

Executive Summary

The Executive Summary includes a summary of the action plan, focus groups, and survey that the Clare County Parks and Recreation Commission implemented.

Action Plan Summary

In response to community input through focus groups, a countywide survey, Enterprise Community benchmarks, and other organizations within Clare County, the Clare County Parks and Recreation Commission (CCPRC) has developed nine goals to be addressed during the five year period, 2003-2008. These goals have been organized into the following four categories:

Resource Development

- Goal #1: To develop an agenda for cooperative recreational resource development of state owned lands within Clare County.
- Goal #2: To enhance recreation facilities on a countywide basis.
- Goal #3: To beautify various areas in the County in partnership with Clare County Master Gardeners and other organizations and agencies.
- Goal #4: To create a facility to address indoor recreation needs of Clare County residents.

Recreation Program Initiatives

- Goal #1: To provide access to organized recreation for residents in rural areas within the County.

Services

- Goal #1: To identify and disseminate existing recreational resources and programs to residents and visitors throughout the County.
- Goal #2: To provide County residents with information regarding the benefits of leisure and recreation.

Service Delivery System

- Goal #1: To structure a model of operation that will enable the Commission to successfully address its goals.
- Goal #2: To develop a relationship with County residents which will enable the Commission to effectively respond to their needs, wants, and desires.

This plan is an initial action structure to organize the efforts for Clare County parks and recreation programs and services. Therefore, many of the activities are developmental in nature and have uncertain timelines and costs. The Commission will make every effort to utilize existing resources, not duplicate existing programs and services, and carry out its activities in a fiscally responsible manner.

Focus Group Summary

Eight focus groups were held during July of 2002. The focus groups were based on four special interest groups and four geographic areas of the County. The special interest groups consisted of law enforcement, social service, senior citizens, and tourism professionals. Geographically, the County was broken down into four quadrants, Northwest (NW), Northeast (NE), Southwest (SW), and Southeast (SE).

Future Roles CCPRC Should Aspire Towards

Land acquisition, including lake front and river front property, for future public use, development of existing water access facilities such as road end facilities, and maximizing current resources through partnerships with local townships, schools, the State and other potential agencies are important future considerations for the CCPRC. CCPRC should also consider providing positive recreation and leisure alternatives for youth, seniors and other populations that need recreation and leisure in their life. Furthermore, CCPRC should be a central location for up-to-date information concerning recreation and leisure opportunities in the County. An advisory committee, with representatives from each township, should be formed, and CCPRC should provide a leadership role in future park and recreation issues in the County. Finally, CCPRC should assist in rebuilding recreation facilities the community already has.

Who CCPRC Should Serve

Regardless of the services provided, CCPRC services should be focused on Clare County residents first, then tourists. Specific groups that need services are youth (including pre-high school youth), senior citizens (including new retirees), people with low incomes, and people with disabilities. In addition, services should focus on the various social, economic, and geographic issues that prevent specific groups from reaping the benefits of recreation and leisure services. Also, services for tourists, such as well-marked trails and communication of the current tourism and recreation resources, are needed. Finally, CCPRC should focus on filling in the gaps, cracks, and voids, not duplicating services.

What Future CCPRC Programs and Facilities Should Include

CCPRC should focus on both facility acquisition and development and year-round programming. Safety and the positive development of residents should be the focus. A swimming pool, community center, sports facility, campground, and public beach should be investigated, but the location for a single County facility is difficult to determine as the County's population is dispersed and transportation is a major issue with residents residing in the rural areas of the County. To lead future programs, staff knowledgeable in the various social needs of potential program participants should be hired. Finally, residents are interested in activities beyond sports and outdoor recreation such as cultural arts, music, and the theater.

How CCPRC Should Pay for Programs, Facilities, and Staff

The method of payment for programs and facilities should correlate with the program or service that is provided. For example, if tourists are targeted, then user fees are appropriate, but if user fees are initiated, scholarships should be created for residents within Clare County with low incomes. Partnerships should be used to reduce costs of future programs, facilities and staff, and government and foundation grants should be sought. In addition, land acquisition may be pursued through tax defaulted property and bequests. If a millage were to be pursued, residents might vote if most residents felt they would get something out of it. It would be important to provide a plan of how the money would be allocated throughout the County before a millage request is sought. Finally, CCPRC should establish a fund in the Community Foundation to support parks and recreation activities.

Survey Summary

A countywide survey, which was submitted to 1,200 randomly sampled Clare County registered voters during November 2002, resulted in a 42% response rate. The voters were selected from a list maintained by the Clare County Clerk of all registered voters. The list contained names and addresses of approximately 19,000 registered voters and was alphabetically ordered. The following highlights are important results from the countywide survey.

- The greatest barriers to participation include not being aware of recreation/leisure opportunities (31%), personal schedule conflicts (30%), and lack of facilities and/or nature areas (22%).
- Residents felt that future tasks for the CCPRC should include, in order of importance, assisting communities, townships, and schools in improving current recreation facilities, assisting communities, townships, and schools in enhancing current recreation programs, developing recreation facilities, and providing recreation programs.
- Residents felt that future facilities for the CCPRC should include, in order of importance, youth centers, outdoor trails, community centers, public beaches, parks, campgrounds, and improving boat access/parking.
- Residents felt that CCPRC should focus, in order of importance, on youth, families, people with disabilities, seniors, and people who are economically disadvantaged.
- In response to a potential small millage, 26% felt they would support a millage, 43% responded as maybe, and 26% felt they would not support a millage.
- In response to potential user fees for CCPRC services, 45% felt they would support user fees, 37% responded as maybe, and 18% felt they would not support user fees.
- Detailed results related to specific activities are included in Appendix B.