

2020-2022



20-589 - A - Work Plan

PARKS AND RECREATION DIVISION

LEGISTAR

August 25, 2020



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INTRODUCTION

The Parks and Recreation Division (Division) is one of seven operational divisions within the Department of Resource Management. In a typical year the Division is responsible for providing park services to approximately 190,000 annual visitors (or 31,667 visitors per permanent field staff) at Solano County's four park locations: Belden's Landing Water Access Facility, Lake Solano County Park, Lynch Canyon Open Space Park and Sandy Beach County Park. For FY2019/20, use of the parks significantly decreased due to closures and then limited access due to COVID-19, resulting in 139,258 people accessing the parks. Demand for outdoor recreation and park access continues through the pandemic, and it is anticipated the numbers of park users will rebound as more access to park facilities is provided.

The primary functions of the Division are to ensure a high level of customer service and safety for park patrons, proper park facility maintenance, park revenue fee collection, and protection and promotion of the parks' natural resources. The Division consists of one park manager, one park ranger supervisor, and five permanent ranger staff, which are supported by up to nine seasonal extra help park aides. These staff are responsible for operations and maintenance of three campgrounds, two picnic areas, one sand beach, two motorized and one small craft boat launches, two fishing piers, one trail access and staging area and the Lake Solano Nature Center. Additional responsibilities include ongoing cleaning and maintenance of over 200 acres of turf, landscaping, paved roads and parking lots, restrooms and shower buildings, a fishing pond, water wells, sewage systems, exhibits, and other park facilities and assets inclusive of the equipment utilized in those maintenance activities, construction work and installation efforts. From tree trimming to cleaning restrooms to performing spontaneous interpretive programs for park visitors, the diverse variety of duties requires ranger staff to be versatile in their daily duties and to balance priorities that do not always mesh well. During closures and subsequent reduced public access to the parks from COVID-19, staff have been performing maintenance to the parks' facilities that has been deferred from peak use periods. The Division, working very closely with contracted volunteer coordinators, also administers Park Volunteer programs that provides interpretive tour docents, camp hosts and volunteer labor for trail and environmental restoration projects. During COVID-19 interpretive tours and programs are continuing virtually, and volunteer labor for restoration programs is used by limiting the number of participants and implementing proper social distancing and sanitation protocols.

The Division, working very closely with partners such as Solano Land Trust, Putah Creek Council, and Solano Resource Conservation District, administers Park Volunteer programs that provides interpretive programs including docent tours, camp hosts and volunteer labor for trail and environmental restoration projects to improve the public's enjoyment of the parks and to maintain and preserve the parks. Partnerships such as these have proven to be incredibly valuable as they have provided not only increased public engagement in the parks, but continue to evolve presenting opportunities for shared efforts for mutually beneficial outcomes including grant identification and development such as the Beldens Landing Restoration Grant (currently funded and work is in process), and increasing public access to currently inaccessible lands, such as the Cordelia Hills-Sky Valley Enhancement Project (in final stages of property transfer) while opening doors for potential partner opportunities for new access locations such as Rockville Trails Estates (owned by Division partner, Solano Land Trust).

The Parks and Recreation Commission assists the Division with outreach efforts with partners, both existing and potential as well as participating in making recommendations related to the promotion of recreation within the county. Longer-term projects include building public awareness through marketing efforts, establishing a social media presence, and offering park activities that bring in new visitors, as well as updating older park planning documents to keep them relevant. These projects are in addition to daily park operations and regular, annual projects such as park asset replacement and administering the Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund grant program.

SUMMARY

The Parks and Recreation Work Plan includes the major projects and initiatives that the Division plans to start or complete through FY2021/22; several of which are already underway. The Work Plan reflects an ongoing effort to expand park services to the public and improve and preserve the quality of the park facilities and natural resources under the Division's stewardship. The Work Plan also includes efforts to address incidents of peak-day overcrowding, promotion of healthy lifestyles, staff training, and updates to operations and maintenance management programs.

The Division continues to seek ways to improve financial sustainability, both by improving revenues and finding more cost-effective ways to provide public services to the parks. This includes efforts to seek grants and build partnerships with related agencies, maintain park fees at market rates, and seek concessionaire and vendor opportunities, all with an emphasis on achieving long-term stability. The Division continues to support the Regional Parks Subcommittee on working towards the formation of a Regional Parks and Open Space District with current efforts being focused on working with local agencies for public education and input.

The Division continues to feel the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. After initial closures of all county park locations, the Division has now implemented public access plans to allow varying levels of use compliant with state guidelines to reduce the potential for COVID-19 transmission at all four parks. Currently, access to the parks includes a return to normal operations for Lynch Canyon Open Space, boat launch only access at Beldens Landing Water Access Facility, day use and campground operations with reduced occupancy levels at Lake Solano, and reduced access hours for boat launch at Sandy Beach. Installation of new assets or modification to existing assets and operations is necessary to increase the public's access at the parks during restrictions necessary to protect the public during the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff continues to seek methods including asset installation, exploring potential use of a day use reservation system, and adjusting staff hours to accommodate safe and appropriate access for the public during the pandemic and the work plan includes actions that support this effort.

PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

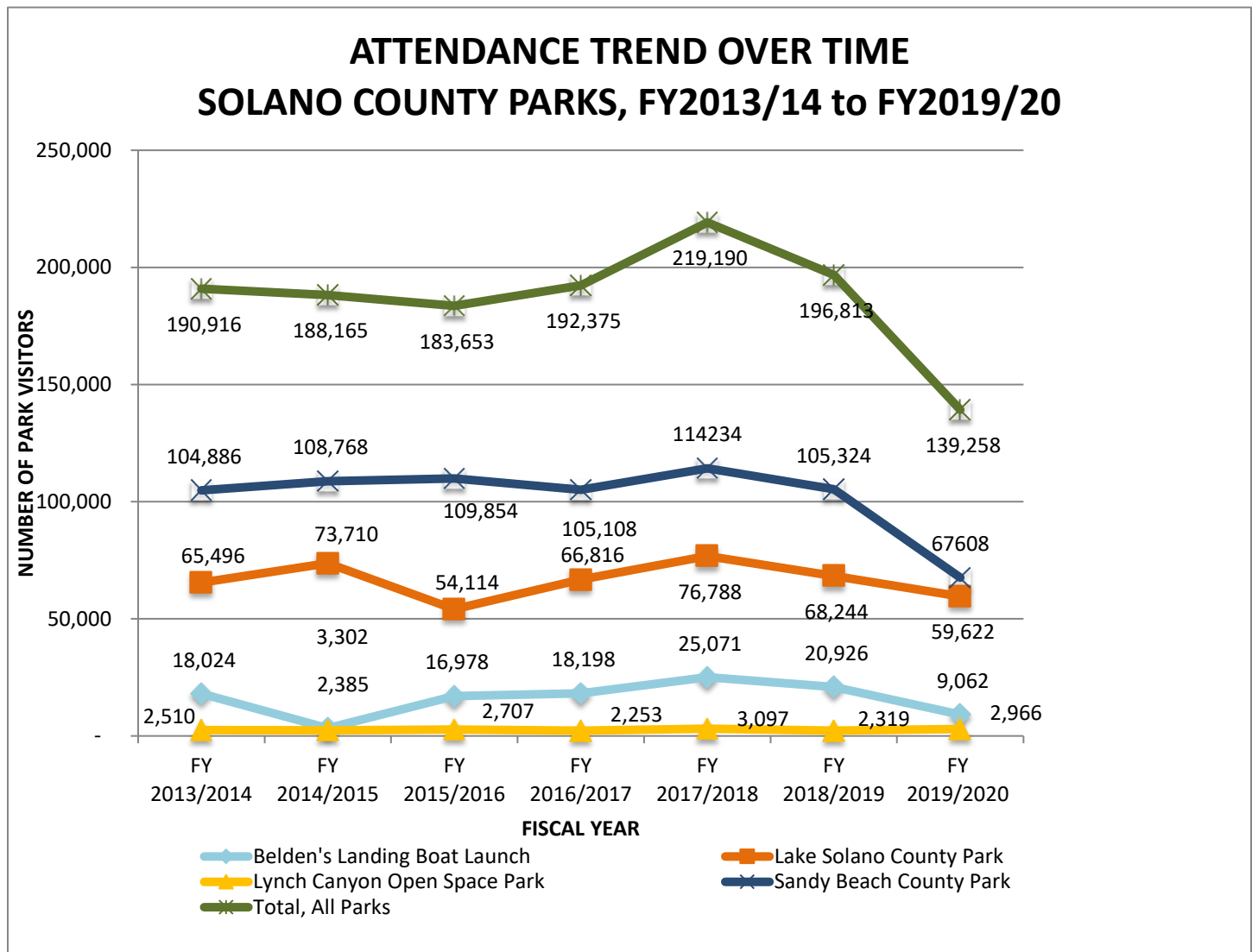
Major Projects and Initiatives	Estimated Work Effort (# of hours)	Task Status/Comment
Near Term (July 2020 thru January 2021)		
Covid-19 Operations: Monitor and update operations appropriate to the level of public access allowable to meet state and local guidelines to protect from COVID-19 transmission. This includes modifications of operations or asset installation to ensure social distancing protocols, enhanced sanitization practices, and asset availability with adapted occupancy levels can be maintained.	160-240	Staff has continued this process since March of 2020. Adaptations to operational hours, asset availability, access to park entrance points and adapted hours of operations are currently in place with exploration of day use online reservation payment methods and increased controls of entrance points in process. Discussions with neighboring park agencies regarding their operations is on-going as Covid-19 continues to impact the operations of all park agencies in the region and statewide.
Outreach: Update mobile display and distribute brochures at events. Utilize park volunteers to help (State Fair, County Fair, "Visions of The Wild" Event)	40-60	Ongoing, annual updates. Live events are postponed due to COVID-19. Researching virtual adaptations to provide this service to public.
Park Aide Recruitments: Further develop Park Aide Program to incentivize seasonal returns.	20-40	In progress, seasonal extra positions recruitment beginning January 2021.
Sandy Beach Entrance Reconfigure: Research options for possible reconfiguration of existing entrance road to facilitate separate campground and day use access points.	160-240	In progress, seeking input from other county divisions and departments. Evaluating interim measures.
Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund: Administer yearly grant cycle for FWPF Program with Park and Recreation Commission. Close-out contracts for previously awarded grants	20-40	FY20/21 scheduled for announcement in September 2020.
Sandy Beach Restroom Closure Asset Install: As a result of the Covid-19 Closures of Parks, the passive entry without a locking option for the restrooms will be updated to allow for hard closures	20	Materials purchased, pending install.

Major Projects and Initiatives	Estimated Work Effort (# of hours)	Task Status/Comment
Lake Solano Restroom Closure Asset Install: As a result of the Covid-19 Closures of Parks, the passive entry without a locking option for the restrooms will be updated to allow for hard closures	20	Materials identified, awaiting analysis of Sandy Beach install for appropriateness prior to ordering.
Staff Training: Identify Park staff's specialized skill training needs (e.g., tractor, chainsaw, other power tools, trail maintenance, pruning, herbicide spraying, customer service, interpretation, water safety, chemical agents, water distribution)	60-80	Ongoing, some trainings are being reconfigured for distance learning, dates pending.
Natural Resource Management: Coordinate Lake Solano Park, invasive weed removal and native planting projects and docent program. Include use of public volunteers (contract with Solano Resource Conservation District and Putah Creek Council)	20-40	Ongoing. MOU established 2014, budgeted in FY2020/21; projected to continue with partnership.
Medium Term (<i>Through December 2021</i>)		
Outreach: Develop program based on the HPHP (Healthy Parks/Healthy People) initiative, together with County Health and Social Services Department	60-80	In cooperation with H&SS, installation of water bottle filler stations at Lake Solano and Sandy Beach.
Ranger Operations Manual: review and update Manual based on changes to duties/operations since 2010	100-120	Review and update in process.
Lynch Canyon extension: work with Solano Land Trust to coordinate access to lands near Lynch Canyon Open Space.	60-80	Brown Property portion of Cordelia Hills, Sky Valley Project currently in ownership transition with public access assets installed.
Natural Resource Management: Plan out potential, future natural resource projects at Sandy Beach and other County parks, and identify funding support through partnerships, grants and County funds	100-160	National Fish and Wildlife Fund Restoration grant at Beldens in process, Planning grant being written for Lake Solano to include habitat restoration elements.
Social Media: Start work on a "business operations plan" to establish a social media application for County Parks, in compliance with County "Social Media Policy"	60-80	

Major Projects and Initiatives	Estimated Work Effort (# of hours)	Task Status/Comment
Park Master Plans: Begin comprehensive review of projects in previously adopted Park Master Plans, to review timelines and funding priorities and compare to current and projected use, with input and assistance from the Park and Recreation Commission.	80-100	Will begin review in Spring 2021
Long Term and Ongoing (Current and beyond January 2022)		
Sandy Beach: Develop alternatives to address peak day overcrowding that exceeds capacity of picnic area and beach (e.g., peak-season pricing, design solutions [e.g., new gates, signs, fencing], or use of reservation system, other).	100-120	
Parks Utility Services: Explore options to update park infrastructure, including electrical, potable water, irrigation system, and waste management. Water reduction updates, garbage and recycling programs, alternative electrical power sources are areas of intended exploration, specifically as they relate to cost efficiencies.	80-100	Will continue to evaluate funding opportunities to improve park utilities.
Grant Programs: research, plan and apply for grants to address park improvement priorities. Some sources include National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Prop 68 (multiple programs) and Land and Water Conservation Fund.	40-60	Staff is currently working on identified grant programs in efforts to increase access, improve existing facilities and restore habitat.
Park Maintenance Standards: Update maintenance standards, including maintenance frequency/replacement schedule and standards for upkeep of septic systems, landscaping, turf areas and buildings.	60-80	In process, recent updates created to accommodate Covid-19 operations.
Alternative Revenue Sources: Research and write policy(ies) for park sponsorship, donations and memorials, to include sponsored events, corporate donations, and memorial benches. Consider development of an in-park advertising policy.	100-120	
Concessionaires and Vendors: Look for opportunities and prepare contract(s) for concessionaire-provided public services and in-park vending.	40-60	Currently working with 2 continual vendor opportunities; one for Ice cream sales at Sandy Beach, and one for paddleboard trips at Lake Solano.

Major Projects and Initiatives	Estimated Work Effort (# of hours)	Task Status/Comment
Park and Recreation Element (2003): Review timelines and funding priorities for proposals in the “Park and Rec Element” of the County General Plan, with assistance and input from the Park and Recreation Commission.	60-80	
Regional Parks Discussion: Continue to participate in regional discussion with Solano Land Trust and others on “regional options” for park/open space management.	300+	Ongoing, SB365 signed 9/2017; working with Solano Land Trust (public entity partner) on public outreach and public opinion, on hold at the time of this report
Annual Fee Review: Review and consider new/changed fees, including senior/disabled rates, boat launch fees; higher peak-season pricing. Consider establishing Division-specific cost recovery goals. With assistance and input from the Park and Recreation Commission.	20-40	County fee review process occurs annually
Parks Partnering opportunities: Continue to build upon existing partner relationships and seek out new partner opportunities. Focused attention to furthering environmental education, recreation and stewardship programming efforts within the county.	80-120	Relationships with Suisun Resource Conservation District, Solano Resource Conservation District, Bureau of Reclamation, Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation, Putah Creek Council, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, United States Forest Service, Together Bay Area, Bay Area Ridge Trail and others will continue to be bolstered, while new relationships continue to be identified including non-profit organizations and local cities and special districts.
TOTAL	1,920-2,480	

ATTENDANCE TRENDS



Contributing Factors for significant attendance swings include:

- Beldens Landing attendance tracking was impacted by payment machine theft in 2014 and damage to the fishing pier as a result of the Branscombe Fire in 2018.
- Lake Solano attendance was heavily impacted by park closures related to the summertime wildfire activity in 2015 and 2018.
- Lynch Canyon attendance was impacted by a prolonged season of access due to mild weather patterns in 2015/2016; and multiple weather-related closures in 2018.
- In FY2016/17, Sandy Beach attendance was impacted by a reduction in day use visitor turnover as visitors are observed to be staying for the whole day instead of segments therein.
- In FY2019/20 all parks saw reductions in attendance as a result of Covid-19 closures beginning in March 2020. Lynch Canyon was the first location to reopen, with increased visitor use levels as a result of many new park users seeking open spaces to recreate.

PARKS DIVISION ORGANIZATION CHART

