

REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION

ITEM NO. 19.

DATE OF REQUEST: June 22, 2009

REQUESTED BY: Patrick T. Davenport, Director of Planning and Community Development

SHORT TITLE: A Resolution Adopting a 2009 Parks and Recreation Capital Improvement Plan.

BACKGROUND: Pender County's most recent plan for parks and recreation facilities and improvements was approved in 1998 ("1998 Open Space Plan"). Currently the County supports two parks, the Hampstead Kiwanis Park and the Pender Memorial Park. As the county's population increases, the demand for parks and recreation facilities also increases. As well, having adequate parks and recreation opportunities is a quality of life issue for county citizens.

The Board of Commissioners has discussed the need to be more proactive in the development of parks throughout Pender County to provide for more citizen access to parks and recreation. The 2009-2011 Action Plan adopted by the Board sets forth objectives for identifying and developing new park space and facilities in the county.

The County Manager has directed the Planning and Development staff to prepare a parks and recreation capital improvements plan that provides for a variety of parks and recreation opportunities all across Pender County. The attached draft 2009 Parks and Recreation Capital Improvements Plan has been prepared to meet that need, as well as to provide justification and support for future funding opportunities to make those parks a reality. Implementation of this plan is long-term in nature.

This plan will be broadened and enhanced into a more comprehensive document as we move forward.

SPECIFIC ACTION REQUESTED: To approve a resolution adopting the attached 2009 Parks and Recreation Capital Improvement Plan; and authorizing staff to move forward with implementing the projects listed therein subject to Board prioritization and funding availability.

COUNTY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Respectfully recommend approval.

Initial

RESOLUTION

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Pender County Board of Commissioners that:

the attached 2009 Parks and Recreation Capital Improvement Plan is hereby adopted; and the Planning and Community Development staff is authorized to move forward with implementing the projects listed therein subject to Board prioritization and funding availability. The County Manager is authorized to execute any/all documents necessary to implement this resolution.

AMENDMENTS:

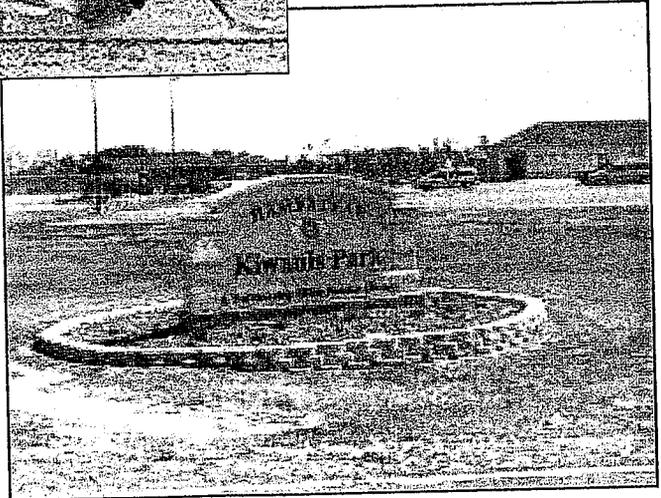
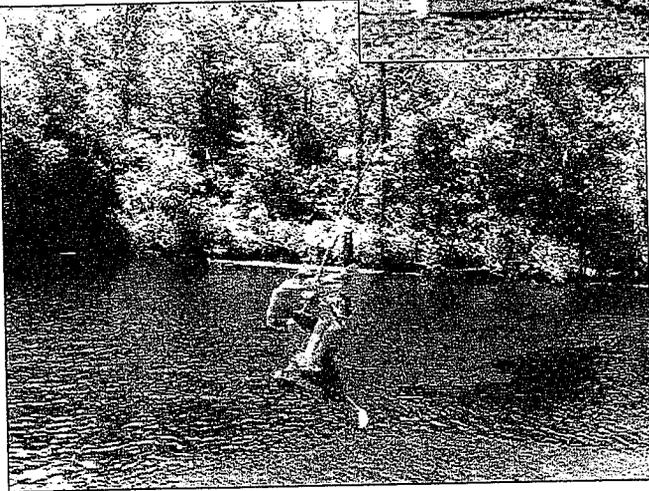
MOVED _____ SECONDED _____

APPROVED _____ DENIED _____ UNANIMOUS

YEA VOTES: Tate ___ Brown ___ Blanchard ___ Rivenbark ___ Williams ___

Jimmy T. Tate, Chairman Date

ATTEST Date



2009 PARKS AND RECREATION CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN



Introduction

Pender County, a traditional rural and agriculture community, offers County residents limited various recreational opportunities. However, as the population increases and demand for parks and recreation facilities and opportunities intensifies, it is imperative that Pender County initiate development of new parks and recreation facilities as well as enhance existing facilities.

Park and recreation facilities and programs provide a variety of economic, social and health benefits for a community. Parks provide an opportunity for stress relief, exercise, social interaction, and offer a place for families and friends to spend time together. Communities with adequate parks and recreation opportunities are generally more highly valued and are more desired locations for development of homes, neighborhoods, businesses and industry.

As population increases, the demand for parks and recreation facilities also increases. Pender County has been one of the fastest growing counties in North Carolina. Due to its proximity to the Atlantic Ocean and the fast growing Wilmington metropolitan region, the County has attracted dramatic population increases since 1990. The NC State Data Center projects population growth for Pender County at 96.1% from 2000 to 2030 – the 11th fastest projected growth rate in NC. At the 2000 Census, Pender County ranked 58th in population among the 100 counties within the State. If NC State Data Center population growth rates hold true, Pender County will increase to the 39th most populous county by the year 2030.

Pender County is currently significantly deficient in public recreational acreage and facility inventory. The 2009-2013 North Carolina Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) indicates that Pender county ranks 66th or below out of the 100 North Carolina counties in 13 out of 14 park and recreation opportunity types, including 99th in playgrounds, 97th in basketball courts, 96th in picnic shelters, and 95th in tennis courts. These deficiencies are further reflected in the Pender County Regional Growth Management Plan, which indicates that the need for an additional 8-10 acres of neighborhood parks, 13 acres of community parks, and 25-127 acres of district parks just to address the park acreage needed to support the projected military-induced growth in Pender County.

As population continues to increase in Pender County, the landscape of the County will shift from a rural character to a more urban one. As such, the land available for parks and recreation within the County will decrease as development occurs to accommodate the population growth. Without an increase in parks and recreation areas and facilities, existing facilities will become increasingly crowded and negatively impacted by use and surrounding development. New areas need to be identified and steps taken to acquire them prior to their being impacted by or lost to development.

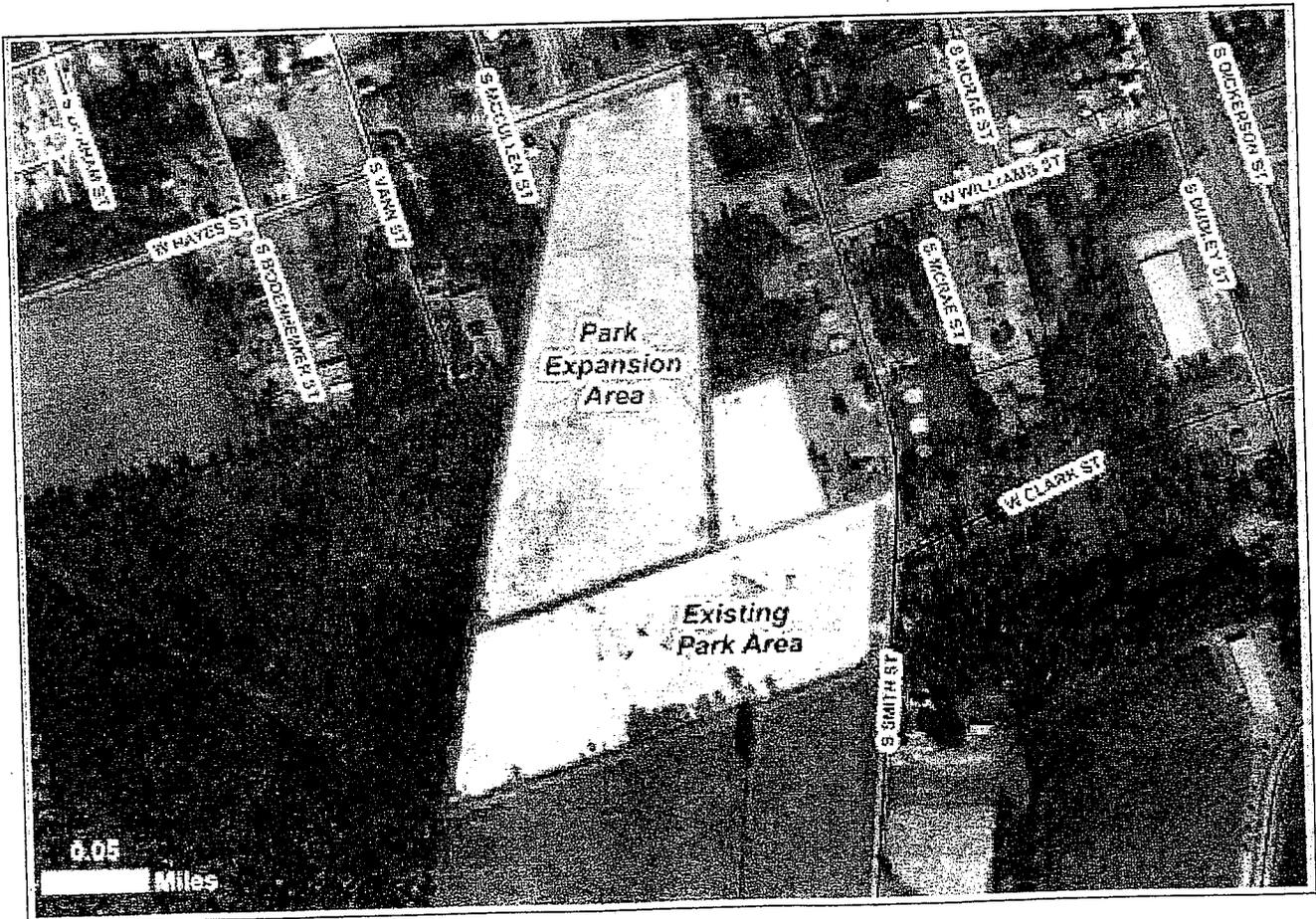
In summary, Pender County currently has very limited parks and recreation facilities and opportunities. The County is experiencing trends that will continue to increase demand for such facilities. Pender County is committed to address that demand by acquiring, developing, and improving parks and recreation facilities for the social, health, economic, and quality of life benefits to its County residents.

Existing County Parks and Recreation Facilities

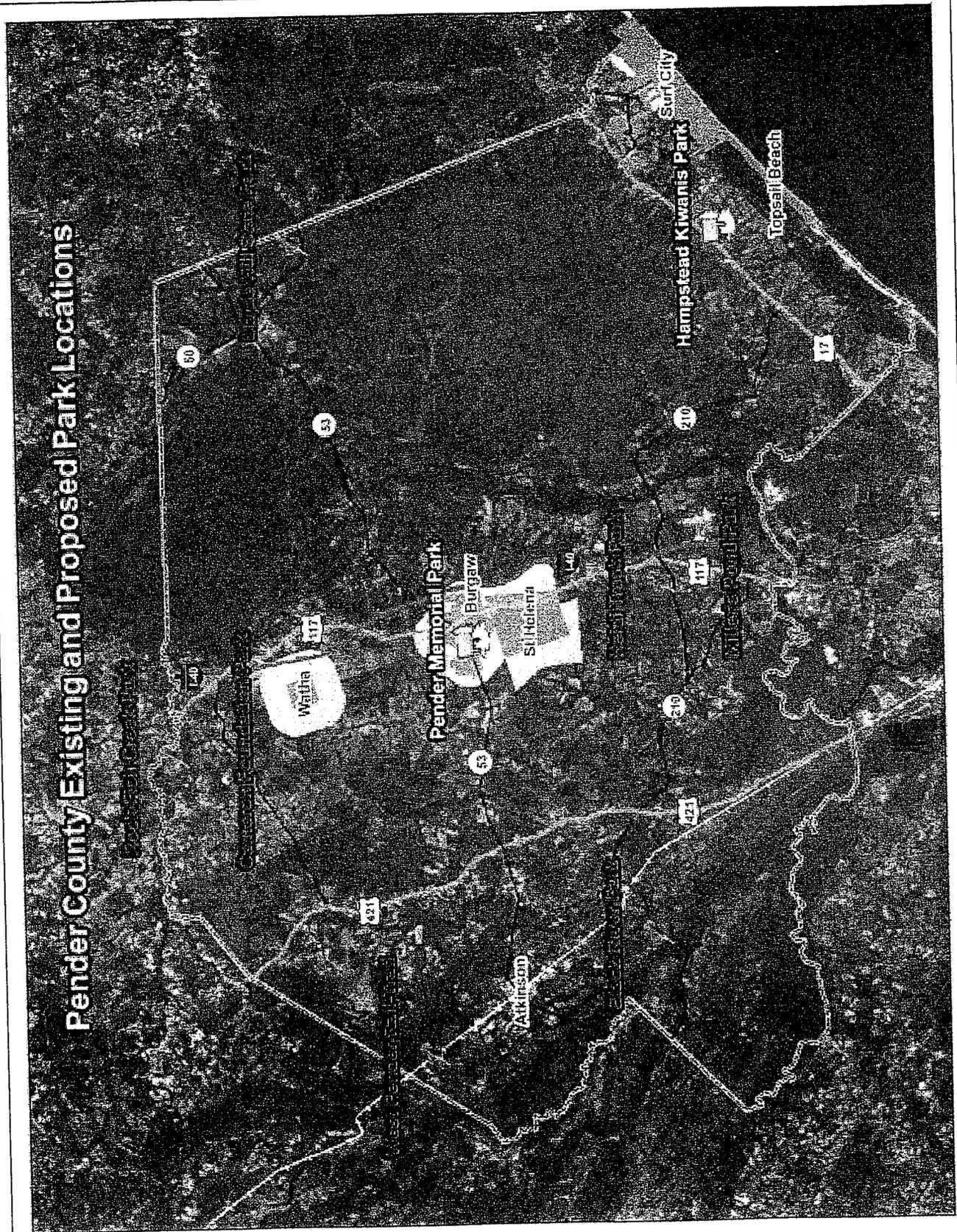
Pender Memorial Park

Pender Memorial Park is located on two parcels totaling 16 acres in Burgaw and features four youth baseball/softball fields, one multipurpose baseball/softball field, a concession stand, restroom, and storage facility, a picnic shelter, and three batting cages. Pender County has formed a partnership with Burgaw Dixie Youth, a non-profit organization that facilitates youth baseball and softball programs, for the development and maintenance of Pender Memorial Park. Burgaw Dixie Youth currently leases a privately-owned parcel that comprises 2 acres of the park, while Pender County owns the 14 acre parcel that hosts the majority of the current park amenities. In 2003, Pender County acquired an adjacent 13 acre tract for future park expansion. Burgaw Dixie Youth occasionally financially assists Pender County in improvements to the park, and the County assumed maintenance responsibilities for the park in 2004.

In 2006, Pender County was awarded a \$280,000 PARTF grant to develop two youth baseball/softball fields, one football/soccer field, two youth soccer fields, playground equipment, a concession stand and restroom facility, and a parking lot. These improvements are currently under construction, and will be completed by the end of 2009. Grant funding will be sought for future park development, which will include field lighting and renovation of antiquated park facilities and amenities.



Pender County Existing and Proposed Park Locations

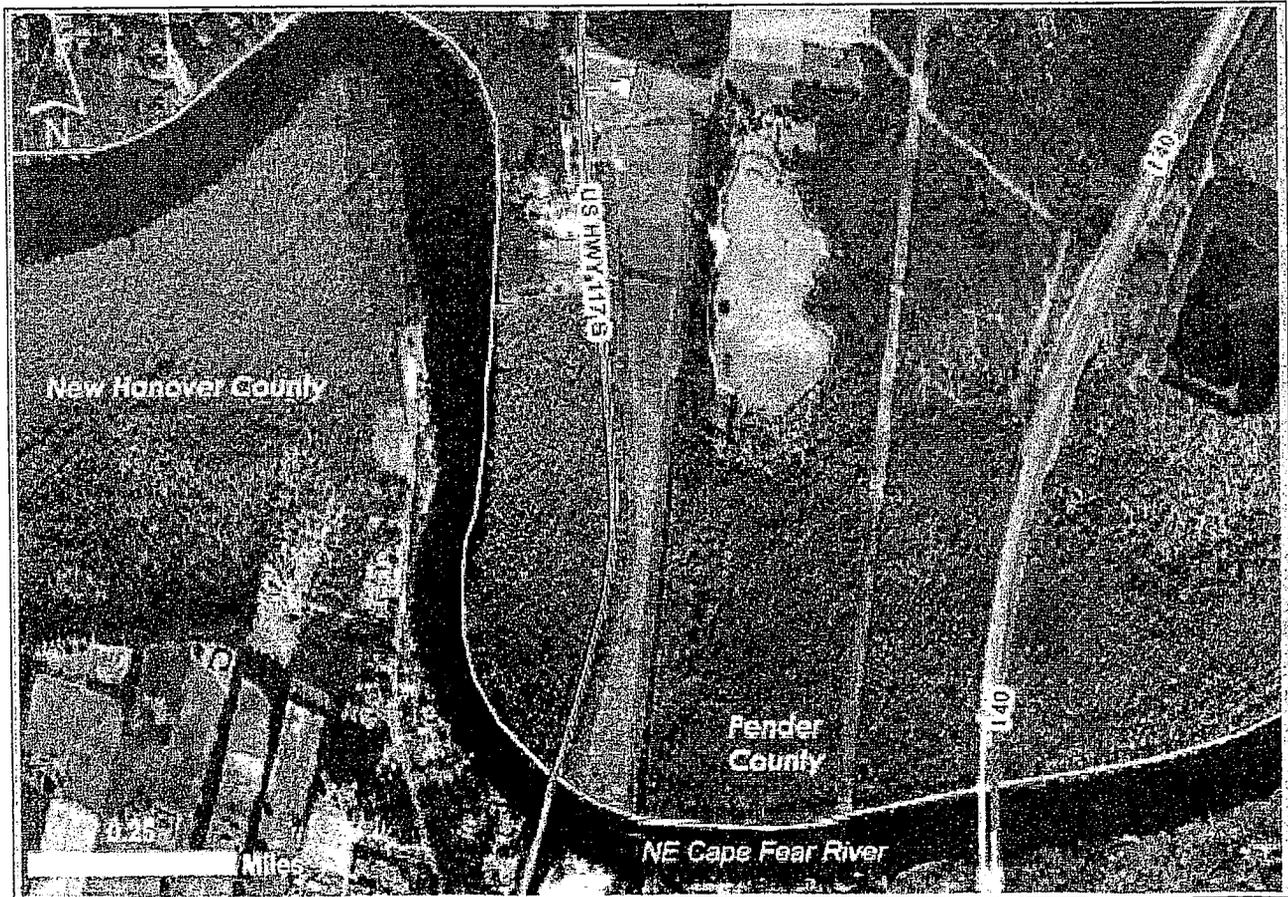


Priority Projects

Miller's Pond Park

The Miller's Pond Park site is comprised of three undeveloped parcels totaling 24.38 acres, all currently owned by Pender County. The site is located on the Pender – New Hanover County line, and situated between US Highway 117 and the Castle Hayne – Wallace rail corridor. The site is adjacent to the Northeast Cape Fear River, and in close proximity to Rocky Point, area focused for significant residential development in the County. The site hosts a large freshwater lake and significant natural vegetation. The location of the park site adjacent to US Highway 117, a major arterial road for the County, provides for adequate ingress and egress to the facility. This site is also historically significant, as it was host to a major prisoner exchange during the Civil War.

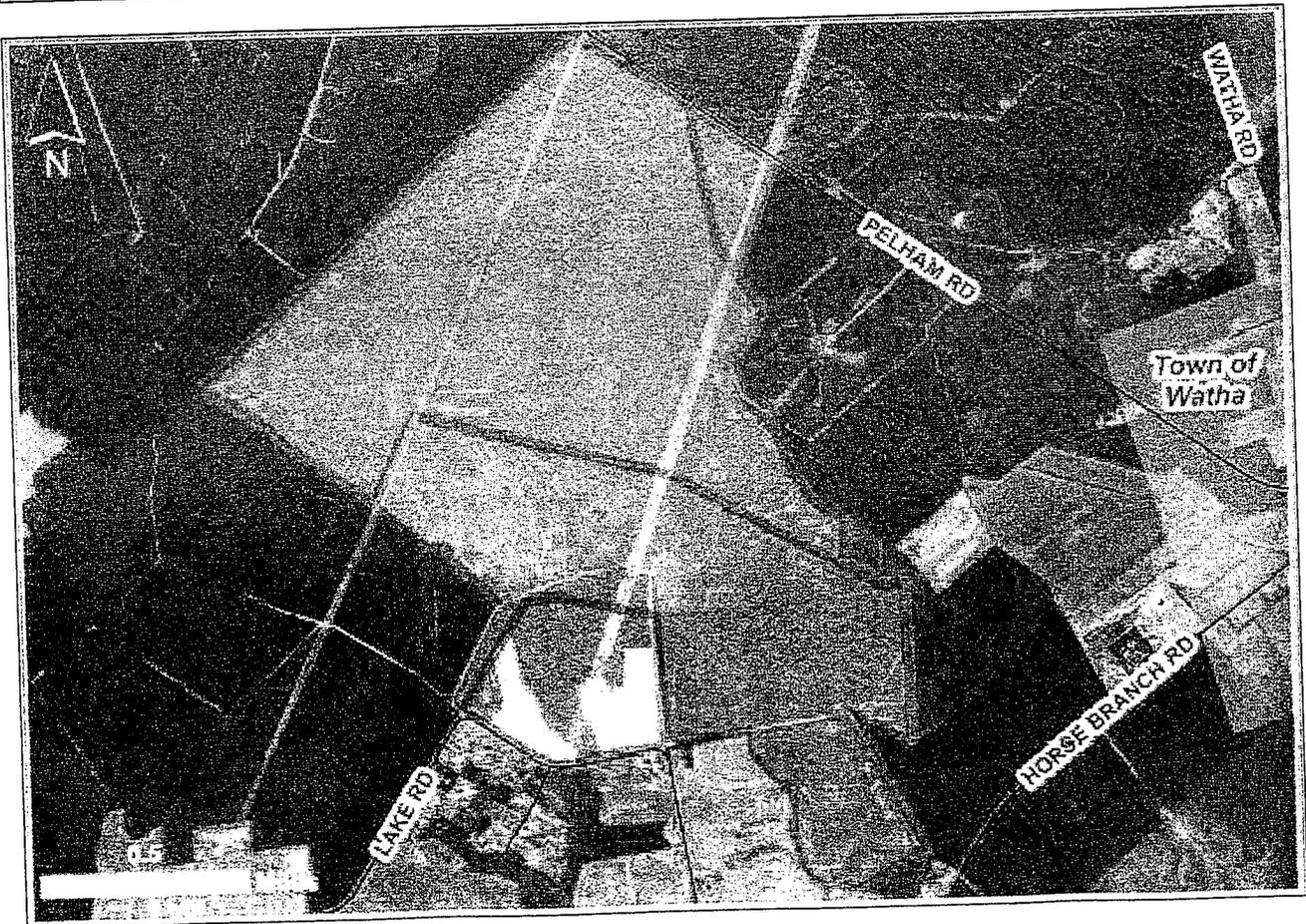
<i>Potential Facilities and Amenities</i>	<i>Estimated Cost</i>
Land Clearing	\$5,000
Parking Lot and Entrance Road	\$30,000
Playground Equipment	\$50,000
Walking Trails (2 miles)	\$100,000
Fishing Pier	\$15,000
Picnic Shelter	\$30,000
Restroom Facilities	\$125,000
<i>Total Estimated Cost:</i>	\$355,000



Bruce Barclay Cameron Foundation Property

The Bruce Barclay Cameron Foundation currently owns several tracts totaling approximately 1074 acres west of Watha that may be suitable for multipurpose conservation and recreational uses. The County has received a willing seller letter from the property owner. The parcels are undeveloped at this time, although significant acreage of the southern parcel is currently in agricultural use. This site is suitable for a partnership with NC State University, the NC Division of Forest Resources, the NC Cooperative Extension, the US Department of Agriculture, and similar agencies to develop experimental forestry projects. Currently, there are three experimental forests in the state, which serve to represent a specific ecosystem for conducting experiments on stand management and regeneration, restoration of wildlife and plant populations, watershed management, and the effects of pollution, climate change, and timber harvest. An experimental forest at this site may also host educational opportunities and recreational activities, such as hiking trails, camping, hunting, and educational tours and programs, similar to the other experimental forests in the state. The southern parcel may be appropriate for an agriculture experimentation station and community garden.

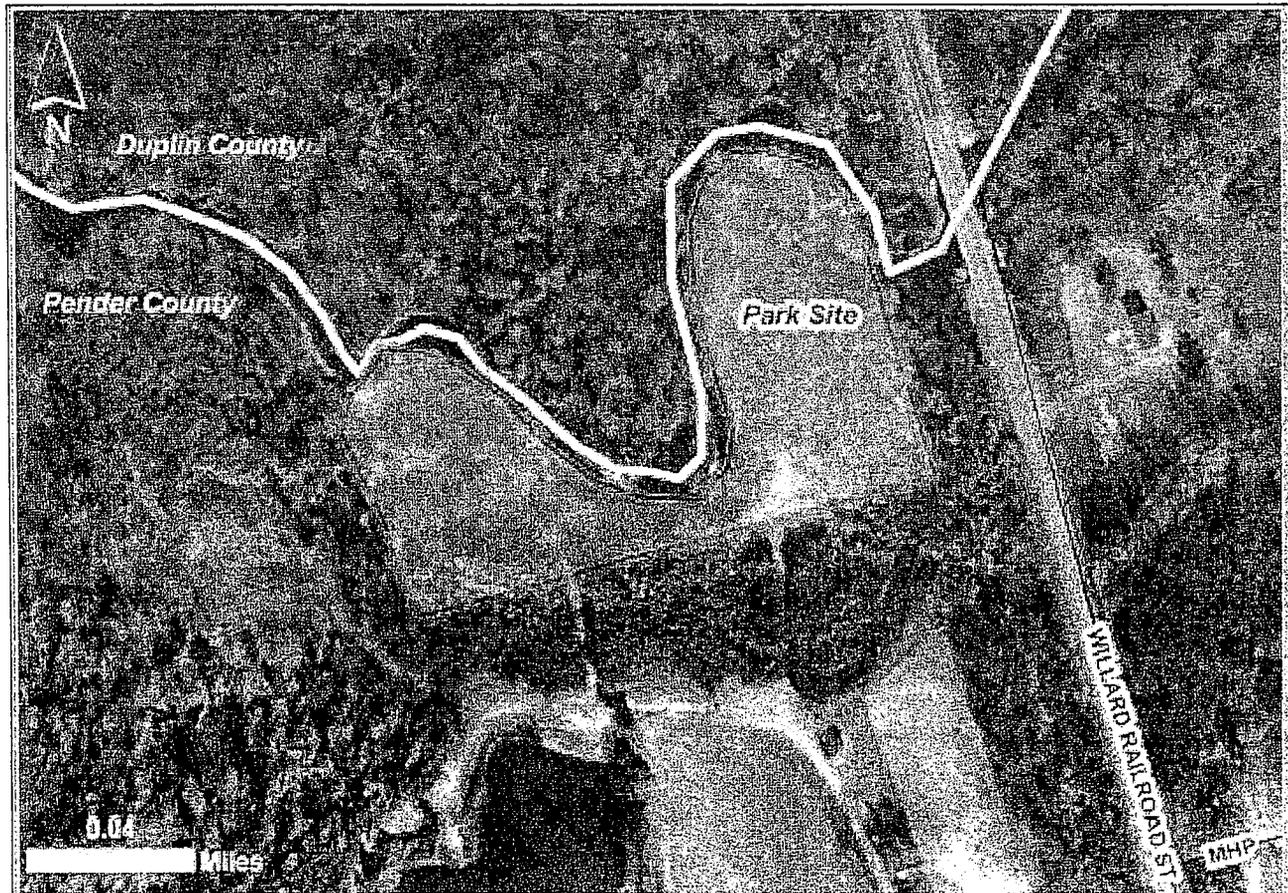
<i>Potential Facilities and Amenities</i>	<i>Estimated Cost</i>
Land Acquisition	\$2,000,000
Walking, Bicycle, and Interpretive Nature Trails	\$250,000
Picnic Areas	\$150,000
Camping Sites and Restrooms	\$175,000
Educational/Nature Center	\$750,000
Total Estimated Cost:	\$3,325,000



Rock Fish Creek Community Park and Water Access Facility at Willard Railroad Street Bridge

This is a site for a potential passive waterfront recreation facility location as well as a potential water access facility. The land adjacent to the creek on both sides of Willard Railroad Street is high ground and suitable for a small boat/canoe access facility and a small park. Tracts in all quadrants of the intersection of Rock Fish Creek and Willard Railroad Street are privately owned, and largely undeveloped especially along the creek. A portion of any of these tracts would be suitable for a small park and water access facility.

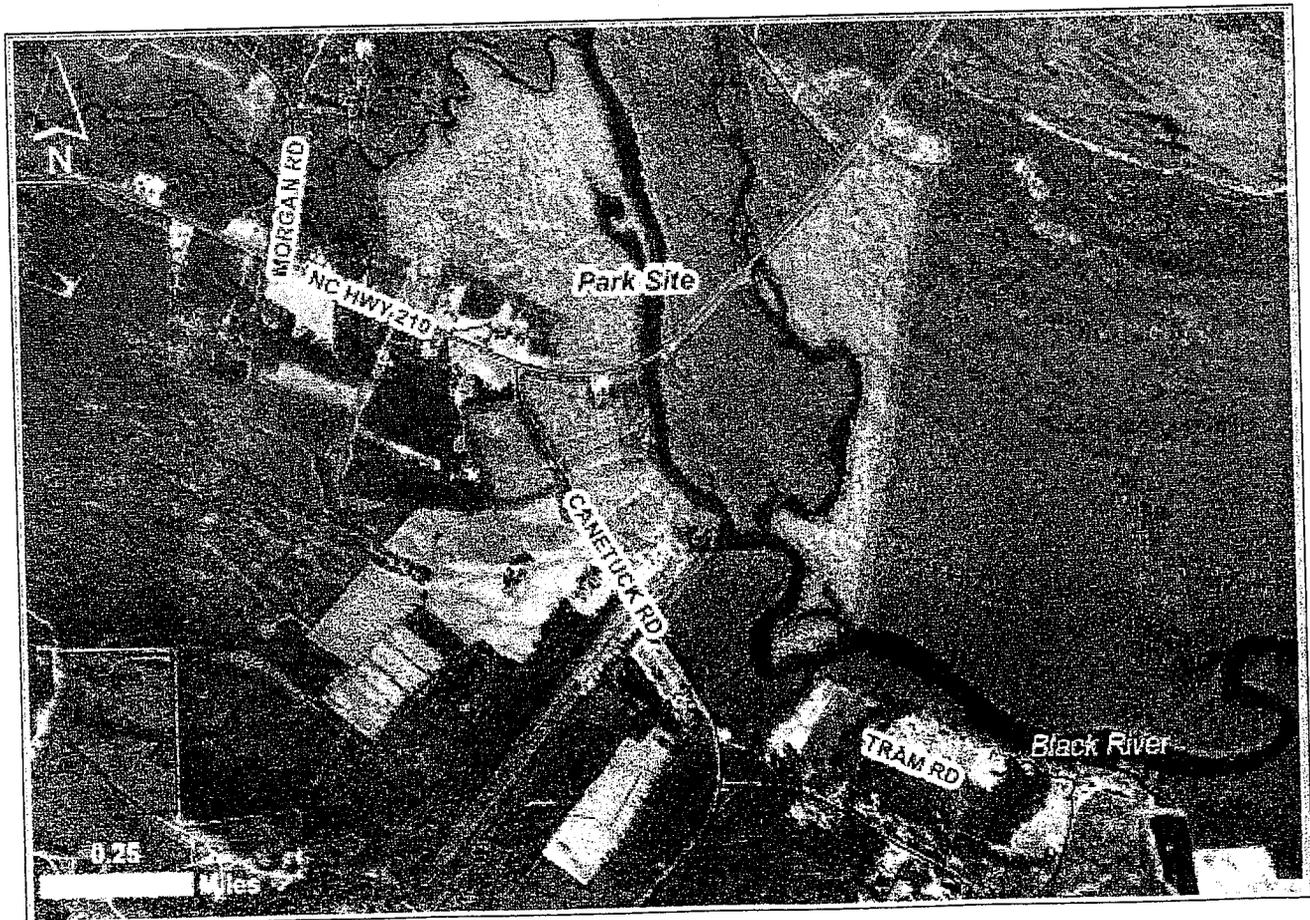
<i>Potential Facilities and Amenities</i>	<i>Estimated Cost</i>
Land Acquisition	\$15,000
Water Access for Canoes, Kayaks, and Small Boats	\$250,000
Playground Equipment	\$25,000
Walking Trails	\$50,000
Picnic Areas	\$50,000
Restroom Facilities	\$125,000
Total Estimated Cost:	\$515,000



Black River Community Park and Water Access Facility at NC Highway 210 Bridge

This is a site for a potential passive waterfront recreation facility location as well as a potential water access facility. The western side of the Black River at this location is higher ground and more suitable for a recreation facility than the eastern side. The Nature Conservancy currently owns the 64 acre parcel to the east of the Black River at the NC 210 bridge crossing. This parcel stretches both north and south from NC 210, and is one of many parcels making up the 3016 acre Black River Preserve. A privately-owned 155 acre parcel comprises a significant portion of the western Black River bank. A potential water access and recreation facility may be located on this parcel, either north of NC 210, or south of NC 210 off of Canetuck Road; both sites include significant frontage along the river. A water access facility at this location would augment the existing upriver Sampson County facility.

<i>Potential Facilities and Amenities</i>	<i>Estimated Cost</i>
Land Acquisition	\$300,000
Water Access for Canoes, Kayaks, and Small Boats	\$250,000
Picnic Areas and Restroom Facilities	\$175,000
Total Estimated Cost:	\$725,000



Heidi Trask Site

The Heidi Trask Site is currently owned by Pender County, and is located adjacent to Heidi Trask High School approximately ½ mile from Rocky Point, and features around 120 acres suitable for parks and recreation facilities. The surrounding area is poised for significant residential and commercial development in the near future. Parks and recreation facilities at this site are to be focused on recreation-dependent facilities such as multipurpose fields and facilities, which will complement the existing facilities at the high school.

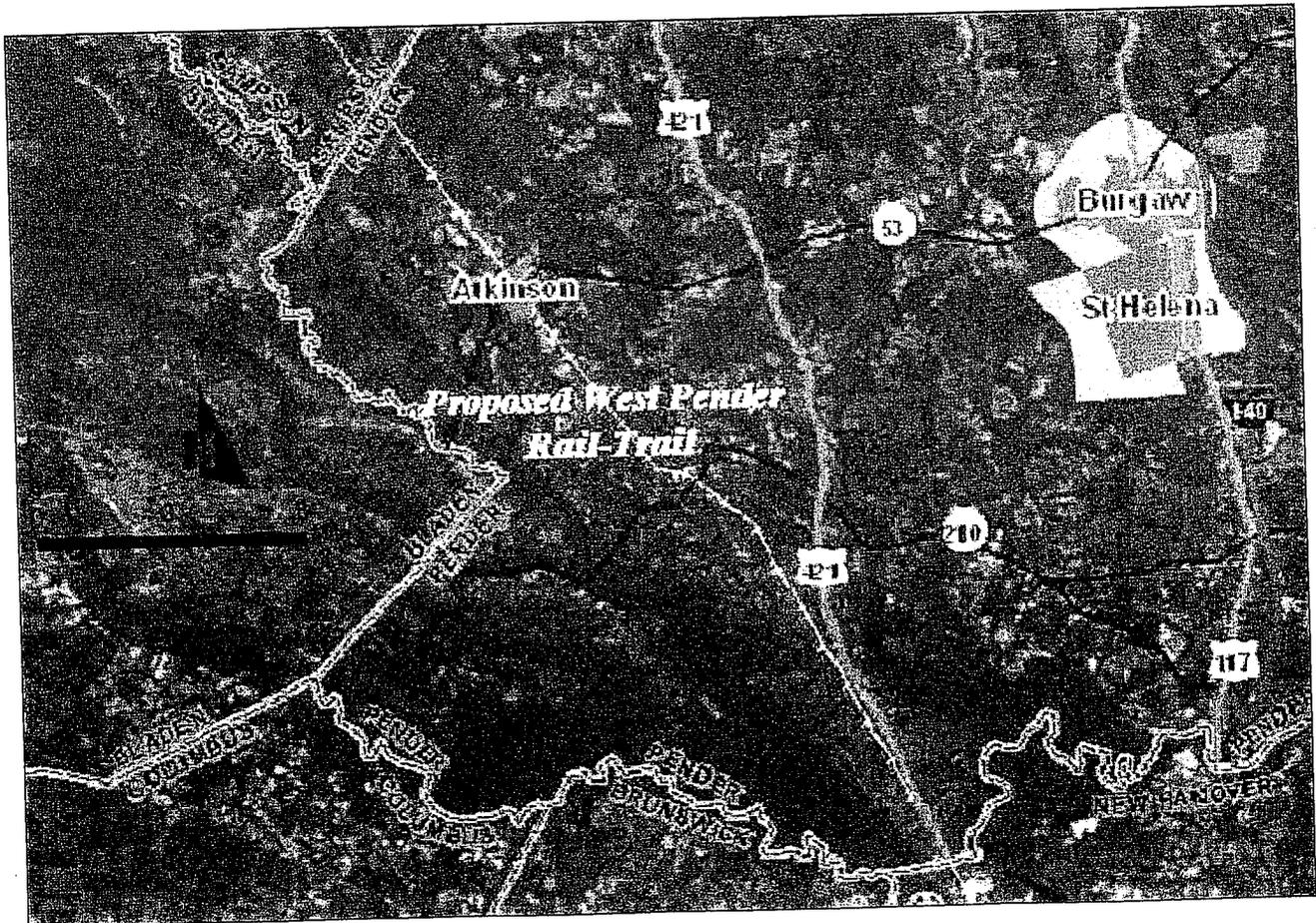
<i>Potential Facilities and Amenities</i>	<i>Estimated Cost</i>
Site Preparation, Parking Lot, and Entrance	\$175,000
Playground Equipment	\$50,000
Picnic Shelter	\$50,000
Tennis Courts	\$50,000
Football/Soccer Field	\$50,000
2 Youth Soccer Fields	\$60,000
Concession and Restroom Building	\$150,000
2 Baseball/Softball Fields	\$80,000
<i>Total Estimated Cost:</i>	\$665,000



West Pender Rail-Trail

The West Pender Rail-Trail is a project to create an approximate 22-mile non-motorized recreational trail in the western area of the County comprised of off-road and on-road segments, utilizing the abandon Seaboard Coast Line rail corridor where feasible. The property ownership of the corridor has reverted to adjacent property owners in accordance to North Carolina General Statutes since the abandonment of the corridor, therefore the right to utilize the corridor must be secured before trail construction may commence. Currently, the West Pender Rail-Trail Alliance, a non-profit committee composed of designees from several interested parties and agencies, is acting as the steering committee for the project. Options to secure the rights to the corridor for trail use are currently being explored.

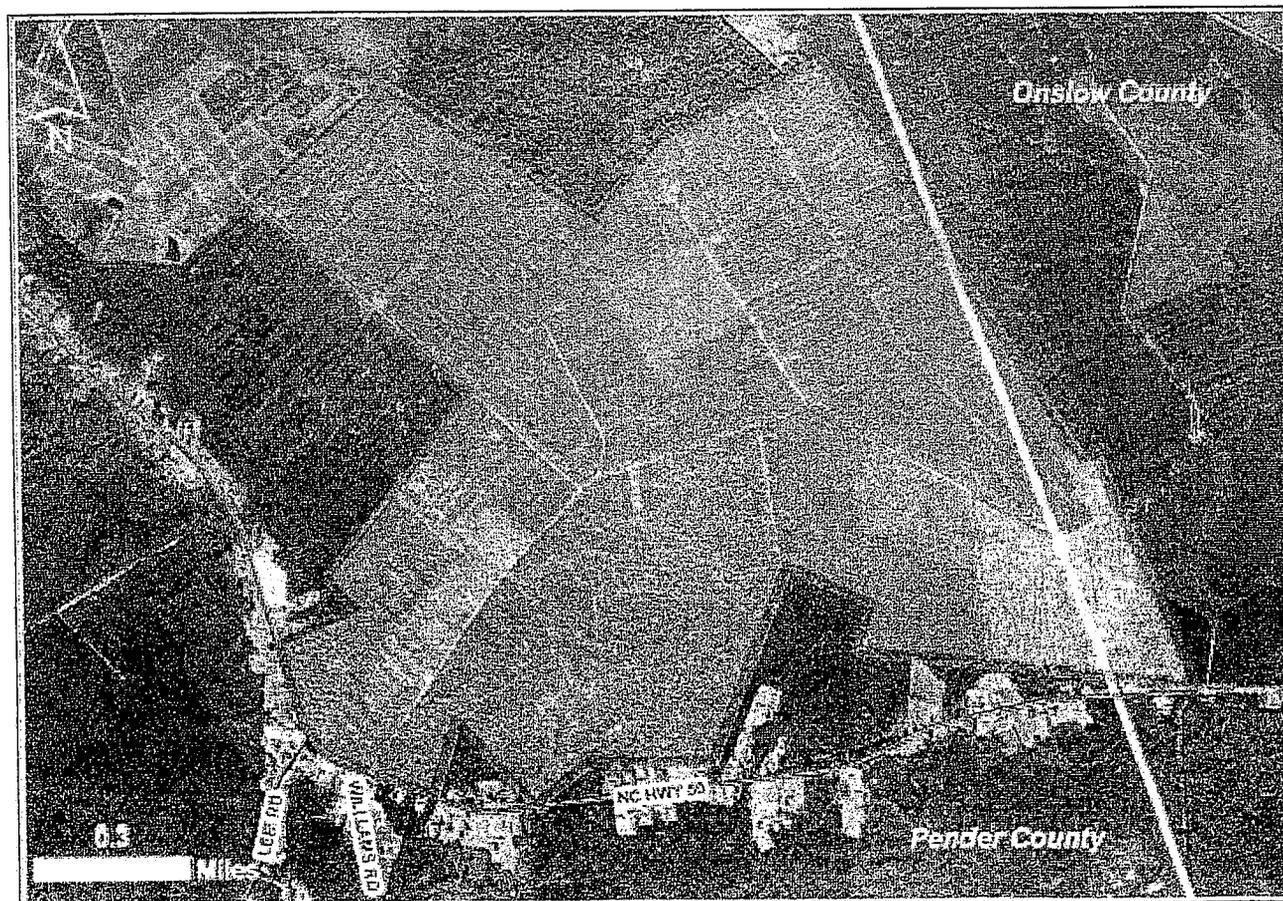
<i>Potential Facilities and Amenities</i>	<i>Estimated Cost</i>
Approximately 22 miles of Bicycle and Pedestrian Trail	\$2,200,000
Trailheads with Parking, Restrooms, and Picnic Areas	\$750,000
Interpretive Nature Signage	\$30,000
Historical Markers and Signage	\$30,000
<i>Total Estimated Cost:</i>	\$3,010,000



Potential State Park in the Maple Hill Area

The State currently owns an undeveloped 941.48 acre parcel along the western border of the County near Maple Hill that would be suitable for development of a State Park and experimental forestry projects. The parcel features approximately ½ mile of frontage along NC Highway 50, and a network of former logging roads. The property was previously used for timber logging ventures, but has been undisturbed for several years. The property could host a variety of nature-based activities, and would fill the deficiency of a park in the Maple Hill area.

<i>Potential Facilities and Amenities</i>	<i>Estimated Cost</i>
Primitive, Semi-Primitive, and Group Camping Areas	\$100,000
Playground Equipment	\$50,000
Picnic Areas	\$50,000
Restroom Facilities	\$125,000
Hiking and Bicycle Trails	\$200,000
Education/Nature Facility	\$300,000
Total Estimated Cost:	\$650,000



Parks and Recreation Facility Funding Opportunities

Pender County General Fund

Traditionally, most of the annual operating budget for parks and recreation comes from the general fund of the Pender County Government, which is funded by the collection of County property taxes and other general fund revenues. The general fund pays primarily for the operating expenses of personnel, maintenance, utilities, etc., but may also be used to pay for acquisition and development costs.

Federal and State Grants & Assistance

To fund specific acquisition and development projects, the County is eligible for federal and state grants such as the Land and Water Conservation Trust Fund (LWCF), Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA) grants, and Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF). Federal and state grants generally require matching funds from the County.

Other sources may include the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant, the National Foundation of the Arts and Humanities' Expansion Arts Program, and the General Services Administration Property Management and Disposal Services, which conveys surplus federal real estate to local governments in some cases.

Several other state funding sources are also available, including the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries' Public Fishing Access Grants Program and the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission's Boating Access Program.

Federal and State Budget Appropriations

Special State and Federal legislative budget appropriations are also a potential source of parks and recreation funding.

Development Exactions

Local governments also may have programs or incentives for developers to contribute land, facilities, materials, or cash for providing parks and recreation capital programs to serve facility needs due to increased demand from growth and development.

Private Donations

Donations of land and capital are occasionally made to the County to assist in the development of parks and recreation facilities and open space. Also, various private foundations may be used as funding sources for park and recreation facility and program development. The restrictions and limitations of foundations and the types of projects they fund vary widely.

General Obligations Bonds and Other Financial Vehicles Authorized

The State of North Carolina authorizes local governments to borrow funds for capital projects through a variety of financing methods, including bonds. The issuance of bonds is contingent of voter approval, however other financing methods are available that do not require voter approval.

Summary

Pender County recognizes its deficiencies in parks and recreation facilities as the County changes from a traditional rural and agricultural community to a more suburban and urban one. During this transition, the County is observing trends including population increase and decreasing available land for parks and recreation facilities, both of which increase the burden on current parks and recreation facilities as well as increase the need for new facilities.

Parks and recreation facilities provide a number of economic, social, and health benefits to the residents of Pender County. Increased property values, attraction and establishment of new businesses, residents and tourists, increased quality of life factors, improved health, and environmental preservation are a just a few of the benefits provided by a well-planned and established parks and recreation system within the County.

The County Board of Commissioners is committed to making investments to develop new parks and recreation facilities and to enhance existing facilities for its citizens. This document is designed to set forth the need and justification for future parks and recreation facility development in Pender County, and to provide a basis for supporting partnerships and funding development necessary to implement a long range capital improvements plan for parks and recreation.