaffirmed these goals and the core business of OC Parks as defined in the General Plan. By doing so, the process has served as a reminder that the work of OC Parks encompasses both recreational and resource management, the latter including the many unique natural, scientific and cultural assets of Orange County. It has also identified opportunities and overwhelming public concerns to update and enhance OC Parks operations to more effectively pursue these complementary goals. This is necessary to respond to the changed and changing circumstances and opportunities facing the regional park system in the first decades of the 21st century.

The Scope and Challenge of Orange County Regional Parks

Through Orange County Parks, the County of Orange owns or manages over 39,000 acres of regional park facilities as well as cultural-historical and natural resources. This extensive regional park system includes:

- 32,000 acres in 25 urban and wilderness parks
- Seven miles of beaches and other coastal facilities
- Seven regional historic sites and parks
- Important archeological and paleontological collections
- 7,000 acres of open space lands, and
- 230 miles of regional riding and hiking trails.

OC Parks has also successfully maintained high performance standards throughout this expansive park system. In a recent opinion poll of over 1,000 Orange County residents conducted as a part of the strategic planning process, 90% of the respondents rated the quality of appearance and cleanliness at the OC Parks park they most often visit as excellent or good. For many years OC Parks facilities have also been frequent recipients of the Orange County Register’s annual “The Best of Orange County” in numerous categories, including best places for hiking, jogging/biking, golfing, weddings and picnics/reunions.

Over the past several years, especially since the Orange County bankruptcy in 1994, OC Parks has had to carefully conserve financial resources by doing more with less. OC Parks has now reached a critical juncture in its park facilities development. With completion of large-scale land development

planning, the County has successfully created a regional park system that realized much of the original vision, but in a vastly more urbanized Orange County than once envisioned.

Facing a number of new significant challenges and opportunities, OC Parks requires for the future the kind of value, vision, and mission-driven coherent direction that can be provided by a Strategic Plan - especially a plan developed through the active involvement of the Orange County community, including key stakeholders, policy-makers and staff.

A Combined Outreach and Technical Process

The consultation and outreach process involved consultation with and engagement of over 2,300 individuals, including elected officials, OC Parks employees, agency representatives, Orange County communities, interest groups and the general public. Specific numbers are:

- 138 employees were involved through all-staff workshops
- 228 community members participated in public workshops
- 127 provided comments through the website
- 815 consulted through a park visitor survey
- 1,000 members of the general public interviewed via telephone survey

- 60 interest group representatives, agencies and cities participated in Technical Advisory Groups and the Stakeholder Advisory Committee

While public outreach was a key feature of the strategic planning process, the approach to development of this Strategic Plan integrated ongoing consultation with technical analysis. This technical analysis was designed to provide independent data so that the vision, goals and strategies could be developed and implemented using reliable information. The goal was to provide a complete picture of existing conditions and opportunities, both internal and external, facing OC Parks. These analyses included:

- A **Park Facility Analysis** giving a general assessment of current park facilities based on staff information and knowledge. This analysis will set the stage for a more in-depth quantitative analysis scheduled for 2008.
- A **Funding and Financial Analysis** presenting a financial model and 10-year proforma to provide an accurate analysis of OC Parks' current fiscal state and give a conservative projection of future funding availability, given certain Board-directed policies and fiscal solutions.
- A **Separate Department Feasibility Analysis** designed to objectively consider the resulting costs and benefits of a separate OC Parks department, including potential

impact on RDMD and the County of Orange as a whole.

Issues and Action Areas

As a result of the combined consultation and technical analysis process a number of priority issues, many with global implications for the future of OC Parks and the development of its strategic plan, were identified.

Changing Demands and Expectations

Changes in the population, their attitudes and activities, and other conditions of Orange County have impacted the assumptions underlying OC Parks' role in serving the needs of residents.

- **Focus on Stewardship** - Increased public expectation that the stewardship of natural and cultural-historic resources should remain a critical dimension of OC Parks responsibilities and core businesses.
- **Balancing Conflicting Demands** - Potential conflict between the growing demand for more recreational facilities and stewardship responsibilities, including the need to set aside and protect wilderness, cultural and habitat areas.
- **Physical Capacity to Meet Needs** - Ensuring that the physical capacity of the regional park system and individual parks is sufficient to handle increased usage by residents and other visitors.

- **Diverse and Changing Expectations** - Changing recreational needs and expectations of a growing, more diverse population challenge the ability of all park systems, including the regional park system, to meet those needs.

Changing Financial Circumstances

Past financial constraints have restricted OC Parks in recent years, but these conditions are projected to improve.

- **Lack of Reserves** - There was the inability to develop a capital reserve and to maintain a prudent level of contingency reserves because annual recurring revenues have been running at levels approximately equal to annual operating costs.
- **Lean Operation** - A combination of property tax diversions and rising capital improvement, maintenance and operational costs required that OC Parks Administration pursue a guiding policy of "doing more with less" in order to operate an adequately maintained system. In coming years, unless financial stability is assured as forecast, it will be increasingly difficult to sustain this prudent approach against eventual detriments to the system.
- **Sustainability of Financial Upturn** - Financial conditions are expected to improve in the very near term and especially after 2016; however there is a need to ensure sustainable funding to meet future needs.

Focus Areas for Addressing Results of Past Constraints

Improving financial circumstances will create opportunities to improve service provision and facility conditions that were the consequences of past financial difficulties.

- **Maintaining Physical Integrity of Facilities** - While existing facilities are well-maintained in the eyes of the public, excessive deferred maintenance and equipment reaching the end of its useful life will require concerted action to ensure the continuing physical integrity of existing facilities and infrastructure.
- **Focus on Facilities Supporting Core Mission** - Because of the extensive range of facilities, focus should be placed on those facilities that are core to OC Parks' mission, and retention of all those that are seen as essential to the integrity of the regional park system.
- **Strategic and Informed Approach to Facilities Restoration** - There is no up-to-date assessment of the present physical condition of park facilities and equipment or the true cost to catch up on deferred maintenance and replace existing equipment.¹ New or updated General Development Resource Management Plans are needed for most facilities. A system-wide depreciation study has been initiated to inventory the existing condition of

the parks and provide economic strategies for accomplishing deferred maintenance and routine care of park facilities.

- **Adequacy of Staffing Levels** - Staffing levels have not kept pace with population growth and the commensurate increase in park attendance and demands for services.
- **Resources for Land Acquisition and Maintenance** - While additional open space land acquisitions are called for, this is largely constrained by the availability of funding for acquisitions, and staffing to maintain additional open space. A shortage of undeveloped open space in those densely populated parts of the County most in need of new regional parks is also a constraining factor.
- **Display and Use of Existing Historic and Cultural Resources** - While priority is needed for additional education and interpretive facilities and programs, key resources such as the archeological and paleontological collections have been largely neglected due to funding constraints.

Changing Organizational Circumstances and Opportunities

OC Parks and stakeholders have recognized the need to consider how OC Parks' placement within the County structure as well as how its internal organization can enhance or hinder its ability to carry out its core mission and accomplish its goals.

¹ An inventory and assessment of all park facilities and equipment is scheduled to take place in 2007.

- **Focus on Vision and Mission** - There is a public perception that greater autonomy can provide additional policy-level focus on planning and implementing OC Parks’ vision and mission.
- **Increase in Accountability** - There is an expressed desire for an organizational structure that can provide more direct policy-maker scrutiny and involvement in OC Parks’ financial and programmatic decisions.
- **Partnership Opportunities** - A number of programs, such as interpretation of historic, paleontological and archeological resources, active recreation facilities and the trails and bikeway system, can benefit from increased partnering and joint service provision. This could be accomplished, in part, through organizational changes focused on communication, promotion, partnerships and joint service provision.

Strategy for the Future

In response to these and other related issues, the resulting Strategic Plan provides OC Parks with an overall vision and mission for the future, as well as a series of goals and strategies designed to achieve this new vision. To help navigate along this new path, the Strategic Plan also includes the Balanced Scorecard approach to management that will monitor and communicate progress toward this vision from four perspectives: Customer, Financial,

Internal Processes and Learning and Growth. In this way, the OC Parks Scorecard will provide feedback around both internal processes and external outcomes, enabling the organization to more effectively translate its vision and strategy into action, and over time continuously grow and improve its performance and results.

Elements of the Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan Framework for OC Parks consists of the following elements:

- **Values** describe the norms and qualities of OC Parks and are the basis upon which each staff member should be operating.
- The **Vision** guides OC Parks toward its desired future.
- The **Mission** describes the purpose of OC Parks and its role in achieving the Vision.
- **Goals** describe broad courses of action that OC Parks will seek to employ in carrying out its Mission and achieve the Vision.
- **Strategies** specify the directions OC Parks will follow in the pursuit of each of its Goals. Each strategy will be carried out through a variety of activities, projects, programs and other initiatives.
- **Strategic Objectives and Key Performance Indicators** identify the high-level outcomes that will be monitored to measure and com-

municate progress toward effective implementation of the Strategic Plan.

A diagram providing a one-page visual overview of the Strategic Plan Framework appears on the following page.

County of Orange, Resources and Development Management Department
Orange County Parks Strategic Plan Framework



MISSION

AS A STEWARD OF SIGNIFICANT NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES, ORANGE COUNTY PARKS MANAGES AND OPERATES A SYSTEM OF REGIONAL PARKS, BEACHES, HARBORS, TRAILS AND HISTORIC SITES THAT ARE PLACES OF RECREATION AND ENDURING VALUE.

GOALS

<p>RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES meet the regional recreational needs of a growing population in balance with preservation and protection of natural, cultural and historic resources.</p>	<p>NATURAL RESOURCES STEWARDSHIP preserve and protect the environmental legacy of Orange County for present and future generations.</p>	<p>CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES STEWARDSHIP preserve and protect the cultural and historic legacy of Orange County for present and future generations.</p>
<p>ACCESS AND CONNECTIONS ensure accessibility to and continuity of the county's harbors, beaches, parks, cultural sites, and trails.</p>	<p>PUBLIC COMMUNICATION/ EDUCATION increase public awareness and appreciation for the natural, cultural, and historic resources of Orange County.</p>	<p>COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP/ PARTNERSHIPS create strategic alliances by pro-actively engaging other organizations and the community-at-large.</p>
<p>ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS align organizational structure and capabilities with the mission and goals.</p>	<p>FINANCIAL DISCIPLINE achieve sustainable long-term financial viability to satisfy operational needs, capital requirements and desired programs and services.</p>	<p>PUBLIC SAFETY ensure that all OC Parks facilities maintain a high level of safety for visitors and employees.</p>

Values

The Values of OC Parks describe the basic behaviors, attributes, principles and beliefs that should guide all staff. The Values are the bedrock for the development and direction of OC Parks staff in their work, mission and relationships.

We Value...

- *Stewardship*: We have a responsibility to protect and preserve the natural, cultural and historic resources of Orange County.
- *Integrity*: We act ethically and with a strong sense of purpose.
- *Quality*: We maintain high standards for our work, ourselves, and our parks.
- *Pride of Ownership*: We take pride in providing high quality, well-maintained facilities and a variety of recreational opportunities.
- *Community Service*: We serve the public by providing places that improve the quality of people's lives in body, mind and spirit.
- *Cooperation*: We willingly partner with other organizations, public and private, that share our commitment to protect, manage and maintain the natural, cultural and historic resources of Orange County.
- *Teamwork*: We work well together from a strong foundation of mutual respect and shared purpose.
- *Education*: We have a commitment to lifelong learning for ourselves and

all who visit our parks.

Vision

OC Parks' Vision describes the ideal future that OC Parks is striving to create. The Vision reflects the priorities and values of the staff and stakeholders:

Preserve Orange County's parks in perpetuity for the recreation, education, and inspiration of all visitors.

Mission

The Mission of OC Parks describes the main functions of OC Parks and the role it plays to achieve its vision for the future. The Mission gives the overall charge and purpose of the organization. All OC Parks activities relate to one or more aspects of the mission statement:

As a steward of significant natural and cultural resources, Orange County Parks manages and operates a system of regional parks, beaches, harbors, trails and historic sites that are places of recreation and enduring value.

Strategic Plan Goals

The Goals provide direction for achieving the OC Parks Vision and Mission. Strategies and objectives are identified for each goal area.

- A. Recreational Opportunities: Meet the regional recreational needs of a growing population in balance with the preservation and protection of natural, cultural and historic resources.

- B. Natural Resources Stewardship: Preserve and protect the environmental legacy of Orange County for present and future generations.
- C. Cultural and Historic Resources Stewardship: Preserve and protect the cultural and historic legacy of Orange County for present and future generations.
- D. Access and Connections: Ensure accessibility to and continuity of the county’s harbors, beaches, parks, cultural sites and trails.
- E. Public Communication and Education: Increase public awareness and appreciation for the natural, cultural, and historic resources of Orange County.
- F. Collaborative Leadership/Partnerships: Create strategic alliances by pro-actively engaging other organizations and the community-at-large.
- G. Organizational Effectiveness: Align organizational structure and capabilities with the Mission and Goals.
- H. Financial Discipline: Achieve sustainable long-term financial viability to satisfy operational needs, capital requirements and desired programs and services.
- I. Public Safety: Ensure that all OC Parks facilities maintain a high level of safety for visitors and employees.

Each Goal has a set of Strategies that are designed to support forward movement and progress toward achieving the OC Parks Vision, Mission and Goals, and to position OC Parks to

meet future challenges. Progress on implementation of the Strategic Plan will be measured through a set of outcome-based Strategic Objectives and Key Performance Indicators.

Next Steps

With Board of Supervisors approval of the Strategic Plan on October 2, 2007, OC Parks and its partner organizations, inside and outside the County, will move forward with the strategies and actions required to translate the Vision and Goals of the Orange County regional park system into reality. At the same time, the Balanced Scorecard provides feedback on key performance metrics that will keep the organization focused on those things most important in ensuring the long term success of the Strategic Plan. Utilizing the OC Parks Scorecard enables OC Parks staff to adjust their efforts as needed, to more effectively implement the Strategic Plan. As a result, the Strategic Plan will remain current and relevant as a living document that can continue to serve OC Parks as an effective road map for years to come.



chapter one

INTRODUCTION

In March 2006, the County of Orange, Resources & Development Management Department (RDMD)/Orange County Parks (OC Parks) began the process of developing a Strategic Plan. The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to reaffirm, as well as where necessary and appropriate, redefine OC Parks' overall Vision and Mission, and develop a series of Goals and Strategies to guide the future development of its facilities and programs for the next decade. This plan is the culmination of a twenty-month process that included an opportunity for participation by many key stakeholders, OC Parks staff members, and the County Board of Supervisors, as well as input from the public. This Plan represents the collective time, effort and insight of those individuals.

Through OC Parks, the County of Orange owns or manages over 39,000 acres of regional park facilities as well as cultural-historical and natural resources. This extensive regional park system includes 32,000 acres in 25 urban and wilderness parks, seven miles of beaches and other coastal facilities, seven regional historic sites and parks, large archeology and paleontology collections, 7,000 acres of open space lands, and 230 miles of regional riding and hiking trails. Since the 1960s the long-term development and management of this extensive regional recreational system was guided by the Resources Element and the Recreation Element of the County's General Plan. In more recent years, however, OC Parks reached a critical juncture in its park facilities development. With completion of large scale land development planning, the County has successfully created a regional park system that realized much of the original vision, but in a vastly more urbanized Orange County than once envisioned. Facing a number of new significant challenges and opportunities, OC Parks required for the future the more specific direction that can be provided by a Strategic Plan, especially a plan developed through the active involvement of the Orange County community, including key stakeholders, policy makers and staff.

A Strategic Plan was needed to address what was distilled into three key strategic issues:

- *Funding Regional Parks* – How best to fund regional parks in response to limited funding and increased demand for services and facilities.

- *Core vs. Non-Core Business* – Reassessing OC Parks priorities in light of its core mission and mandates as defined by the General Plan and the views of Orange County residents, park user groups, and other stakeholders.
- *Stewardship of Open Space* – How to balance the competing interests of protecting large areas of environmentally sensitive habitats with the growing public demand to access these areas.

In response to these and other related issues, the resulting Strategic Plan provides OC Parks with an overall Vision and Mission for the future, as well as a series of Goals and Strategies designed to achieve this new Vision. To help navigate along this new path, the Strategic Plan also includes a Balanced Scorecard Performance Management System to monitor progress toward this Vision. There are many very good reasons to believe that Orange County has one of the premier regional park systems in the nation, if not the world. By taking this time to listen to its many stakeholders, to review its remarkable history, and to assess its present-day challenges and opportunities, OC Parks is ensuring that the future of its regional park system will continue to be one that positively contributes to the quality of life in Orange County while fulfilling the needs and aspirations of all who come here to visit and experience these special places.

Process Overview

The strategic planning process engaged participants in mapping a course for the future by clearly defining a Vision and desired outcomes and linking the most critical strategic efforts to achieve those outcomes. Concurrent with this public engagement process, objective plan research analyses were independently undertaken by the consultant team to examine key imperatives required to better inform the public outreach efforts and plan development. The strategic planning process included three distinct phases:

Phase I: Visioning (March to July 2006) The primary purpose of the first phase was to identify and examine key strategic issues and define the Values, Vision and Mission of OC Parks.

Phase II: Strategizing (August to November 2006) This phase focused on translating the Values, Vision, and Mission, along with the strategic issues that had emerged in Phase I, into a range of strategic goals and strategies.

Phase III: Preparing for Action (December 2006 to August 2007)

During this final phase, an ad hoc committee of the Board of Supervisors was formed to ensure that the Board had input and direction for the development of a complete plan that addressed their issues and concerns. During this phase, a performance management system was developed to

quantify progress toward the achievement of strategic goals, and all OC Parks regional recreational facilities were assessed in terms of the General Plan criteria.

Following the selection of a consultant, Moore Iacofano Goltsman, Inc. (MIG), to assist OC Parks with the development of the Strategic Plan, a **Strategic Plan Project Team (SPPT)** consisting of OC Parks staff, working under the direction of the OC Parks Director, began working closely with MIG to coordinate the planning process and to provide feedback at each stage in the development of the Plan. The sixteen members of the SPPT represented all three OC Parks divisions, as well as the various facility types and geographic districts that compose OC Parks. The SPPT was intimately involved in the development of the Strategic Plan during each of the three phases.

Public Outreach Activities

The public outreach element of the strategic planning process was particularly extensive during the first two phases of the strategic planning process. During Phase I, the focus of many of these activities was to identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) facing OC Parks, as well as other related issues and perspectives needed to identify and formulate the Values, Vision and Mission



Participant gives her input at a public meeting

of OC Parks. Later, during Phase II, the focus shifted to the identification of the strategies needed to accomplish the goals of the Strategic Plan. These perspectives were gathered from a variety of audiences, including OC Parks staff, key stakeholders, Board of Supervisors, and the community-at-large.

Following initial meetings with the SPPT and a review of existing planning documents, OC Parks staff and representatives from the MIG consultant team met individually with each of the five members of the **Board of Supervisors** and their staff. These interviews offered the Supervisors an early opportunity in the planning process to share their views regarding the future of OC Parks and the regional park system, and their involvement in the development of the Strategic Plan.

One-on-one interviews were also conducted with **key stakeholders** representing a wide range of perspectives,

including local non-profit environmental groups, community organizations, economic development, local city officials, a city department manager, and park concessionaires. These interviews were intended to assess their perceptions about OC Parks, their readiness to participate in the planning process, and identify the outcomes they would like to see in the future.

A **Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC)** was formed as an advisory body of approximately 65 members, representing key stakeholder organizations. Membership included park and open space support and user groups, a variety of commissions and non-profit organizations, as well as staff representing RDMD functions. These SAC representatives came largely from formally recognized organizations with regional open space, park or trail responsibility or interest, or those representing a broad range of stakeholders. The role of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee was to provide information, explore ideas, and make recommendations, which OC Parks staff and consultants used in conjunction with information gathered through other sources, such as community meetings and technical analyses, to help prepare the strategic plan. The SAC met six times at key milestones in the development of the strategic plan, using their collective input to help identify key strategic issues and to shape the core elements

of the strategic plan, including the new vision, mission, goals and strategies, as well as to review the final draft documents.

Also during Phase I, **OC Parks Staff Workshops** were held to directly engage frontline OC Parks staff in the strategic plan development process. During these two days, 138 OC Parks employees voluntarily participated in facilitated discussions and exercises designed to elicit their ideas and perspectives on the future of OC Parks. These activities enabled OC Parks staff to interact with employees from throughout the organization, review input collected at that stage of the process, and to help develop a clear picture of what future success would look like. This input also provided additional insight for subsequent public outreach activities.

A major component of the public outreach process in Phase I were the **five Community Forums** sponsored by OC Parks in the months of June and July. These meetings were designed to both inform members of the public about OC Parks, and to offer them opportunities to share their ideas for the future of the regional park system. One community forum was convened in each of the County's five supervisorial districts, with a County of Orange Supervisor hosting each meeting. A total of 228 community members attended the

five forums. In each forum, attendees were presented with potential concepts for a new OC Parks vision and mission; concepts that had emerged during preceding steps in the planning process, including the OC Parks staff workshops and SAC meetings. Those preliminary conceptions of OC Parks' desired future and its role in achieving such a future reflected the collective priorities and values of those participants. The community forums thus provided an opportunity to further test and refine those concepts, while also further identifying future priorities derived from those perspectives.

In conjunction with other public outreach activities, Responsive Management, a public research survey firm specializing in outdoor recreation and related natural resource issues, conducted a **public opinion poll** of over 1,000 Orange County residents. This telephone survey of a representative sample of Orange County residents asked respondents about their participation in outdoor recreation, their recreational facility use patterns, and their views on recreation and natural resources issues. Another related survey was distributed at regional parks by OC Parks staff and was completed by 815 park visitors. Data from both user surveys were used, along with the information gathered through the community forums and other venues to develop a comprehensive picture

of the views and priorities of Orange County residents and visitors regarding their regional park system. In addition to the forums and public opinion polls, Orange County residents were invited to share their views directly with OC Parks via email and the OC Parks website at www.ocparks.com/strategicplan.

Phase II of the strategic planning process began with meetings of six **Technical Advisory Committees (TAC)** formed to tackle key questions that had emerged during the strategic planning process. These TACs played a key role in translating the Vision, Mission and Goals into strategies required for their accomplishment. Each TAC consisted of SAC members with technical expertise in their respective topic, as well as people with specific knowledge or experience concerning the various topics, including County managers and staff. OC Parks SPPT members facilitated each of the TACs. One TAC was formed for each of the following seven topic areas:



Technical Advisory Committee Meeting



Park ranger at a staff workshop



OC Parks staff complete an exercise during a workshop

- Cultural and Historic Resource Stewardship
- Natural Resource Management/ Environmental Stewardship
- Regional Recreation and Open Space
- Trails and Connections
- Partnerships and Alliances
- Funding and Organizational Structure
- Public Safety

Two additional TACs were formed with Park Rangers and Park Maintenance Staff to address a range of strategic operation issues related to these topics. Findings and recommendations that emerged from each of the TACs were later used to identify specific strategies for each of the strategic goals that had previously emerged in the planning process.

Plan Research Analyses

In parallel with the public outreach activities, technical studies in support of the planning process were also conducted. The plan research analyses consisted of three inter-related studies:

- Park Facility Analysis
- Funding and Financial Analysis
- Separate Department Feasibility Analysis

These studies were initiated during Phases I and II. Findings from these studies were particularly useful dur-

ing the final Phase III of the planning process as they provided an objective basis with which to assess and prioritize recommendations generated by public and stakeholder input during earlier public outreach activities. As this was a repetitive process, OC Parks, RDMD Administration, Auditor/Controller, IT, Purchasing, and Architect/Engineer Project Management staff were included in the development of these analyses and the SAC also reviewed and provided feedback that further refined the findings as they emerged from the technical studies.

The **Park Facility Analysis** provided a general assessment of current park and recreational facilities based primarily on available staff information and knowledge. This broad brush portrayal of existing facilities utilized survey instruments and other similar tools to assess current park site and facility information based on the views of those most familiar with those facilities - OC Parks operations and maintenance staff, as well park visitors who use those facilities. Relying on these sources, the park facility analysis was intended to provide a largely qualitative profile of the following:

- Current conditions of OC Parks facilities
- Utilization of OC Parks facilities
- Availability of OC Parks facilities

- Capacity of OC Parks facilities to meet existing and projected future demand.

To help answer these questions, park operations and maintenance staff located in all OC Parks facilities completed detailed survey questionnaires customized for their facility. As a follow-up to the survey, focus groups with park rangers and park maintenance staff were later held to gather more in-depth information. The park facility analysis also relied upon findings from the telephone user survey conducted by Responsive Management, and the park visitor survey to gather information from the park user perspective. These data were supplemented by information gathered through the public outreach process, including the stakeholder interviews and the community forums. The general assessment of park facilities resulting from this analysis will set the stage for a more in depth quantitative analysis based on an actual physical inspection and inventory of all recreational facilities, as recommended later in this Strategic Plan and scheduled for implementation in the near future.

The primary purpose of the **Funding and Financial Analysis** was the development of a financial plan directed toward implementation of the overall Strategic Plan. This required the development of a financial model

and 10-year proforma to provide an accurate and objective understanding of OC Parks' funding history, and the factors contributing to its current financial condition. The financial model was developed on the basis of OC Parks' operations as they are currently structured and reported as "actuals" at the close of each fiscal year (FY) through FY 2006/2007. It divided OC Parks' revenues and expenses into high level categories, and then developed a financial history of those categories so estimated revenues and expenses for the future years 2008-2017 could be projected. This process involved a series of collaborative meetings with both RDMD and OC Parks financial staff to construct an accurate picture of OC Parks' financial history, including the major issues that had shaped its funding and financial status over time. The Funding and Organization Technical Advisory Committee, whose many participants included the RDMD Director, staff from CEO Finance and the Auditor/Controller office, and other key financial experts, also played a major role. The financial story that emerged from this work provided an accurate and in-depth understanding of the current financial status of OC Parks, and how this story would likely unfold in the future depending on which set of funding and financial policies and fiscal solutions and recommendations the Board of Supervisors

might authorize OC Parks to adopt. In this way, the financial analysis provided a solid, credible basis for the funding and financial analyses presented in the Strategic Financial Plan. Results from this analysis also provided data required for the completion of the Separate Department Feasibility Study.

The **Separate Department Feasibility Analysis** was designed to determine and assess the opportunities and constraints associated with Harbors, Beaches and Parks becoming an independent county department separate from the Resources & Development Management Department. The detailed analysis objectively considered the resulting costs and benefits of a separate OC Parks department as it related to continuous provision of OC Parks services, execution of the core business practices, and the successful pursuit of the OC Parks Mission. This analysis assessed the potential impact not only as it would affect OC Parks, but also RDMD and from the perspective of the County or Orange as a whole. The analysis focused on three key impacts:

- OC Parks' ability to carry out its core functions most effectively
- OC Parks' accountability to County policymakers and the public at large, and the
- Financial cost to both departments.

To address these potential impacts, extensive interviews were conducted with OC Parks and RDMD management, and with key OC Parks stakeholders. This study also required an examination of financial records to determine potential financial impacts. This task drew in part on the recent experience of the separation of Dana Point Harbor from RDMD, and a peer comparison of administrative services staffing from the Integrated Waste Management Department .

Integration of Public Outreach and Technical Analyses

Together, findings from the Strategic Plan's research analyses and the public outreach efforts provided a more complete picture of existing conditions and opportunities, both internal and external, facing OC Parks at this time in its history. This understanding of where OC Parks is today provided a necessary and important comparison with where and what OC Parks could achieve and with where its staff and stakeholders want OC Parks to be in the future, as described by the new Vision, Mission, and Goals. Recognizing and assessing the gap between present day and the desired and achievable ideal future, helps to clarify the path that OC Parks will need to navigate in coming years if it is to successfully accomplish the Goals identified in this Plan. This was the primary work of the third and final phase of the strategic planning process,



OC Parks staff share views at a staff workshop

which began following the presentation of the interim Draft Strategic Plan to the County Board of Supervisors on November 21, 2006.

During Phase III, an ad hoc committee of the Board of Supervisors was formed to help guide OC Parks staff through the completion of the final strategic plan. The ad hoc committee focused on issues and concerns raised by the Board during its consideration of the interim Draft Strategic Plan in November 2006, as well as those anticipated to be raised by new Board members in early 2007. These focus areas included:

- Acquisition and management of open space.
- Addressing the lack of regional parks in central and north Orange County.
- Continuing to ensure the public safety for visitors and employees of Orange County's parks.

- Completing a facilities assessment to determine consistency with the County’s core mission of providing the operation and maintenance of regional park services.
- Consider recommendations for a new name for Harbors, Beaches and Parks – OC Parks.
- Discuss standards and requirements for signage at Orange County regional park facilities.
- Discuss reimbursement issues for Harbor Patrol service provided to cities.
- Development of performance metrics to measure the successful delivery of recreation services to the public.

With the guidance of the Board ad hoc committee, OC Parks staff developed a performance measurement system based on the Balanced Scorecard approach to management, which will track progress toward the achievement of strategic plan goals. A facilities assessment was also completed to determine consistency with General Plan criteria for regional park facilities, and convened a new Technical Advisory Committee that focused on the strategic plan goal of Public Safety.

Completion of this work addressed several issues in order to ensure effective implementation of the Strategic Plan.

Strategic Plan Organization

Including this introductory chapter,

this Strategic Plan contains the following five chapters:

Introduction

Presents the purpose of the Strategic Plan and describes the process to develop it.

Existing Conditions and Opportunities

Presents an overview of existing conditions and opportunities facing OC Parks based on findings from both the public outreach and technical analyses.

Strategic Plan Framework

Describes the core elements of the Strategic Plan and by doing so forms the basis for the overall strategic direction of OC Parks.

Strategic Goals and Strategies

Details the nine (9) primary Goals of the Strategic Plan, the strategies for accomplishing the Goals, and the issues and opportunities they address.

Performance Measures

Introduces the Balanced Scorecard, which will measure progress in the implementation of the Strategic Plan through Strategic Objectives and Key Performance Indicators.

Appendices (separate documents)

Strategic Financial Plan Report

Separate Department Feasibility Study

Community Forums Summary Report

Park Facility Analysis

Opinion Survey of Orange County
Residents

Park Visitor Survey

OC Parks Facility Information

Public Meeting Wallgraphics and
Summaries

Facilities Inventory Assessment

Community Forums



District 2 - June 19, 2006
Upper Newport Bay Nature Preserve



District 4 - June 27, 2006
Clark Regional Park



District 1 - June 28, 2006
Old County Courthouse



District 5 - July 6, 2006
Laguna Hills Community Center



District 3 - July 12, 2006
Irvine Regional Park

Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meetings



Meeting #1 - April 27, 2006
Upper Newport Bay Nature Preserve



Meeting #2 - June 1, 2006
Old County Courthouse



Meeting #3 - July 20, 2006
Buena Park Community Center



Meeting #4 - September 21, 2006
Santiago Oaks Regional Park



Meeting #5 - November 9, 2006
Old County Courthouse

Technical Advisory Committee Meetings



■ **Cultural & Historical Resources**
August 22, 2006
Old County Courthouse



■ **Natural Resources Management**
August 29, 2006
Old County Courthouse



■ **Maintenance**
September 12, 2006
Mile Square Regional Park

■ **Regional Recreation & Open Space**
August 22, 2006
Santiago Oaks Regional Park

■ **Trails & Connections**
August 30, 2006
Old County Courthouse

■ **Funding & Organizational Structure**
September 19, 2006
HGO Building Room 503

■ **Park Rangers**
August 25, 2006
Santiago Oaks Regional Park

■ **Local Partnerships & Alliances**
August 31, 2006
Old County Courthouse

Staff Workshops



June 9, 2006
Irvine Regional Park



June 14, 2006
Irvine Regional Park

Attendance: (Approx.)
Community Forums = 228
Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meetings = 170
Technical Advisory Committee Meetings = 120
Staff Workshops = 138
Total = 656



chapter two EXISTING CONDITIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

This chapter provides an overview of the conditions and opportunities currently facing OC Parks as viewed from several aspects of the organization. These aspects are described in the following sections:

Community and Stakeholder Findings

Identifies key themes regarding the present day reality and future of OC Parks as seen from the perspective of the community. This includes findings from both public meetings and a telephone survey of Orange County residents.

Park Facilities Analysis

Provides a qualitative assessment of current park and recreational facilities, including general conditions and utilization, as derived from available staff knowledge and the opinions of park visitors.

Funding and Financial Analysis

Summarizes factors that shaped the financial history of OC Parks and determined its current financial status, and applies lessons learned from this analysis to ensure sufficient funding for all future priorities.

Separate Department Feasibility Analysis

Assesses the pros and cons associated with OC Parks becoming an independent department separate from the Resources and Development Management Department.

Strategic Issues and Priorities

Integrates findings from these four different perspectives to highlight the key challenges and opportunities that the OC Parks Strategic Plan is designed to address.

More extensive treatment of this information is provided elsewhere in this report or in separate documents. The Appendices include several additional documents providing more detailed information stemming from the analysis that is summarized in this chapter. These include the Strategic Financial Plan, Separate Department Feasibility Study, Park Facilities Analysis, and Community Forums Summary Report, among other separate documents accompanying this Strategic Plan.

Community and Stakeholder Perspectives

Public Outreach Findings

The following is a synopsis of the major ideas and themes that arose during a series of public meetings and interviews that took place during the spring and summer of 2006. This includes four meetings of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee, five Community Forums, two OC Parks staff workshops and interviews with the Board of Supervisors and other key stakeholders. The wide variety of issues and themes discussed during these meetings fall into two broad categories. The first category involves the areas of action in which participants wish to see OC



Park ranger talking to a child at the Clark Park Interpretive Center

Parks involved. The second category concerns how best OC Parks should be organized to carry out these activities.

Areas for Action

Issues and opportunities that participants wish to see OC Parks focus its attention and resources include:

Stewardship - Stewardship is seen as a core OC Parks responsibility. Emphasis was placed upon the concept that the resources to be managed, protected and enhanced must be clearly identified, and these include not just natural/environmental resources, but also cultural and historic ones.

Education and stewardship - Education is seen as an integral part of the stewardship responsibility. To ensure that these resources are passed on as a legacy from the present to the future, it is critical that each generation recognizes and appreciates their intrinsic value. This can be achieved through interpretive programs designed to increase public awareness and appreciation for the full range of natural, cultural and historic resources in Orange County. Educational programs translate into public support and potentially the development and cultivation of new, and future stewards of these public assets.

Archeological and paleontological collections - There is tremendous educational, scientific, aesthetic, scholarly

and economic value in the archeological and paleontological collections, but their potential value and benefit to the County lies untapped due to a lack of funding and personnel to implement an adequate program. It is critical that these collections be properly preserved, cared for and catalogued, and that they be “taken out of the boxes” where they are now and be made available to the public. Many suggested the creation of a natural and cultural history museum.

Acquisition of new open space - Open space, including the regional park system, was seen as integral to Orange County’s quality of life, its natural environment and its economy. All of these are threatened if open space is unnecessarily sacrificed in response to short-term, inadequately planned development pressures. The need for open space and additional parks will continue to increase as the population grows, but that future need will be unmet if current opportunities to acquire additional public lands are missed. For these reasons, the acquisition of new open space is a critical, present-day opportunity that cannot be postponed to the future. This view was expressed in all five supervisorial districts, but was especially urgent in the north Orange County districts. There is fear that continuing reliance on OC Parks to help resolve the County’s financial problems is at the price of meeting this critical long-term prior-

ity, and that creative financial/funding solutions are needed to resolve this dilemma. Although most would like to see current financial resources re-allocated to support acquisitions, none were willing to do so if it was at the expense of maintaining existing open spaces and parks.

Natural resources management - The management of natural resources should focus on habitat protection and restoration, including maintaining the wilderness character of open space lands where it still exists. Understanding baseline existing conditions for the region will be critical for setting resource management goals. Individual park habitat goals should be determined within a framework of a regional habitat protection plan. Many asserted OC Parks could more effectively fulfill this responsibility by working in partnership with other landowners, both public and private. OC Parks can take advantage of



Mile Square Regional Park



Equestrians riding along a trail.

existing efforts and potential funding opportunities, including those linked to water quality and watershed management.

Recreation - OC Parks can help find ways to meet the recreation needs of a growing population, but it must develop solutions compatible with its stewardship responsibilities. The desired goal is a premier recreation system in balance with the preservation of habitat and wilderness areas. Finding this balance requires working in close partnership with local cities, schools and other partners, each providing a different array of recreational services to meet this growing demand. Assessing the capacity of the regional parks to meet increased demands is also recommended. Thinking of stewardship, education and recreation

as complementary elements of a single holistic system was proposed as a guiding principle.

Access and connections – Improving access to the park system was seen as one important way to help meet the recreation needs of County residents, especially in north Orange County. This includes completing Orange County’s regional bikeway and riding and hiking trail networks by eliminating all gaps in that system, making it possible to walk or bike seamlessly throughout the County or even to travel across the County along the trail system from the mountains to the ocean. Linking the County’s regional trail system with local trails helps achieve this desired outcome. To complete these systems, many hoped more vigorous steps would be taken to guard against encroachments across trails, and that acquisition opportunities for both new trails and parks would be pursued when they become available, especially in north Orange County. Another way to address the north/south wilderness and natural parks imbalance might be to provide frequent transit service from communities in the north to parks in south Orange County, especially on weekends and holidays.

Organized for Action

The following summarizes recommendations made by participants on how OC Parks should be organized to

achieve its Mission and Vision for the future.

Partnerships and leadership - In order for OC Parks to adequately fulfill its stewardship responsibilities, it needs to become more pro-actively engaged with other institutions and the community at-large. By itself, even with increased funding and a larger staff, OC Parks cannot meet all the environmental and recreational needs of Orange County. As a result, greater collaboration, including working partnerships with other public and private organizations such as local cities, county, state and federal agencies, along with non-profit organizations, is required. In order to create these partnerships and meet its other goals, many asserted OC Parks should assume a more high-profile facilitative leadership role. Such leadership might also require that OC Parks examine whether there were organizational habits of thinking and behavior that had worked well for staff in the past, but if unchanged could inhibit this more proactive leadership role in the future. If so, a more proactive stance within OC Parks would be needed, enabling it to more easily launch initiatives, and to be more responsive to local community requests for assistance. Most importantly, OC Parks should be more actively engaged in the process of building constituencies for the park system through its educational and marketing programs,

and by the expansion of its volunteer corps.

Organizational independence – Many of those who participated in the community outreach process stated their belief that OC Parks would need to once again become an autonomous, independent department if it is to assume a leadership role and effectively carry out its stewardship and recreational mission. In their view, organizational independence would place OC Parks in a stronger position to protect and preserve the regional park system (including its recreational facilities) by providing it with more direct access to the Board of Supervisors, the CEO, other agencies and organizations, and the community at-large. It would also ensure the more effective utilization and protection of its financial resources, through better accountability, transparency and responsiveness. This was a theme expressed in all five of the community forums, all meetings of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee and many stakeholder interviews.

Financial health - All would like to see the financial health of OC Parks fully restored to meet both current and long-term financial needs. Many believe that additional open space acquisition opportunities have not been pursued, and important long-term capital improvements and maintenance needs put on hold,



Inside the Old Orange County Courthouse

because OC Parks has had to contribute millions each year to help reduce the County’s bankruptcy debt. Adding to the perceived financial injury, OC Parks has also funded services such as the Harbor Patrol, the mission of which has evolved to place a greater emphasis toward homeland security. As such, Harbor Patrol is perceived as no longer directly supporting the regional

park system.¹ Stakeholders want to see steps taken to establish sustainable, long-term funding sources to meet OC Parks operational needs, capital requirements and open space acquisitions. To ensure fiscal responsibility, they believe OC Parks should operate more like a business, and leverage its fiscal resources through collaboration with other organizations, including strategic partnerships.

Improve organizational effectiveness

- OC Parks staff was complimented for their dedication and ongoing efforts to maintain the quality and integrity of the park system despite financial and organizational constraints. Still, some expressed concern that the size and technical scope of the OC Parks organization was insufficient to meet the multi-disciplinary needs of the park system. They believe staffing levels will have to be increased to match the needs and goals of the park system, and that leadership, managerial and technical capabilities of the organization will need to be further developed. Finally, they would like to see a more proactive organizational climate developed, as required, to fulfill its leadership role and stewardship responsibilities.

¹ In response, the Board of Supervisors decided in June 2006 Budget Hearings to discontinue charging OC Parks Fund 405 for Harbor Patrol. Instead, effective FY 07/08, the Sheriff will pay \$5.8 million to harbor patrol services offset with an increase in general funding.

Other Issues

In addition to the broader themes summarized above, other specific issues also were expressed in many of the public meetings. These are the following:

Old Orange County Courthouse

- In all of the meetings, opposition was expressed to the possibility that responsibility for the Old Orange County Courthouse (Old Courthouse) might be transferred from OC Parks to the County Clerk-Recorder. The Old Courthouse was seen as one of the “jewels” of the park system. Transferring it away from OC Parks was viewed as a violation of OC Parks’ stewardship responsibilities, especially since this responsibility was seen as encompassing cultural and historic assets such as the historic courthouse. It was noted by some that if the Old Courthouse were transferred, there would then be no OC Parks facilities in District 1.

Moratorium on transfer of OC Parks facilities - Concern was expressed that significant decisions potentially impacting the future integrity of the regional park system were in the process of being made, especially regarding the possible sale or transfer of some OC Parks facilities. Those mentioned included not only the Old Courthouse, but the Upper Newport Bay Nature Preserve and other small parcels. It was strongly believed that such deci-

sions should be put on hold until the completion of the Strategic Plan, in the hope that this will provide the criteria or framework needed to properly assess the costs and benefits of these critical decisions.

Overlooked Facilities – In many of the meetings, there were those who expressed concern that OC Parks and the County were not devoting sufficient attention and resources to some of their facilities. The Orange County Zoo was described by some as a marvelous educational tool that was under-funded and needed to be more effectively promoted. Others felt that the County was neglecting its equestrian heritage by not acting to compensate for a growing shortage of equestrian facilities. A few individuals felt the County should do more to address the shortage of dog parks, especially in north Orange County.

Public Opinion Survey Findings

Over 1,000 Orange County residents participated in the telephone survey conducted by Responsive Management in August 2006. Many of the findings from this survey of the general public appear to complement those obtained through other elements of the public outreach process, including the community forums and Stakeholder Advisory Committee meetings. In particular, there was strong and nearly equal appreciation and support for

both environmental and recreational interests. For instance, when asked to rate the importance of nine different “values provided by OC Parks facilities”, the top three ranked values embodied environmental concerns and interests:

- Protection of air and water quality - a mean of 9.4 in importance out of 10, with 73% rating its importance at a “10”.
- Preservation of open spaces and scenic views - 9.1 mean, 64% rating it “10”.
- Protection of wildlife - 9.0 mean, 64% rating it “10”.

Providing recreational opportunities was only the fifth-ranked value. However, at a mean of 8.7 in importance out of 10, with 51% rating its importance a “10”, its overall numerical rating was only slightly less than the environmental values. In addition, from the different perspective of “reasons to visit an OC Parks facility”, outdoor recreation was the top-rated reason, with enjoying nature being a very close second.

For a majority, the character of their preferred recreational activities appear to be compatible with efforts to preserve the natural, open space nature of OC Parks facilities, as most visitors attended for casual, passive activities (61%) rather than for active sports (15%). Another 22% described their

visits as consisting about equally of both casual, passive activities and active sports.

Other findings indicate there is support for direct participation in stewardship activities. A small, but not insubstantial, percentage of those who visited an OC Parks facility (6%) volunteered to help with a natural resource or outdoor recreation project. Meanwhile, 7% of Orange County residents say that they would be very likely to volunteer their time in the next year.

Some findings from the opinion poll include the following:

- About a quarter (27%) of Orange County poll respondents had visited an OC Parks facility in the past year. During the same period, a majority of residents (66%) had visited a city park, and 15% had visited a state park or national forest within Orange County.
- The most popular OC Parks facilities visited by Orange County poll respondents are Irvine Regional Park, Mile Square Regional Park and Upper Newport Bay Nature Preserve.
- The majority of polled Orange County OC Parks park users (57%) do not experience any major problems hindering their enjoyment of park facilities. Just 10% identified overcrowding as a source of dissatisfaction.

- Orange County poll respondents overwhelmingly feel safe at OC Parks facilities, as 98% felt safe on their last visit (with 81% saying very safe).
- Most polled Orange County residents (68%) know at least a little about OC Parks facilities, but almost a third (31%) know nothing.
- Knowledge of OC Parks (the department itself) is less than the knowledge of its facilities. While a slight majority (53%) know at least a little, nearly half (47%) know nothing.

Additional findings from the opinion poll applicable to the condition and utilization of park facilities are discussed below in the park facilities analysis.

Park Facilities Analysis

The following is a qualitative assessment of OC Parks facilities drawn primarily from survey information provided by OC Parks rangers and maintenance staff, and by respondents to the telephone survey conducted by Responsive Management.

Current Conditions of OC Parks' Facilities

As a result of financial constraints created by property tax diversions, and higher capital and operating costs, OC Parks has accumulated a significant backlog of deferred maintenance. Despite these challenges, however, the overall assessment from front-line staff



A volunteer serves snacks to visitors at the Orange County Zoo

and from the general public is positive. Overall responses by OC Parks operation staff to survey questions regarding conditions of OC Parks facilities ranked them as Good to Very Good. This observation was repeated in a follow-up focus group with park maintenance staff, who, despite their belief that there is a growing need for more preventive maintenance, also believe that they have been generally successful in meeting the expectations of park visitors, stating that 85% to 95% of comments received from the public are positive. This observation was corroborated by the opinion poll, where 90% of respondents rated the quality of appearance and cleanliness at the OC Parks park they most often visit as excellent or good, while only 1% rated it poor.

Park rangers and maintenance staff also provided specific recommendations for

upgrades, renovations and improvements to each of the regional parks and open space facilities in the OC Parks regional park system. The critical facility and infrastructure needs most frequently identified included:

- Renovation and increased availability of basic amenities such as restrooms and drinking fountains.
- Renovation of irrigation and water systems.
- Renovation and upkeep of trails.
- Repair of buildings and group picnic shade shelters, specifically roofing.
- Improved, upgraded and additional walking paths (especially near lakes and park roads).
- Improved or expanded parking areas.
- Improved lighting, especially in parking areas.

Specifically related to the wilderness parks and nature preserves, there were other additional concerns such as the need for better protection of endangered habitats, improved invasive plant control and improved maintenance of lakes and trails. These concerns were related to general concerns about the potential erosion problems due to insufficient ongoing maintenance. Also, a shortage or lack of amenities, such as restrooms, drinking fountains and shade structures was identified in these parks. A need for additional tractors, mowing equipment and other

tools was also frequently cited.

Although the overall response by park operations staff to questions regarding the conditions of OC Parks facilities was, as mentioned above, Good to Very Good, there were some exceptions to this positive trend as follows:

- A majority of park operation staff cited most of the facilities at Santiago Oaks Regional Park as being in only Fair condition.
- In four parks, a majority of park operations staff stated the park lake or other water feature such as a creek was in only Fair to Very Poor condition.
- Leased areas in two of the urban regional parks were in Fair to Very Poor condition.
- In Yorba Regional Park, most facilities and amenities were rated as being in Fair condition, as were the riding and hiking trails in Laguna Niguel Regional Park.
- A majority rated the restrooms in three of the six wilderness parks as Fair.
- Restrooms in three of the natural regional parks (O’Neill, Wieder and Peters Canyon) were rated from Fair to Very Poor.
- Restrooms at two of the regional beaches (Salt Creek, Sunset Beach) were rated as Fair to Poor.
- Conditions varied widely at historic parks, with a majority of facilities in Good to Very Good condition,

but with the exception of some individual historic structures at three of the historic parks (Irvine Ranch, Modjeska and George Key Ranch).

OC Parks staff did note that beyond the financial issues previously noted, there were operational and procedural factors that can and have constrained ongoing maintenance operations. These include contracting practices that enable suboptimal performance by low-bid contractors constructing or maintaining facilities and overly restrictive procurement procedures, among others. Although their individual efforts in the past have successfully dealt with these problems on a case-by-case basis, there is a strong desire to see them resolved at an organizational level to avoid even the possibility of negative impacts on park facilities in the future.

Utilization of OC Parks Facilities

According to the opinion poll of Orange County residents, the top rated reason to visit an OC Parks facility was for outdoor recreation. Most visitors to OC Parks facilities attended for casual, passive activities (61%), with just 15% of park users visiting specifically to engage in active sports. This finding was reinforced by others, including the result that walking for pleasure and picnicking are the two most popular forms of outdoor recreation, both in terms of past participation and future interest. Other popular activities included accompanying a child

to a playground or tot lot, swimming in the ocean and bicycling on a paved bikeway. The most popular activities engaged in on a regular recurring basis, as defined by the mean days of participation, were jogging or running (mean of 32.1 days), walking for pleasure (31.3 days), walking a dog (31 days) and soccer (21.3 days).

Also, according to the opinion poll, the amenities at OC Parks facilities most frequently used by Orange County residents are the more utilitarian, less specialized ones such as restrooms (used by 83% of park visitors), and picnic tables (70%), followed by family picnic areas (66%) and barbecue/fire rings (50%). The top aesthetic/rec-



Skim boarders and surfers at Salt Creek Beach Park

reational facilities are beaches (68%), hiking trails (58%) and bike trails (51%). The most frequented active sport facilities were baseball fields (used by 22% of park visitors).

Most Orange County residents (67%) do not personally, nor does anybody in their household, participate in an organized sports league that uses a city park, OC Parks facility or school yard. Among those who do participate in active sports, city parks (18%) and schoolyards (13%) were more frequently cited as locations of choice for this activity.

Availability of Amenities Within OC Parks Facilities

According to the opinion poll, most Orange County residents appear to be satisfied with the availability of



A volunteer guides children through the Orange County Zoo.

amenities within OC Parks facilities, with 80% saying they do not lack any features they would like to see added. Among those who did state they would like to see something added, “more restrooms” was most frequently mentioned. This finding is reinforced in the park maintenance staff survey where restroom improvements and expansion were identified as a critical priority in a large number of park facilities.

Overall ratings regarding access to wilderness areas were also positive. Most Orange County residents polled (63%) were satisfied with current levels of access to wilderness areas, and only 12% were dissatisfied. Those who were satisfied stated they had no problems or that access was easy. Common reasons for dissatisfaction include lack of enough roads or trails, not being able to easily find roads and trails, or crowding at the access site.

Park maintenance staff did not cite many park amenity availability problems except for holiday weekends, when parking lots will often fill early in the day, requiring later arrivals to park on nearby roads and streets outside the park.

Ability of OC Parks Facilities to Meet Existing and Projected Future Demand.

At this time there is a perception that

the capacity of OC Parks facilities is sufficient to meet existing demand from park visitors. According to the opinion poll, nearly half of Orange County residents polled (47%) say that there are about the right amount of OC Parks facilities. A significant minority (33%) of those polled however, believe there are too few OC Parks facilities. Additionally, Orange County residents polled more often agree (63%) than disagree (17%) that current OC Parks facilities meet the needs of Orange County residents. Although a majority of polled residents agree that current OC Parks facilities meet the needs of Orange County residents, support (59%) for a bond measure to add more park facilities exceeded opposition (22%) by almost 3 to 1.

Funding and Financial Analysis

This is a synopsis of the financial analysis conducted as a part of the strategic planning process. It provides an overview of OC Parks' financial history and current financial conditions, projections of anticipated future revenues and expenses, and a review of possible options for generating additional revenue. This analysis and its findings are described in greater depth and detail in Appendix A, the Strategic Financial Plan Report.

OC Parks Funding History

OC Parks was originally a Special

District receiving a dedicated property tax allocation. After Proposition 13 and the Gann Initiative (1978-79), OC Parks became a County Service Area (CSA 26) in 1989, retaining its property tax allocation.

OC Parks is required by State Legislation to contribute to the Orange County bankruptcy recovery until the year 2016. The annual payment started at \$4 million in 1995 continues to grow annually at the rate of increased property tax assessed evaluation, is currently (FY 2007/2008) approximately \$9 million per year and is expected to return \$12.4 million per year to OC Parks in 2016 when the bankruptcy recovery is complete.

Funding for ongoing operations is critical. Many of OC Parks facilities are understaffed as staffing levels have not kept pace with population growth, increased attendance and community expectations.

Capital projects have impacted OC Parks financially when funds were allocated only for capital improvements or acquisition projects and no additional operating funds were allocated. For example, new lands have been opened to public use (Talbert Nature Preserve, Barham Ranch expansion of Santiago Oaks and others) and major new structures constructed (Muth Interpretive Center and Nix Nature Center) with only nominal staffing increases.

A major reason to develop the OC Parks Strategic Plan was to provide a necessary response to OC Parks' tenuous financial condition over the past six years or so. For most of that time, OC Parks' recurring costs and revenues were about equal, with costs barely exceeding revenues in some years and costs actually slightly less than revenues in others.

OC Parks management has achieved a savings of nearly \$700K annually by reassigning non-core business facilities to others, including: Centennial Park (\$230K), Ladera Sports Park (\$400K), and Newport Coast/Buck Gully open space (\$40K). OC Parks management saved \$900K annually in the OC Parks Fund 405 by obtaining Board and State approval to shift the cost of Upper Newport Bay Nature Preserve/Muth Interpretive Center to funding from Newport Tidelands.

OC Parks has achieved other non-recurring savings and fiscal enhancements through accurate budgeting, thereby freeing up funds for immediate use, reversals of encumbrances of \$1 million from completed service and construction contracts, and planned capture of over \$1 million in deposits held in the OC Parks general ledger.

In summary, OC Parks has done everything it could to live within the income it generates and to "Do more with less" as its guiding policy.

Summary 10-Year Financial Forecast

OC Parks' financial picture is projected to improve substantially in the next ten years compared to the previous decade. During this period, projected growth in tax revenue is expected to outpace the estimated growth in capital and operating expenses, even in the years prior to the scheduled 2016 property tax allocation reinstatement (See Exhibit A: 10 Year Pro-Forma in Appendix A: Strategic Financial Plan Report.) The largest overall component of this revenue is the allocation of the County's property tax revenue worth about \$46.5 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2006/2007 and growing to \$70.8 million in FY 2017/2018. Although net operating income before reserves is estimated at a negative (\$29.5) million in FY 2007/2008, it quickly recovers and escalates from about \$7.7 million in FY 2008/2009 to about \$11.2 million in FY 2012/2013. It then reaches about \$24.2 million in FY 2016/2017, as a result of both the general increase in tax revenue (or \$13.5 million) and the completion of the bankruptcy contribution, estimated by the County Auditor/Controller at approximately \$12.4 million.

These projections are derived from a financial model and proforma that was developed to estimate the potential financial performance of OC Parks in its current organizational configuration. The proforma prioritizes funding

for capital improvements to existing facilities, while also adequately funding reserves in the next ten years, and fully funding existing levels of service. Future allocations of property tax to OC Parks in the proforma were estimated based on a schedule provided by RDMD staff and projections by California State University Fullerton. The proforma conservatively, but realistically, projects substantial property tax income for OC Parks in the future. This increase allows OC Parks to cover projected operating and capital improvement costs, and builds its reserves to allow OC Parks to address additional capital improvements or programming needs outlined in the Strategic Plan.

There are several factors that could affect the proforma. For example, OC Parks has yet to complete its study of existing facilities and consequently does not have a true cost for all deferred maintenance and needed capital improvements (findings from a capital facilities depreciation study completed in the early 1990's are no longer current). The proforma includes allocating \$102 million over the next 10 years for such purposes. The future facilities study may show the amount needed to be more than the \$102 million, maybe even double that amount. If this would be the case, then OC Parks would have to use more of its cumulative reserve to address this issue.

On the other hand, the projected increase in property tax income was calculated at a percentage rate historically lower than any year in Orange County history. The actual percentage increase in property tax may well be in the 7-9 percent range, as it has been for the past several years, instead of the 3-5 percent range used in calculating the proforma and, thus, OC Parks would have significantly greater revenue, and be able to plan for offering increased services, land acquisitions or additional capital projects.

It is also unknown if, in the future, the State of California will divert tax income to education, as it has done in the past, or to some other purpose and thus affect the proposed proforma. There are also the issues of internal policy changes, potential unfunded retirement liability and potential assigning of costs for other services not currently charged to OC Parks that could affect the proforma.

OC Parks should plan its next ten years based on the revenue and expense projections in the proforma and then modify those plans if any of the above eventualities were to adversely affect OC Parks.

Potential Revenue Alternatives

OC Parks could consider alternatives to generate additional revenue to implement new programs, replace revenue lost by diversions of existing revenue

sources, develop new facilities or for the acquisition of future properties. Additional revenue options may also be needed if the true cost of necessary capital improvements to existing facilities is greater than currently estimated.

If the Strategic Plan and the upcoming study of facility capital improvement needs shows OC Parks will need to increase its recurrent revenue to meet these demands, OC Parks could consider pursuing other taxing opportunities that other County Regional Park systems use. For example, OC Parks could try establishing an Open Space Maintenance District similar to what Marin County Regional Parks did. It would require voter approval, but if the voters in Orange County wanted to preserve wilderness areas, acquire buffers to protect encroachment on the Cleveland National Forest and keep its rural parks open space, the County of Orange Supervisors could establish a non-profit land trust and conservancy and appoint a Board of Directors to manage the land trust and conservancy. The OC Trust & Conservancy would be initially funded by a one time property tax assessment on all properties in Orange County.

The OC Trust & Conservancy would then invest the funds and use the income generated from investments to acquire and manage Orange County Regional Parks open space and wilder-

ness areas. OC Parks would acquire, develop and manage all regional parks that are urban or active parks from its traditional sources of income. The OC Trust & Conservancy would also act as the non-profit fund-raising arm of OC Parks, and be able to accept land donations and bequests. This approach has been successful in Marin County, California and other agencies throughout the nation when there is voter interest in preserving wilderness and open space areas.

Other potential tax revenue options include:

- A park benefit maintenance district established for the completion and maintenance of the Countywide Trails System.
- A sales tax increase to fund improvements to existing OC Parks facilities or to fund new facilities.
- A transient occupancy tax allocation to OC Parks given that the acquisition, development and operation of regional park facilities is a major draw for tourists to Orange County.

Bonds and other similar financing measures to develop park and recreation facilities that should be considered:

- General Obligation Bonds and Park Bonds - traditional financing methods used by counties to develop park and recreation facilities usually in the form of a special tax assessment, requiring voter approval.

- Revenue Bonds, where the facility being developed will generate revenue to pay debt service on the bonds.
- Certificates of Participation; also can be used with proposed facilities that have revenue generating components, but issued in script of \$5,000 or \$10,000 which allows for smaller investors to invest.
- Lease Purchase Financing; the County leases the proposed site and facility improvements to an investment group, which provides funding for development of the site and facility. The lease serves as collateral for financing.
- Utilize “Smart Card” technology for annual passes, gift certificates, and daily entry fees, and the development of an Orange County Resident discount system to encourage local attendance and make regional park access more affordable.
- Implement asset management opportunities (such as information and advertising kiosks, telecommunication tower leases, naming rights and/or facility sponsorships) in ways aesthetically compatible with the park environments.

All of these potential revenue sources, as well as the analysis of OC Parks’ current and projected future financial conditions are presented in significantly greater detail in Appendix A, Strategic Financial Plan Report.

Other potential revenue sources, include

- Apply for and make use of both state and federal grant programs, such as Proposition 12, Proposition 40 and most recently Proposition 84)
- Develop partnerships with non-profits to provide funding and encourage the development of new recreational facilities, cultural facilities, museums, nature centers, etc.

Additional revenue can be generated through changes in the management of OC Parks facilities, including:

- Selectively increase park entry and other fees where a comparison with the fee structure of other adjacent/comparable counties indicate OC Parks can raise fees without negatively impacting attendance.

Separate Department Feasibility Study

The following is a synopsis of a preliminary evaluation to assess the organizational and financial impacts associated with OC Parks becoming an independent department separate from RDMD. The study undertaken to evaluate this proposal considered both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of this question. The critical underlying issue was whether or not the costs of a separate department would be offset by a more effective and efficient OC Parks (see Appendix B for the full report).

Financial Impacts

The financial impact of OC Parks as a stand-alone department would primarily affect two agencies: OC Parks and RDMD. Potential costs fall into three categories of expenses:

- **Administrative and Overhead Costs (both direct and indirect)** – These are the costs associated with maintaining a full-service administrative function within OC Parks, minus the costs associated with obtaining those and other management services from RDMD. It is estimated that OC Parks would likely be required to hire 29 new positions to replace the administrative services currently being provided by RDMD. While not a one to one reduction, RDMD would be able to obtain a savings in roughly the same amount, with perhaps some costs due to a loss of certain efficiencies of scale.
- **RDMD Operations and Maintenance Charges** – Were OC Parks to become a separate department, it would be required to pay the additional overhead charge associated with contracting with RDMD for operations and maintenance (O&M) services, or provide for these services internally by hiring three more O&M staff.
- **One-Time Charges** – OC Parks would incur a series of one-time costs associated with becoming a separate department, such as the purchase of IT equipment, office supplies and payroll costs.

Based on an analysis of these three expenses categories, it is estimated that in summary OC Parks would potentially save approximately \$200,000 annually by becoming a stand-alone department². At the same time, RDMD would be responsible for either reducing or reallocating approximately \$3.5 million in indirect costs that are currently allocated to OC Parks. A considerable portion of these indirect costs would be reduced based on the fact that RDMD will have a significant reduction in staff. However, a portion of those expenses related to overall RDMD management and administrative expenses would not be fully eliminated. These remaining indirect costs would be passed along to other RDMD functions.

Organizational Impacts

While OC Parks and RDMD share many of the same goals and objectives, an independent agency would necessarily be able to more effectively focus on its own mission and goals. Both from an operational decision-making perspective and a financial management perspective, OC Parks would have one less layer of review of its

² A spreadsheet summarizing these financial impacts is included in Appendix B of this report. These figures are meant to be illustrative only and provide a general magnitude of impact of OC Parks becoming a separate department. These are not meant to represent figures, which could be inserted into a potential budget for a stand-alone OC Parks.

strategic and operational decision-making. As an independent department, rather than having issues potentially screened and vetted by RDMD, OC Parks would report directly to the CEO resulting in greater accountability and more direct oversight of the agency in terms of implementation of Board and CEO directives. However, this change would come at the cost of increasing the number of direct reports that must be managed by the CEO.

The potential impact on RDMD of a stand-alone OC Parks is mixed. On the one hand, RDMD could potentially benefit from a reduced span of control in the management of its existing divisions; on the other hand, the ability of RDMD to more directly coordinate all public resource and facility decisions could be more difficult. When combined with the potential financial impact associated with a separate OC Parks RDMD would likely be negatively affected by the loss of OC Parks.

Other County departments such as the CEO HR, CEO budget, and CIO would likely experience some increase in workload, as issues previously addressed in a coordinated manner by RDMD would now be addressed individually with OC Parks. While the cost of this additional workload is difficult to evaluate, a potential benefit could be more effective administrative

functions within OC Parks as more direct attention would be spent on OC Parks issues.

Similarly, the Board and the CEO would also spend more time on OC Parks projects. This additional attention could result in significant benefits to OC Parks, potentially resulting in more accountability and more direct input on OC Parks projects.

It was determined that no conclusion could be arrived from looking at eight other nearby counties regarding the most effective organizational structure for county park functions. Among the other counties, three were independent agencies and five were subordinate to a larger department.

Conclusion

The organizational and financial impacts of a separate OC Parks department are varied and impact different County agencies in unique ways. The issues surrounding a stand-alone OC Parks are complex and difficult to quantify. In summary, the issue is best approached by evaluating what organizational structure will allow the County to most efficiently and effectively achieve the mission of protecting and promoting natural resources, historic resources and public facilities. In effect, the implications of this issue extend beyond the potential benefits and costs to OC Parks alone

but to the organizational structure of the County as a whole, a question that is ultimately best assessed from the broader institutional perspective of the CEO. For this and other related reasons, the Board during its November 2006 meeting, which reviewed the Interim Draft Strategic Plan, considered and rejected the proposal for creation of a separate department for OC Parks.

Strategic Issues and Priorities

The several separate analyses of existing conditions and opportunities have led to the identification of a great many interrelated issues. Many of these issues have global implications for the future of OC Parks and the development of its strategic plan. These priority issues are summarized here.

Changing Demands and Expectations

Changes in the population and other conditions of Orange County have impacted the assumptions underlying OC Parks' role in serving the needs of residents.

- Increased public expectation that the stewardship of natural and cultural resources should be a critical dimension of OC Parks responsibilities.
- Potential conflict between the growing demand for more recreational facilities and stewardship responsibilities, including the need to set aside and protect wilderness and habitat areas.

- Ensuring that the physical capacity of the regional park system and individual parks is sufficient to handle increased usage by residents and other visitors.
- Changing recreational needs and expectations of a growing, more diverse population further affecting efforts to ensure the regional park system has the ability to meet those needs.

Changing Financial Circumstances

Past financial constraints have restricted OC Parks in recent years but these conditions are projected to improve.

- Annual recurring revenues historically running at levels approximately equal to annual operating costs.
- Previous inability to develop a capital reserve and to maintain a prudent level of contingency reserves.
- Ability to fulfill regional responsibilities had been constrained by cumulative fiscal impact of lower revenues caused by property tax diversions, and by rising capital improvement, maintenance and operational costs.
- Prudent business decisions by OC Parks Administration.
- Board of Supervisors support for a Capital Improvement Program.
- Financial conditions are expected to improve in the very near term and especially after 2016.
- Need to ensure sustainable funding to fulfill regional responsibilities, both in the short term (pre-2016) and long term (post 2016- bank-

ruptcy recovery program).

Addressing Impacts of Past Financial Constraints

Improving financial circumstances will create opportunities to improve service provision and facility conditions that were consequences of past financial difficulties.

- Need to ensure the physical integrity of existing facilities and infrastructure into the distant future.
- Desire to focus on those facilities that are core to OC Parks Mission, and retain all those that are seen as essential to the integrity of the regional park system.
- Excessive deferred maintenance of park facilities, including a substantial portion of equipment approaching the end of its useful life, must be addressed.
- An up-to-date assessment of the present physical condition of park facilities and equipment or the true cost to catch up on deferred maintenance and replace existing equipment is needed. A study to provide this information is currently in the early stages of development.
- Staffing levels have not kept pace with population growth and increased park attendance and the demand such as Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCCP) and Citation Authority.
- Ability to pursue needed open space land acquisitions constrained largely by financial factors and the ability to

maintain additional open space.

- Archeological and paleontological collections largely neglected due to funding constraints.
- Lack of new or updated General Development Plans and/or Resource Management Plans in place for all facilities.

Changing Organizational Circumstances

Clarifying which changing organizational factors have enhanced or hindered OC Parks' ability to focus on its mission and goals.

- Perception that a lack of autonomy within the current County of Orange organizational structure has constrained the ability of OC Parks to effectively perform its Mission.
- Greater need for partnerships with other organizations to fulfill stewardship and recreational responsibilities and expand funding sources.
- Implication of a revised Mission and goals for how OC Parks should be organized.



chapter three STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK

Information gathered through the strategic planning process, including both public input and technical analyses, has been organized into the Strategic Plan Framework. The Strategic Plan Framework consists of the core elements of the Strategic Plan. By describing those elements and the relationships between them, the Framework offers a high-level blueprint of the Strategic Plan that will help guide the development of these elements into core business oriented and measurable strategic objectives.

Elements of the Strategic Plan Framework

The Strategic Plan Framework for OC Parks consist of the following elements:

- Values describe the norms and qualities of OC Parks and are the basis from which each staff member should be operating.
- The Vision guides OC Parks toward its desired future.
- The Mission describes the purpose of OC Parks and its role in achieving its Vision.
- Goals describe broad courses of action that OC Parks will seek to employ to carry out its Mission and achieve its Vision.
- Strategies specify the directions OC Parks will follow in the pursuit of each of its Goals. Each strategy will be carried out through a variety of activities, projects, programs and other initiatives.
- Strategic Objectives and Key Performance Indicators identify the high level outcomes that will be monitored to measure and communicate progress toward effective implementation of the Strategic Plan.

A diagram providing a one-page visual overview of the Strategic Plan Framework appears on the following page.

County of Orange, Resources and Development Management Department
 Orange County Parks Strategic Plan Framework



MISSION

AS A STEWARD OF SIGNIFICANT NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES, ORANGE COUNTY PARKS MANAGES AND OPERATES A SYSTEM OF REGIONAL PARKS, BEACHES, HARBORS, TRAILS AND HISTORIC SITES THAT ARE PLACES OF RECREATION AND ENDURING VALUE.

GOALS

<p>RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES meet the regional recreational needs of a growing population in balance with preservation and protection of natural, cultural and historic resources.</p>	<p>NATURAL RESOURCES STEWARDSHIP preserve and protect the environmental legacy of Orange County for present and future generations.</p>	<p>CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES STEWARDSHIP preserve and protect the cultural and historic legacy of Orange County for present and future generations.</p>
<p>ACCESS AND CONNECTIONS ensure accessibility to and continuity of the county's harbors, beaches, parks, cultural sites, and trails.</p>	<p>PUBLIC COMMUNICATION/ EDUCATION increase public awareness and appreciation for the natural, cultural, and historic resources of Orange County.</p>	<p>COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP/ PARTNERSHIPS create strategic alliances by pro-actively engaging other organizations and the community-at-large.</p>
<p>ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS align organizational structure and capabilities with the mission and goals.</p>	<p>FINANCIAL DISCIPLINE achieve sustainable long-term financial viability to satisfy operational needs, capital requirements and desired programs and services.</p>	<p>PUBLIC SAFETY ensure that all OC Parks facilities maintain a high level of safety for visitors and employees.</p>

Values, Vision and Mission

Values

The Values of OC Parks describe the basic behaviors, attributes, principles and beliefs that guide all OC Parks staff. The Values are the bedrock of OC Parks staff attitudes toward their work, their mission and their relationships.

We Value...

- *Stewardship:* We have a responsibility to protect and preserve the natural, cultural and historic resources of Orange County.
- *Integrity:* We act ethically and with a strong sense of purpose.
- *Quality:* We maintain high standards for our work, ourselves, and our parks.
- *Pride of Ownership:* We take pride in providing high quality, well-maintained facilities and a variety of recreational opportunities.
- *Community Service:* We serve the public by providing places that improve the quality of people’s lives in body, mind and spirit.
- *Cooperation:* We willingly partner with other organizations, public and private, that share our commitment to protect, manage and maintain the natural and cultural resources of Orange County.
- *Teamwork:* We work well together from a strong foundation of mutual respect and shared purpose.
- *Education:* We have a commitment to life long learning for ourselves and all who visit our parks.

Vision

OC Parks’ Vision describes the ideal OC Parks future that it is striving to create. The Vision Statement reflects the priorities and values of the staff and stakeholders:

Preserve Orange County’s parks in perpetuity for the recreation, education, and inspiration of all visitors.

Mission

The Mission of OC Parks describes the main functions of OC Parks and the role it plays to achieve its vision for the future. The Mission gives the overall “charge” and purpose of the organization. All OC Parks activities relate to one or more aspects of the Mission Statement:

As a steward of significant natural and cultural resources, Orange County Parks manages and operates a system of regional parks, beaches, harbors, trails and historic sites that are places of recreation and enduring value.

OC Parks Strategic Plan Goals

The Goals provide direction for achieving the OC Parks' Vision and Mission. Strategies and objectives are identified for each goal area.

- A. *Recreational Opportunities:*** Meet the regional recreational needs of a growing population in balance with preservation and protection of natural, cultural and historic resources.
- B. *Natural Resources Stewardship:*** Preserve and protect the environmental legacy of Orange County for present and future generations.
- C. *Cultural and Historic Resources Stewardship:*** Preserve and protect the cultural and historic legacy of Orange County for present and future generations.
- D. *Access and Connections:*** Ensure accessibility to and continuity of the county's harbors, beaches, parks, cultural sites, and trails.
- E. *Public Communication and Education:*** Increase public awareness and appreciation for the natural, cultural, and historic resources of Orange County.
- F. *Collaborative Leadership/Partnerships:*** Create strategic alliances by pro-actively engaging other organizations and the community-at-large.
- G. *Organizational Effectiveness:*** Align organizational structure and capabilities with the mission and goals.
- H. *Financial Discipline:*** Achieve sustainable long-term financial viability to satisfy operational needs, capital requirements and desired programs and services.
- I. *Public Safety:*** Ensure that all OC Parks facilities maintain a high level of safety for visitors and employees.

Each **Goal** has a set of **Strategies** that are designed to support forward movement and progress toward achieving the OC Parks Vision, Mission and Goals, and position OC Parks to meet future challenges. Progress on implementation of the Strategic Plan will be measured through a set of outcome-based Strategic Objectives and Key Performance Indicators (see Chapter 5).

Overview of OC Parks Strategic Plan Goals and Strategies

GOALS	PRIMARY STRATEGIES
A. Recreational Opportunities	A1 Adapt recreational opportunities to changing needs, demographics, and technology.
	A2 Work in partnership with local cities for cooperative delivery of recreational facilities and programs.
	A3 Optimize recreational opportunities within open space lands.
	A4 Develop Public Access and Recreation Plans (component of the RMP) incorporating “recreational use zones” to balance recreational use with resources.
	A5 Develop maintenance and operations practice standards to ensure excellence in recreational use and access.
	A6 Assess countywide recreational needs and demands.
B. Natural Resources Stewardship	B1 Implement Best Management Practices at all facilities
	B2 Integrate Resource Management Plans with watershed planning and other regional resource management efforts.
	B3 Coordinate regional natural resource management responsibilities among other major public and private landowners and with non-profit support organizations.
	B4 Develop regional habitat assessment, protection, & restoration plans.
	B5 Increase staffing and expertise in natural lands management.
C. Cultural & Historic Resources Stewardship	C1 Elevate the status and operations of the historical parks.
	C2 Enhance stewardship of archeological/paleontological collections with improved curation program and facilities.
	C3 Enhance existing OC Parks interpretive centers, learning facilities, and programs.
	C4 Foster a coalition of cultural, historic and scientific organizations that can ensure long term stewardship through the joint development of a major museum.
D. Access and Connections	D1 Close gaps in the regional trail and bikeway system.
	D2 Review and update Regional Riding and Hiking Trails Master Plan.
	D3 Identify access needs and opportunities.
	D4 Ensure trails/bikeways Conditions of Approval in approved Development Plans and EIRs and Developer Agreements are being fulfilled.
	D5 Provide county residents with improved access to the regional park system.

Overview of OC Parks Strategic Plan Goals and Strategies *continued*

GOALS	PRIMARY STRATEGIES
	<p>D6 Establish sustainable funding levels for trail and bikeway maintenance.</p>
	<p>D7 Develop a trails and bikeways marketing program to raise public awareness and support.</p>
	<p>D8 Explore innovative ways of using network technologies to offer virtual access to County’s regional facilities.</p>
<p>E. Public Communication & Education</p>	<p>E1 Facilitate educational efforts to increase public understanding and participation in environmental and cultural stewardship.</p>
	<p>E2 Engage visitors and volunteers in experiential learning opportunities that promote stewardship.</p>
	<p>E3 Partner with schools and universities for curriculum-based educational opportunities and potential volunteers.</p>
	<p>E4 Showcase and celebrate successes that promote the contribution of the regional park system to the quality of life in Orange County and to preserving its natural and cultural heritage.</p>
	<p>E5 Build closer relationships with policy makers regarding recreational, natural and cultural resources.</p>
	<p>E6 Build partnerships with and support among local community and historic preservation groups.</p>
<p>F. Collaborative Leadership/ Partnerships</p>	<p>F1 Incorporate into OC Parks’ organizational processes and structure, conditions that facilitate networking, coalition-building and partnership formation.</p>
	<p>F2 Create inter-organizational resources and tools to provide facilitative leadership in recreation, natural lands management, and cultural resource stewardship.</p>
	<p>F3 Form coalitions of key stakeholders working together to achieve mutual goals.</p>
	<p>F4 Work with partners to identify mutual goals and joint implementation strategies.</p>
	<p>F5 Establish a competitive grants program for public agencies and non-profits for their activities and programs that are mutually supportive.</p>
	<p>F6 Share technical knowledge and expertise with cities and others.</p>
	<p>F7 Form an independent, non-profit 501(c)3 organization/foundation to raise funds for park improvements and expansion.</p>
<p>G. Organizational Effectiveness</p>	<p>G1 Provide appropriate organizational structure to allow OC Parks to fulfill its Mission.</p>

Overview of OC Parks Strategic Plan Goals and Strategies *continued*

GOALS	PRIMARY STRATEGIES
	<p>G2 Improve communication, coordination and access to the County Board of Supervisors, CEO and other County departments and divisions.</p>
	<p>G3 Develop and expand specialized staff expertise in areas of core responsibilities/competencies (e.g. natural lands management).</p>
	<p>G4 Re-assess the existing organization to evaluate viability of management by facility type (e.g. urban/wilderness) versus by geographic location (e.g. north/central).</p>
	<p>G5 Re-design internal procurement policies and practices to improve efficiency of field and administrative operations.</p>
	<p>G6 Develop a more pro-active organizational culture to strengthen capacity for collaborative leadership/partnerships.</p>
	<p>G7 Enhance the volunteer support program for a variety of uses.</p>
<p>H. Financial Discipline</p>	<p>H1 Determine long-term funding needs to accomplish OC Parks Strategic Plan Goals and Strategies.</p>
	<p>H2 Establish project and service priorities to match projected revenues, and pursue additional funding if needed.</p>
	<p>H3 Fully fund OC Parks reserves, which include: Operations, Maintenance, Dredging, Capital Improvements, and Contingency, toward ensuring long-term viability of OC Parks facilities structures and infrastructure.</p>
	<p>H4 Improve cost-effectiveness by continually evaluating costs to provide and operate facilities and programs, and by adjusting to unexpected economic fluctuations.</p>
	<p>H5 Develop a funding program of both public and private revenue sources to implement OC Parks operations.</p>
	<p>H6 Seek additional revenue-generating activities, grant programs, and other fund raising activities consistent with the Mission.</p>
	<p>H7 Prioritize the funding of core facilities and programs over non-core activities.</p>
<p>I. Public Safety</p>	<p>I1 Develop Public Safety & Resource Protection Operational plans supporting or containing: Emergency Access Maps; Unified Incident Command structure; Evacuation Plans; and Incident Call-Out Procedures.</p>
	<p>I2 Work in partnership with local cities, state and federal public safety agencies to conduct cross training and scenario training including: search & rescue; ride-a-longs; fire and emergency specific.</p>

Overview of OC Parks Strategic Plan Goals and Strategies *continued*

GOALS	PRIMARY STRATEGIES
	I3 Develop and conduct educational programs to increase visitor awareness to inherent dangers that are facility specific.
	I4 Develop a standardized signage program throughout all park facilities to provide clear information.
	I5 Design and construct safe public facilities.



chapter four GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The following pages in this chapter describe the broad, overall directions OC Parks intends to follow to achieve the desired future described in its Vision. These organizational priorities are defined by nine (9) Goals as well as the issues and opportunities they address. In turn, each Goal has a set of Strategies, which describe the kinds of activities that will be undertaken as a part of this overall direction. As Strategies are implemented, progress toward achieving each Goal is qualitatively described through Desired Outcomes that are specific to each Goal.

To coordinate actions and measure progress quantitatively across all these nine (9) Goals, the next chapter will introduce a performance management system, which will include Strategic Objectives. These Strategic Objectives are higher-level Desired Outcomes because they are not specific to one (1) Goal, but represent progress toward multiple Goals. They can be viewed as destinations along a pathway for carrying out the strategic plan since they are created by the intersection of multiple goals, or more accurately the many Desired Outcomes that embody portions of each Goal. Actual progress along the strategic plan pathway is made by implementing the various Strategies, described in Chapter Four, and quantitatively measured by Key Performance Indicators specific to each Strategic Objective, which will be described in Chapter Five.

A. Recreational Opportunities

GOAL: Meet the regional recreation needs of a growing population, in balance with the preservation and protection of natural, cultural and historical resources.

The County of Orange has developed an outstanding regional park system that continues to succeed in meeting the high expectations of both residents and visitors alike. A longstanding commitment to superior performance, based on high maintenance and operational standards in all park facilities, has been one of the key factors in bringing about this success, and this is intended to remain true in the future.



Ranger shares interpretive information with young park visitors

Continued excellence, however, will also require the ability to meet new challenges created by a growing population that will also be older and more ethnically and culturally diverse. A larger population will require that OC Parks assess the capacity of the regional parks to accommodate a greater influx of visitors requiring additional recreational facilities, and plan accordingly. These assessments must also enable OC Parks to anticipate and plan for evolving recreational needs and use patterns brought about by demographic and social trends as well as changes in technology.

OC Parks can find ways to meet the recreation needs of a growing and changing population, but it must also develop solutions compatible with

its other environmental stewardship responsibilities. The desired outcome is a premier recreational system in balance with the protection of natural areas preserved for both environmental and recreational purposes. Finding this balance requires working in close partnership with local cities, schools and other partners, each providing a different array of recreational services, to meet this growing demand. The development of Public Access and Recreational Use Plans (a component of Resource Management Plans) that can incorporate “recreation use zones,” will also help achieve this critical balance. Through these planning efforts and in partnership with local cities, Orange County can continue into the future to have a regional park system that sets a high standard other regional park agencies will try to emulate.

STRATEGIES

- A1** Adapt recreational opportunities to changing needs, demographics and technology.
- A2** Work in partnership with local cities for cooperative delivery of recreational facilities and programs.
- A3** Optimize recreational opportunities within open space lands.
- A4** Develop Public Access and Recreational Use Plans (component of the Resource Management

Plan) incorporating “recreational use zones” to balance recreational use with resources.

- A5** Develop maintenance and operations practice standards to ensure excellence in recreational use and access.
- A6** Assess countywide recreational needs and demands.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

- Orange County has a premier recreational system in balance with native habitat and wilderness areas.
- Aesthetic, maintenance and safety standards are maintained in all regional parks, exceeding the expectations of all visitors.
- Stewardship of natural open space ensures quality of life opportunities for the residents of Orange County.
- Partnerships with local cities, non-profit support organizations and other providers ensure Orange County residents have access to a full array of active and passive recreational activities.

B. Natural Resources Stewardship

GOAL: Preserve and protect the environmental legacy of Orange County for present and future generations.

Stewardship of the natural environment through effective land management practices is a core OC Parks

responsibility. The uniquely diverse parks it manages are seen as an essential feature of Orange County’s way of life that must be protected and preserved for the future. As a public agency that owns and manages over 39,000 acres of open space and habitat throughout Orange County, OC Parks is in an ideal position to directly fulfill this responsibility, and indirectly as a model for other major natural resource landowners to follow.

The effective management of natural resources should balance habitat protection and restoration with recreational uses while, maintaining the wilderness character of open space lands where it still exists. Understanding baseline existing conditions for the region is critical for setting resource management goals. Local park habitat goals need to be determined within a framework of a regional habitat protection plan. OC Parks can more effectively fulfill this responsibility by working in partnership with other major landowners, both public and private, and non-profit support organizations. OC Parks can leverage existing efforts and funding opportunities, including those linked to water quality and watershed management. To more effectively carry out this role, OC Parks will also need an inter-disciplinary staff trained and/or with expertise in a range of resource management specialties.

OC Parks must also balance natural resource protection with appropriate public access to these lands, especially as the population continues to grow, placing added pressures on environmentally sensitive areas. The strategic acquisition of parklands to preserve additional wilderness areas can help ease these pressures, although this is contingent on having sufficient funding not only for their acquisition, but also to manage, operate and protect these new parklands. Success in this regard will help ensure that future generations will still experience significant vestiges of the natural areas of Orange County, as they once existed before it became home to over 3 million residents.

STRATEGIES

- B1** Implement Best Management Practices at all facilities.
- B2** Integrate Resource Management Plans with watershed planning and other regional resource management efforts.
- B3** Coordinate regional natural resource management responsibilities among other major public and private landowners.
- B4** Develop regional habitat assessment, protection and restoration plans.

B5 Increase staffing and expertise in natural lands management.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

- OC Parks is the leader in natural resource management in Orange County.
- Regional habitat and open space goals are identified, agreed upon, and achieved.
- The wilderness character of existing open space natural lands are protected, with sensitive public access provided.
- The effective use of Best Management Practices has successfully protected, enhanced and restored the ecosystems within Orange County park lands.
- Effective inter-agency partnerships ensure consistent management of natural resources throughout Orange County.
- A healthy native habitat mosaic (and associated flora and fauna) is restored on open space lands throughout Orange County.

C. Cultural and Historic Resources Stewardship

GOAL: Preserve and protect the cultural legacy of Orange County for present and future generations.

OC Parks oversees many of the County’s cultural and historical resources, from small artifacts to historical buildings and parks that portray the rich cultural heritage of Orange

County. These diverse cultural and historical assets receive varying levels of community access, and financial and management resources for their care and maintenance.

Over the years Orange County has required that developers deliver to its care any archeological and paleontological artifacts they have uncovered at their project sites. The large archeological and paleontological collections that emerged through this process possess tremendous educational, scientific, aesthetic, scholarly and economic value, but its potential worth and benefit to the County lies untapped from a lack of funding and personnel with the requisite expertise to implement an adequate curation program. It is critical that these collections be properly cared for and catalogued. Although a small number of specimens are on display, the rest of the collection should be cared for and properly catalogued so they can be “taken out of their boxes” where they are now and made available for viewing by the public. In the short term, improvements to and expansion of existing curation facilities is seen as an essential first step. The creation of a natural and cultural history museum by the County or another public or non-profit agency in partnership with the County will eventually be the most appropriate venue for caring and displaying these irreplaceable artifacts.

The continued stewardship of Orange County’s historical parks and buildings is an equally important responsibility. The Old Orange County Courthouse has been called one of the “jewels” of the park system. It is viewed as a model for what can be achieved at other Orange County historic sites when sufficient funding for operations, maintenance and repair is available. In addition, the County maintains and operates Arden - the Helena Modjeska House and Gardens, a National Historic Landmark set in its original canyon setting. This designated landmark is one of only two that exist within the county and holds international significance.

Maximizing the use and care of cultural and historical resources will elevate the public’s awareness and appreciation of these unique resources and the value of OC Parks as a steward of the region’s heritage. New partnerships that support OC Parks’ Mission and foster new, creative and collaborative approaches are needed to help build public and political support for expanded cultural and historic resource preservation and management.

STRATEGIES

- C1** Elevate the status and operations of the historical parks.

- C2** Enhance stewardship of archeological and paleontological collections with improved curation program and facilities.
- C3** Enhance existing OC Parks interpretive centers, learning facilities, and programs for cultural and historic resources.
- C4** Foster a coalition of cultural, historic and scientific organizations that can ensure long-term stewardship through the joint development of a major museum.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

The region has greater awareness of, a new appreciation for, and enhanced access to the County's historical parks and collections.

- A new, professional curation facility and museum of archeological and paleontological collections is the centerpiece of an expanded and more visible curation department.
- Each OC Parks interpretive center, learning facility, and program for cultural and historic resources is closely linked to the OC Parks Mission, well-utilized, and features enhanced management practices.
- OC Parks leads a coalition of partner agencies and private organizations that emphasizes creative development of cultural/historic programs, facilities, and services.

D. Access and Connections

Goal: Ensure the accessibility and connectivity of the County's harbors, beaches, parks, cultural sites and trails.

Improving the accessibility and connectivity of the regional riding and hiking trail system will enable OC Parks to more effectively meet the recreational needs of Orange County residents. Although OC Parks has a diverse set of facilities spread throughout Orange County, due to historic development patterns and natural topography, southern Orange County has considerably more open space than northern Orange County. This has led to perceived accessibility inequities between the more densely populated communities in the northern parts of the County and those in the southern portions.

In addition, while many OC Parks facilities such as trails and beaches connect, others do not. There is also often little connection between city-operated, state-operated and county-operated facilities and programs. Even when connections exist, it is not always possible for the public to "connect the dots" and understand how to access the array of public recreational opportunities available in Orange County.

A program to complete the Orange County trails and bikeway network by eliminating all gaps in those sys-

tems, making it possible to walk or ride between parks or even across the County from the mountains to the ocean is essential. To ensure the trail system is completed, as master-planned, vigorous steps will need to be taken to guard against encroachments along planned trail routes. Acquisition opportunities for both new trails and parks should be pursued when they become available, especially in north Orange County.

Accessibility and connectivity to the park system can also be improved through a partnership with the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) to help develop public transportation solutions. The north/south wilderness and natural parks imbalance can be addressed in part by providing frequent transit service from communities in the north to parks in south Orange County, especially on weekends and holidays. In turn, the completion of the regional trails and bikeway system can provide an alternative solution to Orange County's increasingly congested freeways and roads, especially if the links extend beyond the parks to include major regional destinations (work centers) and transit centers.

OC Parks must respond to these challenges through comprehensive facilities planning and related implementation actions that close gaps and maximize

access and connections, as well as through expanded sources of funding to maintain current and new facilities. OC Parks will also need a stronger voice in the region's development processes, from neighborhood to regional levels, and among public agencies and private developers.

STRATEGIES

- D1** Close gaps in the regional trail and bikeway systems.
- D2** Review and update Regional Riding and Hiking Trails Master Plan.
- D3** Identify access needs and opportunities.
- D4** Ensure that the trails and bikeways Conditions of Approval in Developer Agreements are being fulfilled.
- D5** Provide county residents with improved access to the regional park system.
- D6** Establish sustainable funding levels for trails and bikeways maintenance.
- D7** Develop a trails and bikeways marketing program to raise public support.
- D8** Explore innovative ways of using network technologies to offer virtual access to regional parks.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

- All gaps in the regional trails and bikeways system are eliminated.
- The regional trails and bikeways system provides through connectivity to all regional parks, other major points of interest and all transportation modes.
- The regularly updated Regional Riding and Hiking Trails Master Plan accounts for all access needs and opportunities and guides the County’s decision-making process for developing new facilities.
- OC Parks reviews and provides input to all trails and bikeways improvements.
- Every regional park facility is accessible by public transportation.
- Dedicated, sustainable, and diverse funding sources provide consistent resources for ongoing trails and bikeways maintenance and development.
- The public and policy-makers have a greater awareness of the trails and bikeways system.
- OC Parks provides a key leadership role in developing trails and bikeways.
- North County residents have improved access to park facilities.

E. Public Communication and Education

Goal: Increase public awareness and appreciation for the natural, cultural and historic resources of Orange County.

Education is an integral part of the stewardship responsibility. To ensure that these resources are passed on as a legacy from the present to the future, it is critical that each generation recognizes and appreciates their intrinsic value. This can be achieved through interpretive programs designed to increase public awareness and appreciation for the full range of natural, cultural and historic resources in Orange County.

OC Parks has a vast set of resources that can be employed as “experiential learning environments” for adults and children alike. These resources include not only the natural environment under the stewardship of OC Parks, but also its historic structures and parks, and its archeological and paleontological collections. While OC Parks has some ongoing educational activities (such as docent tours and exhibition of a small portion of the archeological and paleontological holdings), there is a need and opportunity to make more use of existing natural and cultural resources with education in mind and to consider the expansion or development of new educational resources.

The guiding principle is to create opportunities for visitors to learn by doing, by directly engaging visitors in the natural environment, and in living history opportunities. The ideal experiential learning activities are those where visitors and volunteers can actively participate in stewardship activities, creating future stewards who have acquired an intimate understanding and appreciation of the importance of this work.

Another important educational area is building broader awareness of OC Parks' services and assets among policy-makers, community groups, and other agencies. To sustain and expand support for OC Parks' Mission, a stronger network of relationships can help to develop new resource opportunities and political support for a sustainable OC Parks.

STRATEGIES

- E1** Facilitate educational efforts to increase public understanding and participation in environmental and cultural stewardship.
- E2** Engage visitors and volunteers in experiential learning opportunities that promote stewardship.
- E3** Partner with schools and universities for curriculum-based, interpretive educational opportunities and potential volunteers.
- E4** Showcase and celebrate successes that promote the contribution of the regional park system to Orange County.
- E5** Build closer relationships with policy-makers regarding recreational, natural and cultural resources.
- E6** Build partnerships with and support among local community and historic preservation groups.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

- Overall public awareness of and appreciation for the value and benefits of environmental and cultural stewardship is increased.
- Direct public involvement in environmental and cultural stewardship is increased.
- Local school districts and colleges are increasingly aware of curriculum-based interpretive educational opportunities throughout the regional park system.
- The public, policy-makers, and partner agencies have a greater understanding of the region's environmental and cultural stewardship needs.
- OC Parks has formalized communication channels and partnerships with local community and historic preservation groups.
- Policy-makers recognize OC Parks as the region's premier leader and steward of environmental and cultural resources.

F. Collaborative Leadership and Partnerships

Goal: Create strategic partnerships by proactively engaging other organizations and the community-at-large.

To more effectively fulfill its stewardship responsibilities and achieve all its key goals, OC Parks needs to become more proactively engaged with other institutions and the community at-large. By itself, even with increased funding and a larger staff, OC Parks cannot meet all the environmental and recreational needs of Orange County. As a result, greater collaboration, including working partnerships, with other public and private organizations, such as local cities, other county, state and federal agencies, as well as non-profit organizations, is required.

To create these partnerships, OC Parks will need to assume a more high-profile facilitative leadership role. Such leadership might require changes in the organizational culture, enabling staff to more easily launch new initiatives and be more responsive to local community requests for assistance that are consistent with OC Parks' Mission. To further reinforce this leadership role, other conditions that facilitate the partnership formation process should also be in place. These include establishing single points of contact within OC Parks for partner organizations, and streamlining partnership agreement procedures.

OC Parks will also need to reach out to its organizational partners by including them in its annual planning and progress assessment process. This endeavor should feature the identification of mutual goals and joint strategies for shared achievement. This could take place at an annual park symposium, which would develop joint goals and report on progress in key areas of shared interest. This annual partnership event would encompass all key OC Parks strategic goals, including natural resources stewardship, recreational opportunities, cultural and historic resources stewardship, education, and access and connections, and possibly other topics. Partnership committees meeting periodically throughout the year would facilitate ongoing coordination of regional resource and recreation management responsibilities with local municipalities' and relevant non-profits' programs.

However, the most important partnerships are the ones OC Parks creates with all those who enjoy visiting the park system. For this reason, OC Parks should be actively engaged in the process of building constituencies for the regional park system through its educational and marketing programs, and by the expansion of its volunteer corps.

STRATEGIES

- F1** Incorporate into OC Parks' organizational processes and structure, conditions that facilitate networking, coalition-building and partnership formation.
- F2** Create inter-organizational resources and tools to provide facilitative leadership in recreation, natural lands management, and cultural resource stewardship.
- F3** Form coalitions of key stakeholders working together to achieve mutual goals.
- F4** Work with partners to identify mutual goals and joint implementation strategies.
- F5** Establish a competitive grants program for public agencies and non-profits for their activities and programs that are mutually supportive.
- F6** Share technical knowledge and expertise with cities and others.
- F7** Form an independent, non-profit 501(c) 3 organization/foundation to raise funds for park improvements and expansion.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

- The coalition of key stakeholder organizations that has been created, continues working successfully with OC Parks to achieve mutual goals.

- Communication between OC Parks and its partners is ongoing and effective.
- Key stakeholders see OC Parks as a responsive and indispensable partner organization.
- The financial health of OC Parks is significantly strengthened through the active support of its partners.

G. Organizational Effectiveness

Goal: Align organizational structure and capabilities with the Mission and Goals.

The staff at OC Parks is well respected for their dedication and ongoing efforts to maintain the quality and integrity of the park system, despite past financial and organizational constraints. Still, the size and technical scope of the OC Parks organization may not be sufficient to fully meet the multi-disciplinary needs of the regional park system. Within and outside OC Parks the belief exists that staffing levels will have to be increased to match the diverse needs and goals of the park system. Also, leadership, managerial, and technical capabilities of the organization will need to be further developed. This will require investments in succession planning, skills development, and recruitment to support strategic directions in resource management, stewardship, recreation, and education. A more proactive organizational culture is also required if OC Parks is

to fulfill its leadership role and stewardship responsibilities: In other words, developing a set of assumptions, habits and values shared by staff that encourage initiative; enabling OC Parks to more quickly and readily carryout actions as needed to fulfill its Mission. Ultimately, all of these issues should be explored as part of a larger question concerning how OC Parks should best be organized to achieve its Mission.

Until 1975, OC Parks was a separate department of the County of Orange, when it was merged with other functions as part of a central agency, now identified as the Resource Development and Management Department. Until 1988, OC Parks was also a Special District, a legal entity separate from the County of Orange, when the former District was dissolved and merged into the County of Orange. These reorganizations, combined with the Orange County bankruptcy recovery program, led to a perception by many, including key stakeholders, that OC Parks' contribution to Orange County's quality of life was not as strong as it would have been under different circumstances. For these reasons, many stakeholders who participated in the Strategic Plan development process expressed a desire for a new organizational structure that, in their view, would place OC Parks in a stronger position to protect and preserve the regional park system and

ensure the more effective utilization of its financial resources through better accountability, transparency and responsiveness.

STRATEGIES

- G1** Provide appropriate organizational structure to allow OC Parks to fulfill its Mission.
- G2** Improve communication, coordination and access to the County Board of Supervisors, CEO and other County departments.
- G3** Develop and expand specialized staff expertise in areas of core responsibilities and competencies.
- G4** Re-assess the viability of existing organization to evaluate management by facility type (e.g. urban/wilderness) versus by geographic location (e.g. north/central).
- G5** Re-design internal procurement policies and practices to improve efficiency of field and administrative operations.
- G6** Develop a more proactive organizational culture to strengthen capacity for leadership and collaborative partnerships with other public, private and social sector entities.
- G7** Enhance the volunteer support program to meet the Mission.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

OC Parks is better able to communicate and coordinate with the County Board of Supervisors, CEO, other departments and divisions, and the community at large.

- OC Parks is organized to effectively carry out its stewardship mission.
- The scope and depth of specialized staff expertise and staffing levels fully match the wide range of OC Parks' roles and responsibilities.
- OC Parks staff has the resources, tools, and training needed to effectively perform their jobs.
- OC Parks has the financial and organizational capabilities to ensure all OC Parks owned land and facilities are properly maintained and accessible as appropriate or feasible by the public.
- OC Parks is successful in maximizing grant opportunities.
- OC Parks is able to fully comply with all State and Federal mandates.
- OC Parks has recruited, trained and made successful use of volunteers in as many areas of its operations as possible.

H. FINANCIAL DISCIPLINE

Goal: Achieve sustainable long-term financial viability to satisfy operational needs, capital requirements and desired programs and services.

Orange County Parks receives its primary funding from a dedicated

percentage allocation share of property taxes. As a result of external factors largely beyond the control of OC Parks management, however, the fiscal capacity of OC Parks has weakened. During each of the last 15 years, annual revenues and operating costs ran about equal to each other, leading to a reduction in reserves and virtually no funding available for capital projects, except for Federal and State grants, when such programs were available.

The primary factor contributing to this weakened financial condition has been a requirement enacted by the State Legislature that OC Parks contribute a portion of its property tax allocation to fund the Orange County post-bankruptcy recovery plan. This annual contribution to fund the bankruptcy recovery, which began at \$4 million in FY 1994-95, continues to grow each year by the increase in assessed valuation of property countywide. OC Parks' annual contribution is currently \$9 million and is projected to peak at \$12.4 million in 2016, when the bankruptcy recovery is complete.

Other factors that further intensified financial constraints included an escalation in labor and material costs during this time period. Harbor Patrol costs funded by OC Parks have increased by 90% since 1996. In addition, new capital projects have impacted OC Parks financially because they created

additional ongoing operating costs at a time when OC Parks funding for operations was already constrained providing for existing facilities and programs.

Given these financial hurdles, some potential significant additional open space opportunities have not been pursued, and important long-term capital improvements have been put on hold. In addition, staffing levels at many OC Parks facilities have not kept pace with population growth and increased attendance. Despite these problems, OC Parks has taken vigorous steps to live within the income it currently generates, by “doing more with less” as a guiding policy, enabling it to continue to meet the high expectations of those who visit all of its parks. More recently, some of the funding diverted for County bankruptcy recovery has been “rebated” by the Board of Supervisors from the County General Fund, and full restoration is expected when the diversion of property taxes approved by the State Legislature is slated to expire in 2016.

All would like to see the financial health of OC Parks fully restored to meet both current and long-term (post 2016) financial needs. Now, OC Parks is exploring numerous ways to generate additional funding and to improve overall cost-effectiveness. Such opportunities include further development of

revenue-generating programs, public/private partnerships, grant applications, and other innovative financing and funding alternatives. In addition, the dedicated property tax allocation income for OC Parks is projected to increase in the future, giving OC Parks a projected positive cash flow even before 2016. Given this anticipated development and other steps OC Parks is taking as a result of its strategic planning process, OC Parks’ financial picture is expected to improve substantially over the next 10 years. This improved financial situation will enable OC Parks to more effectively carry out the strategies and actions needed to accomplish the goals of this Strategic Plan.

STRATEGIES

- H1** Determine long-term funding needs to accomplish OC Parks Strategic Plan Goals and Strategies.
- H2** Establish project and service priorities to match projected revenues, and pursue additional funding if needed.
- H3** Fully fund OC Parks reserves, which include: Operations, Maintenance, Dredging, Capital Improvements and Contingency, toward ensuring long-term viability of OC Parks facilities structure and infrastructure.

- H4** Improve cost-effectiveness by continually evaluating costs to provide and operate facilities and programs, and by adjusting to unexpected economic fluctuations.
- H5** Develop a funding program of both public and private revenue sources to implement OC Parks operations.
- H6** Seek additional revenue-generating activities, grant programs and other fund raising activities consistent with the Mission.
- H7** Prioritize the funding of core facilities and programs over non-core activities.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

- The financial health of OC Parks is fully restored to meet both current and long-term (post 2016) financial needs.
- OC Parks has financial and staff resources sufficient to achieve its strategic goals, and all project and service priorities, including its fund reserves and needed capital improvements.
- OC Parks maintains complete and accurate information on the costs to operate and maintain each facility and program.
- Alone or in partnerships, OC Parks has the financial capacity to acquire additional new public lands, and/or to accept dedications.

- OC Parks has successfully leveraged its fiscal resources through collaboration with other organizations.
- The physical integrity of existing and future facilities and infrastructure is ensured.

I. PUBLIC SAFETY

Goal: Ensure that all OC Parks facilities maintain a high level of safety for visitors and employees.

While visitors to OC Parks facilities generally feel very safe at OC Parks facilities¹, OC Parks is continuously looking for ways to further enhance public safety. County staff and contracted safety personnel's (i.e. life-guards) primary role is to maintain a safe and healthy environment for the public.

Many of Orange County's wilderness and natural parks contain inherent dangers including, but not limited to, mountain lions, rattlesnakes, poison oak, and rugged terrain. County beaches pose dangers from hazards such as deep and shallow areas, unpredictable currents, depth charges, and obstructions in the water. The public at County harbors may experience dangerous conditions such as vessel traffic (potential collisions), sudden weather changes, and tsunami impacts.

¹ Source: *OC Residents' Participation in Outdoor Recreation and Their Recreational Needs, Responsive Management 2006.*

Wildfires present another potentially dangerous condition for the public in the County's wilderness and natural parks, as well as for the public in neighboring communities abutting these areas. OC Parks Operations staff currently collaborates with responding fire department personnel to develop strategies for fire management and emergency response.

Protection of the public from inherently dangerous conditions in the County's regional park system requires effective collaboration and coordination with internal and external agency staff. Cross-training and scenario training among public safety agencies is another effective strategy for improving communications and coordinating efforts. Effective communication between internal and external agency staff is critical to reduce emergency response time, coordinate incident command and relay critical information. In order to enhance communications, OC Parks has recently contracted with a unified ranger dispatch service.

Park Ranger safety training involves Level 3 Academy training with Orange County Sheriff, including PC 832, CLETS Training, EVOC Training, Fire Training, and First Responder Medical Training. Equipment provided to Park Rangers includes Mobile and pack set radios utilizing the 800 megahertz

system, pepper spray, body armor, and code 3 lights and sirens on a patrol vehicles. In addition, effective January 9, 2006, the citation program was launched and all rangers were issued citation books.

Over the years OC Parks has designed and developed safe park facilities. Many park facilities and infrastructure constructed in the 1970s and earlier will need to be replaced in the near future. In addition, newer regional parks, such as Laguna Coast Wilderness Park, require new public facilities to accommodate public access. OC Parks will continue to design facilities that are safe and complement the site's natural and cultural resources.

STRATEGIES

- 11** Develop Public Safety & Resource Protection Operational plans containing: Emergency Access Maps; Unified Incident Command structure; Evacuation Plans; and Incident Call-Out Procedures.
- 12** Work in partnership with local cities, state and federal public safety agencies to conduct cross training and scenario training including: search and rescue; ride-a-longs; fire and emergency response.

- 13 Develop and conduct educational programs to increase visitor awareness to inherent dangers that are facility specific.
- 14 Develop a standardized signage program throughout all park facilities to provide clear information.
- 15 Design and construct safe public facilities.

DESIRED OUTCOME

Provide a safe environment for recreation and work.



chapter five PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Strategy for the Future

The previous chapters provide an overall vision and mission for OC Parks' future, as well as a series of goals and strategies to be achieved. To monitor and communicate progress toward achieving the strategies contained in the plan, OC Parks has developed a Balanced Scorecard. The Balanced Scorecard will facilitate a means of measurement and management from four perspectives: Customer, Financial, Internal Processes and Learning and Growth. The OC Parks Scorecard will provide feedback around both internal processes and external outcomes, enabling the organization to more effectively translate its vision and strategy into action while continuing to improve performance, ensuring expected results.

The Balanced Scorecard Approach to Management

Most organizations' operational and management control systems are built around financial measures and targets, which bear little relation to the progress in achieving long-term strategic objectives. The emphasis most organizations place on short-term financial measures leaves a gap between the development of a strategy and its implementation. In order to achieve and sustain strategic success via operational excellence, the performance management system must balance metrics related to four different perspectives of the organization: Learning and Growth, Process, Financial, and Customer. In addition, these metrics must be aligned to focus on the organization's vision and strategy. In 1992, Robert Kaplan of Harvard Business School and David Norton of Renaissance Solutions introduced the Balanced Scorecard (BSC), a complement to traditional financial measurement systems that helped organizations manage performance and progress. This tool has evolved into a strategic management system that can help organizations achieve and sustain strategic success as the business environment climates change.

OC Parks through the initial phases of the Strategic Planning Process received comment and feedback from park users, advisory committees and stakeholders which identified nine (9) goals (see the Orange County Parks Strategic Plan Framework in Chapter 3) if achieved, enables OC Parks to achieve its vision. While goals in the Strategic Plan Framework address "*What to Achieve*" they do not address the "*How to Achieve*" and "*How to Measure*."

Managers using the balanced scorecard do not rely on short-term financial measures as the sole indicators of the organization’s performance. The scorecard introduces four new management processes that, separately and in combination, contribute to linking long-term strategic objectives with short-term actions.

Using an approach to strategic management developed by Drs. Kaplan and Norton, and taking into account complexity of coordinating the actions required to build the foundation and structure to achieve the Strategic Plan Framework’s (9) nine goals, OC Parks developed a Strategy Map and Balanced Scorecard to communicate and measure achievement and progress toward objectives. Used collectively, these two tools will be used to communicate our objectives and our progress in reaching them, to our governing bodies, citizens, stakeholders, and staff.

The Strategy Map

The Map serves as the foundation for the Balanced Scorecard; it describes OC Parks’ strategy through explicit cause-and-effect relationships. The Strategy Map also serves as a model for how OC Parks can create value, driven by the creation of understandable metrics.

The Strategy Map Objectives:

- Provides a simple visual depiction of how the organization aligns its resources to achieve its common goals.
- Links strategic objectives that will collectively help further OC Parks’ Mission.
- Helps unify components of the balanced scorecard so each metric is not merely seen as a discrete accomplishment, but as intrinsically linked to all strategic objectives.
- Simplifies the cause-and-effect relationships described on the Map in terms of four different perspectives of the organization: Learning and Growth, Process, Financial, and Customer.

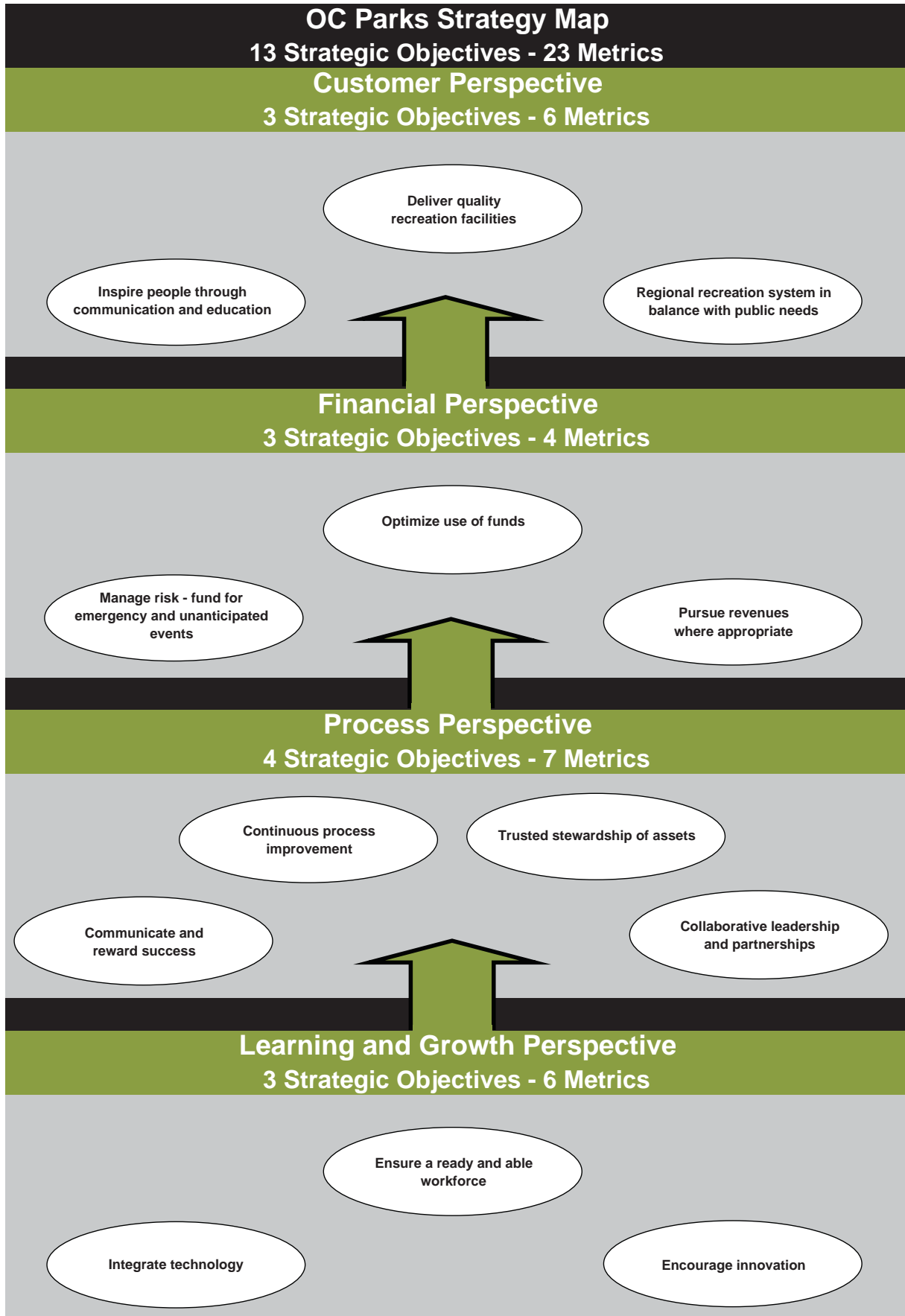
The Learning and Growth perspective, which is the foundation for the map, describes how OC Parks can develop its employees and organizational culture to respond to the Department’s Mission and Vision. OC Parks staff must have the right skills, knowledge and talent applied to right job, at the right time for personal and organizational success.

The Process perspective answers the questions: “Which business processes must OC Parks excel at? What can OC Parks do more efficiently? Should OC Parks integrate or disaggregate processes to increase customer and stakeholder value? Is OC Parks working toward the right outcomes?” Efficiency

is important - but not at the cost of effectiveness.

The Financial perspective answers questions such as “If OC Parks succeeds, how will OC Parks be perceived by the taxpayers? What are the financial objectives with respect to satisfying the customers? How does OC Parks manage risks to the organization?”

To achieve OC Parks’ vision in the Customer perspective, OC Parks must further ask: “Who is the customer and what do they value?” At a deeper level OC Parks must seek to understand the customer’s perceptions by asking: “Who is not a customer and why?”



OC Parks Balanced Scorecard

The balanced scorecard is a management system - not just a measurement system – that enables organizations to clarify their vision and strategy and translate them into action. It provides feedback around internal business processes and external outcomes, so that the organization can continuously grow while improving its performance and results.

The balanced scorecard will be used as the primary driver to communicate OC Parks’ strategic objectives. In conjunction with the strategy map, it will be used to unite OC Parks’ efforts towards meeting goals established in the Strategic Plan Framework, to review progress in meeting strategic objectives, and to keep in the forefront the Key Performance Indicators (KPI’s) identified as core on through 2012.

The creation of this first balanced scorecard marks a beginning, not the end, of OC Parks’ strategic thought and action. The scorecard provides the means to assess organizational health. Metrics will improve with time, as technology and systems are employed to capture information and data that can, with the application of knowledge, increase effectiveness. The balanced scorecard should be seen as a living document for use in the long term, communicating purpose and direction, throughout the organization to each

employee, empowering all to participate in the reward of organizational and personal achievement.

The OC Parks Scorecard at the enterprise level contains the four perspectives most commonly observed and recommended by the Kaplan and Norton model: Customer; Financial; Processes; and Learning and Growth. Each perspective contains specific metrics, aligning actions to the Strategic Themes identified in the OC Parks Strategy Map, to ensure the explicit cause-and-effect relationship between action and strategy is maintained.

Customer Perspective enables organizations to assess customer and stakeholder satisfaction with park system facilities and services. For this perspective, the objectives metrics assess the health of OC Parks program as perceived by park customers.

Financial Perspective optimizes cost efficiency of the OC Parks program to ensure that the maximum amount of funds are available to accomplish the core business of the County’s park facilities.

Within any organization, there are numerous internal business processes that require attention to ensure that resources and systems are effectively used. The **Process Perspective** addresses not only the internal business processes that must be developed to produce

customer and stakeholder satisfaction, but also the process results that lead to enhanced communication, growth and learning and alignment of strategy - ultimately, supporting organizational success.

Learning and Growth perspective is important because it promotes individual and organizational growth - factors that are crucial to future success. Support for this perspective equates to recognition of the link between top-level strategic objectives and life-long learning, activities needed to re-skill employees; supplying information; and aligning individuals and teams with the County, RDMD and OC Parks strategy and long-term sustainability.

**OC RDMD/Orange County Parks
Balanced Scorecard**

OC Parks Balanced Scorecard			
Strategic Objectives	Key Performance Indicators (KPI)	Baseline	Target
Customer Perspective - 6 Metrics			
Deliver Quality Recreation Facilities	Number of park visitors	2006 Attendance	Inc. w/population
	Visitor Satisfaction Rating ¹	2006 Survey	Increase
Inspire people through Communication and Education	Number of customers participating in programs in parks	2006	Increase
	Number of volunteer hours in parks	2006	Increase
Regional recreation system in balance with public's needs	Number of park visitors from outside park 5-mile radius	TBD	Increase
	Visitor satisfaction rating of park amenities ²	2006	Increase
Financial Perspective - 4 Metrics			
Prudent Use of Funds	Percentage of projects completed on time & within budget	FY 06-07	Increase
Provide Funding for Emergency & Unanticipated Projects	Maintain Operations Reserve at 20% of total budget	FY 06-07	Measure
	Maintain Contingency Reserve at 120% of previous large-scale disaster loss	\$7,280,000	Measure
Optimize Revenues Where Appropriate	Increase Percentage of non-property tax revenue	FY 06-07	Increase %

¹ Composite index of Visitor Survey responses

² Composite index of Visitor Survey responses

**OC RDMD/Orange County Parks
Balanced Scorecard**

Strategic Objectives	Key Performance Indicators (KPI)	Baseline	Target
Process Perspective - 7 Metrics			
Trusted Stewardship of assets	Number of preventable visitor accidents and injuries	2006	Decrease
	Number of acres of restored/enhanced habitat	FY 06-07	Increase
	Number of acres of under management	FY 06-07	Increase
Communicate and Reward Successes	Number of employee recognition events and awards	2006	Increase
	Number of volunteer recognition events and awards	2006	Increase
Collaborative Leadership and Partnerships	Number of service agreements with organizations supporting the OC Parks' Mission	2006	Increase
Continuous Process Improvement	Number of business units with Balanced Scorecards	TBD	Increase
Learning and Growth Perspective - 6 Metrics			
Ensure a Ready and Able Workforce	Vacancy and Staff Readiness Index	TBD	Decrease
	Number of training days/hours completed	# of hours req'd. training	Increase
	Number of preventable employee accidents and injuries	2006	Decrease
Integrate Technology	Number of page views on www.ocparks.com	TBD	Increase
	Number of page views on OC Parks Intranet	TBD	Increase
Encourage Innovation	Percent of PIP/MAP goals achieved	FY 06-07	Increase

The Balanced Scorecard Metric Definitions

Number of park visitors

The growth or decrease in the number of park system visitors year to year normalized by the percent change in County population.

Visitor Satisfaction Rating

A composite index of measures rating park system services and overall customer satisfaction, established by random survey of Orange County citizens and park users. Source: Annual Park Performance Surveys.

Number of customers participating in programs in parks

The increase or decrease in the visitors participating in interpretive, educational and recreational programs offered by OC Parks or by its agents.

Number of volunteer hours in parks

The increase or decrease in volunteer hours of service provided to OC Parks by park docents, ranger reserves, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations and other non-compulsory volunteer human resources.

Number of park visitors from outside park 5-mile radius

The increase or decrease in the number of visitors from outside a five mile radius as an indicator of regional draw at a park facility.

Visitor satisfaction rating of park amenities

A composite index of measures rating public satisfaction with park system facilities and amenities, established by random survey of Orange County citizens and park users. Source: Annual Park Performance Surveys.

Percentage of projects completed on time and within budget

A composite index of the percent of capital projects completed within each fiscal year as planned and variance between projected and actual costs.

Maintain Operations Reserve at 20% of total budget

The variance as a percentage between the annual budget and 20% of the annual budget. A fully funded reserve would equal 100%.

Maintain Contingency Reserve at 120% of previous large-scale disaster loss

The variance as a percentage between the 2006 FEMA disaster repairs (\$6.2M) times 120% and actual account budget. A fully funded contingency reserve would equal 100%.

Increase Percentage of non-property tax revenue

The increase or decrease in all revenues to OC Parks from non-tax sources, such as leases, licensing, and program, product and service sales.

Number of preventable employee or visitor accidents and injuries

The increase or decrease in total number of preventable employee or visitor accidents.

Number of acres of restored/enhanced habitat

The total number of acres restored to natural conditions, such as re-vegetation projects or enhanced by removal of non-native or invasive species.

Number of employee recognition events and awards

The increase or decrease in the total number of employees that received awards or were honored in recognition events or activities by the County or others.

Number of volunteer recognition events and awards

The increase or decrease in the total number of volunteers receiving awards or honors by the County or others.

Number of service agreements with organizations supporting the OC Parks Mission

The percent of organizations supporting OC Parks that have formal service agreements.

Number of business units with Balanced Scorecards

Organizational alignment is found to be a major contributing factor to successes created by the BSC system.

Alignment can occur when the enterprise level BSC metrics are cascaded through the each organizational level. Over the next two years OC Parks will cascade the BSC, first into each OC Parks division, and then park system units aligning employee PIP and MAP goals with the BSC system.

Vacancy and Staff Readiness Index

The decentralized nature of field operations places a limited number of staff at each facility. To serve OC Parks' customers, provide for safety and quality facilities, it is critical to maintain low vacancy rate with staff trained to minimum standards of competency. The Vacancy and Staff Readiness Index is the average number days that pass from the position vacancy, to the fill date with staff meeting minimum standards of training for each classification.

Number of training, personal development and education hours completed

The increase or decrease in total number of hours of training or education for certificate, degree, or other professional development for all OC Parks staff per each fiscal year.

Number of page views on www.ocparks.com

The increase or decrease in total number of visitor page views within a period to be established.

Number of page views on OC Parks Intranet

The increase or decrease in total number of visitor page views within a period to be established.

Percent of PIP/MAP goals achieved

The increase or decrease in total number of PIP and MAP goals achieved that are in alignment with each business unit BSC.

The KPI to Strategic Plan Framework Goal Matrix

The Matrix visually identifies the relationships between the OC Parks Balanced Scorecard Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and the nine (9) goals identified in the Strategic Plan Framework. It is no accident that the Matrix demonstrates that the Strategic Plan Framework Goals are fully achievable using the balanced scorecard approach. Staff exhausted many hours in research, collaboration and reflection to ensure that the OC Parks Strategy Map and the Balanced Scorecard deliver a performance management system supporting a “*Best in Class Regional Park System*” for today and the future.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS TO STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK GOALS MATRIX

KPI to Goal Matrix	Customer Perspective - 6 Metrics						Financial Perspective - 4 Metrics			
	Deliver Quality Recreation Facilities		Inspire people through Communication and Education		Regional recreation system in balance with public's needs		Prudent Use of Funds	Provide Funding for Emergency & Unanticipated Projects		Optimize Revenues Where Appropriate
	Number of park visitors	Visitor Satisfaction Rating ¹	Number of customers participating in programs in parks	Number of volunteer hours in parks	Number of park visitors from outside park 5-mile radius	Visitor satisfaction rating of park amenities ²	Percentage of projects completed on time & within budget	Maintain Operations Reserve at 20% of total budget	Maintain Contingency Reserve at 120% of previous large-scale disaster loss	Increase Percentage of non-property tax revenue
Recreational Opportunities: Meet the regional recreational needs of a growing population in balance with the preservation and protection of natural, cultural and historic resources.	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓				✓
Natural Resources Stewardship: Preserve and protect the environmental legacy of Orange County for present and future generations.	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	
Cultural and Historic Resources Stewardship: Preserve and protect the cultural and historic legacy of Orange County for present and future generations.	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	
Access and Connections: Ensure accessibility to and continuity of the county's harbors, beaches, parks, cultural sites and trails.	✓	✓			✓					✓
Public Communication and Education: Increase public awareness and appreciation for the natural, cultural, and historic resources of Orange County.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
Collaborative Leadership/Partnerships: Create strategic alliances by proactively engaging other organizations and the community-at-large.			✓	✓		✓	✓			
Organizational Effectiveness: Align organizational structure and capabilities with the mission and goals.					✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Financial Discipline: Achieve sustainable long-term financial viability to satisfy operational needs, capital requirements and desired programs and services.							✓	✓	✓	✓
Public Safety: Ensure that all OC Parks facilities maintain a high level of safety for visitors and employees.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	

¹ Composite index of Visitor Survey responses

² Composite index of Visitor Survey responses

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS TO STRATEGIC PLAN FRAMEWORK GOALS MATRIX

KPI to Goal Matrix	Process Perspective - 7 Metrics							Learning and Growth Perspective - 6 Metrics					
	Trusted Stewardship of assets			Communicate and Reward Successes		Collaborative Leadership and Partnerships	Continuous Process Improvement	Ensure a Ready and Able Workforce			Integrate Technology		Encourage Innovation
	Number of preventable visitor accidents and injuries	Number of acres of restored/enhanced habitat	Number of acres of under management	Number of employee recognition events and awards	Number of volunteer recognition events and awards	Number of service agreements with organizations supporting the organization's mission	Number of business units with Balanced Scorecard	Vacancy and Staff Readiness Index	Number of training days/hours completed	Number of preventable employee accidents and injuries	Number of page views on www.ocparks.com	Number of page views on OC Parks Intranet	Percent of PIP/MAP goals achieved
Recreational Opportunities: Meet the regional recreational needs of a growing population in balance with the preservation and protection of natural, cultural and historic resources.	√		√				√	√	√		√	√	√
Natural Resources Stewardship: Preserve and protect the environmental legacy of Orange County for present and future generations.		√	√					√	√		√		
Cultural and Historic Resources Stewardship: Preserve and protect the cultural and historic legacy of Orange County for present and future generations.			√					√	√		√		
Access and Connections: Ensure accessibility to and continuity of the county's harbors, beaches, parks, cultural sites and trails.			√								√		
Public Communication and Education: Increase public awareness and appreciation for the natural, cultural, and historic resources of Orange County.	√				√	√		√			√		
Collaborative Leadership/Partnerships: Create strategic alliances by pro-actively engaging other organizations and the community-at-large.			√	√	√	√			√		√	√	√
Organizational Effectiveness: Align organizational structure and capabilities with the mission and goals.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Financial Discipline: Achieve sustainable long-term financial viability to satisfy operational needs, capital requirements and desired programs and services.	√						√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Public Safety: Ensure that all OC Parks facilities maintain a high level of safety for visitors and employees.	√							√	√	√			



glossary of key terms

ORANGE COUNTY PARKS STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Plan Elements

Strategic Plan – An action-oriented plan that outlines OC Parks’ purpose and role, affecting all aspects of daily management and operations. Plan components include but are not limited to: a Vision; Mission Statement; Values; Goals; Strategies; Strategic Objectives; and Key Performance Indicators.

Vision - A narrative description of the ideal future that an organization strives to create. By describing the desired impact the organization will have on its clients and the community it serves, it conveys a felt sense of what success would look and feel like. The Vision reflects the priorities and values of the staff and management.

Mission - Explains why an organization exists – the business it is in. It is an overall statement of what the organization must do to be successful. It describes the organization’s critical services and/or the role it plays within the community. The Mission gives the overall “charge” and purpose of the organization.

Values - Describes the basic behaviors, attributes, principles and beliefs that guide the organization during its journey to achieve the vision. These principles are the bedrock of staff attitudes toward their work, their mission and their relationships.

Goals - Describes broad courses of action that the organization seeks to employ in serving its customers and stakeholders. Goals add specificity to the vision and mission. Strategies and objectives are identified for each goal area.

Strategies - Each Goal has a set of Strategies designed to support forward movement and progress toward achieving the mission and vision, and position the organization to meet future challenges. Strategies reinforce the goals by describing the methods, resources, processes, and systems the organization will deploy to achieve success.

Desired Goals – Specific, tangible results that relate to each Goal, indicating that progress toward that Goal is being made.

Balanced Scorecard – Performance measurement system that encompasses and balances four perspectives for determining organizational effectiveness: customer metrics, business process metrics, financial metrics, and employee development (learning and growth) metrics.

Strategic Objectives – High-level Desired Outcomes, which encompass the four Balanced Scorecard perspectives. They indicate progress toward multiple Goals and are the key drivers of success for an organization.

Key Performance Indicators - Progress on implementation of the Strategic Plan is measured through outcome-based Performance Measures that are specific to each Strategic Objective. These success indicators include specific, detailed, and measurable targets that provide information on the organization's progress toward achieving these high-level Desired Outcomes.

Strategy Map – A visual depiction of the cause-and-effect relationship between the Strategic Objectives and Key Performance Indicators that are monitored in the Balanced Scorecard.

Recreational Facilities (General)
These terms are adapted from the County of Orange General Plan, 2004, Recreation Element. The two plans

were developed by OC Parks and guide future park and trail management. These are not specific park types.

Master Plan of Regional Recreation Facilities - A network of public trails, as conceptually depicted on the trails plan, which connect municipal, state and federal trail systems and trails systems of surrounding counties.

Regional Parks – Areas that offer recreational or scenic attractions that are of countywide significance and generally not available in local parks. They are larger than a typical small neighborhood park. Regional Parks are large enough to offer facilities for family and group picnicking, camping, nature study, and a diversified plan area for all age groups. The emphasis is on improvements designed to meet unmet regional recreational needs.

Recreational Facilities (Specific)
These terms are adapted from the County of Orange General Plan, 2004, Recreation Element. They refer to specific park types under OC Parks' direct management. OC Parks may either own or lease the land for these facilities.

Master Plan of Regional Riding and Hiking Trails – The purpose of the Master Plan of Regional Riding and Hiking Trails is to provide policies and programs to direct the development

and operation of a Countywide public trail system that provides for the public welfare by serving the recreational needs of equestrian, pedestrians and mountain bikers.

Regional Bikeways (Class I Off-Road) – A Class I bicycle trail is a paved off-road facility which is physically separated from a roadway and designated primarily for the use of bicycles. Crossflows by pedestrians and motorists are to be minimized. However, where significant pedestrian traffic can be anticipated on a two-way Class I bikeway, a design standard for combined pedestrian/bicycle traffic is provided in Section 1003.1 (1) of the Orange County Highway Design Manual “Bikeway Planning and Design”.

Urban Regional Parks – A regional park, generally located within an urbanized area, which provides any one or number of intense recreational facilities such as sport centers, playfields, golf courses, riding and hiking trails, county bikeways, and swimming, as well as more passive activities like picnicking and camping. The park’s environmental resources are generally man-made and domesticated and the principal attractions are constructed by man.

Natural Regional Parks – A regional park in a more natural setting, with

predominant aesthetic and passive type activities such as picnicking, camping, nature and hiking trails, support facilities, and limited organized recreation.

Development may be limited to necessary utilities, leaving the area in as near natural state as possible, with minimal domestication, in recognition that natural topography and biological resources of the site are the principal attractions of the park.

Wilderness Parks – A regional park in which the land retains its primeval character with minimal improvements and which is managed and protected to preserve natural processes.

The park 1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by forces of nature, with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable; 2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; 3) is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and 4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic or historical value.

Nature Preserves – Areas whose acquisition and maintenance are undertaken primarily for protecting significant natural resources, rather than for conventional recreation activities. The objective is to provide a recreational experience under close supervision

through interpretive programs which foster knowledge about and appreciation for the natural resource values of the site, and for the importance of environmental protection generally. It can be made available for scientific research.

Historic Parks and Sites – Historic sites preserve and enhance Orange County’s archaeological, paleontological, and historical resources. Frequently, historical sites are the setting for events which strive to inform people about the County’s heritage of social, cultural, economic and scientific values.

Aquatic Harbor Parks – A regional harbor providing facilities typical of both a regional harbor and a regional park, including on-shore camping.

Multi-purpose Harbors – A regional harbor providing a variety of recreational facilities such as: boating, swimming, fishing, picnicking, play, and marine preserve areas with facilities for both short- and long-term small craft anchorage. Such harbors are equipped with facilities for marine supply and aid and contain extensive commercial facilities of a tourist, recreational, and/or fishing nature.

Beach Parks – A regional beach usually with an adjacent or upland park area which provides hiking and picnicking areas, restrooms, quiet nature areas, unstructured activity areas, and other

park-like facilities. A beach park may contain day camping facilities, boardwalks or piers, and related concession facilities, together with facilities for volleyball, basketball, and parking.

Typically, these are comparatively large beach areas with sizable flat, sandy acreage to accommodate large numbers of users.

Shoreline Beaches - A regional ocean front beach which generally provides for only those recreational activities usually associated with the shoreline and adjacent tidelands areas which are used for swimming, diving, shore fishing, tide pool study, etc. Shoreline beaches commonly do not have parking and restroom facilities, are situated within cove areas, and are accessible only by pedestrian accessways on bluffs.

Other Resources

These terms are adapted from the County of Orange General Plan, 2004, Resources Element. They refer to other facilities and resources for which OC Parks may have direct or indirect management responsibilities.

Natural Resources - Orange County has many natural resources, scenic areas (including ridgelines and hillsides), a pleasant climate, farmlands, native vegetation and wildlife, and mineral resources. The Natural Resources

Component contains policies and programs which are designed to protect and conserve these areas not only because they have economic value, but because they are necessary to sustain the quality of life in Orange County.

The principal natural resource concerns addressed in this component of the Resources Element are: 1) agricultural resources, 2) mineral resources, 3) vegetation and wildlife habitat, and 4) landforms. Coastal resource (e.g., wetlands) policies and plans are contained in the Local Coastal Programs for each specific coastal area in Orange County.

Open Space – The State Government Code also contains an open space definition that further clarifies the role of open space. Open space is:

“Any parcel or area of land or water which is essentially unimproved and devoted to an open space use as defined (below).

- The Preservation of Natural Resources
- The Managed Production of Resources
- Outdoor Recreation
- Public Health and Safety

Cultural & Historic Resources – Cultural-historic resources are defined as buildings, structures, objects, sites, and districts of significance in history, archaeology, architectural history, and

culture. In Orange County, resources of paleontological significance are included in the cultural resource management program.