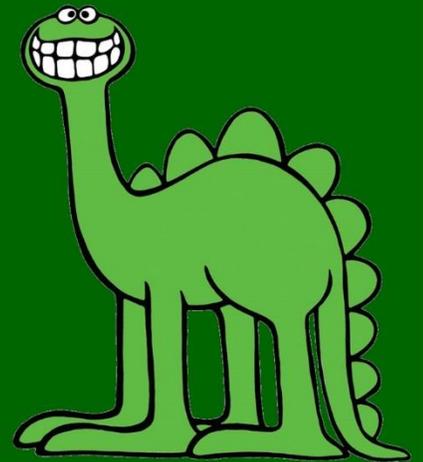




Broome County

# Parks Plan

2019



## Our Mission

Recognizing the vital role of recreation in the maintenance of physical, mental and social health, and its critical role in supporting area-wide financial health, Broome County Parks and Recreation strives to:

- Create public opportunities for leisure, both active and passive
- Promote both competitive and non-competitive recreational events
- Create and promote wellness activities
- Support events and attractions which promote area-wide tourism



Broome County Parks and Recreation

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# Acknowledgements

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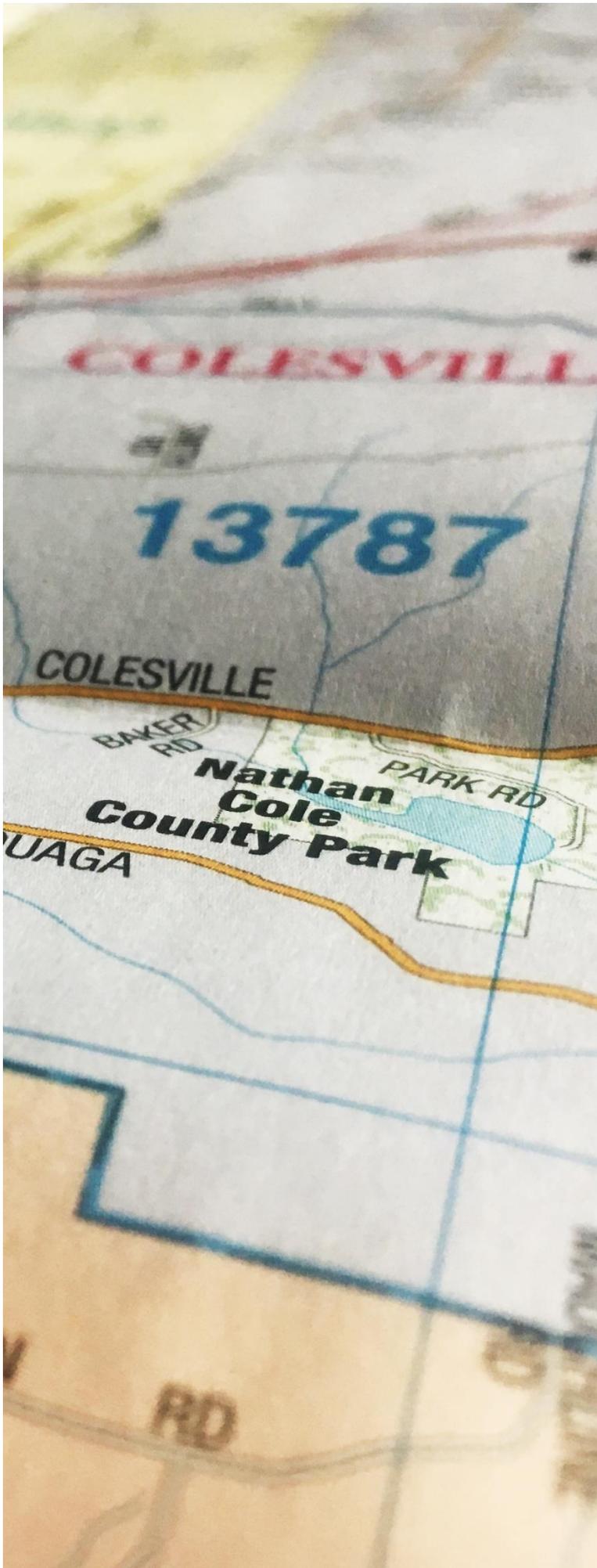
## Broome County DPW Engineering

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## **CONTENTS**

**1 WHY PARKS ARE IMPORTANT**

**2 YOU SPOKE. WE LISTENED.**

**3 WHERE WE ARE NOW**

**4 ADMINISTRATIVE ASSESSMENT**

**5 ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES**

**6 PEOPLE**

**7 RECREATIONAL TRENDS**

**8 RECOMMENDATIONS**

**9 APPENDICES**



*Play Area at Greenwood Park*

## Why Parks are Important

Broome County maintains over 1,800 acres of parks. These 8 parks attract 2 million visitors each year, and that number is growing. Attendance at county parks has increased by 22% since 2011. Our parks offer nature trails, sports fields, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, sledding, beaches, bocce ball, camping, playgrounds, canoeing, picnicking, concerts and events, swimming, fishing and even sailing. Why do we make such an investment in our parks? Because parks make Broome County an attractive place to live, work, and play.

## Parks Protect the Environment

Trees capture and store carbon. According to one urban ecosystem analysis, trees in Atlanta remove 19 million pounds of pollutants each year. Trees and parks reduce noise and counteract the heat that cities generate from asphalt, vehicles and building systems. Forests are a primary source of clean drinking water. New York City provides 1.1 billion gallons of fresh, clean drinking water by preserving 2,000 square miles of open space near three reservoirs in Upstate New York. Broome County's parks and open spaces help control storm water runoff and provide flood storage capacity. Trees, parks, and open spaces slow down the passage of rainwater to streams and rivers which reduces the volume and velocity of flood waters. Allowing storm water to spread out and sink in also filters out harmful pollutants before rainwater becomes drinking water. Parks are an important part of our storm water management efforts.

## Parks Promote Health and Wellness

The American Planning Association produced a briefing paper entitled, "How cities use parks to improve public health" which aggregated findings from many different sources. According to this report, access to outdoor recreational space increases physical activity levels and reduces obesity. Studies have shown that contact with nature lowers blood pressure and cholesterol, improves chances of surviving heart attacks and lowers stress. Children with attention deficit disorders and teens with behavioral disorders show significant improvements when they have regular contact with natural settings. And "green exercise" in a park is more beneficial than physical activity in other settings. Active park users are less likely to be overweight and are less likely to need to visit their doctor than other people. In an age of rising obesity, parks are an important part of our public health programming.

“

*I run through Otsiningo four times a week. So many people use this park for so many reasons and I love that. It brings much of the community together.*

*Public Survey Comment*



*Healthy Kids Running Series at Otsiningo Park*

## Parks Support Economic Development

Proximity to parks increase property values. Frederick Law Olmsted was one of the first to document the impact of parks on property values. To justify the \$13 million, he directed in the creation of New York's Central Park over 100 years ago, Olmsted tracked the value of adjacent properties. He found that over a decade and a half since its creation, there was a \$209 million increase in property values near Central Park. This positive impact from parks has been documented in many other places. One example: the value of condominiums adjacent to Atlanta's Centennial Olympic Park more than doubled after the park was built.

Parks attract tourists and visitors. More people visit Otsiningo Park than visit the National Aquarium in Baltimore's Inner Harbor (1.5 million vs 1.3 million annually). Parks also attract and retain affluent residents. Accounting giant KPMG did a survey of 1,200 workers in high tech industries, and those workers reported that quality of life in a community increases the attractiveness of a job by 33 percent. Nearby access to high-quality park and recreation amenities is important to 92% of Millennials when choosing a place to live (and important to 85% of Americans overall). At the other end of the age spectrum are the growing number of affluent, active, seniors deciding to remain in their community or relocate after retirement. One study of affluent retirees found that scenic beauty and recreational opportunities were the top two features that they considered when making decisions of where to spend their retirement years. Parks are a critical part of our economic development efforts.

# 85%

of Americans consider high quality parks as an important factor when they chose a new place to live

*2017 Americans' Engagement with Parks Survey; National Recreation and Park Association*



*Cross Country Skiing at Greenwood Park*

## Why Write a Parks Plan?

We know that parks are a treasured asset in our community. In an era of declining resources and changing interests, we need to carefully consider how we manage our parks. Developing the plan provides an opportunity to hear from various interest groups and evaluate the resources, needs, and challenges facing the parks system. The objectives of the Broome County Parks Plan include:



**Assess changing  
recreational needs of  
residents**



**Develop goals and  
strategies to enhance  
our recreational  
assets**



**Prioritize future  
investments**

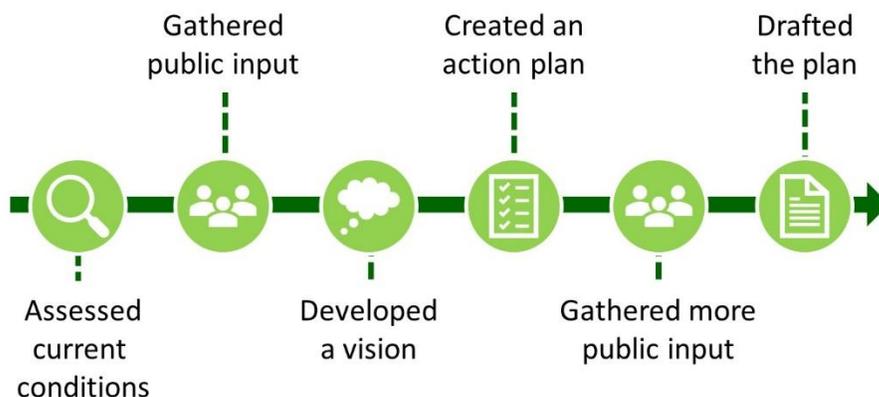


**Support future grant  
writing initiatives**

The county's demographics are changing. As this happens, the recreational needs of residents are changing, and the parks must adapt. In addition, the nature of recreation itself is changing, uses that would not have been prevalent 20 years ago such as kayak boat launches, and dog parks are now in high demand. As needs and demands change, we must prioritize investments made in the parks to ensure balancing current needs such as ongoing maintenance while making sure the parks are engaging to future generations.

## The Planning Process

The Broome County Parks Plan consisted of six steps:



## RELATED PLANS

The following documents were used to inform the parks planning process:

Binghamton Metropolitan  
Greenway Study

Broome County Local  
Waterfront Revitalization  
Plan

Broome County  
Comprehensive Plan

Broome County Parks  
Dept. Annual Reports

## Who is Writing the Parks Plan

To prepare the plan, the County created a steering committee consisting of:

**DIRECTOR OF PARKS & RECREATION** Elizabeth Woidt

**DIRECTOR OF PLANNING** Frank Evangelisti

**SENIOR PLANNER** Beth Lucas

**ENGINEER II** Brenda Gowe

**PLANNER** Stephanie Brewer



## You Spoke. We Listened.

Public engagement is a fundamental part of any planning process. Information gathered from the community identified what people like about Broome County Parks and what can be improved in the future. Broome County solicited input from the public through an online survey and multiple public workshops. The public's thoughts and ideas were used to determine the goals and strategies for the Parks and Recreation Department.

## Our Vision

Broome County Parks should enable all residents, regardless of age or ability, to live an active lifestyle. Our parks need to provide a full spectrum of recreation from highly developed, event-oriented parks to serene, remote, wilderness areas. Our parks must be maintained to a high standard and take full advantage of the beauty and recreational opportunities of the land and the rivers. We should encourage physical activity by making our residents aware of the many recreational opportunities available and providing interesting programs and engaging amenities.

”

*We are an aging  
population, please  
don't forget the  
handicapped*

*Public Survey Comment*



*Broome County Office for Aging at Dorchester Park*

## How We Engaged the Public

A plan is only as good as its the community input. Fully engaging the public means the plan will be will well-informed by the true experts: the community. Public engagement also generates interest in the plan and may spur people and groups to partner with the County to achieve the goals of the plan.

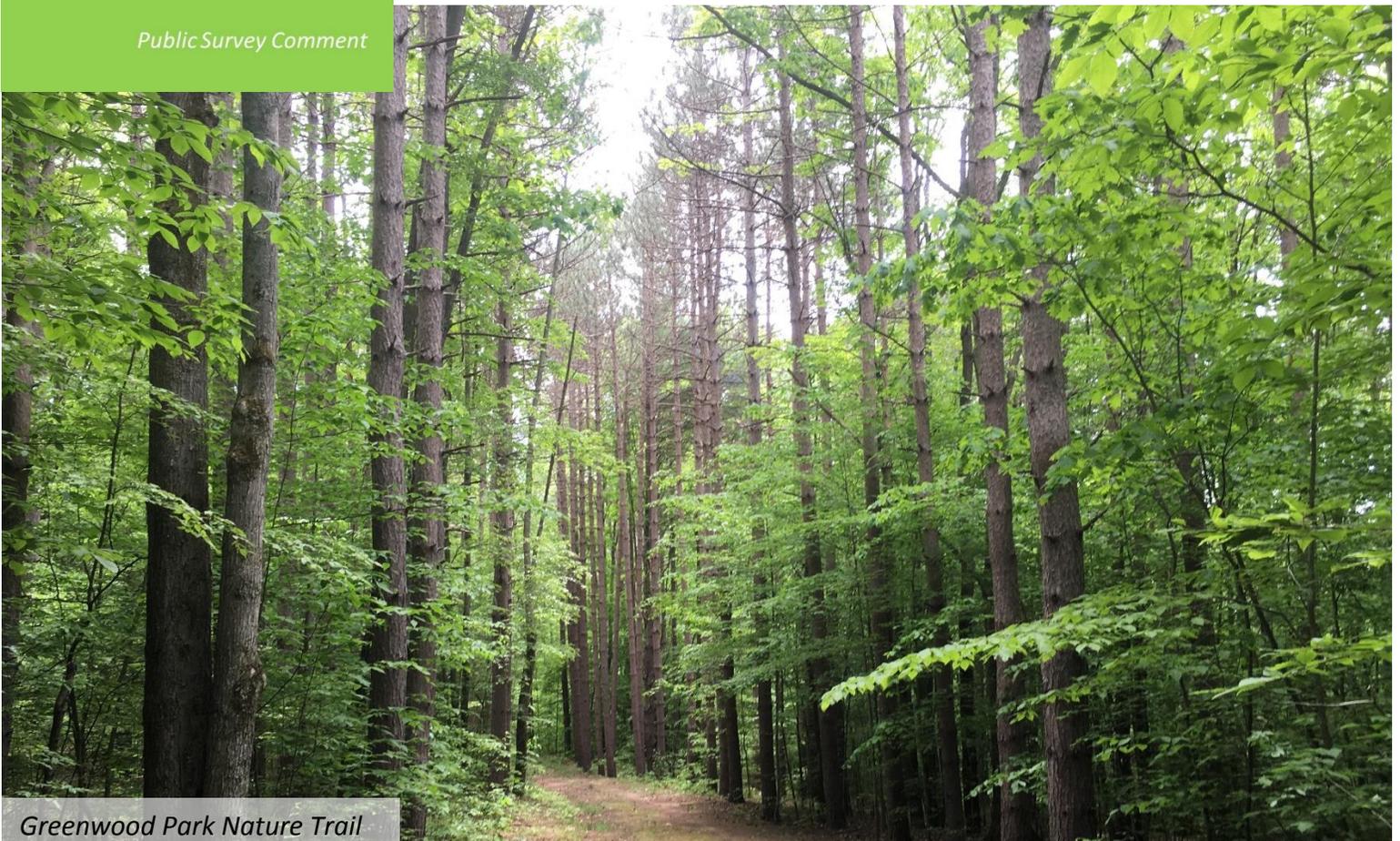
The primary method of collecting public input for the Parks Plan was the online survey conducted in the Summer of 2017. A total of 891 residents completed the survey and 300 respondents shared comments and suggestions. Broome County Planning held three open house workshops in the Fall of 2017 to identify features that would improve the experiences of park visitors. Finally, the Broome County Environmental Management Council (EMC) held a public meeting for residents and groups representing a variety of recreational interests.

Talking to the users of our parks gave us insight into how the parks meet their needs, and where the parks fall short. Through this process, we learned about changing recreational interests and got an honest assessment of the parks' condition.

“

*People who come to or drive through Broome County always comment on 'how green it is' and the beauty of the tree covered hills. We have a responsibility to protect this natural amenity and help preserve the beauty of our area*

*Public Survey Comment*



*Greenwood Park Nature Trail*

## What We Learned

From all this engagement, we learned that there is some disconnect between the activities that residents are most interested in and what activities are available at Broome County parks. One thing we do well is accommodate hiking, walking, and running. The number one recreational interest of the community is hiking, walking, and running. This is also the number one activity that people do in the parks.

After hiking, however, people are most interested in nature observation and boating/paddling and these two interests are not in the top three list of activities that people do in our parks. Nature observation was barely nudged out of the top three activities. This tells us that we may want to better promote the nature observation activities at our parks. People may just not think of Broome County parks as a place to observe nature.

The two parks with the best opportunity for a passive activity like birdwatching or observing nature, Aqua-Terra and Hawkins Pond, have the lowest visitor numbers. Almost 90% of survey respondents do not visit Hawkins Pond even once per year. For Aqua-Terra, the number was almost 79%. By contrast, only 12% of survey respondents never visit our most popular park: Otsiningo.

Boating and padding was the third highest recreational interest, but it is well down in the list of activities that people participate in at our parks. When asked about barriers preventing residents from using the river for recreational purposes, the second highest response was a feeling that “river access is limited/unavailable”. Alarmingly, the number one barrier to recreational river use is a concern over the “pollution/debris levels of the river.” The County should consider improving recreational access to the rivers, and concerns about pollution/debris levels should be investigated.



*The rivers are the county's greatest natural recreation assets*

*Public Survey Comment*



Three out of four survey respondents traveled outside of Broome County to another park facility. Of these, 10% left because they did not find the facilities that they wanted here. Similarly, when we asked what prevents or discourages you from using Broome County parks more often, the second highest response (after I do not have enough time) was “the recreational program/facility I am interested in is not offered at county parks.” When we asked people to get specific on what new amenities they wanted, the top three responses were a Fitness Track, Off-Leash Dog Park, and Bicycle Rental. For riverfront parks, residents wanted us to add more greenway trails, scenic overlooks, and boat launches/access sites. As we look to improve our parks, we should consider adding these amenities.

We also wanted to find out how people would budget the Parks funds if given the chance. This is an important question because it forces residents to be pragmatic about limited resources and gives us real insight into their priorities. The top priority of residents was to maintain existing infrastructure/facilities, and we need to not lose sight of this. After maintain facilities, residents want us to develop new trails and add new amenities. These survey results were corroborated by participants at the three open houses and the Environmental Management Council workshop.

We also focused on Aqua-Terra Wilderness Area and how people wanted that park treated in this plan. Aqua-Terra was originally a popular ski lodge which was acquired by the County in the 1980’s. Today, Aqua-Terra is an undeveloped park and is often used for passive recreation. Residents were given a wide range of choices for park enhancements and the top choices, picnic tables, portable restrooms, and a scenic outlook deck, represent a minimally invasive approach that should be respected.

Residents favor a more natural aesthetic for landscaping, pavilions, trails, and signage as demonstrated by the results of the visual preference survey that we conducted at the public workshops. This should be used to inform design designs at county parks.

As we look at upgrades, one thing to keep in mind is that the number one priority of residents for the County parks budget was to maintain and upgrade existing facilities. This was ahead of popular choices such as develop new trails, add new amenities, and river access improvements.

“

*The parks are a huge asset in this community and we can't let them fall into disrepair due to lack of on-going maintenance*

*Public Survey Comment*

## Public Survey

The first method utilized to collect public input for the Parks Plan was the online survey conducted in the Summer of 2017. To encourage participation, thousands of postcards were mailed to randomly selected households, and social media/press releases were made inviting the public to take the survey. As a result of these efforts, 891 participants provided feedback. More than 300 respondents provided comments/suggestions for the plan. The full results of the survey are included in the Appendix.

**Park Benefits** Parks and recreation are invaluable assets to communities of all sizes. Broome County parks are free and open to the public, ensuring all residents and visitors have a chance to enjoy their benefits. The top benefits of Broome County parks are:



**28%**  
Promotes  
Health & Wellness



**23%**  
Provides  
Gathering Places



**17%**  
Protects  
Environmental  
Resources

”  
*It provides a fun place for our family to go to for a "day" vacation when we do not have time or money for a longer or further away vacation*

*Public Survey Comment*

**What People Do at BC Parks** Dozens of recreational activities are available to local park users. What activities people choose to do largely depends on which stage of life they are in. According to the survey when visiting a county park, respondents are most likely to be:



**26%**  
Hiking/Walking/  
Running



**10%**  
Family/Group  
Activities



**10%**  
Picnicking



*Outdoor physical activity for older adults. I've seen online parks in other places with stationary biking equipment and other things so seniors can exercise at the park*

*Public Survey Comment*

**Favorite Recreation Interests** Parks users have diverse interests, which may or may not be offered at the county parks. Results show many respondents are generally interested in passive recreation activities such as:



**25%**  
Hiking/Walking/  
Running



**13%**  
Nature Observation



**10%**  
Boating/ Paddling

**BC Parks Events & Activities** Dozens of events and activities are hosted in the county parks each year. Most people are aware of these events and activities, but the majority did not attend. This suggests the public may not be interested in the events/activities offered or they do not have time. The most highly attended events/activities include:



**44%**  
Spiedie Fest



**27%**  
Rented a Boat



**20%**  
Community 5k  
Run/Walk

**New Amenity Preferences** Each Broome County park offers a variety of unique activities for users. However, if new amenities were added to county parks in the future, respondents said the following would improve their experience:



**10%**  
Fitness Track



**9%**  
Off-Leash  
Dog Park



**9%**  
Bicycle Rental

**Riverfront Improvements** Three county parks are located along the Susquehanna and Chenango Rivers. These riverfront parks are an important resource, but their role in recreation is not obvious to some users. Respondents feel the following park improvements will improve access and visibility of the river:



**19%**  
Greenway Trails



**19%**  
Scenic Overlook



**15%**  
Boat Launch Sites

**Riverfront Barriers** Although some Broome County parks are located on the river, often they are underutilized for riverfront activities such as, boating and fishing. The following were identified as barriers to using the rivers for recreational purposes:



**20%**  
Concerns About  
Pollution/Debris



**19%**  
Limited Access



**16%**  
No Boat & Don't  
Know Where to  
Get One

**Facilities/Services** The condition of park facilities and services affects visitation numbers and use of facilities. The lowest rated facility was the condition of the bathrooms/changing areas. The top-rated attributes of Broome County parks include:



**81%**  
Park Cleanliness



**78%**  
Condition of Trails



**64%**  
Condition of  
Playground Areas

“  
*I have lived in two other states and several other counties and as far as I'm concerned Broome County Parks are the most cared for and cared about. Cheers to the Parks Dept.*  
Public Survey Comment

**Park Visitation** There are eight county-owned parks in Broome County that welcome about 2 million visitors annually. The County’s undeveloped parks, Aqua Terra and Hawkins Pond, were the least visited. Respondents indicate the parks they visit most often are:



Otsiningo Park



Dorchester Park



Nathaniel Cole Park

**Park Use**

Patterns of park use often varies throughout the year. Low visitation in the morning and on weekdays suggests the parks may be underutilized at these times. Throughout the week, most Broome County park users visit the at the following times:



29%  
Saturday



25%  
Sunday



45%  
12 PM to 4 PM



*I think my family would use them even more often if there were more nature programs and activities available*

Public Survey Comment

**Park Use Barriers** Numerous respondents did not visit a county park last year. While many indicate there were no reasons that prevented them from using our parks, others stated the following prevented them from visiting:



26%  
Time Constraints



10%  
Limited Programs & Facilities



8%  
Inconveniently Located

**Traveling Outside of Broome** About three quarters of respondents traveled outside of the county to a park/recreational facility. While some reasons are outside the purview of the Parks Department, more can be done to encourage residents to play in Broome. The top cited reasons for traveling outside the county include:



**27%**  
Wanted to Take  
a Day Trip



**27%**  
Unique Natural  
Settings



**23%**  
Out of Town for  
Another Reason

**Spending Priorities** Broome County continually works to maintain and improve its parks. The Parks budget relies heavily on tax dollars, and its share has declined over the years. While there is strong support to improve the parks system, resources are limited. Residents feel the parks top spending priorities should be:



**Maintain & Upgrade  
Existing Facilities**



**Develop New  
Trails**



**Add New Amenities**

**Park Investments** Funds are disbursed among each of our parks based on the resources and level of service they require. When given a budget to allocate between the county parks, the top three parks respondents would allocate money between are:



Otsiningo Park



Dorchester Park



Greenwood Park

**Aqua-Terra** Aqua-Terra was formerly a local ski lodge, and is now a county Park used primarily for passive recreation. Overall, respondents want minimal development here. There are opportunities to add new features that will enhance user experience. If new features were added to Aqua Terra, most respondents would favor:



79%  
Picnic Tables



77%  
Portable  
Restrooms



75%  
Scenic Lookout  
Deck

**Volunteers** Individuals and group volunteers help make Broome County parks great places. About 1/3 of respondents said they are interested in volunteering at our parks. Typically, they would like to participate in:



**23%**  
Park Beautification



**20%**  
Trail Maintenance



**20%**  
Group Volunteer  
Projects

**Communications** It is important to share information with the public and engage the community with news about our parks. Residents feel the following forms of communication would be the most effective:



**24%**  
Social Media



**21%**  
Email



**17%**  
County Website



*Binghamton University Volunteers at Otsiningo Park*

## Open House

Broome County held three open house workshops in the Fall of 2017. The purpose of these workshops was to identify features that would improve park users' experiences. Approximately 80 people provided input in a visual preference survey, identified activities and programs they want at county parks, and allocated \$500 to various parks/recreation activities. All participants had an opportunity to write additional comments for the plan.

### VISUAL PREFERENCE SURVEY

A visual preference survey is a public engagement tool that gathers feedback based on various types of community design elements by allowing participants to select photos of features they favor.



## Landscaping

Broome County parks possess a range of landscape types. Our highly developed parks require more maintenance and care, whereas our natural areas are largely unmaintained. When asked about landscaping styles, participants mostly prefer semi-landscaped areas, with numerous trees.



### Pavilions

Park pavilions are one of the most widely utilized features of our parks as they offer opportunities for social gatherings and events. In total, our parks include 17 pavilions. In the future, older structures will need to be replaced, or there may be a demand to build new pavilions. When shown four different styles, participants largely favored rustic style pavilions that use a mix of stone and wood materials.



## Trails

Recreational trails are a fundamental element of our parks and recreation system. Broome County parks contain over 20 miles of walking/hiking trails. Being one of the most popular activities among park users, there is considerable interest in developing new trails and on-going projects to expand existing trail systems. Results show many participants prefer gravel paths with natural settings, similar to what you may find at the IBM Glen.



## Signage

Signage is an important element of park facilities. Signs establish a sense of identity, convey information, and provide direction. While most park users feel our signage is adequate, there will be a need to update signs in the future. When shown four options of entry signs, most participants prefer the style of Otsiningo's current sign, which includes a mix of stone and wood materials.



### Tables

Picnic tables are a valued feature of our parks. These provide space for social gatherings and areas for park users to sit and relax. Our existing picnic tables are rectangular with bench-style seating. If new tables are needed in the future, participants would most like to see circular picnic tables made from wood materials.



## PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

Participatory budgeting exercises allows the public to provide direct input on what they think spending priorities should be



### Budget

Workshop participants were given fictional “Hartley Dollars” to allocate in areas where they feel future investment should be focused. Overall, participants feel funds should be used to improve upon our existing assets. Based on the totals, maintain/upgrade conditions of existing facilities was the most important priority, followed by develop new trails, river access improvements, and adding new amenities at existing parks. These results are similar to how people allocated money in the public survey.



## Programs & Activities

Special programs and activities encourage residents to utilize parks and increase social interaction among users. Both private and county-sponsored programs provide a range of activities for all types of park users throughout the year. In 2017, there were over 40 different events that took place in our county parks. In the future, people would like to see: more large community events/festivals, riverfront activities, and guided wildlife tours at the parks.



## WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Broome County EMC  
Disc Golf  
BMX/Mountain Bikers  
Cyclists  
Hikers & Runners  
Paddlers/Kayakers  
Educators

### Public Workshops

In January 2018, Broome County hosted a public meeting with the Environmental Management Council (EMC). About 30 people attended the workshop representing a variety of recreational interests.

During this workshop, groups were asked to list individual assets, threats, and opportunities related to Broome County parks. From the multitude of responses, various themes emerged. There was some overlap of topics among the different themes, as what one person perceives as an asset another might view as a weakness. The purpose of this exercise was to understand what different park users value, along with assessing needs and gaps to help determine where future efforts should be focused. The Appendix includes a full list of responses.



### Assets

Broome County parks are highly valued by the community. Groups were asked to identify assets, special features, programs, facilities, etc. that our parks currently provide. Nine themes arose from over 90 identified assets/strengths. The most frequent responses related to Water Interests, Convenience, and Facilities & Appearance themes.

### ASSETS

- Water Interests
- Convenience
- Facilities & Appearance
- Culture & Environment
- Run, Hike, Bike
- Programs & Activities
- Appeals to Diversity of Users
- Winter Interests
- Age-Friendly

### Threats

While our parks provide numerous benefits to the area, there are some characteristics that may place them at a disadvantage compared to other areas. Six major themes arose from over 70 topics groups perceive as a threat or weakness. The most cited themes included Improving Existing Facilities, Maintenance, and Rules & Regulations.

### THREATS

- Improve Existing Facilities
- Maintenance
- Rules & Regulations
- Administrative
- Needs New Ideas
- Improper Usage

### Opportunities

It is important for the Parks Department to actively take advantage of opportunities that will aid in achieving larger goals and providing better service to its users. Eight categories containing over 80 ideas were collected from the groups. The most common themes cited were Trails & Connections, New Facilities, and New Amenities.

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Trails & Connectors
- New Facilities
- New Amenities
- New Programs & Activities
- Water Recreation
- Long-Term Department Goals
- Green Infrastructure & Solar
- Events



*Greenwood Park Lake*

## Where We Are Now

Broome County parks are part of a larger network of parks and public spaces. While each facility may serve a specific recreation demand, the entire system (including county and non-county owned parks) serves the collective needs of the community. Including the 8 county parks, there are 125 publicly-owned parks and recreation areas covering 19,402 acres, representing about 4% of the land area. The following classification system was adapted from other county parks plans and is used to establish the variety of existing park types, and help identify potential gaps in our public park system.

**LOCAL PARKS** are less than 100 acres and range in size from small pocket parks to mid-sized community parks that include a variety of active and passive amenities, serving one or more neighborhoods within a ½ mile. These parks are generally owned and maintained by local municipalities and are often used as gathering spaces for the community. Examples of local parks include Recreation Park in the city of Binghamton and Highland Park in the town of Union.

**REGIONAL RECREATION PARKS** are large multi-use parks that serve multiple communities and visitors. They provide both active and passive recreation opportunities and a range of facilities for all age groups. In Broome County, these parks are typically owned by county or state agencies. Some regional recreation parks include Otsiningo Park and Chenango Valley State Park.

**OPEN LANDS** are typically small areas, usually containing undeveloped land that have few passive amenities. Finch Hollow Nature Center is an example of open lands.

**NATURE AREAS** include areas larger than 100 acres and have environmental significance. Similar to open lands, nature areas often have few or no amenities. Popular nature areas in the county include the Binghamton University Nature Preserve and Jones Park in the town of Vestal.

## OTHER RECREATION LANDS

There are other types of recreational lands that contribute to the county’s open space network, but were not included in this plan’s analysis

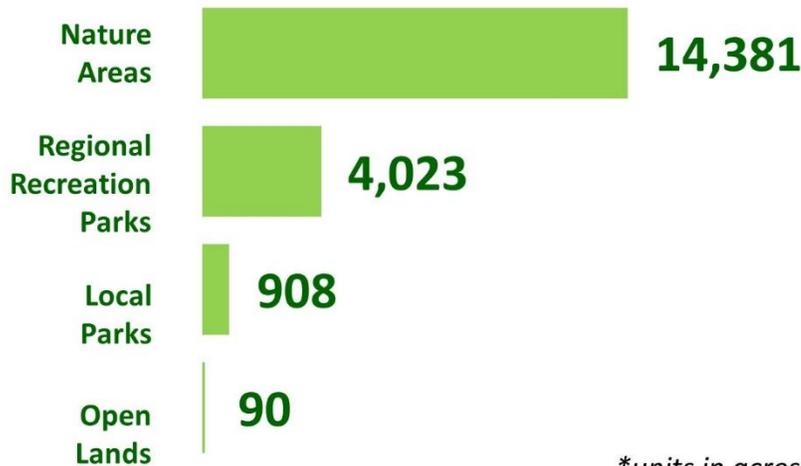
PRIVATE OPEN SPACE

**3,775 acres**

EDUCATIONAL OPEN SPACE

**790 acres**

## PUBLIC OPEN SPACE BY THE NUMBERS



*\*units in acres*

## Local Parks

Local parks are well-distributed throughout the urban core, but gaps exist in the northern and eastern parts of the county. These parks range in size from less than one acre to 86 acres and typically contain a range of recreational facilities and amenities.

- |    |                                |    |                             |
|----|--------------------------------|----|-----------------------------|
| 1  | 17C Sports Complex             | 47 | Julius Rogers Park          |
| 2  | ACA Memorial Park              | 48 | Kennedy Park                |
| 3  | African Road Park              | 49 | Klumpp Park                 |
| 4  | Alfred Street Park             | 50 | MacArthur Park              |
| 5  | Argonne Neighborhood Park      | 51 | Maine Town Park             |
| 6  | Arnold Park                    | 52 | Marie Lynch Memorial Park   |
| 7  | Baker Street Playground        | 53 | Mersereau Park              |
| 8  | Barlow Park                    | 54 | Middendorf Park             |
| 9  | BAGSAI*                        | 55 | Northside Park              |
| 10 | Boland Park (JC)               | 56 | Otsiningo North             |
| 11 | Boland Park (Binghamton)       | 57 | Phelps Park                 |
| 12 | Booth Field/Kent Playground    | 58 | Port Crane Civic Fields     |
| 13 | Boswell Hill Park              | 59 | Recreation Park             |
| 14 | Broad Acres Park               | 60 | Richards Ave Park           |
| 15 | Brown Park                     | 61 | Ross Park                   |
| 16 | C Fred Johnson Park (CFJ Park) | 62 | Sandy Beach Park            |
| 17 | Castle Creek Park              | 63 | Schnurbusch Park            |
| 18 | Castle Gardens Park            | 64 | South Side Veteran's Park   |
| 19 | Chenango Bridge Park           | 65 | Stair Park                  |
| 20 | Chenango River Promenade       | 66 | Stratford Park              |
| 21 | Cheri Lindsey Park             | 67 | Struble Road Sports Complex |
| 22 | Choconut Center Park           | 68 | Sullivan Park               |
| 23 | Clyde S. Woodward Park         | 69 | Sunflower Park              |
| 24 | Columbus Park                  | 70 | Taft Heights Park           |
| 25 | Commercial Alley               | 71 | Twin Orchards Park          |
| 26 | Confluence Park                | 72 | Tyler Park                  |
| 27 | Conklin Forks Park             | 73 | Union Park                  |
| 28 | David Avenue Park              | 74 | Valley Park                 |
| 29 | Deposit Fireman's Park         | 75 | Valley Street Park          |
| 30 | EJ Theme Park                  | 76 | Vestal Center Park          |
| 31 | Ethel Place Park               | 77 | Vestal Little League Fields |
| 32 | Fairview Park                  | 78 | Vestal Memorial Park        |
| 33 | First Ward Park                | 79 | Vestal Memorial Pool        |
| 34 | Floral Avenue Park             | 80 | Vestal Multi-Use Field      |
| 35 | G. W. Johnson Park             | 81 | Veterans Field              |
| 36 | Glendale Park                  | 82 | Veterans Park Gazebo        |
| 37 | Grange Hall Park               | 83 | Veterans River Park         |
| 38 | Harmony Park                   | 84 | Virginia Ave Park           |
| 39 | Harold Moore Park              | 85 | Wallenburg Park             |
| 40 | Hider Park                     | 86 | Walnut Street Park          |
| 41 | Highland Park                  | 87 | Wayne Ave Field             |
| 42 | Hillcrest Park                 | 88 | Webster Street Park         |
| 43 | Howard Avenue Park             | 89 | West End Park               |
| 44 | Jackson Park                   | 90 | West Endicott Park          |
| 45 | Jeanne and John D Wifley Park  | 91 | William Hill Park           |
| 46 | Jennison Park                  |    |                             |

\*County-owned facility

## Regional Recreation Parks

Ten regional recreation parks are located throughout the county, typically surrounding rivers, lakes, or other water bodies. Broome County's regional recreation parks are large areas, ranging in size from 18 acres to over 1,100 acres. They have basic recreational facilities and amenities, but also accommodate a wide range of activities such as boat rentals, camping, and cross-country skiing. While most of these lands are managed for recreational purposes, two of the county parks are preserved as natural areas offering opportunities for sightseeing, hiking, nature observation, and other passive recreation activities.

- |    |                             |     |                            |
|----|-----------------------------|-----|----------------------------|
| 92 | Aqua Terra Wilderness Area* | 97  | Hawkins Pond Natural Area* |
| 93 | Chenango Valley State Park  | 98  | Nathaniel Cole Park*       |
| 94 | Dorchester Park*            | 99  | Oquaga Creek State Park    |
| 95 | Greenwood Park*             | 100 | Otsiningo Park*            |
| 96 | Grippen Park*               | 101 | Roundtop Park*             |

\* More information about Broome County Parks is included in the following section

## Open Lands

There are six open lands areas covering approximately 90 acres, primarily located in the central and western parts of Broome County. These areas are designated as parks and are typically maintained by the municipalities, but have few or no built amenities or facilities for public use. The primary differences between open lands and nature areas are their size, amount of development, and ecological diversity.

- |     |                     |     |                             |
|-----|---------------------|-----|-----------------------------|
| 102 | Finch Hollow*       | 105 | Riverview Park              |
| 103 | Fuller Hollow Park  | 106 | South Mountain Natural Area |
| 104 | Magnolia Drive Park | 107 | Town of Maine Natural Area  |

\*County-owned facility

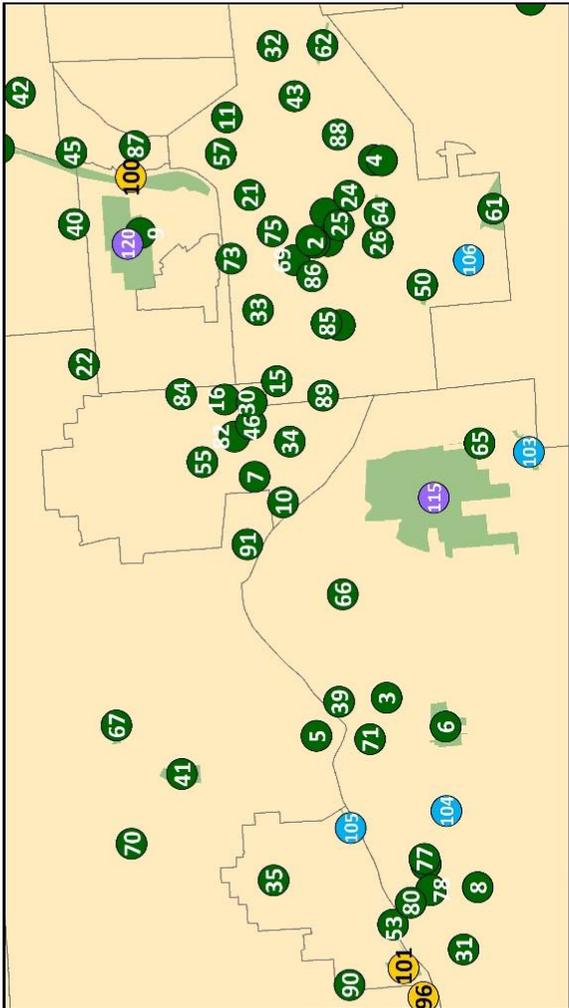
## Nature Areas

Eighteen nature areas are scattered throughout the county, totaling 14,381 acres. Mostly, nature areas are designated conservation lands that allow for low-impact, passive recreation activities. These areas are important because they provide a unique aesthetic and contribute to the diversity of our park system. Many of the county's nature areas are NYSDEC State Forests and are open to the public for recreational purposes such as hunting and trapping. Timber management is practiced in some of the state forests. Typical nature area facilities may include nature trails, benches, and informational kiosks.

- |     |                               |     |                                   |
|-----|-------------------------------|-----|-----------------------------------|
| 108 | Beaver Dam State Forest       | 117 | Melondy Hill State Forest (South) |
| 109 | Beaver Flow State Forest      | 118 | Nanticoke Lake Mult. Use Area     |
| 110 | Beaver Pond State Forest      | 119 | Skyline Drive State Forest        |
| 111 | Binghamton U. Nature Preserve | 120 | SUNY Broome Nature Area           |
| 112 | Cascade Valley State Forest   | 121 | Tracy Creek State Forest          |
| 113 | Cat Hollow State Forest       | 122 | Triangle State Forest             |
| 114 | Hawkins Pond State Forest     | 123 | Whitaker Swamp State Forest       |
| 115 | Jones Park*                   | 124 | Whitney Point Mult. Use Area      |
| 116 | Marsh Pond State Forest       | 125 | Wolfe Park*                       |

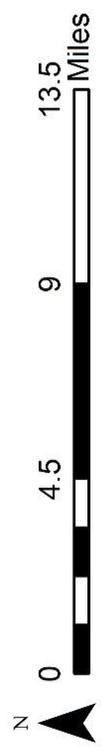
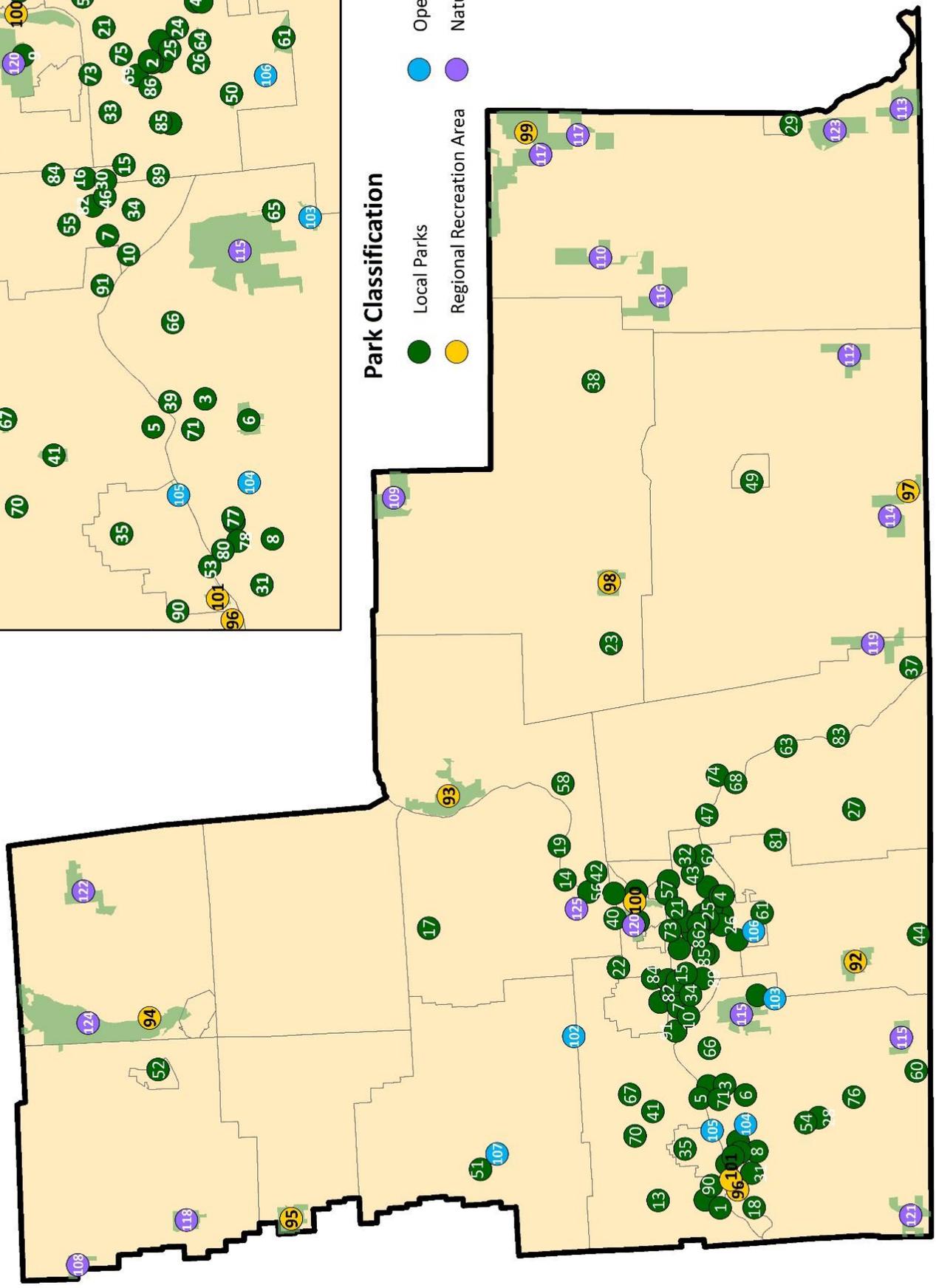
*\*Natures areas that are designated municipal parks*

# Park Types



# Park Classification

- Local Parks
- Regional Recreation Area
- Open Space
- Natural Area



## Broome County Parks Inventory

Our parks provide diverse, year-round recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. The County maintains eight parks and recreation facilities totaling 1,847 acres which are all free and open to the public. Our parks offer unique activities that can improve mental and physical health, and overall enhance our quality of life. An inventory of the county parks is included in the Appendix.



**10**

Play Areas



**21**

Trail Miles



**200**

Picnic Areas



**7**

XC Ski Areas



**7**

Fishing Areas



**5**

Volleyball Courts



**4**

Boating Locations



**8**

Athletic Fields



**3**

Swimming Areas



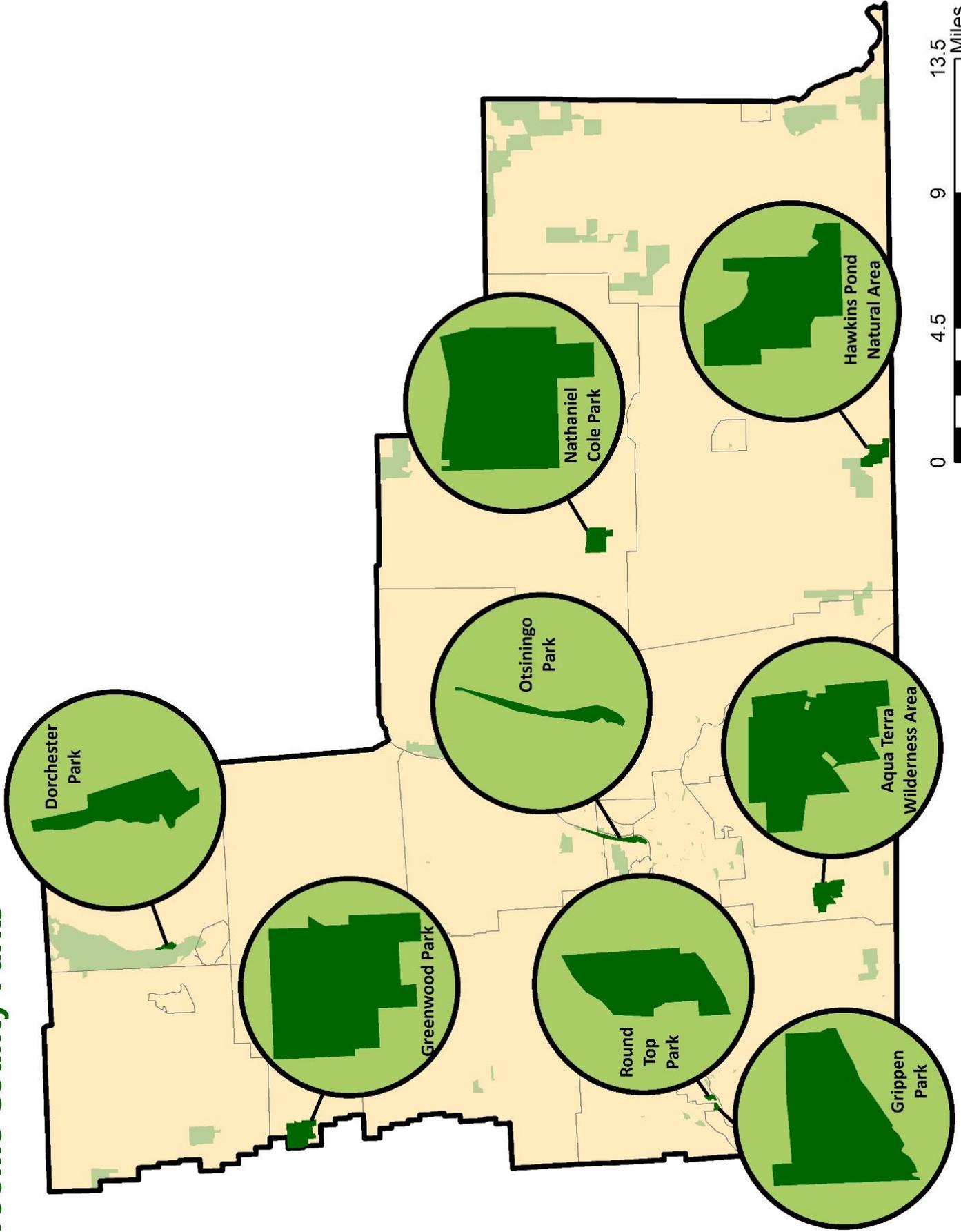
**1**

Campground

### Our Facilities

Broome County DPW Engineering Division conducted a facility condition assessment of county-owned parks, with respect to structures and grounds. This inventory will be used to prioritize future capital investments and it will serve as a benchmark to evaluate their condition over time; specific actions are included in the Recommendations chapter. In addition, Broome County performed a self-evaluation of the park's accessibility. Preliminary findings are included in this plan, but more data is needed to develop a complete ADA Transition Plan for the County.

# Broome County Parks



## Aqua Terra Wilderness Area

Aqua Terra is an undeveloped park in the town of Binghamton, located on Maxian Road near the town's border with Vestal. The park was formerly the Innsbruck USA ski resort and the Aqua Terra Sports Club. In the 1980s, Broome County acquired the property to remain as a park. In terms of area, Aqua Terra is the largest county-owned park, covering 459 acres. Today the park is primarily used for passive recreation activities including hiking, cross-country-skiing, dog walking, and nature observation

### Park Facilities Assessment

There are no paved surfaces or facilities within Aqua Terra. A 1,000-foot reclaimed asphalt pavement access road leads to Aqua Terra's parking area; these surfaces are in good condition.



**Location:** Town of Binghamton



**Attendance:** Not Available



**Size:** 459 acres



**Trails:** 3 miles, unpaved



**Amenities:** Parking



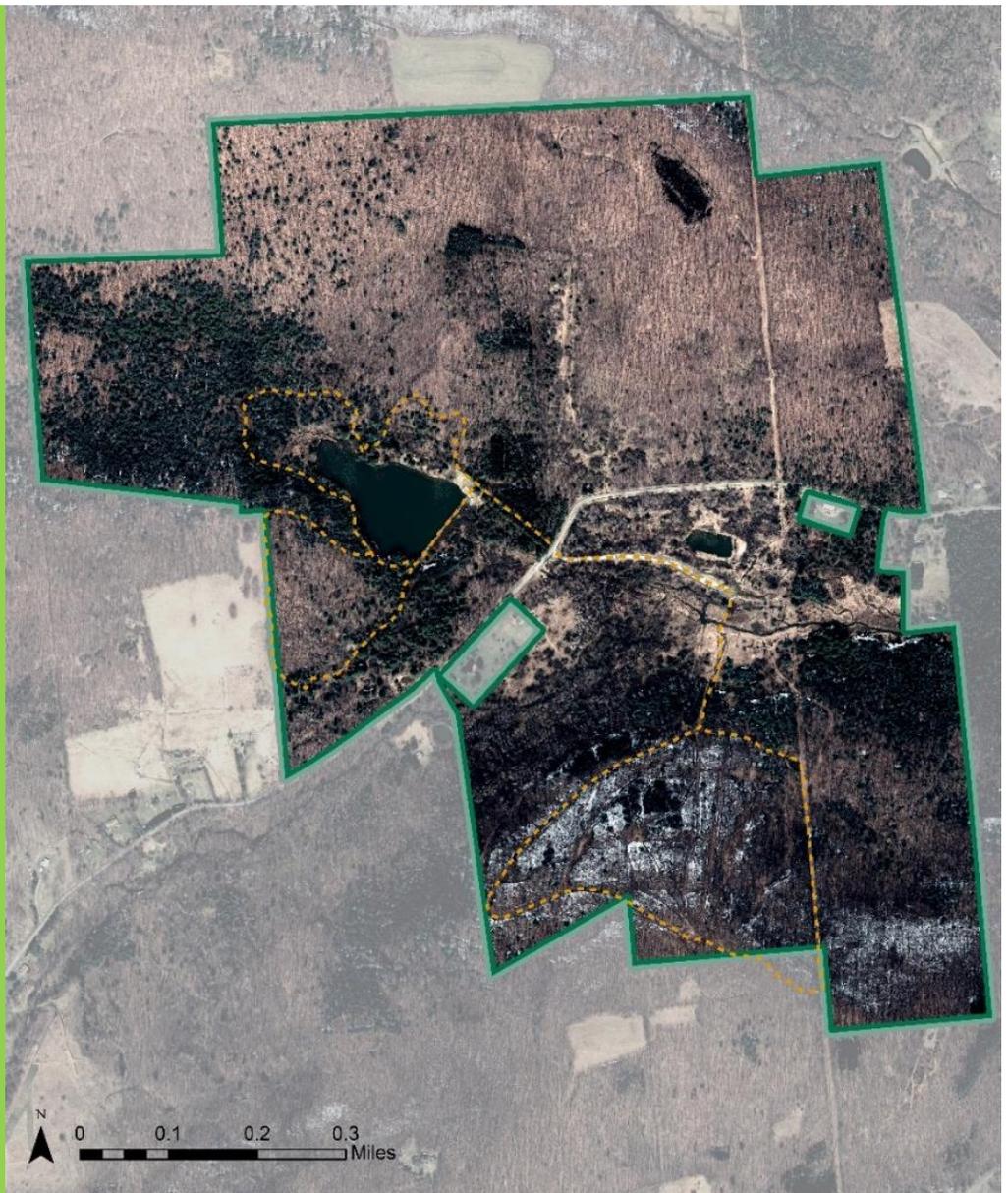
**Activities:** Hiking, fishing, nature observation



**Notable Features:** 6-acre pond, steep slopes



**Issues:** No bathrooms





*Aqua Terra Pond*

## Dorchester Park

Dorchester Park, located in the town of Triangle, is a multi-use park consisting of 53 acres. The park is located on a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers flood control project, the Whitney Point Reservoir Dam and the Whitney Point Multiple Use Area; Broome County leases the parkland, agreeing to operate and maintain the grounds, roads, and facilities. Within the park, there is a NYSDEC-owned hard-surface boat ramp that provides access to the reservoir; this is one of two county parks where users can bring their own boat. Beginning at the park's southern border is a 2-mile multi-use trail that connects Dorchester to the Village of Whitney Point. Popular recreation events such as the Almost Annual Crappie Derby and the Broome County Triathlon take place at this park. In addition, part of the park is open to youth groups for camping throughout the summer.



**Location:** Town of Triangle



**Attendance:** 118,603



**Size:** 53 acres



**Trails:** 2 miles, paved



**Amenities:** Parking, rest-rooms, benches, picnic shelters



**Activities:** Hiking, fishing, xc skiing, snowshoeing, swimming, boating, playground, biking



**Notable Features:** 1,200-acre lake, beach, boat ramp



**Issues:** Flooding, aging playground facilities



### Park Facilities Inventory

Most of Dorchester's buildings and grounds were rated good to fair condition. The 750-foot entrance road into the park is in poor condition due to loss of pavement in some areas and major cracking. Other roads throughout the park are in better condition with only minor cracking. The parking areas are in good to fair condition with some minor cracking. The condition of the park's bridges and culverts varies from good to fair condition. Broome County recently received a federal grant for the Dorchester Park Gateway Project which will repair the vehicular bridge over Page Brook, make improvements to the entrance road, and install new sidewalks. Restrooms, picnic shelters, and other structures within the park are in good to fair condition. However, the bathrooms on the south end of the park experience septic issues.

### Physical Accessibility Assessment

Dorchester's site assessment focused primarily on the south end of the park and included three parking lots and five segments of walking paths in the park. The parking areas are not ADA compliant because accessible spaces are not signed properly. The trails/pathways measured in the south end of the park comply with the ADA slope requirements.



Dorchester Park  
Photo: Kageepan Kandasmany

## Greenwood Park

Greenwood Park is a 439-acre park, located on the county's western border in the town of Nanticoke. Established in 1961, Greenwood Park is the oldest and most developed county-owned park. The 6.5-mile trail system guides users around the lake and through the wooded areas of the park. In the winter, hiking trails are groomed for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing; rentals are available for a small fee. The park's campground is one of the county's most popular campsites for residents and tourists. Additionally, the park is a popular location for family reunions throughout the summer. The 25-acre Greenwood Lake provides swimming, boating, and fishing opportunities.



**Location:** Town of Nanticoke



**Attendance:** 130,550



**Size:** 439 acres



**Trails:** 6.5 miles, unpaved



**Amenities:** Parking, rest-rooms, benches, picnic shelters, concession stand



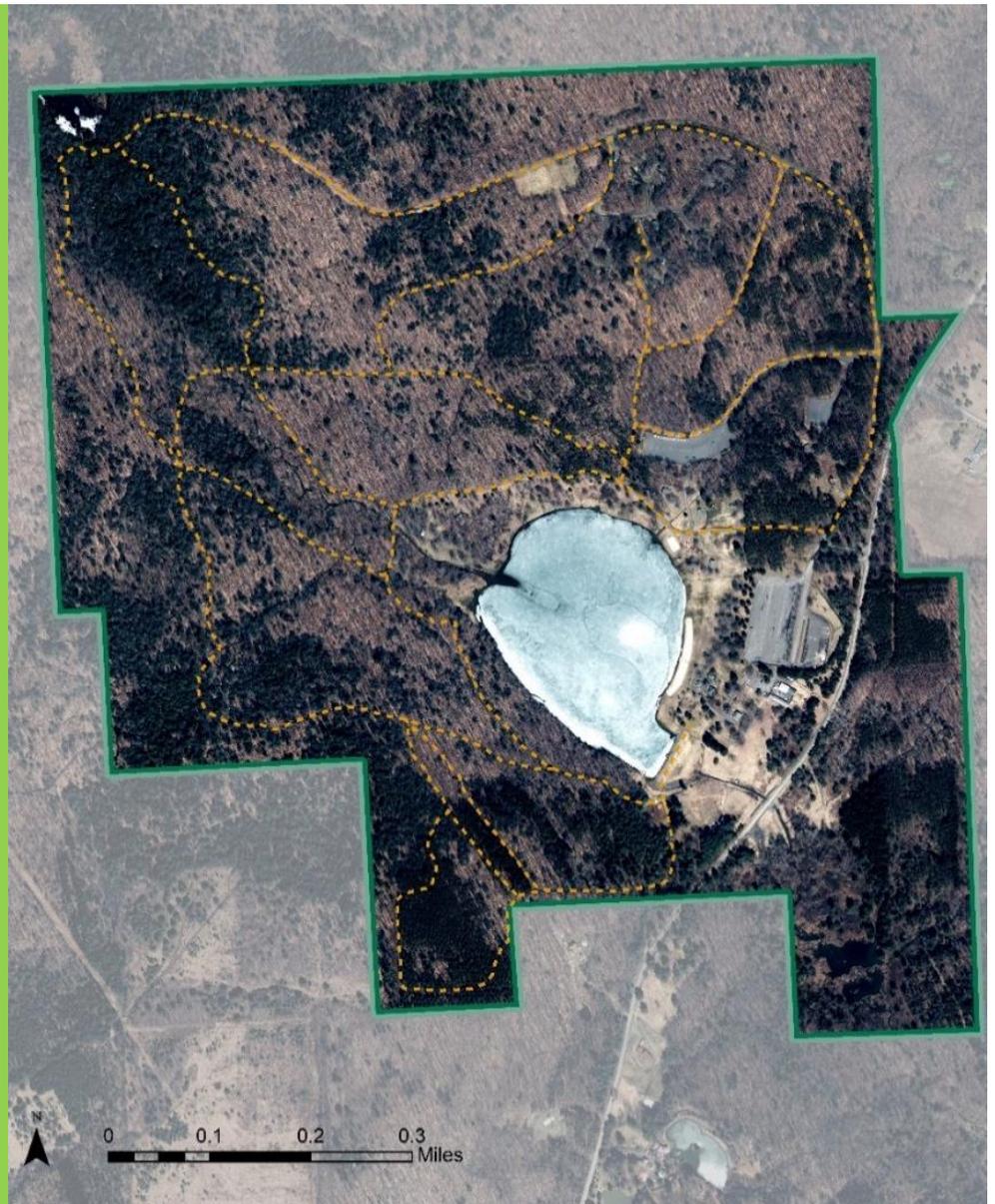
**Activities:** Hiking, fishing, xc skiing, snowshoeing, swimming, boating, camping, playground, volleyball



**Notable Features:** 25-acre lake, beach, campgrounds



**Issues:** Drainage issues, road/parking conditions, condition of campground facilities, park structures need upgrades



### Park Facilities Inventory

On average, the condition of Greenwood Park's grounds and facilities are rated fair to poor. Roads within the park vary from good to fair condition, while the asphalt sidewalk is in poor condition. Minor cracking and potholes were observed throughout the park. The parking areas are in good to poor condition, where the primary parking lot in the south end of the park was showing signs of failure; some cracking and potholes were also evident in the parking areas. The park's culverts are in fair to poor condition; many corrugated metal pipe culverts are crushed or concrete culverts are seriously damaged. The culverts, in the northern area of the park where the RVs park, are in especially poor condition. The condition of Greenwood's facilities/buildings are fair; additional input from park staff is needed for a complete assessment.

### Physical Accessibility Assessment

Several areas of Greenwood Park were evaluated including two parking lots and pathways within the main part of the park. Both parking lots lack accessible parking signage, and therefore are not ADA compliant. Four of the five pathways do not comply with ADA standards because they exceed the maximum slope.



*Greenwood Park Campgrounds*

## Grippen Park

Grippen Park, an 18-acre park located in the village of Endicott, is home to the northeast's only covered BMX race track. Previously, the structure was used as an ice rink, until it was closed following the 2006 flood. The structure now houses a privately-operated BMX facility, which is closed to the public. The park's boat ramp provides boating and fishing access to the Susquehanna River; there is no boat rental at this park, so users must bring their own.

Future improvements are planned for Grippen Park. In 2018, Broome County received a State and Municipal Facilities grant for improvements to the boat ramp and a scenic outlook in the park. Broome County also received a federal ARC grant to extend the Chugnut Trail, a 3.2-mile multi-use trail that connects downtown Endicott to Glendale Park, through Grippen Park.



**Location:** Village of Endicott



**Attendance:** 94,282



**Size:** 18 acres



**Trails:** 0.25 miles, paved  
proposed trail connection



**Amenities:** Parking,  
restrooms, picnic shelter



**Activities:** Fishing,  
boating, baseball, BMX



**Notable Features:** BMX  
track, Susquehanna River



**Issues:** Flooding,  
condition of BMX  
structure



### Park Facilities Inventory

Overall Grippen's grounds and facilities range from good to fair condition. The 550-foot entrance road to the boat ramp is in fair condition; large potholes and pavement deterioration were observed in various locations. Additionally, substantial cracking occurs throughout the road length and near the BMX facility. The parking lot is in good condition with minor cracking in some areas. Grippen Park has one picnic pavilion which is in good condition, however, there is a large crack at the corner of the concrete base which may have been a result of ground settling. In 2018, Broome County performed a structural assessment of the BMX facility and identified extensive upgrades that need to be made to the structure.

### Physical Accessibility Assessment

Grippen Park's accessibility is relatively good, however, there are some areas of concern. There are no marked handicap spaces within the parking lot. In addition, a segment of the boat ramp path exceeds the maximum slope. Also, there is not a direct paved path between the BMX facility entrance and the restroom entrance.



Grippen Park BMX  
Photo: Pics by Patty

## Hawkins Pond Nature Area

Hawkins Pond covers 322 acres in the town of Windsor. Visitors navigate the nature area through 4 miles of hiking/cross-country ski trails which continue into the adjacent 539-acre Hawkins Pond State Forest. The 25-acre Hawkins Pond provides fishing opportunities; however, swimming and boating are prohibited. The park is largely undeveloped; there is one picnic shelter/restroom building located in the southern portion of the park. In 2018, the Parks Department began renovations on the structure.

### Park Facilities Inventory

Hawkin's Pond Natural Area is accessed by a 590-foot gravel road which leads to the park's only picnic shelter; the shelter is in good condition.



**Location:** Town of Windsor



**Attendance:** 8,679



**Size:** 322 acres



**Trails:** 4 miles, unpaved



**Amenities:** Parking, rest-rooms, picnic shelter



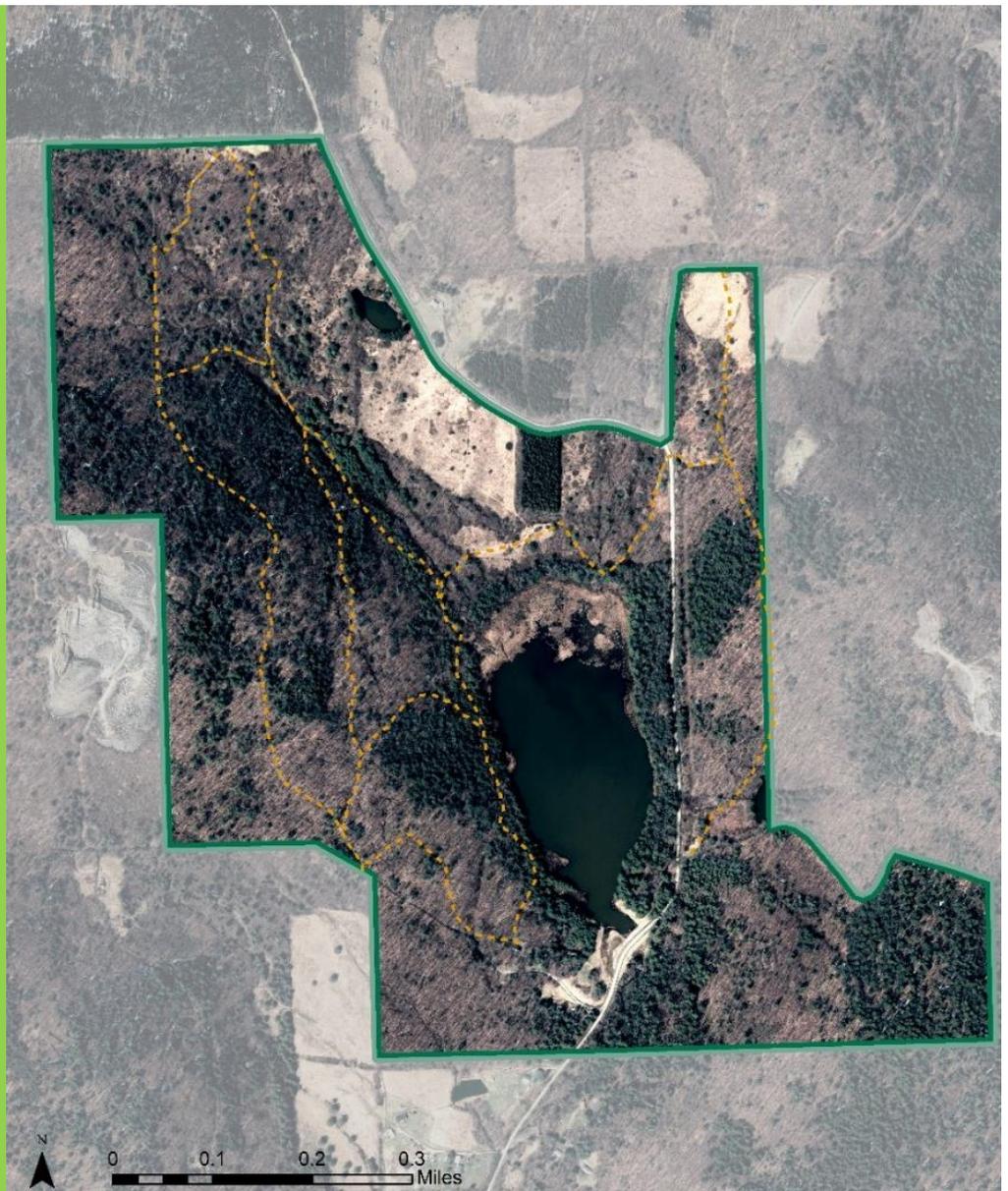
**Activities:** Hiking, fishing, nature observation, cross-country skiing, snowshoe



**Notable Features:** 23-acre pond



**Issues:** Trail Maintenance





*Hawkins Pond*  
*Photo: Nowacki Farms*

## Nathaniel Cole Park

Nathaniel Cole Park, often referred to as Cole Park, is located in the town of Colesville. The park covers 367 acres and includes a 44-acre pond for swimming, boating, and fishing. This park also features a wide range of activities for users and a 1.5-mile nature trail loop that guides park users around the lake. In the fall, local high schools use Cole Park for cross-country races. While the public cannot camp here, the park is available to youth groups for camping in the summer.



**Location:** Town of Colesville



**Attendance:** 152,936



**Size:** 367 acres



**Trails:** 1.5 miles, unpaved



**Amenities:** Parking, rest-rooms, benches, picnic shelters, concession stand



**Activities:** Hiking, fishing, xc skiing, snowshoeing, swimming, boating, playground, soccer, volleyball



**Notable Features:** 44-acre pond, watershed



**Issues:** Boat dock, park buildings need upgrades, condition of staircases



### Park Facilities Inventory

Most of Cole Park's grounds and facilities are in fair condition. The park entrance road was recently repaved and is in good condition, while other road segments within the park exhibit potholes and cracking. The parking areas are in poor condition with signs of major cracking and pavement deterioration. There is a pedestrian bridge in the west part of the park which is in fair condition, and numerous culverts ranging from good to fair condition. Most of the park buildings are in good to fair condition, however, the maintenance building is in poor condition with rotted wood siding.

### Physical Accessibility Assessment

Most of the areas evaluated in Cole Park were not in compliance with ADA standards. The four lots within the park did not have the minimum required number of accessible parking spaces based on total capacity. Also, the majority of the walking paths within the main park area exceeded the maximum slope.



*Cole Park  
Photo: Drew Lewis*

## Otsiningo Park

Otsiningo Park is a 150-acre multi-use park that runs along the Chenango River in the town of Dickinson. Broome County leases the park land from the NYS Department of Transportation, agreeing to maintain the park grounds and facilities. With more than 1 million visitors each year, Otsiningo is our most popular park, offering a wide range of activities for visitors. The park has a 3-mile multi-use trail that is part of the Two Rivers Greenway and connects it to Otsiningo North in the Town of Chenango. A private organization runs the community gardens located in the southern part of the park. Numerous community events such as various sports leagues, the Spiedie Fest and Balloon Rally, and Broome Bands Together take place in the park each year. In 2017, Broome County received a State and Municipal Facilities grant to construct a performance stage in the park; this project is expected to be complete in the Spring of 2019.



### **Park Facilities Inventory**

Otsiningo Park's buildings and grounds overall are in good condition. Many roadways and paths have varying levels of cracking, but generally are in good condition. The parking areas are in fair condition, however cracking and potholes were observed. The park's facilities are in good condition; there is noticeable cracking in the slabs of the south picnic shelter and restrooms. The park's north facilities and culverts which were not included in this inventory.

### **Physical Accessibility Assessment**

A preliminary accessibility assessment revealed that many parts of Otsiningo Park are not ADA compliant. Most of the parking lots did not have the minimum required number of accessible spots, or were not signed properly. In addition, the paths leading to the parking lots and the ramp leading to the bathrooms have slopes that exceed the ADA maximum slope standard.



*Otsiningo Park  
Photo: Kathleen Al-Jallad*

## Roundtop Park

Roundtop is a 32-acre park that sits atop Roundtop Hill in the village of Endicott. Broome County acquired this park from the Village in the early 1980s with plans to expand Grippen Park. While those plans never materialized, the County still owns and maintains both parks. Located above the Susquehanna River, Roundtop historically offered spectacular views of the valley; more recently the view has been obstructed by tree and brush growth. Part of the State and Municipal Facilities and Appalachian Regional Commission grants that Broome County received will be used for improvements at Roundtop Park including a scenic outlook and a spur trail that will connect Round Top to the Chugnut Trail along the river.



**Location:** Village of Endicott



**Attendance:** 58,907



**Size:** 32 acres



**Trails:** < 1 mile, unpaved



**Amenities:** Parking, rest-rooms, picnic shelter



**Activities:** Walking, fishing, playground



**Notable Features:** steep slopes, Susquehanna River



**Issues:** Overgrown brush



### **Park Facilities Inventory**

The building and grounds at Roundtop Park vary from good to fair condition. There is a 1,300-foot entrance road that leads into the park which is in fair condition; there are multiple potholes and consistent cracking throughout the length of the road. The parking areas are in fair condition with substantial cracking. The picnic shelters are in good condition, however cracking in the concrete slab is noticeable. Similarly, the bathrooms are in good condition, but cracking occurs in the cement around the building.

### **Physical Accessibility Assessment**

Gaps exist in the accessibility of Roundtop's features and structures. The east parking lot has one accessible parking space where at least two are required. Also, there was no direct connection between the east parking lot and the sunrise shelter. In addition, the pathway between the restrooms and the picnic shelter exceeded the maximum allowable slope according to ADA standards.



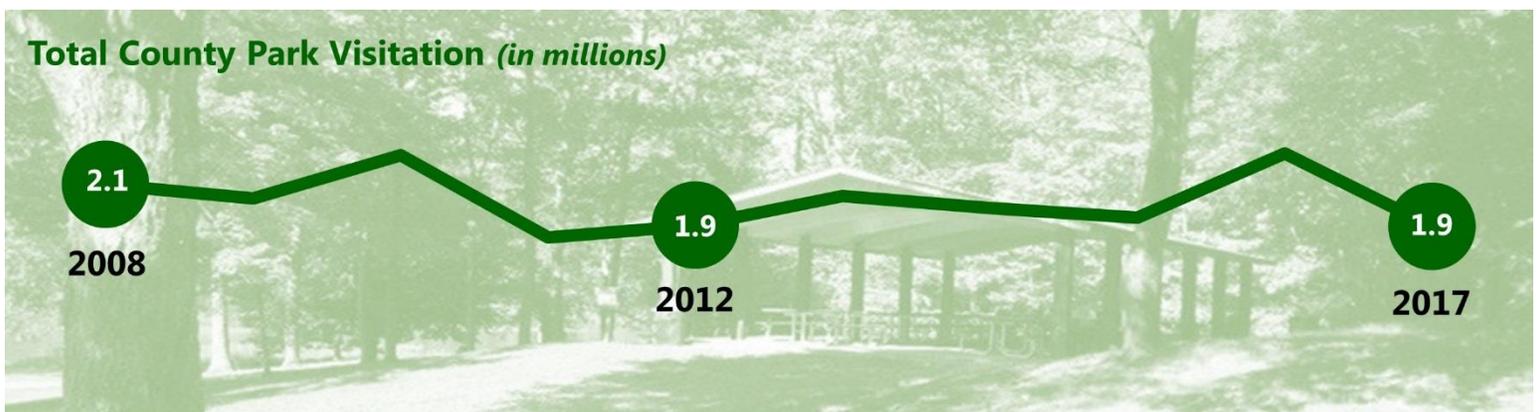
### Park Visitation

About 2 million residents and visitors enjoy Broome County parks annually. Park visitation is variable from year to year, often influenced by weather, time, and other external factors. According to the public survey, peak visitation days for the parks are on the weekends.

Users experience outdoor recreation in unique ways at each park, but most commonly visit Otsiningo, Cole, and Greenwood parks. Otsiningo alone has over 1 million visitors each year, and visitors' favorite thing to do here was walking the trails and participating in family/group activities. The lesser-known parks with minimal development including Hawkins Pond and Aqua Terra (no visitation counts available) have less visitation throughout the year.

Year	Greenwood	Dorchester	Cole	Hawkins	Roundtop	Grippen	Otsiningo
2008	130,598	139,980	165,693	7,966	67,337	83,174	1,503,707
2009	141,184	94,761	179,860	10,530	57,202	106,010	1,437,330
2010	138,059	117,056	174,435	8,856	55,980	99,262	1,656,517
2011	124,686	114,966	165,186	8,335	50,684	99,921	1,261,965
2012	145,001	75,824	166,104	9,470	60,010	84,939	1,345,851
2013	121,694	112,712	148,022	7,787	63,860	98,057	1,486,818
2014	120,813	131,544	156,192	8,002	48,132	93,929	1,420,765
2015	123,248	122,834	135,677	8,610	57,927	91,512	1,389,668
2016	123,248	142,293	134,485	8,691	70,882	93,954	1,685,143
2017	136,964	134,055	103,708	8,543	57,053	92,058	1,349,059

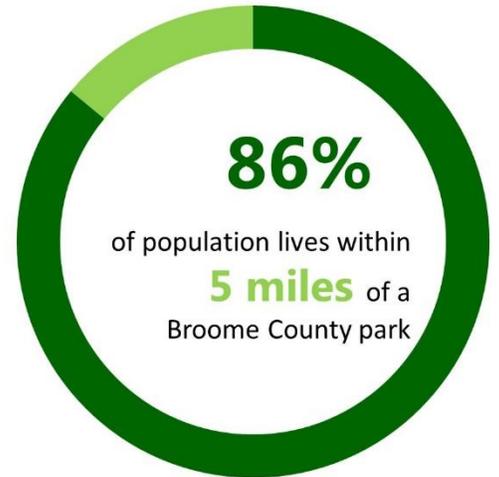
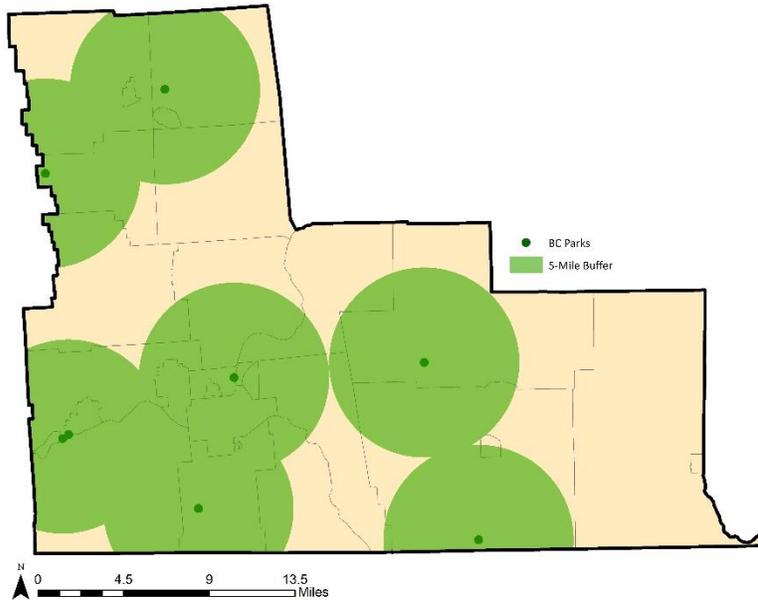
\*Counts not available for Aqua-Terra



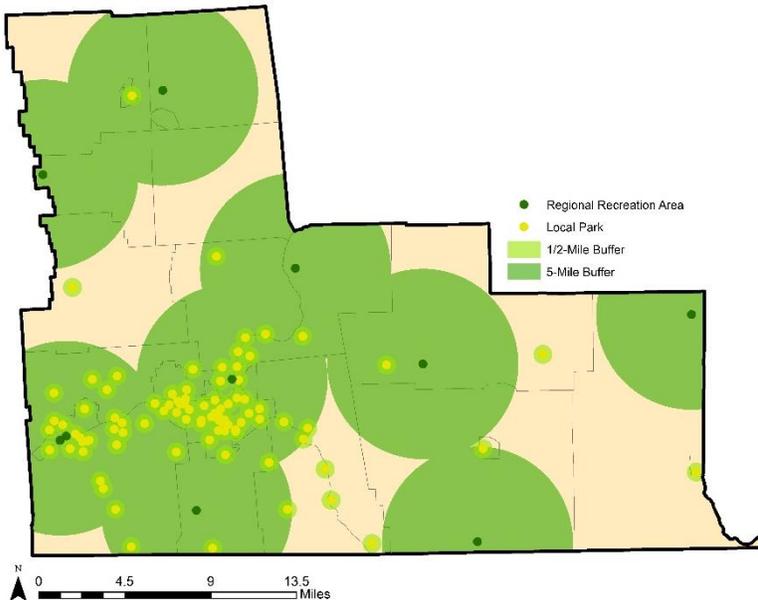
## Park Distribution

Proximity to park areas influences park use among residents. While there are some visible gaps in the northern and eastern parts of the county, most of the population lives within the existing service areas of the county's park system. Countywide, 86% of the population lives within five miles of a county-owned park. Accounting for other park types, the percentage of the population that lives within ½-mile of a local park or five miles of a regional park increases to 92%.

Broome County Parks Service Area



Local and Regional Parks Service Area



## Acres per 1,000 Residents

A common method of assessing adequacy of park service is determining the number of park acres per 1,000 residents. In Broome County, there are 9 acres of county-owned parkland per 1,000 residents, which exceeds the average of 7.4 acres per 1,000 for similar sized jurisdictions documented in the NPRA 2016 Field Report. Countywide, there are 25 acres of local and regional parks per 1,000 residents. With no major population increases expected, the County will maintain an adequate level of service in terms of park area into the future. However, Broome County should determine if the existing programs and facilities are meeting the needs of residents, as 15% of survey respondents said they traveled outside of Broome County for recreational purposes because a certain facility or program was not offered here.

Park Type	Acres	Acres per 1,000 residents
Local Parks	908	5
Regional Recreation Park	4,023	20
Natural Areas	14,381	72
Open Space	90	0.4
<b>All Parks &amp; Recreation Areas</b>	<b>19,402</b>	<b>97</b>
Broome County Parks	1,847	9
Local and Regional Parks	4,931	25



Greenwood Park  
Photo: Steve Avery



Otsiningo Park Scarecrow Contest



## Department Overview

The Broome County Parks Department serves to provide opportunities for leisure, promote recreational events, promote health and wellness, and support events and attractions which promote area-wide tourism. The department maintains over 1,800 acres of parkland, hundreds of facilities and amenities, and oversees the various events that take place in the parks throughout the year. This chapter provides a brief assessment of the department's organization and operations.

## Park Staff

The Broome County Department of Parks and Recreation is charged with the management of the county's park system. The department has 18 full-time, 2 part-time, and 99 seasonal positions. Dramatic reductions in staff levels creates challenges for the level of service and park maintenance. Since 1998, the number of full-time positions decreased from 40 to 18, representing a 55% cut in staffing; these cuts are depicted in the organizational chart on the next page. Specific positions that were eliminated included arborists, the design division, engineer, and construction workers.

## Maintenance and Operations

Fourteen staff members are responsible for the day-to-day operations and maintenance of the parks system. These include: two park managers; one park equipment maintenance Manager; three assistant managers; one assistant recreation facility manager; three senior park technicians; and four park technicians. Typical responsibilities of the park staff include:

- Oversee seasonal employees
- Prepare park reports and records
- Park preparation and clean-up
- Perform building and equipment maintenance and repairs
- Maintain and repair recreational equipment
- Perform grounds keeping maintenance
- Maintains trails and athletic fields
- Snow removal from roads, parking lots, and sidewalks

In addition to working in the parks, a portion of the Parks staff works at the Arena from September through April, acutely limiting park maintenance capacity during these months.

## Equipment

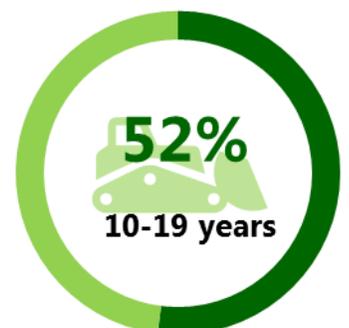
Personnel indicated maintenance was one of their strengths, but the aging buildings and outdated equipment are issues affecting operations. Based on an inventory of park assets, there are 42 maintenance/operation equipment pieces, and the average age of the equipment is 15 years. Because resources are shared between the Parks and other County departments, if a piece of equipment becomes inoperable it will impact multiple parks and other County facilities.



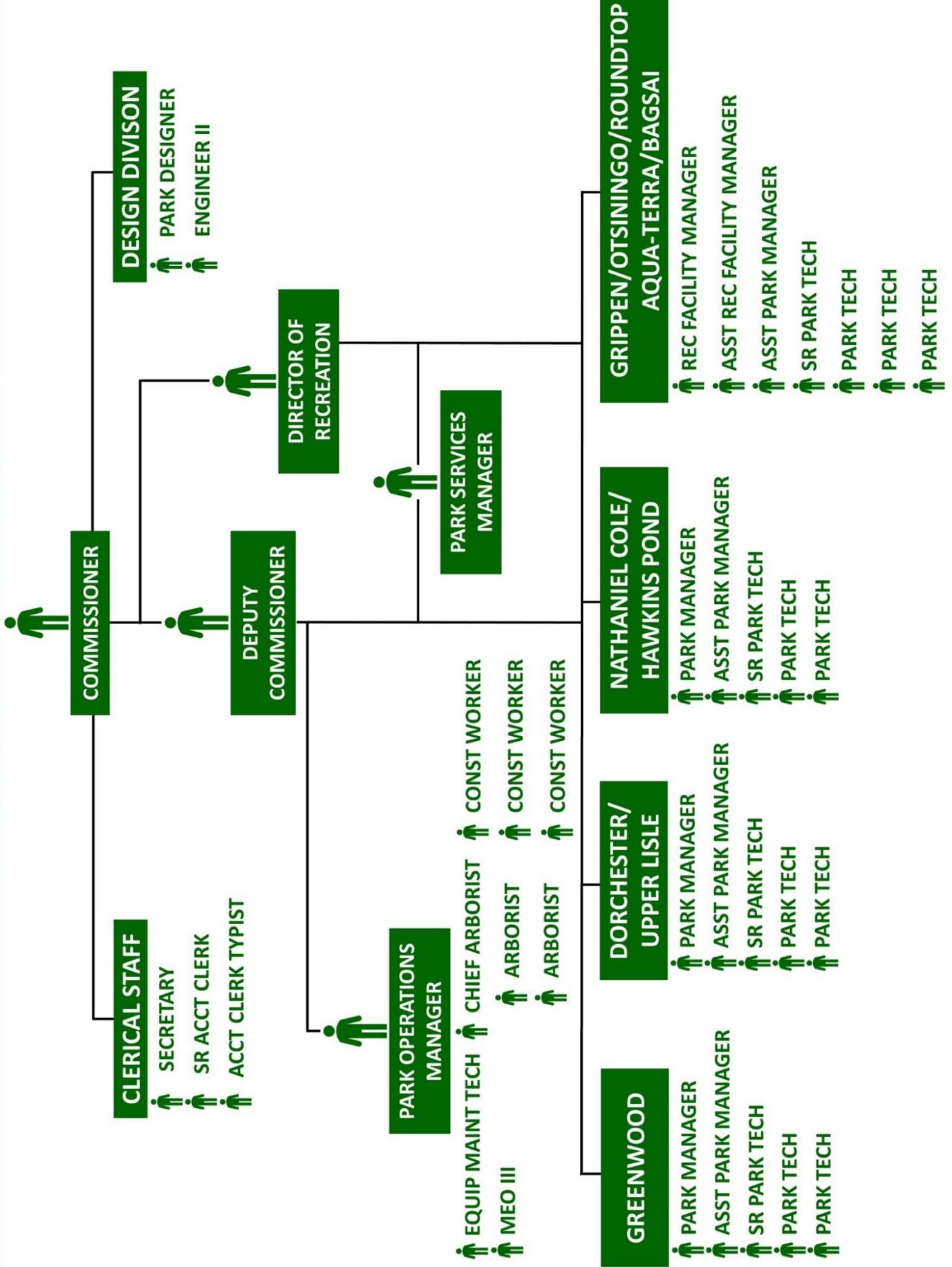
*Reduced staff over the years has led to fewer people in parks providing maintenance and other services. Lost maintenance workers, program leaders, and people in the office.*

*Parks Managers Meeting*

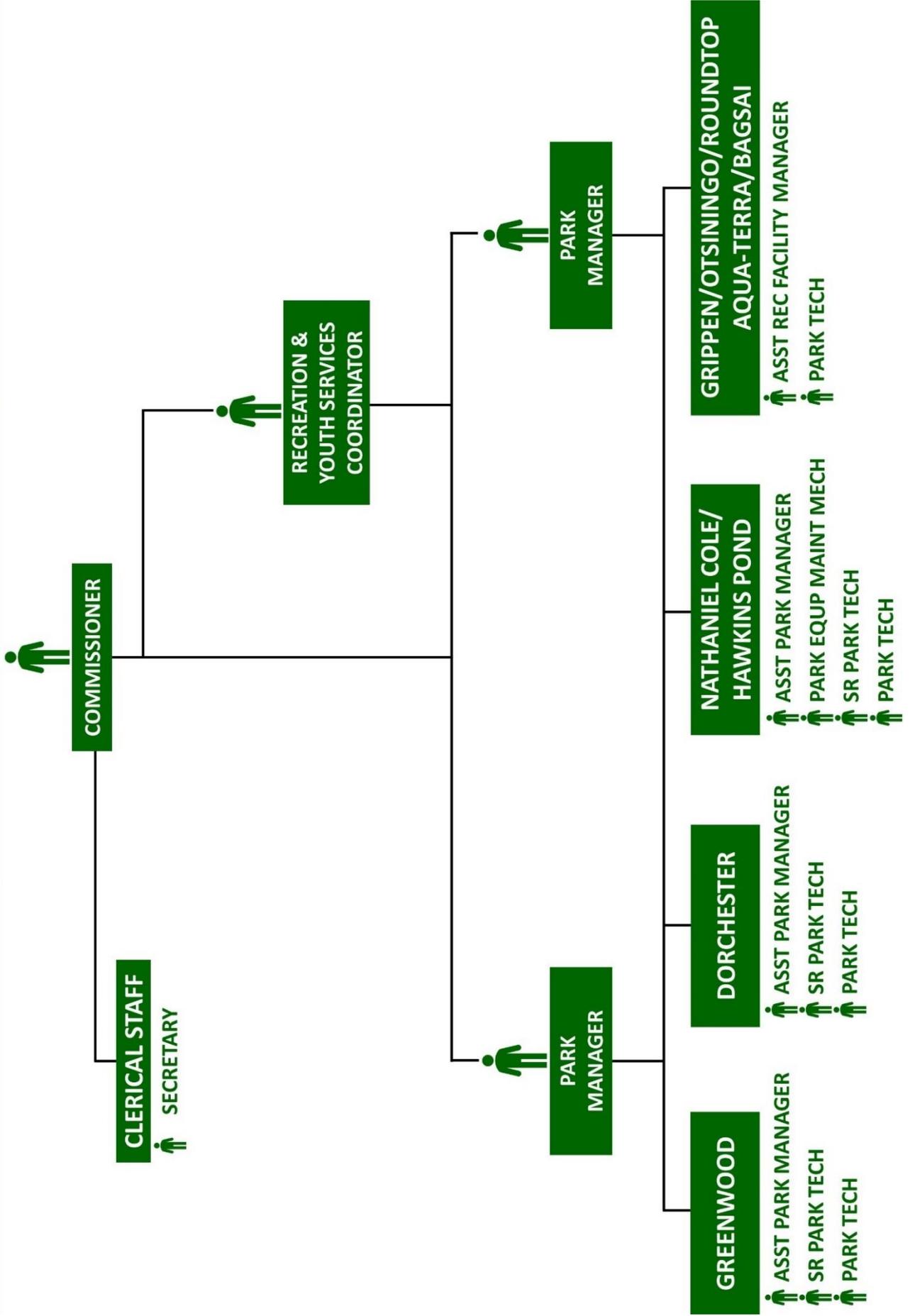
## AGE OF PARKS EQUIPMENT



Department of Parks & Recreation (1998)



# Department of Parks & Recreation (2017)



## YOUTH BUREAU GRANTS

In 2018, the Youth Bureau awarded nearly **\$200,000** in grant funds to 19 different projects

### Youth Bureau

The Parks Department has been given the responsibility of administering the Youth Bureau Program. The Youth Bureau has an 18-member advisory board which works to promote the physical, emotional, and social well-being of youth and families in Broome County. The Youth Bureau's primary function is to administer funding to youth recreation programs and youth-serving agencies made possible by NYS Office of Children & Family Services Bureau of Youth Development.

### Partnerships

One reason why Broome County's parks are great public places is the on-going partnerships that build long-term commitment and investment in the parks. Both public and private partnerships contribute to their role as places where people build relationships and share experiences. Currently, the Parks Department's primary partners include:

- Adopt A Park Organization
- Coughlin & Gerhart, LLP
- Otsiningo Community Gardeners Association
- Grippen Park BMX

### Special Events

Dozens of special events take place at the parks each year such as, community walks/5ks, athletic tournaments, festivals, and more. Each event requires special assistance, set-up and cleanup efforts from parks staff. Events which the department sponsors/co-sponsors include:

- Almost Annual Crappie Derby
- Broome Bands Together Concert Series
- Broome County Parks Triathlon
- Movies in the Park
- Spiedie Fest & Balloon Rally

## Budget

In 2017, the Parks Department administered a budget of approximately \$2.8 million to operate and maintain the park's system and Youth Services. Over the past decade, the park's budget decreased 39% from \$4.5 million in 2008 to \$2.8 million in 2017. Approximately 20% of the department's budget is allocated for administrative purposes, 14% for seasonal staff and special events, and 66% for parks staff and maintenance expenses.

### Total Parks & Rec Budget



Broome County parks are free to the public and utilized by nearly two million people each year. Funding to maintain and operate the parks system comes from two primary sources: the County's general fund and income generated by the department. While the majority of the department's budget is supported by tax dollars, it accounts for less than 1% of the County's total budget and amounts to approximately ten dollars per capita. While County contributions fluctuated over the past decade, mainly declining since 2009, the Park's revenue increased slightly during that time.

### County Contribution



### Parks Income



*\*all values are adjusted for inflation*

## PARKS DEPARTMENT REVENUES

Revenue generated by the parks contributes to the departmental income. In 2018, **\$190,050** in Parks revenue came from:

- Food Concessions
- Boat Rentals
- Camping
- Shelter Rentals
- Ski Rentals
- Grounds Rentals

## Capital Projects

The Broome County Capital Improvements Program (CIP) outlines the County's prioritized improvements, including Parks and Recreation. This document is the basis for physical improvements to the parks, trails, equipment, and public facilities. Over the past decade, the County apportioned about \$2.3 million for various projects and improvements. Each year the apportioned amounts for special projects and maintenance/operations varies. Proposed capital improvements for 2019 include \$200,000 for facilities repairs and renovations, facility development, and surface rehabilitation. Proposed CIP projects for 2019 include rehabilitation of Cole Park's parking lots, replacing the pedestrian bridge at Cole Park, building a culvert at Aqua Terra, reconstruction of two pavilions at Greenwood Park, and other general facility upgrades.

## Charter and Code

The Charter and Code of Broome County identifies the rights, privileges, functions and powers of the County government. Chapter 281 of the charter and code establishes the following for Broome County Parks and Recreation Areas: rules, regulations, and prohibitions; fees and charges; penalties for offenses; and enforcement. The charter and code can be modified by legislative approval to alter existing or introduce new laws. A policy review was completed for the parks department which identified the following:

- The existing charter and code says persons are authorized to carry firearms within the park in designated hunting areas, however, there are no designated hunting areas. The document goes on to say hunting may be authorized by the commissioner, but if there are no designated hunting areas, hunting and firearms should not be allowed within the parks as it may impact park users' safety.
- The charter and code states ATVs are restricted to trails and areas provided for them, but the department's website says they are not permitted.

- Numerous events take place at the county parks each year, but the charter does address the requirements, permits, etc. for organizing such events.
- The Broome County Parks and Recreation General Regulations Guide addresses the following issues, but they are not stated in the latest charter and code. Information in the two documents should be consistent.
  - Park hours
  - Prohibiting feeding of waterfowl
  - Swimming rules
  - Permitting for groups larger than 25 people
  - Sound amplification
  - Smoking within parks
  - Group camping

”

*I visit Cole Park almost every weekend all year. Really happy with everything kept as is. I can't say enough about how the maintenance staff keeps the park*

*Public Survey Comment*





# Environmental Resources

Broome County recognizes the connection between parks and environmental conservation. In the public survey, respondents identified the protection of environmental resources as one of the most important benefits of parks and open space. Each county park has valuable open space assets, including large forests, water bodies, wetlands, and various animal species. These assets are important to our natural environment, the local economy, and the quality of life for residents.

## Threatened or Endangered Species

Parks provide habitats for diverse species, including endangered or threatened species. The Northern Long-eared Bat is a threatened species, and may be present in any of the county parks, most likely habituating within tree cavities, caves, or even man-made structures. This species is protected under Federal law, and projects require a special permit for activities that could disrupt their habitat. Broome County Parks should always consult with the appropriate agencies and avoid development in or near these areas.

The NYSDEC's Natural Heritage Program identified multiple rare or listed animals that could be present in or near the county parks. The protection of threatened, endangered, or rare species should be prioritized and used as a guiding factor when proposing future project that could affect these communities.

Species	Location	Habitat	Status
 <b>Arrowhead Spiketail</b>	Hawkins Pond	Streams and seeps	Vulnerable in NYS
 <b>Bald Eagle</b>	Grippen Otsiningo Roundtop	Near waterbodies	Threatened
 <b>Brook Floater</b>	Grippen Otsiningo Roundtop	Creeks and rivers	Threatened
 <b>Hellbender</b>	Roundtop	Streams and rivers	Special Concern
 <b>Tiger Spiketail</b>	Hawkins Pond	Streams, springs, and seeps	Critically Imperiled in NYS
 <b>Yellow Lampmussel</b>	Otsiningo	Rivers	Vulnerable in NYS

## Fish Species

Fishing is a popular activity among many Broome County residents and visitors. Most parks allow for fishing either from the shore or a rental boat. In the winter, ice fishing is allowed (pending safe conditions) at Dorchester and Greenwood parks. A wide range of species can be found in the lakes, ponds, and rivers of the county parks. The table below highlights the primary species that can be found in county parks.

Fish species in Broome County Parks	AQUA TERRA POND	CHENANGO RIVER (OTSININGO PARK)	GREENWOOD LAKE	HAWKINS POND	NATHANIEL COLE POND	SUSQUEHANNA RIVER (Grippen & Roundtop)	WHITNEY POINT RESERVOIR
Chain pickerel							
Channel catfish							
Largemouth bass							
Muskellunge							
Northern pike							
Panfish							
Rainbow trout							
Smallmouth bass							
Tiger musky							
Walleye							

## Migratory Birds

Broome County park's diversity of natural settings make them an ideal resting area for migratory birds. Certain birds are protected under federal law; Thirteen specific species of concern to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services can be found in the county parks.



***Bald Eagle***



***Black-billed Cuckoo***



***Black-capped Chickadee***



***Bobolink***



***Canada Warbler***



***Cerulean Warbler***



***Golden Eagle***



***Kentucky Warbler***



***Northern Saw-Whet Owl***



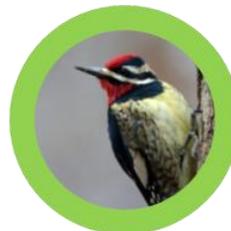
***Prairie Warbler***



***Rusty Blackbird***



***Wood Thrush***



***Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker***

## Invasive Species

Invasive species are non-native species that pose a threat to the environment, public health, and/or economy. If left unmanaged, they can spread rapidly and disrupt native communities, causing loss of biodiversity and habitat. Invasive species are very expensive and almost impossible to eradicate. The following species have a known presence in the county, but more research is necessary to identify their presence and extent within the parks.

### Current Invasive Species in Broome County Parks

The following invasive species have a known or likely presence in Broome County parks and should be assessed to identify effective management measures.

Species	Location	Impact
Emerald Ash Borer	Otsiningo	Defoliation, tree loss, threat to public safety, native plant and habitat loss
Japanese Barberry	Likely in all Parks	Native plant and habitat loss, labor intensive removal, increased presence of ticks
Japanese Knotweed	Hawkins Pond Otsiningo	Native plant and habitat loss, labor intensive removal
Japanese Honeysuckle	Likely in all Parks	Native plant and habitat loss, labor intensive removal
Japanese Stiltgrass	Hawkins Pond	Native plant and habitat loss, labor intensive removal
Purple Loosestrife	Likely in all parks	Native plant and habitat loss, labor intensive removal
Wild Parsnip	Likely in all parks	Causes severe skin/eye irritation, native and habitat loss

### Other Invasive Species to Monitor

The following invasive species have a known presence within the county, but to this date have not been identified in any of the parks.

Species	Location	Impact
Giant Hogweed	None Known	Causes severe skin/eye irritation, native plant loss
Hemlock Woolly Adelgid	None Known	Severe damage/death to Hemlock trees, native plant and habitat loss
Kudzu	None Known	Kills other plants, reduces diversity and habitat, can damage buildings and utilities

### Nuisance Species

Wildlife provides aesthetic recreational benefits to park goers, but overpopulation and increased human-animal conflict prompts the labeling of certain wildlife species as nuisances. Calls about geese are common for Broome County Parks staff. Even though the County has a specific role in wildlife management in the parks, Canada Geese are protected under Federal and State laws, so many actions require state and/or federal approvals and permits.

Canada geese are waterfowl that provide enjoyment to bird watchers and nature enthusiasts. However, goose droppings contaminate water and dirty trails/beaches, making them unusable at times. Some survey respondents expressed concerns over this. While population control may help reduce some negative impacts, control methods are expensive and highly controversial. Parks staff have implemented population control methods in the past, but no single method is completely permeant or cost-effective. To discourage geese from gathering at the parks, the feeding of geese and other waterfowl is prohibited within the parks.



Photo: Krystin Normile

## Water Resources

Broome County's water resources are a defining element of its parks, and offer recreational opportunities throughout the year. With six lakes/ponds and frontage on two rivers, Broome County has a critical role to ensure the public has optimal access, so they can interact with the waterfronts in different ways. Despite considerable interest in aquatic recreational activities, survey respondents indicate they are not likely to participate in these activities when they visit a county park. This may be caused by inadequate access or lack of knowledge of available resources. Respondents feel improvements such as, greenway trails, scenic overlooks, and boat access/launch points would improve accessibility and visibility of the waterfront, and overall increase enjoyment of the county's water resources.

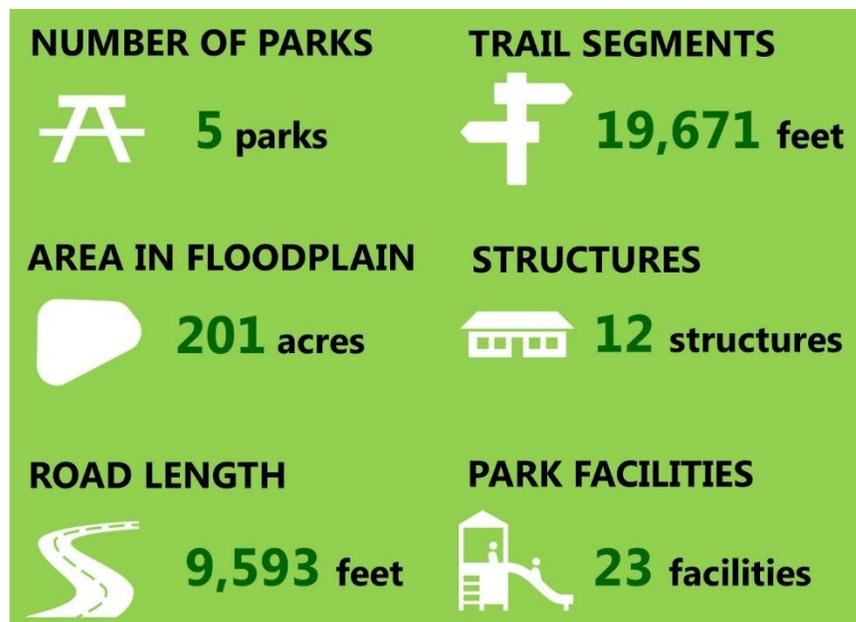
Broome County Parks Water Resources	Water Body 	River Frontage 	Streams 	Wetlands 
<b>AQUA-TERRA</b>	64-acre pond		4,000 ft.	14 acres
<b>DORCHESTER</b>	1,200-acre lake		1,028 ft.	11 acres
<b>GREENWOOD</b>	25-acre lake		6,886 ft.	37 acres
<b>GRIPPEN</b>		1,338 ft.		> 1 acre
<b>HAWKINS POND</b>	26-acre pond		4,282 ft.	45 acres
<b>NATHANIEL COLE</b>	64-acre pond		4,000 ft.	79 acres
<b>OTSININGO</b>	3-acre pond	12,204 ft.		22 acres
<b>ROUNDTOP</b>		1,064 ft.		< 1 acre

## Wetlands

Wetlands are land areas that are usually saturated year-round and include marshes, swamps, and bogs. They have many important functions including wildlife habitat, flood mitigation, and they are protected on both private and public property. Broome County parks contain 41 federally and state regulated delineated wetlands, covering approximately 207 acres including: freshwater emergent wetlands, freshwater forested/shrub wetlands, freshwater ponds, lakes, and riverine. Any project that may disturb these wetlands and their adjacent areas require a permit, however, development in or near these areas should be avoided.

## Flood Risk

Frequent flooding in Broome County demonstrates how parks are not only fundamental amenities, but important to flood mitigation. Parks are a favorable use within the floodplain because they reduce the impacts of flooding by creating floodwater storage, with minimal damage to infrastructure. Five county parks are located within the floodplain including: Dorchester, Greenwood, Grippen, Otsiningo, and Roundtop. These parks experience varying levels of flooding during major flood events and heavy rains. Generally, most of the county's park facilities can withstand flooding, but many resources are required to clean up the parks after an event, to ensure they are safe for public use.



### Broome County Watersheds

Since 1950, Broome County (in partnership with federal agencies) has constructed multiple watershed structures (dams), all of which are owned, maintained, and inspected by Broome County. The purpose of the watersheds is to provide flood control and stormwater management by collecting runoff and storing water behind the dam temporarily, and water is slowly released over time. While the purpose of these structures is for flood protection, residents also enjoy their recreational and environmental benefits. Many people enjoy walking, fishing, and observing wildlife on the watersheds, however, these structures are not parks and are not maintained for these purposes. Watersheds are located in the following county parks: Aqua Terra, Greenwood, Nathaniel Cole, and Hawkins Pond.

Aqua Terra Dam*	Nanticoke Creek Dam #10
SUNY Broome/Public Safety Facility	Nanticoke Creek Dam #13
Brandywine Creek Dam	Nanticoke Creek Dam #7A
BC Corporate Park Dam #2	Nanticoke Creek Dam #7B
Deposit Bone Creek	Nanticoke Creek Dam #8
Deposit Elm Street	Nanticoke Creek Dam #9A
Finch Hollow Dam #1A	Nanticoke Creek Dam #9C
Finch Hollow Dam #3C	Nanticoke Creek Dam #9E
Greenwood Lake*	Nathaniel Cole Park Dam*
Hawkins Pond*	Palmers Pond Dam
Little Choconut Dam #2	Patterson Brixius Creek Dam #1
Little Choconut Dam #2A	Patterson Brixius Creek Dam #2
Little Choconut Dam #2B	West Corners Dike #7
Little Choconut Dam #2E	

*\*Part of Broome County Parks system*  
Public Access: ■ Yes ■ No

## **Water Quality**

Broome County parks offer important water recreation resources for the community. Swimming areas are located at Dorchester, Greenwood, and Nathaniel Cole Parks. Beach areas are tested regularly to ensure waterbodies are safe for public use, and are closed when there is a known or likely health risk.

## **Algae Blooms**

Algae are organisms that live in waterbodies, where they are a major source of food for other organisms and play an important role in carbon dioxide recycling. While algae are always present in the water, Harmful Algae Blooms (HABs) can develop when there are excess levels of sunlight and nutrients. HABs prevent sunlight from reaching other plants and can produce toxins that are harmful to wildlife and humans. In 2018, Dorchester Park's swimming area was closed for one week in July due to algae blooms in the Whitney Point Reservoir.

## **Escherichia Coli**

Escherichia coli (E. coli) is a bacterium that normally lives in human and animal intestines, but certain strains of the bacteria can cause serious illness. The most common path of exposure is swallowing contaminated food or water. To reduce exposure risk, Broome County Parks requires babies to wear diapers specifically designed for swimming and advises patrons to wash off before and after swimming. There have been no confirmed e. coli outbreaks within the parks in recent years.

## **Swimmer's Itch**

Swimmer's itch caused by the parasite cercaria, and can lead to skin irritation for humans. It is caused when parasite eggs enter the water, which is typically passed in waterfowl feces, and comes into contact with human skin. In 2011, the parasite was confirmed at Greenwood Park, subsequently the Parks and Health Departments carried out remediation efforts.

### **Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System**

The NYSDEC regulates and oversees permits for stormwater discharges from municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) as required by Federal law. Broome County is a traditional non-land use MS4 entity, which applies to counties without land use control. This designation means all municipal facilities and projects must comply with the MS4 requirements. As an MS4 operator, Broome County must implement a Stormwater Management Plan which contains control measures and utilizes best management practices. Broome County's 2013 Stormwater Management Plan outlines goals and objectives for park maintenance practices. Broome County MS4 goals that relate to parks include:

- Train Parks staff to identify pollutants of concern and emphasize BMPs such as fertilizing practices and pet waste collection
- Report management activities and pollution control measures annually
- Develop pollution prevention techniques for parking lot sweeping, landscape & lawncare, pests, and pet waste collection
- Develop stormwater education kiosks for parks
- Detect and eliminate all illicit discharges

### **Contamination Sites**

A preliminary review of the parks and adjacent areas (within 1/8 mile) was conducted to determine if there were any environmental concerns at the county parks. There were no significant environmental contaminations, however, eleven "incident or spill" sites and six sites with "activities that may have a potential environmental impact" were identified. While these spills and sites are not an environmental concern, they are still reported because of their potential or perceived environmental risk. There were two accidental spills that occurred within Broome County parks including:

- **Grippen Park:** 300 gallons of ethylene glycol from the ice rink
- **Dorchester Park:** Unknown substance and amount

## Logging

Broome County has more than 1,000 acres of forested lands in its parks, providing a range of environmental, recreational, and health benefits. Timber harvesting in the county parks, particularly within the Aqua Terra Wilderness Area and Hawkins Pond Natural Area, was proposed in the 1990s and more recently in 2011. Timber harvesting is subject to State parkland alienation and Federal conversion processes, which effectively bans the practices in public parks. After assessing the options, Broome County decided not to pursue timber harvesting at any of the county parklands.

## Historic/Cultural Resources

The county's natural and cultural heritage is an important part of our landscape. Each of the county parks are expressions of the community's local history and heritage.

- Purchased in 1960 for \$30,000, Greenwood Park was the county's first regional park. This park set the pace for the development of other regional parks.
- The Whitney Point Dam was built in 1942 in response to the 1935 flood, part of this area was developed into Dorchester park during the 1960s.
- Grippen and Roundtop parks are representative of the Endicott-Johnson era; both were recreational contributions made to the community. During the 1960s, the Endicott Rotary made many improvements to the park including the former ice rink, playground area, and boat launch.
- Aqua Terra, formerly the Innsbruck US ski resort, was the only ski resort in Broome County. It was acquired by the county in the 1980s, and relics of the ski facilities are still visible in the park today.
- Archaeological surveys were performed at Otsiningo and Roundtop parks, uncovering Native American artifacts. Broome County's LWRP recommends interpretative signage highlighting the history of the Native American settlements and the 1779 Clinton-Sullivan Campaign be installed at both sites.

## Unique Natural Areas

Broome County parks contain a variety of natural habitats populated with diverse species of plants and animals. Using the Unique Natural Areas Inventory, developed by the Broome County Environmental Management Council (EMC) with Dr. Julian Shepherd, identified areas within the parks that contain significant natural features and ecological resources, or unique natural areas and should be actively managed and protected.

### Broome County Parks Unique Natural Resources

#### Aqua-Terra

Wetlands, Beavers, Wood Turtles

#### Dorchester

197 bird species including eagles, osprey, herons, and more

#### Greenwood

Mature forest with diverse flora, beaver pond, Jefferson Salamander, waterfowl

#### Grippen

River floodplain, various fish species

#### Hawkins Pond

Shrublands, wildflowers, mature forest, butterflies

#### Nathaniel Cole

Hemlock woods, wetlands, evergreen forests, >100 species of plants, deep forest birds, hawks

#### Otsiningo

River floodplain, unique tree species, rare Indian Plantain

#### Roundtop

Mature pine forest, unique habitat on cliff



NATURE & SKI TRAIL



Cole Park Nature Trail



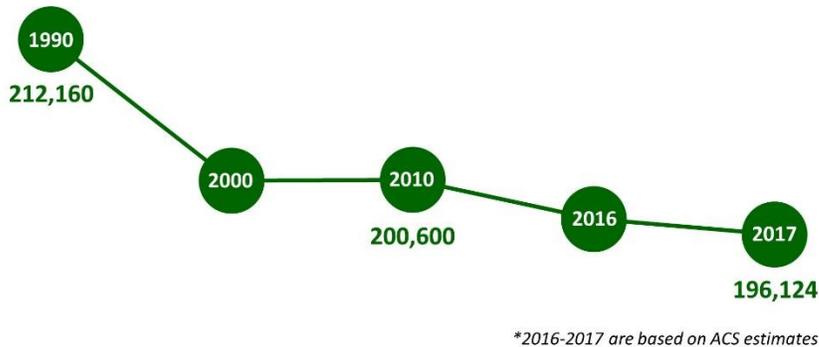
*Spiedie Fest & Balloon Rally*

## People

Broome County's parks offer a variety of facilities and activities for people from different demographic groups. These groups experience parks and recreational activities in unique ways and the demands for recreational facilities and services has changed since the parks were originally built. Understanding which groups are present in Broome County can help ensure the parks system fits the needs of the people living here.

## Population

Broome County's population is declining. Since 1990, the county lost about 16,000 residents, dropping from 212,160 to an estimated 196,124 in 2017, an overall decrease of eight percent. Broome's population decline reflects regional outmigration trends which is expected to continue.



## POPULATION DATA

Broome County population data comes from two sources:

### Decennial Census

a 100% count that shows how many people live in the US, conducted every ten years

### American Community Survey (ACS)

an estimate that shows the characteristics of the population, conducted every year

## Households and Families

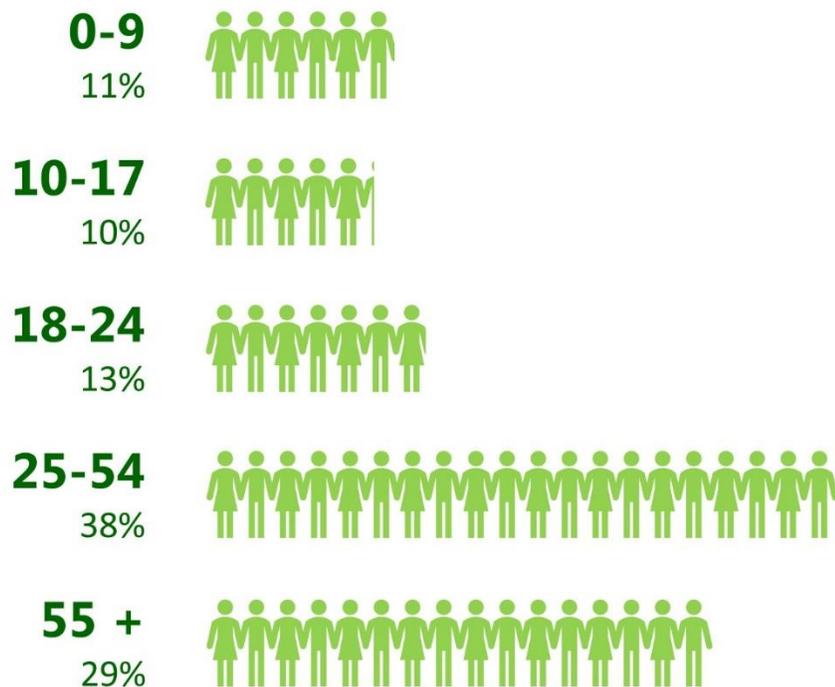
Broome County has an estimated 82,167 households, which represents a slight increase since 1990. Families make up the majority (59%) of households in the county, but the family structure is changing. The percentage of one-parent households is growing, and the share of family households with young children has declined over the past three decades. While parks provide an important service for family recreation and activities, changes in family structure and type suggest there may be an increased demand for non-family activities at the parks.



*\*Based on 2010 Census data*

## Age

A resident's stage of life impacts participation in recreational activities and preferences of amenities and facilities. Children and adolescents make up one-fifth of the county's population; play structures, athletic facilities, and educational programs are key for this age group. Young adults (18-24) represent a smaller segment of the population (13%); among other recreational activities, their interests in technology increase the appeal for activities that utilize social media such as geocaching, and augmented reality apps.



*\*Based on 2010 Census data*

The largest age group (25 to 54-year-olds) includes recent college graduates and many family-oriented individuals, who may be more likely to travel elsewhere for leisure activities. It is important the county provides a range of facilities and activities such as, hiking/walking trails, athletic facilities, lifestyle programs, and arts/entertainment events that appeal to this age group. Empty nesters are the second largest age group and are expected to grow rapidly in the following decades. Passive activities such as walking, fishing, picnics, and nature photography are popular for this age group.

## Race/Ethnicity and Language

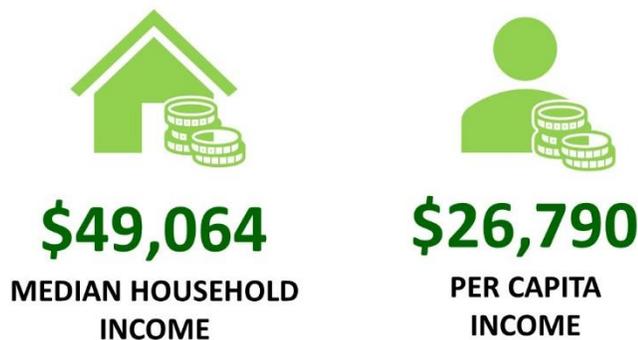
Broome County is slowly becoming more diverse. While the population is predominately non-Hispanic White (88%), the numbers of African-Americans, Asians, and people with Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (people who identify as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race) are growing, with each group doubling in size since 1990. The percentage of residents that speak a language other than English has declined over the past two decades. It is estimated that ten percent of the county's population speaks another language including: Indo-European (4%), Asian and Pacific Islander (3%), and Spanish (2%). The county should determine if new facilities and outreach techniques are needed to attract diverse populations to the parks.



*\*Based on 2017 ACS estimates*

## Income

Broome County's median household income (\$49,064) and per capita income (\$26,970) values are lower than statewide and regional averages, and have experienced slight decline since 2000. Most households in the county make under \$50,000 a year. Broome County parks are free and provide recreational opportunities to users of all incomes. Any future facilities or programs provided by the county should keep income levels in mind, so these services can be supported by the local population.



*\*Based on 2017 ACS estimates*

## Accessibility

Broome County parks are an important resource for all residents, however, accessibility of the parks and their facilities may act as a barrier to some residents. In Broome County, about ten percent of the population has vision (2%) or ambulatory/physical (7%) difficulties (2017 ACS estimates). In 2014, the Binghamton Rotary and the Adopt a Park Program raised funds to install accessible playground equipment at Otsiningo Park. In 2018, an ADA assessment of park's trails, ramps, and parking facilities was completed at the following parks: Dorchester, Greenwood, Grippen, Otsiningo, and Roundtop. Findings revealed multiple facilities were not in compliance with ADA standards; more information about the ADA Assessment can be found in the Where We Are Now chapter.



ADA Playground Equipment at Otsiningo Park  
Photo: Dani Cronce



*Hawkins Pond Nature Trail  
Photo: Kurt Zitzelman*

## Recreation Trends

In addition to shifting demographic patterns, outdoor recreation preferences are changing. Each year the National Recreation Parks Association (NRPA) develops a list of significant trends in the field of parks and recreation. These emerging trends may influence the services we provide and how we choose to promote our parks. This chapter uses NRPA publications to identify current issues and trends that the Parks Department should consider while working to enhance recreation opportunities in the county.

## “Barks Make Life Better”

A dog park is a designated, usually enclosed, area where dogs can run off-leash, and may also include equipment and other amenities. A small town outside Washington, D.C. conducted a survey, which suggested lack of a dog park resulted in lower park usage, especially among adults over 50.

*NRPA, November 2018*

## Programming

Park programming can be used to engage residents from diverse backgrounds and create new experiences within the parks. NRPA stated, “with each supervised activity added to the program offering, there is a 48 percent increase in park use and a 37 percent increase in physical activity”. Currently, the Parks Department does not host any organized recreational programs, but various groups hold their programs at within county parks. Traditional programming includes sports-oriented activities, but park agencies across the nation are expanding their programming to include a broad range of activities for participants of different ages, abilities, and interests.

## Dog Parks

The popularity of dog parks is growing across the nation, playing an important role in the quality of life for people and their pets. In a national study, 91 percent of people said dog parks were beneficial because they provide a safe exercise space, allow dogs to socialize, and they get owners physically active with their dogs (NRPA, November 2018). Every county park is dog-friendly, but dogs must be kept on a leash and are prohibited from the beach and swimming areas.

## Technology

Advancements in technology are making dramatic impacts to the way people live, work and, play. Wi-Fi, augmented reality apps, geocaching, and social media networks can change the way park users interact with their surroundings, creating new experiences in parks. In addition, technology can be used to improve park performance, and make maintenance operations more efficient. Integrating innovative approaches into park systems such as, crowd sourcing apps to get feedback of various conditions of the parks, surveying conditions with drones, smart lighting, smart waste sensors, and more to streamline maintenance practices. Public input reveals that park users desire technology upgrades within the park landscape; in the visual preference survey, 39% of participants chose a solar-panel charging bench when asked which table style they prefer.

### Community Gardens

The popularity and demand for community gardens is growing across the nation and in Broome County. Community gardens are shared spaces that help address various issues including obesity, food deserts, youth development/education, and can revitalize underutilized spaces. The Otsiningo Park Community Gardeners Association operates the garden in Otsiningo Park, and rents plots to the public. Developing community gardens in other parks can establish new relationships with other organizations including Volunteers Improving Neighborhood Environments (VINES) and Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Broome County.

### Skateboarding

Skateparks mostly attract teenagers and young adults, engaging those who skateboard, rollerblade, and ride scooters or bikes. Skateboarding will make its Olympic debut in the Summer 2020 Olympics, which is expected to increase interest in the sport (NRPA, May 2018). Skateboarding is permitted in the county parks, but there are no designated skateparks; the city of Binghamton houses the only public outdoor skatepark in the county.

### Public Art

Public art in the form of murals, mosaics, sculptures, memorials, and more promotes a strong cultural identity, supports the local economy, and breathes new life into public spaces. Various counties around the nation incorporate public art into new construction and facility renovations. Broome County has supported public art by sponsoring public murals, securing grant funds to create new public art, and partnering with local school districts to paint murals at the Broome County Dog Shelter. These efforts should be continued within the parks.

### Festivals

Local festivals and special events provide unique experiences for local residents and visitors. Broome County is home to many cultural festivals and the region's largest festival, Spiedie Fest & Balloon Rally, which takes place at Otsiningo Park each summer. Other types of festivals that are gaining popularity across the nation include food truck, music/arts, craft beverage, and holiday festivals.

### “Art, Parks, and Green Spaces”

Public art is art that is created for and accessible to the public, usually cited in a public space. Public art can take many forms, and is used to rejuvenate public spaces to create new user experiences, but it also can contribute to economic growth in an area.

*NRPA, September 2016*

### Innovative Playground Design

Playgrounds are a fundamental part of any park system; they make parks interesting places, promote physical activity and healthy development, and encourage social relationships among their users. Playground designs across the nation are evolving to include natural playscapes, inclusive/accessible, multi-generational, and interactive playgrounds. During the development of this plan, park managers identified the county's aging playground equipment as an issue that needs to be addressed at multiple parks and multiple survey responses noted the need for new creative playground equipment at the parks, particularly at Dorchester Park. Future upgrades should provide modern, for current and future generations.

### Indoor Recreation

Indoor sports and recreational facilities have become more common to meet the growing demand of multi-purpose indoor recreational space. Outdoor sports and recreational activities are limited to the spring and summer months, but indoor facilities allow users to play year-round. The County does not operate any indoor recreation facilities, but there are several privately-owned facilities in the community which include:

- Greater Binghamton Sports Complex
- The Edge Sports Complex
- The Sportsplex
- 434 Sportsplex
- Planet 3 Extreme Air Park

### Regional Trail Systems

New York State has numerous recreational trail systems used for walking, biking, and hiking. In 2017, Governor Cuomo announced the Empire State Trail, a 750-mile trail system that will connect Buffalo to New York City. While Broome County does not currently connect to the initial phase of the statewide trail system, there are initiatives to create a multi-use regional trail locally. The Two Rivers Greenway is a regional trail that will connect Broome and Tioga counties along the Chenango and Susquehanna Rivers. Currently, there are 10 miles of completed trail segments; part of the trail runs through Otsiningo and new segments are expected to be completed in Roundtop and Grippen Parks.



*Two Rivers Greenway Signage*

### Rewards

One method park agencies are using to engage younger generations is promoting outdoor recreation activities with a rewards/points system. These types of programs encourage friendly competition while creating new experiences for users. The parks could work with various recreational clubs to organize activities such as a scavenger hunt or hiking challenges.

### Sustainability

Survey respondents identified one of the most important benefits of our parks is the role they play in protecting environmental resources. One way to continue promoting this is to integrate sustainable practices into the operations and management of the parks system. Methods to improve sustainability at the parks may include, but are not limited to: developing public education programs, green infrastructure, and following best management practices for developing in the floodplain.

## Parks as a Model for Sustainability

Parks and open spaces can enhance their role as environmental stewards by utilizing sustainable practices that will help preserve natural and cultural resources for future generations. These practices can be integrated into management, fleet, buildings and operations, and waste programs.

*NRPA, April 2017*



*Grippen Park BMX Track  
Photo: Grippen Park BMX*

## Recommendations

The Broome County Parks Plan will be used to guide decisions related to parks, recreation, and open space in the county. Input from the public and other stakeholders helped us develop goals and strategies that will enhance our recreational assets, help prioritize future investments, and support future grant writing initiatives. This section includes general recommendations to improve the parks system and management, and some park-specific recommendations.

## What We Heard



*BC Parks Public  
Survey comments*

## TOP DESIGN FEATURES



Landscaping



Pavilions



Trails



Signage



Tables

## Placemaking

Broome County parks are important gathering spaces for residents and visitors alike. Residents strongly identify with their parks. They are a source of great pride both for the community and the staff of the Parks Department. Creative placemaking can help rejuvenate our parks and ensure they have flexible spaces that can accommodate various groups and interests. By integrating creative placemaking into the parks, the County can help build relationships and develop strategies to enhance their attraction and usability. Steps the Parks Department can take to implement creative placemaking should include:

- Engaging the public through interactive workshops during the planning of new facilities and amenities
- Use the results of the visual preference survey to guide design decisions for new structures and amenities
- Encouraging the County to host more civic and social events at the parks
- Hosting a series of festivals in the parks throughout the year
- Hosting more musical performances at the parks during the summer
- Securing necessary infrastructure for new events
- Using low-cost and temporary techniques that allow users to imagine park spaces in new ways such as, pop-up dog parks and food truck days
- Exploring partnerships to create art throughout the parks

## What is Placemaking?

*A collaborative process by which a community shapes the public realm and facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place*

*Project for Public Spaces, 2007*

## Expand Partnerships and Programming

Broome County Parks has a long history of partnering with organizations to improve its parks, but more connections can be made to create new, exciting experiences in the parks. While park visitation has been steady over the past decade, the introduction of new classes and programs could increase visitation and expand the user base of parks. To do this, Broome County Parks should:

- Conduct an assessment of current parks programs, and identify interests of the community to develop new programs in support of those interests
  - Focus on the recreational needs of the elderly and individuals with special needs
  - Explore non-traditional programming that will diversify park clientele
  - Identify opportunities to enhance existing and develop new environmental, winter, and aquatic programs
  - Consider creating a new passport-style program to encourage visitation and use of the park facilities, or explore opportunities to update Wegmans Passport to Family Wellness brochure to include other recreational activities
- Expand partnerships with other public agencies and identify their role to fill existing programming gaps
  - Develop a protocol that encourages the establishment of new partnerships and use of volunteers
  - Set up volunteer protocols and organize activities for specific groups, providing quality volunteer opportunities at the parks
  - Include volunteer/partnership information on the department's website for interested groups and promote these opportunities on social media

# 10%

of survey respondents  
feel the lack of  
recreational  
programs/facilities of  
interest at Broome  
County Parks  
represent a barrier to  
park use

*BC Parks Public Survey*



*There are opportunities to be innovative and utilize new practices to make the parks' staff jobs easier, but cannot because lack of resources*

*Parks Managers Meeting*

## **Increase Use of Technology in Parks**

New technologies are improving park operations and management by automating systems and processes, and increasing the value of these public spaces. Technology also provides benefits to park users by increasing safety, improving trip planning, and enhancing their park experience. Broome County has been relatively slow to adapt new technologies for parks, but there are opportunities to integrate technology into current operations. To do this, the Parks Department should:

- Transition from paper to digital rental and permit system
- Update all payment systems to allow credit card transactions
- Identify needs and availability of smart technology tools to improve park operations performance
- Research digital counter systems to replace existing visitor counters
- Work with DPW and the Planning Department to identify ways that GIS can be used to enhance park management
- Improve Wi-Fi and broadband availability at the parks
- Integrate solar technologies into park buildings and other areas of the park
- Research and promote use of augmented reality apps such as, Play Biba! And Pokémon Go, that can enhance park user experience
- Establish geocaching activities in the parks

## Use Communications More Effectively to Reach a Larger Audience

Many residents are unaware of the multitude of recreational resources that are available to them here in Broome County, and therefore some parks are underutilized. The survey indicated the best way to communicate information is through social media, email, or the Park's webpage. To bridge the gap between residents and the parks, efforts should be made to:

- Increase effectiveness of social media to promote more events and programs (county and non-county sponsored) that take place at the parks
  - Consolidate the individual Broome County Parks Facebook pages into one page
  - Utilize creative media formats such as videos and infographics in social media posts
  - Highlight park activities year-round, and promote unique recreational assets such as, the greenway/river trails and waterfront activities
  - Cross promotion with other agencies such as Office for Aging and Go All Out Broome
- Update the Parks webpage with information about upcoming events and important notices
- Work with news and entertainment media outlets to provide local spotlights on Broome County Parks
- Collect photos and videos from the public for social media and marketing promotions



*Broome County Parks are a pure gem. They should be strongly promoted luring visitors to our area and should be used to recruit economic development*

*Public Survey Comment*

## BENEFITS OF BC PARKS

One of the top benefits of Broome County Parks is:

### Protects Environmental Resources

*BC Public Survey*

## Enhance and Protect Environmental Resources

Our scenic beauty and abundant natural resources are some of the county's greatest assets. Each of the parks has unique environmental resources that promote passive recreation and contribute to the county's quality of life. In order to maintain these important assets, Broome County should:

- Continue to promote and protect the environmental resources and unique natural areas at the county parks
- Develop educational signage that highlights important environmental features and functions of the parks
- Recognize and document New York State's prohibition of logging public parks

Broome County faces challenges related to impacts of invasive species including loss of habitat and biodiversity, and threats to human health and safety. In order to control the spread and negative impacts of invasive species within the parks, the County should:

- Complete a full invasive species inventory using GPS mapping to record species locations
- Develop an Invasive Species Management Plan
- Develop an Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan
- Pursue funding for prevention and control programs
- Use social media to spread awareness about specific species that public should be aware of and report if detected

The Parks Department works with the Broome County Health Department to test recreational swimming areas to ensure they are safe for public use. While waterborne illnesses are not a common issue the Department has to control, to prepare for potential outbreaks in the future, the Parks Department should:

- Develop a waterborne illness management plan
- Work with the Broome County Health Department to create public education materials related to waterborne illnesses

Broome County parks have about 3 miles of river frontage along the Chenango and Susquehanna Rivers. At these parks we need to recognize their function as flood protection while providing social and recreational benefits. For example, respondents want new amenities that will improve access and visibility of the rivers such as, greenway trails, scenic overlooks, and boat launch sites. The County is working to expand the Two Rivers Greenway and enhance the riverfront in Roundtop and Grippen Parks, however, in order to protect the river while maximizing use of the riverfront, the County should:

- Prioritize flood mitigation benefits of riverfront parks by implementing best practices for floodplain development
- Investigate and educate the public about pollution in the rivers
- Arrange more frequent riverbank cleanups at the riverfront parks

# 20%

of survey respondents  
said concerns of  
pollution/debris levels  
prevent them from  
using the local rivers  
for recreational  
purposes

*BC Parks Public Survey*



*I wanted to go fishing I'm handicapped and in an electric chair. And I do not know of any and I ask if there is fishing docks for the handicapped in Broome County and the answer was always no*

*Public Survey Comment*

## **Improve Accessibility in Our Parks**

Providing accessibility to all users is important to the planning, construction and maintenance of our parks. Preliminary findings from the ADA Accessibility Inventory revealed there are many areas of our parks that need upgrades to be ADA accessible. As Broome County's population continues to age, the mobility and physical ability of residents will change. Multiple survey respondents also noted that some park facilities are difficult to access for those who have mobility impairments. To improve accessibility, the Parks Department should:

- Work with DPW to complete Broome County Parks Accessibility Audit of all park facilities and amenities i.e. trails, parking, restrooms, tables, benches, pavilions, playgrounds, water resources
- Upgrade existing facilities to be accessible to individuals with disabilities
  - Ensure any alterations or renovations of facilities are accessible to, useable by, and engage individuals of all ages and abilities
  - Prioritize high visitation parks, and facilities and amenities that are important for user experience
- Prioritize accessibility when developing new facilities and amenities
  - Utilize Universal Design practices when planning new facilities
- Focus on the recreational needs of the elderly and individuals with special needs
- Partner with groups to assure new projects are accessible to individuals with disabilities

## Enhance Organizational Capacity

The Broome County Parks Department strives to provide quality recreational activities for residents and visitors. Decades of budget cuts have eroded the Department's ability to maintain and enhance the parks. Through this plan, the organizational structure and established policies/procedures were reviewed. The following items should be implemented to improve departmental operations:

- Communicate issues and needs with Broome County DPW to identify opportunities for sharing staff and resources
- Work with DPW to complete an asset inventory documenting location, quantity, condition, photos, issues, etc. of all infrastructure, facilities, and amenities
- Partner with Binghamton University to explore options of expanding their bike share program to include the larger community
- Continue to review and update Department policies and procedures. After an initial review, the following updates should be made:
  - Complete and document the Broome County Parks Maintenance and Operations Plan
  - Incorporate green infrastructure into park projects
  - Incorporate sustainability initiatives into park's operations and maintenance
  - Establish and document procedures to follow during a flood or other type of natural hazard event
  - Establish winter weather maintenance policies that specifically address snow removal protocols
  - Establish and publicize official public policy outlining the maintenance and use of county-owned watersheds



*Parks can't add new facilities or activities because limited resources are overextended maintaining what they already have*

*Parks Managers Meeting*



*My son has been a lifeguard at Dorchester for a few years, they wish they had a big Swimming Rules sign to refer to when enforcing the many rules - the swimmers almost always get hostile and have left bad feedback online. The rules should be posted everywhere else too, brochures, websites, social media. People don't always understand it's about keeping people safe*

*Public Survey Comment*

- Continue to review and update Department policies and procedures. After an initial review, the following updates should be made:
  - Update policies in the Department's Charter and Code:
    - Update the weapons and explosives section and remove language referencing use of firearms in county parks
    - Add statement restricting use of alcohol in water and boats
    - Review current policies regarding consumption of alcohol in Otsiningo Park
    - Update hunting and fishing section and remove language referencing hunting in county parks
    - Add language prohibiting feeding of waterfowl in county parks
    - Add language about supervision of children under 10, restriction personal floatation devices, and use of special swimming diapers
    - Review current policy restricting use of personal watercrafts on county-owned waterbodies
    - Update traffic section referencing use snowmobiles and ATVs to reflect the prohibition in county parks

Allow the Commissioner to establish rules for the following:

- Park Hours
- Groups over 25 need a permit
- Sound amplification
- Group Camping
- Establish Entertainment/Event regulations and requirements

Other topics that should be addressed in the Park's Department policies:

- Establish food vendor policy for special events and everyday operation within the park
- Create a stage rental permit form
- Smoking prohibited with the exception of parking areas and overnight campsites; update to include vaping policy

#### Capital Improvements

- Commit funding to the Parks CIP for regular maintenance, park upgrades, and maintenance equipment purchases
- Identify and document facilities and amenities that need to be upgraded or replaced and update status monthly
- Engage the public in planning of new park amenities and facilities

## Individual Park Recommendations

The previous sections identified general recommendations that should be applied to the entire County Parks system. Each park has a unique character and specific needs, which will be addressed in the following sections. These recommendations focus on improvements to existing parks, and priorities for future facilities and amenities.



*Aqua Terra needs better trail markers and maps. Put accurate trail maps on the Broome County Parks website*

*Public Survey Comment*

### Aqua Terra Wilderness Area

Aqua Terra is the County's largest and least developed county park. Based on the public survey responses, the majority of people want the park to remain undeveloped, but would like to see the addition of amenities including restrooms, picnic tables, and a scenic overlook area.

- Apply for funding to complete a master plan to guide future improvements and amenities
- Clarify park boundary lines with property markings
- Post "No Hunting" signage at entrance and along park boundaries
- Implement trail improvements including signage
- Add bike racks to encourage use of alternative modes of transportation

## Dorchester

Dorchester park is the county's third busiest park. The parks inventory revealed there are flooding issues and aging facilities at the park, but generally the public has very positive perceptions of the park.

- Determine economic feasibility of creating a concession stand at the park
- Examine and repair septic holding tanks
- Build new pavilion between parking lot and lifeguard shack
- Cut down dead trees within the park
- When play area upgrades are made, include ADA and other innovative playground equipment
- Install ADA-accessible boat dock with flood resistant design
- Add bike racks to encourage use of alternative modes of transportation
- Work with the federal government and the Whitney Point Rotary to develop walking trail around Dorchester Lake and make sure trail is wide enough for park maintenance vehicles
- Clarify park boundary lines with property markings
- Complete Dorchester Park Gateway Project
- Reconstruct road and parking into office
- Add to DPW pavement management inspection schedule
- Crack sealing to prolong life of existing pavement (parking lot)
- Reconstruct Greenwood parking lot with permeable pavement and other green infrastructure techniques
- Perform regular maintenance on culverts
- Evaluate and renovate south restrooms

”

*I've really enjoyed discovering Dorchester Park. I boast that it is one of the cleaner more enjoyable parks in our area. I like that you can bring your own boat... some of the others don't let you and you have to rent from them, which is discouraging*

*Public Survey Comment*

## Greenwood

Greenwood Park is the county's oldest and most developed park. Despite its remote location in western Broome County, Greenwood attracts over 100,000 visitors each year. Stormwater drainage issues exist throughout the park, and some of the park facilities require upgrades.

“

*At Greenwood Park, it is a dead zone for cell phones. Getting a signal is very spotty. We camp there and I sometimes feel unsafe without phone access in the camping area. I would suggest either a Wi-Fi or signal booster for the area*

*Public Survey Comment*

- Campground upgrades: new electric lines, renovate restrooms, replace existing firing pads with new firing pads
- Replace two picnic shelters in the park near the volleyball court
- Repave main parking area, road to campground, and walkways between sacs
- Build new building for concession stand
- When play area upgrades are made, include ADA and other innovative playground equipment
- Make necessary repairs to maintenance buildings
- Install aluminum boat dock
- Update interpretive signage for nature trail
- Add bike racks to encourage use of alternative modes of transportation
- Enhance campground to accommodate temporary housing during a natural disaster
- Spot repairs on damaged roads
- Crack sealing to prolong life of existing pavement
- Replace asphalt sidewalk in northern part of park
- Add to DPW pavement management inspection schedule
- Analyze subbase & subgrade to determine best action
- Rehabilitate south parking lot within 3-5 years
- Spot repairs in damaged areas (parking)
- Replace small culverts as needed
- Add large culverts to DPW inspection schedule
- Clarify park boundary lines with property markings

## Grippen Park

Grippen Park is the county's smallest park and is slated for special improvements to increase its riverfront accessibility and appeal. Most comments on the public survey were nostalgic about the ice rink, however flooding issues at the park have made restoring the ice rink impractical. Besides flooding, the poor condition of the BMX structure is another issue facing the park.

- Complete upgrades to improve safety, use, and aesthetics of BMX structure
- Ensure adequate access to public restrooms is available year-round
- Explore options of replacing play area woodchips with rubber mulch
- When play area upgrades are made, include ADA and other innovative playground equipment
- Add bike racks to encourage use of alternative modes of transportation
- Complete Chugnut trail extension through the park
- Complete boat launch improvements
- Complete scenic outlook
- Continue to enhance riverfront access and amenities
- Clarify park boundary lines with property markings
- Partial rehabilitation on park entrance road
- Crack sealing to prolong life of existing pavement
- Rehabilitate pavement adjacent to BMX facility
- Crack sealing to prolong life of existing pavement (parking)
- Spot repairs in damaged areas (parking)
- Repair slab crack and determine if additional ground work needs to be completed

## RIVERFRONT IMPROVEMENTS

The top three riverfront improvements the public would like to see include:

**Greenway trails**

**Scenic outlooks**

**Boat access sites**

*BC Public Survey*



*The hiking trails at Hawkins Pond need help there are quite a few trees and branches down*

*Public Survey Comment*

### **Hawkins Pond Natural Area**

Hawkins Pond is another large undeveloped park with relatively low visitation compared to the other parks. The public sees this park as a great place to hike, but they were concerned with the condition and maintenance of the trails there.

- Improve condition of main trails with use of volunteers
- Clarify park boundary lines with property markings
- Post “No Hunting” signage at entrance and along park boundaries
- Upgrade park bathrooms
- Explore options to provide firewood with pavilion reservation
- Add bike racks to encourage use of alternative modes of transportation

### Nathaniel Cole Park

Cole Park is the most developed park in eastern Broome County. Overall, the public is satisfied with the conditions at the park, but there are some mobility concerns, especially near the boat dock. The managers also identified the aging boat dock as an issue, along with the condition of the facilities.

- Develop new trail loop in southern portion of the park
- Upgrade lifeguard and west bathroom facilities
- Install aluminum boat docks and improve access from walking path
- Install new stairs from east parking lot
- Clarify park boundary lines with property markings
- Repave parking areas
- Explore feasibility of creating primitive campgrounds in western area of the park
- Add bike racks to encourage use of alternative modes of transportation
- Maintain newly paved entrance road
- Crack sealing to prolong life of existing pavement
- Spot repairs on damaged roads
- Analyze existing parking areas to determine method of repair for parking areas
- Crack sealing to prolong life of existing pavement in some areas (parking)
- Repair/replace two CMP culverts in the east end of park
- Rebuild pedestrian bridge over Still Creek
- Rehabilitation/reconstruction of maintenance building



*Can't access Cole Park boat launch on walker or wheelchair. The ground at Cole park makes mobility difficult. Chopping down tree routes or removal may not be an option but a paved trail by the playground area to the water would be great*

*Public Survey Comment*

### Otsiningo Park

Otsiningo Park is the County's most centrally located and most visited park. Being a riverfront park, there are obvious flooding issues, but there are also localized drainage issues within the park. The public noted this park is great for fitness and family activities, the geese droppings are a drawback of the park.



*An enclosed doggie leash-free part of the park would be **AWESOME** at Otsiningo park*

*Public Survey Comment*

- Complete construction of the community stage
- When play area upgrades are made, include ADA and other innovative playground equipment
- Explore options of replacing play area's woodchips with rubber mulch
- Establish policy that will allow food truck vendors to operate within the park
- Provide dog amenities such as pet waste stations and water fountains/wash stations
- Add bike racks to encourage use of alternative modes of transportation
- Install interpretative signage at Otsiningo Park: historical significance, education about flood storage, or effects of feeding waterfowl
- Increase access and make riverfront improvements
- Improve drainage issues throughout park, particularly for soccer fields 1 & 2
- Clarify park boundary lines with property markings
- Crack sealing to prolong life of existing pavement
- Spot repairs on damaged roads/walkways
- Crack sealing to prolong life of existing pavement (parking)
- Complete full inventory of park's culverts and repair as needed
- Establish method of repair for slab cracks
- Determine if additional groundwork needs to be completed to address underlying issues

### Roundtop Park

Roundtop Park is a hidden gem that historically offered unique views of the valley. Currently the view is obstructed by trees and overgrown brush, which was a matter expressed by the public in the survey. Proposed improvements to the park would enhance the park's viewpoint and bring trails closer to the river.

- Improve existing trail connecting park to West Edward Street
- Increase riverfront access by completing Chugnut Trail and Roundtop spur
- Complete the scenic outlook deck
- Install interpretive signage telling history of the park and surrounding area
- Clarify park boundary lines with property markings
- Add bike racks to encourage use of alternative modes of transportation

”

*Round Top Park,  
Endicott, scenic view  
is very limited  
because of years of  
growth of brush,  
weeds, and trees at  
the rail surrounding  
the upper East extent  
of the active park  
area*

*Public Survey Comment*