



FY2020 – FY2024 Strategic Plan

July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023 – Annual Progress Review

Vision - “A leader in cultivating exceptional leisure experiences in our community.”

Mission - “To provide an enriched quality of life for the community through the preservation of natural, cultural and historical resources, enhancement of parks and outdoor spaces, and promotion of a variety of leisure experiences.”

Overview

The Recreation and Parks Strategic Plan was endorsed by the Recreation and Parks Board on January 16, 2020, and was approved by the Commissioners of St. Mary’s County on April 21, 2020.

The Plan has five goals outlined beginning on page 15. The Department is pleased that significant progress has been made on all five goals. Plan recommendations with associated action items are classified as: short term (**ST**) - 1 to 2 years; medium (**M**) – 3 to 4 years; long term (**LT**) – 5 years or more; and ongoing (**O**). All ST, M and LT objectives have been met; however, progress has been noted to show the ongoing work in each area.

The following table represents a review of the progress on the recommendations and actions outlined in the Plan for this FY2023 reporting period.

Goal 1: Provide a variety of quality recreation, leisure, and educational experiences for the public to enjoy

Recommendation	Action(s)	Progress
Enhance existing programs and develop new programs, activities and events that are supported by appropriate fees, grants, and other revenue sources. <i>Division(s): Recreation, Museums, Golf</i>	Update the process for evaluating programs and events. ST	The Department continues to utilize printed and online evaluation surveys, and comments received via social media, to gather feedback from participants. Example: Staff have begun using QR codes at special events and during programs to gather data. The golf course has installed a suggestion box for members to give input.
	Utilize customer feedback to offer new programs that match current trends and popular requests throughout the year. O	Feedback from evaluations is regularly reviewed and several new programs have been developed and offered throughout the year. Examples Free Wednesdays at the Splash Pad are offered again this summer based on positive feedback from last year. A new trip program was created based on research study results. Additional Dinner and Cruise events were added due to demand.
	Engage staff to attend ongoing trends analysis webinars and forums to assist with generating ideas. M	Staff regularly attend continuing education opportunities to learn best practices and trends to generate ideas for new programs and service delivery improvements.
Recruit and retain effective and self-motivated staff members.	Work with the Department of Human Resources to explore monetary and other retention strategies and develop plans	St. Mary’s County enhanced the hourly employee pay scale in December of 2022.

<p><i>All Divisions</i></p>	<p>for recruiting and retaining a competent work force. ST</p>	<p>A grant was obtained to give a retention bonus to all School Aged Care staff.</p> <p>The Museum division continues its participation in an apprenticeship program through the Forrest Technology Center with 4 students participating this fiscal year.</p> <p>Hiring bonuses started for parks staff obtaining their CDL.</p> <p>Raises were provided to lifeguards to fill shortage and keep pace with surrounding counties.</p>
<p>Maintain and enhance staff training opportunities.</p> <p><i>All Divisions</i></p>	<p>Develop schedule of annual training opportunities for all hourly and full-time staff. ST</p>	<p>Staff maintain continuing education through a variety of webinars and training workshops as well as attendance at relevant conferences. The Department created a new Deputy Director position who is charged with developing and maintaining training plans in accordance with CAPRA Accreditation standards and departmental needs. The Parks Division has created a new Parks Manager position that will start in the next fiscal year. This position will oversee staff training and development.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>One parks staff attended the Maryland Recreation and Parks Associations Operations University and became certified to apply fertilizer. All parks' staff and four golf staff received CPR and AED training.</p> <p>The Project Manager successfully completed the NRPA Green Stormwater Infrastructure certificate.</p> <p>The Golf Course Manager attended the annual PGA Show and Conference.</p> <p>The Deputy Director is currently enrolled in the NRPA Marketing and Communications certificate program.</p> <p>Museums staff attended the Annual Travel and Tourism Summit.</p>
	<p>Budget for ongoing educational opportunities and encourage professional certifications and continuing education. ST</p>	<p>Over \$15,000 was budgeted in FY22 and proposed for FY23 in the Operational budget for staff to maintain certifications, attend conferences and conventions and to attend other staff development opportunities. Each division budgets for their merit and hourly staff to attend training and professional certifications such as CDL training, fertilizer application and Certified Parks and Recreation Professional.</p>
<p>Continually seek to enhance existing partnerships, while developing new community partnerships, and sponsorships to broaden program and event offerings.</p> <p><i>Division(s): Recreation, Museums, Golf, Parks</i></p>	<p>Identify appropriate methods for advertising and research innovative ways for garnering sponsorship support. ST</p>	<p>Staff consistently work to develop new methods in obtaining additional sponsorship and community support through various advertising mediums.</p> <p>Example: The Arts Council has secured funding to complete murals and other artwork at Lexington Manor Passive Park. St. Mary's County Health Department secured a grant for the Community Gardens Project. The Museum Division created a new sponsorship program for the Jazz Festival that offers opportunities to have a booth in several locations over the weekend event.</p> <p>The States Attorney's office initiated a partnership with R&P for the Cal Ripken Sr. Foundation grant to provide underserved youth with an opportunity to engage in local law</p>

		enforcement through the Badges for Baseball Program. The Department will host a one-day event focused on sports skills with volunteers from the Sheriff's office.
	Identify key stakeholders and nurture partners through a systematic approach to solicitation of support through established timelines. M	<p>The Department seeks out community partnerships through identified stakeholders on a regular basis. To increase our action in the goal the Department created a new Deputy Director position who is charged with the coordination of programs and activities with allied agencies and stakeholders.</p> <p>Examples: The community gardens project works with over a dozen community stakeholders in the planning for the design and construction of gardens at Lexington Manor Passive Park.</p> <p>The Golf Course has begun a direct marketing campaign to the residents in the surrounding area.</p> <p>The Department and the Community Development Corporation are working on a Memorandum of Understanding for the management of the Gardens.</p> <p>The Museums have begun working with numerous organizations in planning a 2026 America's 250th event.</p> <p>The Parks Division maintains partnerships with the Sierra club and Master Gardeners of St. Mary's County to provide in kind labor to maintain gardens and provide new plantings in the parks.</p>
	Enhance efforts to engage and recruit volunteers, with focus on inclusion and intergenerational attraction. M	<p>The Department created and hired a new Deputy Director position that provides oversight of the Personnel/Human Resources needs that include volunteers and compliance with the Volunteer Manual.</p> <p>Piney Point Lighthouse Museum was re-certified as an RSVP volunteer location.</p> <p>The Golf course is researching the use of volunteers as for starter position and Marshals.</p>

Goal 2: Create new recreational amenities as needed to address growing community needs		
Recommendation	Action(s)	Status
<p>Seek to acquire land suitable for the development of public water access facilities and parkland.</p> <p><i>Division: Administration</i></p>	Develop ad hoc groups to discuss and prioritize recreational space needs. ST	<p>The Department continues to work with several groups related to facility needs.</p> <p>Example: Gymnastics users were surveyed for input on the Gymnastics Center lease continuation verses the relocation of the center. This input was used to finalize the decision to purchase the Willows Recreation Center.</p> <p>Youth sports League Leaders' meetings continue on a biannual basis to discuss needs and concerns.</p>
	Utilize Program Open Space funds and seek other funding sources for purchase and/or development of available park property that meet the level of service goals. ST	Example: In addition to the budgeted POS funding for projects that include the replacement of Baggett Park Playground an additional 1.25 million dollars was received in Infrastructure funds. This

		<p>additional financing is funding (4) new projects including ADA Park enhancements at Chaptico and John Baggett Park, major renovations to Leonard Hall Recreation Center, transition to Bermuda grass on field 6 at Dorsey Park and Parking Lot Lights at 5th District Park.</p> <p>POS funds also enabled the Department to purchase an 8-acre parcel to serve as a trailhead for Phase VII of the Three Notch Trail.</p>
	Develop an aggressive Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that addresses level of service goals for property acquisition. O	Example: The CIP contains a land acquisition project, see approved FY23 CIP Plan adopted May 24, 2022 and the FY24 CIP Plan adopted May 23, 2023.
<p>Develop a large, outdoor sports complex in a central location within the county. Such a facility should include multiple athletic fields and associated infrastructure capable of supporting league/tournament play for field-based sports.</p> <p><i>Division: Administration</i></p>	Partner with the Maryland Stadium Authority (MSA) to develop an economic & market conditions study. ST	The Market & Economic Study for the Sports Complex (RP1904) was completed and presented to the County Commissioners on October 27, 2020. A FY22 State Bond Bill was received for planning for the facility. During FY23 additional discussions have been held regarding what the current community needs are for such a facility and the next steps for a Phase Two study with the MSA. An agreement for the next phase is expected in FY24.
	Engage with youth sports leaders to determine a 5-10-year participation plan. O	<p>Example: The Director hosts Biannual meetings with youth sports leaders to continue to determine the needs and desires of the organizations.</p> <p>Several sports leaders have presented at the Recreation and Parks Board meeting to introduce their organization and discuss their needs.</p>
<p>Develop master plans for new parks and facilities.</p> <p><i>Division: Administration</i></p>	Utilize the approved LPPRP as a guide for master planning recommendations for new parks and facilities; LPPRP . O	<p>Example: Consistent with the LPPRP, the Department is in the process of purchasing the Willows Recreation Center to host the gymnastics program and other leisure programs. Planning continues on several ongoing projects based on previous master planning including Snow Hill Park, Shannon Farm Park, Elms Beach Park and Myrtle Point Park.</p>
	Develop master plans consistent with approved CIP, including feasibility study for large, multiple use recreation/community center. ST	Example: Shannon Farm Master Plan was approved this fiscal year and Snow Hill Master Plan was completed and presented to the Commissioners of St. Mary's County and is expected to be approved in FY24.
<p>Consider the development of a countywide bicycling and pedestrian master plan, and associated steering committee, to guide the</p>	Work with MDOT for consistency with state's long-range Transportation Plan. O	Project Manager continues to work with MDOT with the work on Phase VII of the Three Notch Trail. This phase of the trail as well as the planning of Phase VIII are again included in this year's Tri County transportation priority letter.

<p>development of a connected and sustainable trails network.</p> <p><i>Division: Admin/Parks</i></p>	<p>Work with citizens and other transportation stakeholders to identify trail needs. M</p>	<p>The Department continues to participate in the Tri-County Council's Bicycle & Pedestrian Infrastructure Advisory Committee (BIAC) and Regional Infrastructure Advisory Committee (RIAC) meetings to promote non-motorized transportation in the region.</p>
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Goal 3: Enhance existing parks, trails, golf course, historic sites, waterfront areas and recreational facilities

Recommendation	Action(s)	Status
<p>Ensure facilities and equipment are maintained to all appropriate safety standards and regulations.</p> <p>Division: Parks</p>	<p>Revise the current Park Operations and Maintenance Plan to include park maintenance schedule; waterfront sites maintenance schedule; and equipment maintenance and replacement schedule. ST</p>	<p>The Maintenance and Operational Management Manual was reviewed and updated on March 27, 2023. The manual includes schedules and operational procedures for all parks, the WS Golf Course, Great Mills Swimming Pool, Nicolet Spray Park and now includes the Wellness and Aquatics Center. The Golf Course developed an equipment replacement schedule that will be included in the next manual update.</p>
<p>Explore new ways to measure attendance, participation and visitation for parks, facilities and events.</p> <p><i>Division(s): Museums, Parks</i></p>	<p>Install counters, push buttons, motion detectors, or other means where feasible to assist in measuring attendance and visitation at parks and facilities. ST</p>	<p>Research will be conducted on the use of vehicle detection counters at most heavily used parks as such CRRP, Cecil, Lancaster, Chaptico and 5th district parks.</p>
<p>Make recommendations to the Commissioners of St. Mary's County for park and facility upgrades.</p> <p><i>Division(s): Administration, Parks</i></p>	<p>Assess current facilities and meet with user groups to determine necessary improvements and enhancements to lighting, playgrounds, fields, parking and gymnasiums, as well as ADA upgrades. ST</p>	<p>Director continues to meet user groups on a regular basis and incorporates all gathered information in presentation to the Commissioners in the annual budget request.</p> <p>The Recreation and Parks Advisory Board hosts groups several times a year to hear concerns and requests.</p> <p>All Divisions conduct user surveys to gather data on needed improvements and enhancements.</p> <p>Youth sports League Leaders' meetings continue on a biannual basis to discuss needs and concerns.</p> <p>Input from the Wicomico Shores Golf Advisory Board and various leagues is regularly sought for input on recommended course improvements.</p>
<p>Collaborate with state and county partners in efforts to better inform the public of the total inventory of parks, waterfront public landings and</p>	<p>Develop new or update existing marketing and promotional materials for existing parks, public landings and facilities to include print, signage, web and other media sources. ST</p>	<p>The Department's website and social media accounts are continually updated with information on closures, programs and services and community input opportunities. The Department created and hired a new Deputy Director position that oversees department's marketing and</p>

<p>other facilities throughout the county.</p> <p><i>All Divisions</i></p>		<p>promotions efforts including approval authority.</p> <p>Example: Project manager is working with the Healthy St. Mary's partnership to have all parks trails advertised on multiple websites including All Trails and the partnership website.</p> <p>The Museums Division had a special feature on the Drayden African American Schoolhouse through WMAR 2 Baltimore and is scheduling a similar broadcast on the Old Jail in the future.</p> <p>The Golf Course is exploring the development of a new logo and branding.</p>
	<p>Implement coordinated offerings that create connectivity between parks, trails, and museums. M</p>	<p>Example A new Juneteenth Scavenger Hunt was offered this year that sent citizens all around the county visiting African American sites.</p>
	<p>Capitalize on tourism and recreational opportunities afforded by historic trails and byways in which the museums and parks are included. O</p>	<p>The Museum Division has begun planning for America's 250th, Battle of St. George's Island.</p>

Goal 4: Foster the preservation of our museums and natural, historical and cultural resources

Recommendation	Action(s)	Status
<p>Continue to protect, enhance, improve and update the county-managed museum sites and other appropriate county-owned sites.</p> <p><i>Division: Museums</i></p>	<p>Complete the renovations and enhancements at county-managed museum sites as detailed in the approved Capital Improvements Program (CIP). ST</p>	<p>Design is complete for the new St. Clements Island Museum and in the permitting progress. The project has encountered delays and is expected to break ground in FY24.</p>
<p>Develop and promote programs that will improve visitor experiences and encourage preservation of the county's heritage culture and rural character.</p> <p><i>Division: Museums</i></p>	<p>Promote local heritage awareness through programs, collections, and awareness activities (such as an "In Your Own Backyard" program; stories; and work with the local Tourism agency, Visit St. Mary's, on focused marketing campaigns). ST</p>	<p>Example: St. Clements Island hosted the Annual Heritage Day event with a focus on the history and culture of St. Mary's County.</p>
	<p>Collaborate with the St. Mary's County Public Library, Historical Society, and other area museum staff to work on joint membership, marketing, and programming. ST</p>	<p>Example: The Museum division loaned the Benjamin Hance exhibit to the Leonardtown Library. The library system hosts story time at the Museum locations.</p> <p>The Museums Manager attends Bi-Monthly Museum Managers meetings where all Museum Directors in the County come together to discuss strategies and joint advertisements and programs.</p>

		The Museum Division is currently working with the Historic Society on the Cannon relocation and restoration project.
<p>Assess the county museum site collections and holdings.</p> <p><i>Division: Museums</i></p>	Promote preservation efforts by sharing the Museum's Preservation Plan for all large assets with the public; hold community meetings; and offer programs that highlight what the Museum Division does behind the scenes. ST	The Museum Division hosts an annual After-Hours Chamber of Commerce event.
	Conduct regular collections assessments as specified in the Museum's Collections Management Plan. O	Example: New collections have been obtained this year including oyster gear and cans.
	Hold community days at facilities whereby citizens can have objects and artifacts evaluated. O	Example: Museums hosted the annual Community Day where citizens bring photos for scanning and archiving as well as bringing documents in to have questions answered.
<p>Promote environmentally sensitive areas as well as opportunities for passive recreation and nature interpretation.</p> <p><i>Division(s): Museums, Parks</i></p>	Create and maintain trails on county property. ST	Discussions with partners are ongoing on trails at St. Clement's Island Museum. The design of trails on the property will occur after the construction of the new facility.
		The Parks Division has done asphalt overlay on the Three Notch trail and interior park trails at 5 th District and Chaptico Parks.
	Promote increased use of water taxi, public piers, and kayak launches via improved marketing and special offers. ST	Example: State and Federal funding have been received to purchase two new vessels and make pier improvements to provide accessible vessels and increased use.
	Focus on environmental awareness at parks and facilities as part of annual staff training. M	Example: Project Manager has attended several training courses on green stormwater, climate change, resiliency, and conservation. The Museums Division has created a 2 nd Saturday's program that is a family based environmental education workshop.
		The Parks worked with the local Girls Scouts to host a Piney Point Landing cleanup day.
	Develop opportunities to promote stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. M	Examples: Two Potomac River Clean Up days were hosted this year; one at Piney Point Museum and one at St. Clements Island Museum.
Provide additional opportunities for children to learn and play outside with a focus on understanding watershed resources, forests, farms and fields. M	Example: Five Science/technology/engineering/art/math (STEAM) events were held this year. Four at Piney Point Museum and one at the Patuxent River Naval Aviation Museum.	
Add new and enhanced special events and programs (and self-guided programs, such as geocaching, Find Your Chesapeake, etc.). M	Example: A new geocache was added to St. Clements Island this year. Museums are planning with SMCPS on a new Social Justice event next year.	

Goal 5: Promote community, stakeholder, governmental agency and staff engagement and participation through partnerships and other innovative means

Recommendation	Action(s)	Status
<p>Continue to involve citizens, agencies, and staff in the planning process for development of new park and facility master plans and other visionary documents.</p> <p><i>Division: Administration</i></p>	<p>Increase efforts for awareness of public meetings, especially where citizen input is sought, on the R&P and County website, other applicable agency websites, and on social media. ST</p>	<p>Example: Public meetings were held for the Community Gardens and Arts Parks projects and were advertised through social media websites and partner agency websites.</p>
	<p>Expand opportunities for broadcasting presentations (live Cable Channel 95, YouTube videos, etc.). M</p>	<p>Examples: The Museum Division was highlighted on Baltimore WMAR2.</p>
<p>Work to eliminate barriers to participation by promoting the many benefits of parks and recreation.</p> <p><i>Division: Recreation</i></p>	<p>Explore opportunities for onsite program registration at applicable recreational facilities. M</p>	<p>Registration is available at all recreation centers with daily admission or regular programs.</p>
	<p>Ensure information is accessible for individuals of all abilities. ST</p>	<p>The ADA Transition Plan was updated and published on the website that includes the completion of major renovations made at Lancaster, Chaptico, 5ht District John Baggett and Chancellors Run parks.</p>
	<p>Create new marketing and incentive programs to increase awareness and participation at parks, facilities, events and programs. M</p>	<p>The Department has created a new Deputy Director whose responsibility is to oversee all department marketing for an increased and consistent marketing presence across all divisions.</p> <p>Example: The Museum Division is working on a marketing plan with Baynet. The Golf Division has started a new marketing campaign with the Blue Crabs. The Recreation Division participated in several career fairs and community events geared towards underserved youth.</p>
	<p>Achieve Commission for the Accreditation of Park & Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) accreditation M; then maintain Accreditation O.</p>	<p>The Department achieved Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) September 9, 2022, and submitted its first annual report in March 2023.</p>
<p>Make use of new and emerging technology for promotion and to improve the registration and payment processes.</p> <p><i>Division(s): Recreation, Golf, Museums</i></p>	<p>Continually update the R&P website to remain efficient and engaging. O</p>	<p>The websites are updated as needed no less than weekly. The Museums and Recreation Divisions webpages were completely redone this year.</p> <p>Example: Field/rental calendars & Certified Coaches lists updated daily.</p> <p>Changes and additions made based on customer requests.</p> <p>Program and facility information updated as needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly status reports were added to the Administration page. • Seasonal program offering updated quarterly.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special events page updated when new events offered.
	<p>Update program registration software package as needed to stay up to date with current needs. M</p>	<p>Parks Division began working with the Information Technology Department in the creation of GIS data capturing all assets to use in City works for Park Asset and Operations.</p> <p>RecTrac/Webtrac/Golfrac registration systems undergo frequent updates to improve registration and other reporting functions.</p> <p>The Museum Division/Friends of the Museum events began using Eventbrite for event registrations.</p> <p>The Golf Course is researching the use of new online booking engines for T-times.</p> <p>The Parks Division is working on the use of swipe cards for waterfront park entrance fees.</p>
	<p>Enhance Internet connectivity at various R&P sites. M</p>	<p>Wi-Fi has been installed at Piney Point Lighthouse Museum; all Museum sites in operation now offer WIFI to the public. WIFI has been installed at the following parks: Dorsey, Lexington Manor Passive Park, 5th District Park and Nicolet Park. Security Cameras also have been installed in all parks with WIFI. Next year includes WIFI plans for Myrtle Point and Snow Hill Parks.</p>