

# Mendocino Parks

## Operations and Management Analysis

Mendocino County Parks

February 23, 2022



# Acknowledgments

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# Introduction



## Introduction

This report is a follow up to the County Parks Needs Assessment. It provides an analysis of the County of Mendocino parks' estimated capital and operational costs, potential revenue sources, and overall recommendations for future management of the parks based on the needs expressed in the initial report.

### Purpose and Need

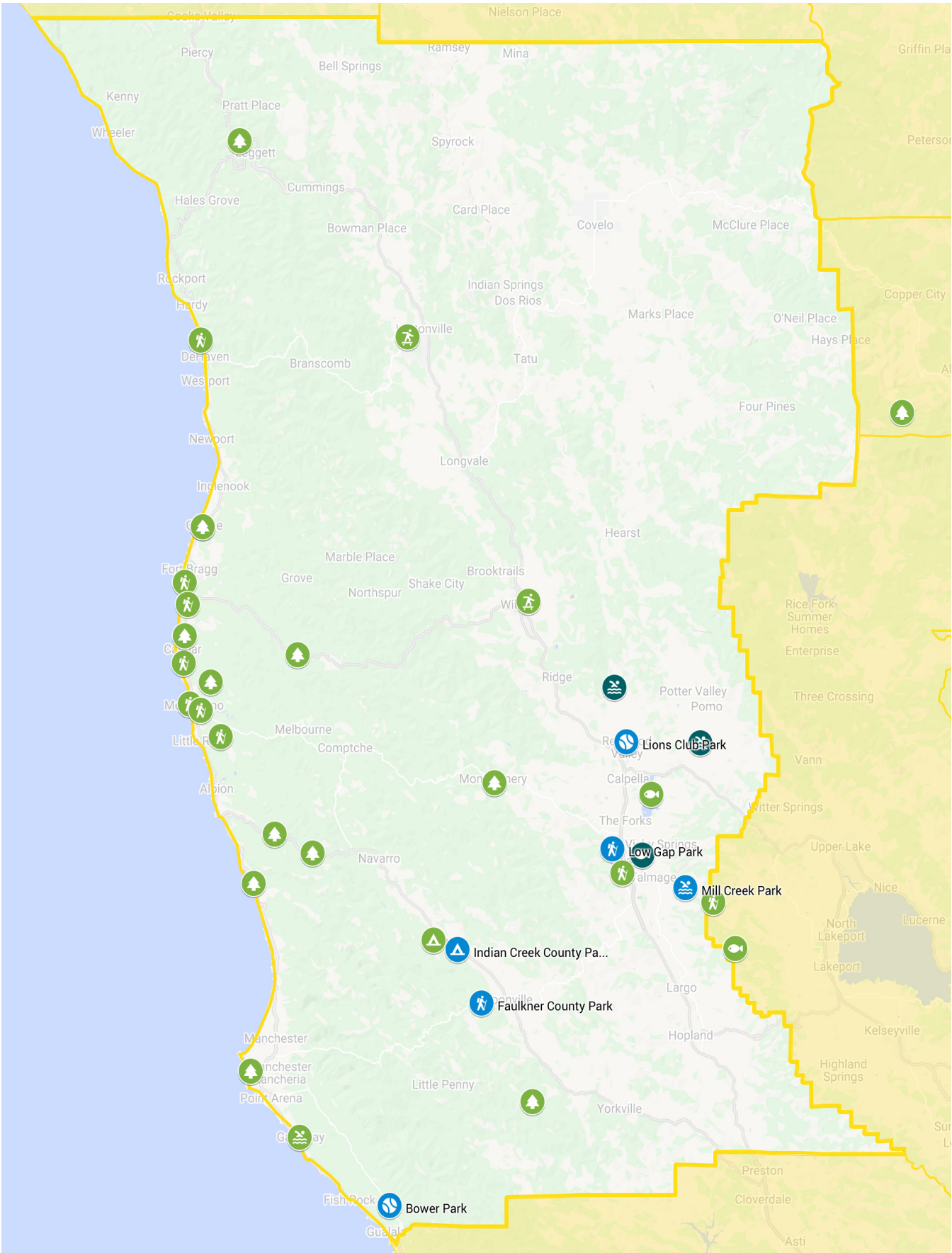
The goal of this document is to help County staff and the Board of Supervisors **understand capital, operating, and maintenance costs and potential revenue streams** for County Parks to inform park management decisions. This document provides operations scenarios for each park to help the County **determine which options to pursue for managing and operating the parks**. This includes **evaluating whether the County should consider transferring ownership** of any parks or access areas that are a significant liability to the County, if possible.

Currently, the **County's parks need substantial deferred maintenance and capital investment**. They have been neglected for a long time with a lack of dedicated resources including funding and staff. According to the National Recreation and Parks Association's (NRPA) 2020 Agency Performance Review, which provides a snapshot of US parks funding, staffing, available amenities,

and programming, the lower quartile of US parks have an annual per capita budget of \$42.95. To meet this lower quartile mark, the County, with a population of 87,000, would need to have an annual budget of \$3.7 million. This figure is focused on more intense city park system operations, and many rural counties would not be as high as this. However using the same methodology, Mendocino County spends approximately \$2.50 per person for parks. The Needs Assessment provided an analysis of six other similar, nearby County park systems, and Mendocino County has the lowest budget by a wide margin.

In consideration of this funding, there are a number of **opportunities to enhance and improve the County's ability to serve the community and add value to visitors** if parks are improved and maintained adequately. The potential to generate additional revenues from the parks is one of the areas assessed and demonstrates an opportunity to increase services while offsetting some of the costs.





## Report Contents

The report provides an overall summary of policies and needs for the successful operation of the park system, as well as the following for each park:

- **Overview** with a park description and overview of the park conditions
- **Amenities Summary** of existing park amenities
- **Health and safety hazard** assessment with recommended actions and costs
- **Minimum Function** Capital improvements needed at for minimum operations regardless of operation model. Please note that these are preliminary estimated capital costs and have not been reviewed by County architects or engineers
- **Annual Maintenance costs** to maintain the park in an operable condition; undeveloped acreage estimates include fuel/ fire mitigation and vegetation management considerations
- **Future improvements** summary of beneficial changes to enhance use and functionality
- **Operations model** recommendation and staffing needs

Table 1. County Park Summary Inventory

Park Name	Park Size	Fulfills Potential?
1. Community Park		
Bower Park	10 acres	Below Potential
Lions Club Park	4 acres	Meets Potential
Low Gap Park	80 acres	Meets Potential with Needs
1. Community Park		94 acres
2. Regional Park		
Faulkner Park	40 acres	Below Potential
Indian Creek County Park & Campground	15 acres	Meets Potential with Needs
Mill Creek Park	400 acres	Below Potential
2. Regional Park		455 acres
3. Access Area		
Mariposa Swimming Hole	.35 acre	Below Potential
McKee Parkway	25 acres	Below Potential
Vichy Springs Fishing Area	2.7 acres	Below Potential
3. Access Area		28.05 acres

- **Costs and Potential Revenue** tables with estimated capital costs for the above improvements and actions and potential revenue streams

## Enabling Policies

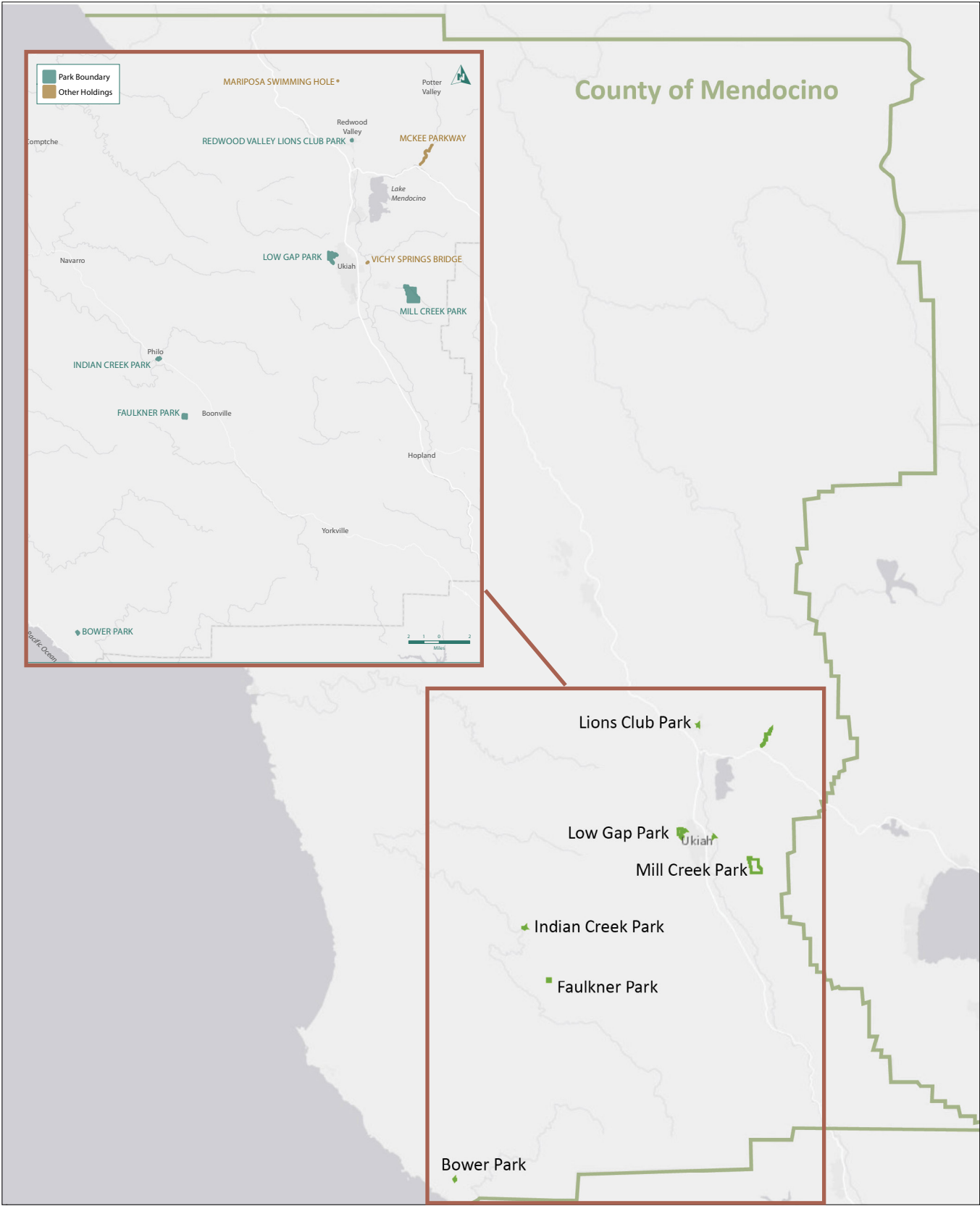
In addition to the specific park recommendations, the County must also implement several key policy changes to enable efficient and effective park management and reduce overall risk to the County, listed below.

## Sustained Funding Source

The County must establish and maintain a basic level of funding, such as a general fund allocation for the parks and required staff. This also entails creating a dedicated parks budget process to evaluate funding.

## Strategic Property Management

New properties that are gifted to the County must undergo an operations and maintenance cost analysis to determine whether the property is worth owning and maintaining.



Minimum Capital/Maintenance

For all parks, the County must complete a minimum level of park improvements to address health, safety, and risks. These basic improvements are required regardless of the long-term plans for the parks.

Staffing

In addition to capital and ongoing maintenance costs, the County needs to provide funding for Park staff to manage and operate the parks to meet their full potential. This includes providing proper ongoing maintenance of the parks and amenities, managing and coordinating volunteers and community involvement, and building additional revenue sources.

Partnerships

The County should partner with community organizations to help fund-raise for park improvements and maintenance. This includes organizations such as Friends of the Parks, comprised of volunteers and neighbors of parks in the City of Ukiah. This effort would require dedicated parks staff, as discussed in the next section.

Costs and Revenue Overview

Below is an overview table of the estimated capital costs, maintenance costs, and revenue potential associated with each park. More detailed cost breakdowns for each park are provided later in the report.

Table 2: Overview of costs and revenue for parks

	Capital Costs–Health and Safety Hazard	Capital Costs–Minimum Function	Capital Costs Future Improvements	Annual Maintenance Costs	Additional Staffing Needs	Revenue – Low	Revenue– High
Bower Park	\$413,250	\$108,000	\$665,100	\$75,000		\$30,280	\$131,070
Faulkner Park	\$24,000	\$222,500	\$330,000	\$43,500		\$18,050	\$64,090
Indian Creek Park	\$67,500	\$221,400	\$7,500	\$45,000		\$18,725	\$68,555
Low Gap Park	\$1,095,000	\$52,500	\$513,000	\$102,500		\$22,360	\$97,920
Mill Creek Park	\$18,000	\$547,500	\$450,900	\$129,250		\$18,800	\$81,760
Lion’s Club Park	\$0	\$0	\$130,750	\$20,000		\$21,960	\$96,080
Mariposa Swimming Hole	\$51,000	\$0	\$0	\$1,500		N/A	N/A
McKee Parkway	\$0	\$2,000	\$210,000	\$18,750		N/A	N/A
Vichy Springs Fishing Area	\$0	\$7,500	\$34,200	\$3,000		N/A	N/A
Total	\$1,668,750	\$1,161,400	\$2,341,450	\$438,500	+/- 14 FTE	\$130,175	\$539,475



Costs are broken down into the following four areas to provide a complete picture of costs for the parks.

- Capital Cost Estimate
- Annual Maintenance
- Revenue Potential
- Additional Staffing Needs

### Capital Cost Estimate

The Capital Costs are separated into three subcategories: Health and Safety Hazard; Minimum Function; and Future Improvements. The three categories indicates which improvements are a priority for the County and what must be done immediately versus in the future Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Many of these costs are due to deferred maintenance over the years. These costs have been derived from best practices, experience in similar upgrades and insights from the County's current activities. Each project will ultimately need to be budgeted based on a detailed bid from a contractor or County.

All "Health and Safety Hazard" costs need to be done immediately and included in the current CIP to avoid the most critical risks. This is estimated to be approximately \$1.7 million.

Secondly, to make the parks operational and good for the community to use, the County needs to address the "Minimum Function" improvements. These include items such as bathroom additions or improvements, removal of old and broken facilities. These costs are approximately \$1.2 million.

The last category, "Future Improvements," are those that will make the parks better for the community, increase overall function, and open up opportunities to additional revenue opportunities. These costs are approximately \$2.3 million.

### Annual Maintenance

Annual maintenance costs are those associated with keeping the parks clean, operational and protecting the County's investment in the parks. The estimates are based on best practices and expertise in analyzing similar costs for similar parks. To determine these costs, the report identifies two kinds of maintenance– those for higher intensity use, "developed areas," such as playgrounds, picnic areas, etc, and the costs associated with the more remote, lower intense uses, "undeveloped areas," such as for trails and open space.

These costs are estimated to be approximately \$440,000 annually.

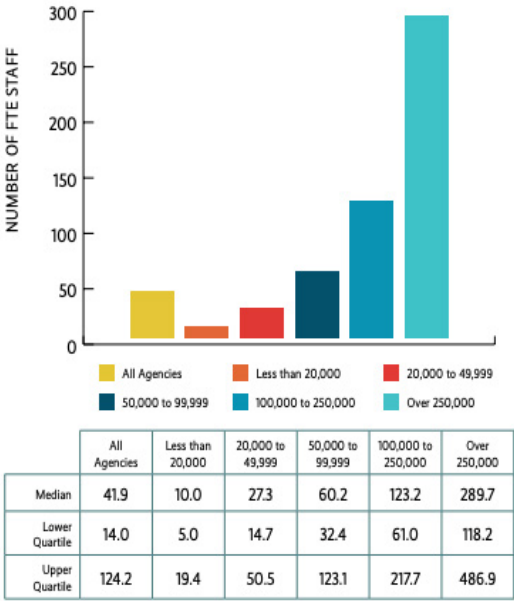
### Revenue Potential

Revenue potential estimates are based on the current or potential facilities at each park. These estimates are conservative and are presented in a range from low to high. This wide range is due to the lack of current staff and capacity to effectively conduct revenue generating activities. If the County can commit to additional staffing and to the parks in general, programming, reservations, and events have the potential to contribute funding to the Park's operation costs. In addition, greater programming will increase use and community services.

### Staffing and Organization

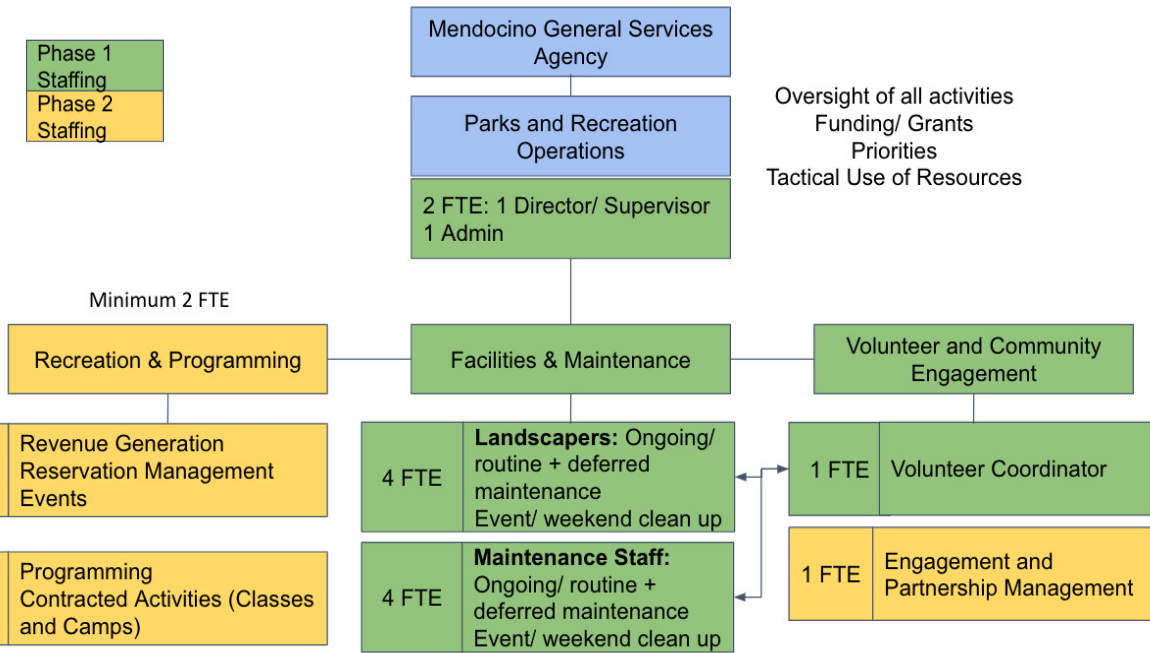
The County must hire or contract for additional staff to oversee park operations and to provide ongoing maintenance. These staff are necessary to ensure that parks are maintained and used to the greatest benefit for the community. In addition, dedicated administrative staff are needed to manage programs, oversee volunteers, and work with stakeholders, and more.

The graph to the right is an overview from the 2020 NRPA Agency Performance Review outlining typical agency staffing numbers for parks, based on size of jurisdiction. According to the report, the lower quartile of jurisdictions the size of Mendocino (with a population of 87,000), on average, have 32 FTE employees. Currently, the County Parks are operating with no full time operations or programming staff and limited maintenance staff who have additional demands. As with the overall budgeting noted in the introduction, the NRPA number is for a more intense operation and is not a direct indicator of how a rural County should operate. However, the County needs to dedicated a minimum level of staff.



Source: 2020 NRPA Agency Performance Review

#### Staffing Organization Overview





The organization chart on the previous page illustrates a basic level of staffing necessary, phasing in employees over the next five years. Phase 1 is in the immediate term (within a year) and Phase 2 is within the next 5 years.

In the immediate future, the County should prioritize hiring essential staff (Phase 1 of staffing), including a director of Parks and Operations to oversee the parks, and direct resources and priorities, along with administrative support to help with grant development.

The County already has dedicated grant writers for securing disaster recovery funds, so filling this position could include hiring a new staff member or reallocating responsibilities among existing grant writers. This staff person (or people) would identify unique revenue streams to pursue for park capital improvement funding and maintenance. Additionally, this person could work with community organizations to help fund raise for parks and help with grant writing for park improvements and maintenance.

**Maintenance Staff**

The County should hire 4 full-time equivalent (FTE) landscape and 4 FTE maintenance staff to address deferred and current maintenance and to cover the large county and rural areas. Costs for maintenance staff are built in to annual maintenance estimates in this report. The County should include this consideration when developing its budget for staffing, as this will offset some of the cost of hiring more staff.

The County should try to schedule park maintenance staff to work from Thursday through Monday specifically to support the parks. This schedule would allow County parks to be cleaned over the weekend, when there is greater park use and more events are held in the parks. In addition, this would provide another level of security for the parks, and improve community service.

Several of the parks – Bower Park, Indian Creek Park and Faulkner Park– are located at great distance from the County's maintenance hub. Costs for providing maintenance to these parks are increased due to the driving distances to these locations. To address these increased costs the County is currently planning to contract with a third party service for their maintenance.

An alternative park steward/ranger model could be considered in the future where a person is assigned to a particular park, providing a more customer service focus, some regulation oversight along with some routine maintenance as done for state parks.

**Partnerships and Volunteers**

To leverage community volunteers and partnerships, the County must also hire a 1 FTE position of Volunteer Coordinator, who would oversee park volunteers to do trail maintenance and related improvement activities . This position would coordinate with facilities and maintenance staff. This is a critical need especially in the more remote areas of the County. Initially, the Volunteer Coordinator would help with partnerships and be replaced in the second phase with a 1 FTE Community Engagement and Partnership Manager to help with managing and building community relationships and engagement.

**Recreation and Programming Staff**

As part of the second phase of staffing, within the next five years the County should hire at least 2 FTE recreation and programming staff, with a focus of creating programs, managing reservations, events, and generating revenue.



**Parks Overview & Recommendations**





# Bower Park | Gualala

## Overview

### 10 Developed Acres

Bower Park is a community park in a beautiful setting, and is the only community park in its area, the southern coast of the County. There is high potential to make the park a unique and special place. Key amenities include an amphitheater, baseball field, basketball court, and tennis court. However, the park has many critical issues and hazards that are preventing it from realizing its potential. Dying trees and deferred maintenance pose risks. Many facilities are in disrepair and hardscape throughout park is cracking, creating potential safety issues.

## Amenities Summary

Amphitheater (4)	Poor
Baseball Field (16)	Fair
Basketball Court (241)	Poor
Caretaker Area	Poor
Community Room (185)	Poor
Duck Pond (302)	Poor
Horseshoe Pit	Poor
Nature Trail (212)	Poor
Outdoor Par Course	Poor
Parking (2,186)	Fair
Picnic Area (11)	Good
Picnic Area (17)	Fair
Play Lot (184)	Good
Play Lot (188)	Good
Pond Trail (7, 190)	Fair
Restroom (15)	Good
Signage	Poor
Tennis Courts	Poor

## Health, Safety, and Risk

There are multiple hazards in the park that need to be remedied in order to address liability concerns. The following health and safety hazards have been identified, along with recommended actions to address each hazard.

- Dying and failing trees pose a falling and fire hazard to the park and surrounding area. The County is currently addressing the hazardous tree conditions with PG&E mitigation funds.
- The pond spillway needs to be repaired.
- The uneven basketball court surface is a tripping hazard, and should be repaved or removed.
- The tennis court surface is a tripping hazard, and the court should be renovated or repaved.
- An illegal fire pit at the tot lot is a safety concern, and should be removed.
- The ballfield scorer's booth is hazardous and should be replaced.
- The amphitheater stage and ramp are buckling and rotting, and need to be completely renovated and brought to current code standards, or removed.

## Minimum Function

The following are upgrades needed to bring Bower Park to adequate condition for the County or community partner to be able to operate it at a satisfactory level. Below are the minimum improvements needed, as well as anticipated ongoing maintenance costs.

## Minimum Capital Improvements

- 100+/- trees should be replanted, watered, and maintained.
- The County should increase signage in the park to promote way-finding and better use of the park.
- The ballfield fence is in poor condition, and

damaged portions should be replaced.

- The caretaker area should be removed and the site should be cleaned.
- The restroom lacks an ADA ramp and needs repair. The County should add a ramp and handrails.
- The abandoned par course in the wooded area is unused and lacks signage. The remaining equipment should be removed.

## Minimum Maintenance Costs

- Bower Park has 10 acres of developed land to maintain, at a projected cost of \$7,500 per acre. This cost assumes an adjusted operations model, and includes increased costs due to remote location.
  - Total maintenance costs: **\$75,000/ year**

## Future Improvements

There are multiple future improvements that would benefit Bower Park in the long-term. These improvements are not urgent but would make the park more attractive and enhance its use. The following are recommended future improvements:

- Develop a Park Master Plan to improve the overall functionality of the park.
- Remove the unused community building.
- Upgrade the picnic areas by adding a barbecue grill, tables, and a trash can.
- Rehabilitate and enhance the duck pond.
- Relocate the tot lot away from the duck pond, and add play structures.
- Fully renovate or replace the tennis and basketball courts.
- Resurface the parking lot and stripe parking stalls.



## Operations Model

The County should operate this park with a community partnership to the extent possible. A community organization, such as the existing Friends of Bower Park group, should organize activities, be in charge of day-to-day maintenance, etc., while the County manages the reservation system. The County would still be responsible for capital improvements/ large scale maintenance.

## Staff Implications

There will need to be a designated staff member to negotiate with the community organization.

## Costs and Potential Revenues

### Capital Cost Estimate

	Health and Safety Hazard	Minimum Function	Future Improvements
Hazardous Tree Removal *	\$50,000		
Tree Replanting		\$15,000	
Repair Pond Spillway	\$142,000		
Park Master Plan			\$90,000
Remove Community Building			\$75,000
Resurface Basketball Court	\$50,000		
Resurface Tennis Courts	\$80,000		
Remove Illegal Fire Pit	\$750		
Upgrade picnic areas			\$9,600
Signage		\$15,000	
Pond Rehabilitation			\$150,000
Relocate Tot Lot (per Master Plan)			\$150,000
Replace Ballfield Scorer's Booth	\$60,000		
Repair Ballfield Fence		\$3,000	
Redo Tennis Court			\$150,000
Resurface Parking Lot			\$40,500
Remove & Clean Caretaker Area		\$37,500	
Repair Amphitheater	\$30,000		
Remove Par Course		\$7,500	
Repair Restroom ADA ramp		\$15,000	
Total	\$413,250	\$108,000	\$665,100

### Revenue Potential

	Highest potential	With Major Improvement	With more staff	Revenue (low)	Revenue (high)
Group Picnic Areas	●			\$8,480	\$32,480
Events (Rentals, concerts, weddings)		●		\$1,800	\$12,340
Summer Camp			●	\$4,800	\$15,000
Community Programs/ Classes			●	\$1,920	\$9,600
Sports, outdoor programs			●	\$3,200	\$14,400
Fitness/ Bootcamp programs			●	\$7,680	\$28,800
Youth Programs (Outdoor adventure; nature, etc.)			●	\$720	\$7,200
Total				\$30,280	\$131,070

### Annual Maintenance Estimate

	Annual Maintenance
Developed Acreage	\$75,000
Total	\$75,000

\* \$300,000 of PG&E mitigation funds is also being used for tree removal.



# Faulkner Park | Boonville

## Overview

### 2 Developed Acres, 38 Undeveloped Acres

Faulkner Park is a beautiful regional park with large, healthy redwoods, and is a potential location for a group camp site, and ongoing nature programs. There is also an opportunity to site a wildfire staging area in concert with a group camp development. Key amenities include picnic areas and nature trails. Currently, much of the park is not maintained and there are potential fire hazards due to overgrown vegetation. Additionally, the trails are underuti-lized and the picnic areas are in poor repair due to deferred maintenance.

## Amenities Summary

Meadow (310)	Fair
Nature Discovery Trail (315)	Fair
Park Ridge Trail (502)	Fair
Parking	Poor
Picnic Areas (178, 180, 181)	Poor
Restroom (175)	Poor
Signage	Fair

## Health, Safety, and Risk

A couple of immediate improvements are necessary for Faulkner Park to either be in adequate condition for a potential concessionaire to take over opera-tions or for the County to operate it safely. Below are health and safety hazards, and what is needed to address each hazard:

- Crossing the roadway from the trail area to the restroom/ meadow is dangerous. Multiple crosswalks need to be installed in order to improve pedestrian safety. Coordinate with County Department of Transportation for crosswalk improvements.
- Parking pullouts are eroding, and need to be graded and reinforced to prevent further damage and return to a more usable condition. Coordinate with County Department of Transportation for roadway right-of-way improvements.

## Minimum Function

The following are upgrades needed for Faulkner Park to either be in adequate condition for a potential concessionaire to take over operations or for the County to be able to operate it adequately. Below are the minimum improvements and ongoing annual maintenance costs:

## Minimum Capital Improvements

- A vault toilet or similar low maintenance bathroom should be added to the picnic area on the south side of the road to allow ADA accessibility and to accommodate more users.
- The picnic areas on the south side of the park should be improved with barbecue grills, tables, and trash cans.
- Two boardwalks that act as stream crossings should be replaced for better safety and stability.

## Minimum Maintenance Costs

- Faulkner Park has 2 acres of developed parkland to maintain at a projected cost of \$7,500 per acre (due to its remote location)\*.
  - Cost: \$15,000/ year
- There are 38 acres of natural areas to maintain at a projected cost of \$750 per acre.
  - Cost: \$28,500/ year

Total maintenance costs: **\$43,500/ year**

\*This cost does not include future maintenance that will be required if additional bathrooms are to be added.

## Future Improvements

There are multiple future improvements that would benefit Faulkner Park in the long-term. These improvements are not urgent but would make the park more attractive and enhance its use. The following are recommended future improvements:

- Develop a parking lot in the level meadow area on the north side of the road to allow for more visitors, as well as to provide an emergency location for fire trucks, if needed.
- Add a group camping area on the north side of the park. Develop a parking lot that could be used in an emergency for fire truck staging as well as for group camping.

- Repair the existing restroom, which only has one operable side.
- Provide additional signage to enhance use of park.

## Operations Model

The location of the park limits the options for operation. There are two general operational possibilities:

- The County continues to maintain and operate the entire park with help from volunteers; or
- Identify a concessionaire for some limited group camping/wedding site activities

Regardless of the County's decision around campground development, the County could work with a community organization on day-to-day upkeep of hiking trails, picnic and nature areas, as well as for the roadside clean up and maintenance.

## Staff Implications

If the County decides to bring on a concession-aire to run a group camp/wedding venue, a staff member would have to provide oversight. If the County chooses to manage the park as is, it should establish a formal partnership with a community organization such as Friends of Faulkner to help maintain trails and vegetation, clean bathrooms, and manage trash pickup and garbage.



# Costs and Potential Revenues

## Capital Cost Estimate

	Health and Safety Hazard	Minimum Function	Future Improvements
Develop parking lot			\$210,000
Add group camping area			\$37,500
Add ADA accessible restroom		\$200,000	
Improve picnic areas		\$15,000	
Repair existing restroom			\$75,000
Crosswalks*	\$15,000		
Signage			\$7,500
Reinforce and grade parking pullouts*	\$9,000		
Replace boardwalk stream crossings		\$7,500	
Total	\$24,000	\$222,500	\$330,000

\* These costs, though necessary for park safety would be under the County Department of Transportation, as they are within roadway right-of-way.

## Revenue Potential

	Highest potential	With Major Improvements	With More Staff	Revenue (low)	Revenue (high)
Camping	●			\$16,250	\$51,750
Events (Rentals, concerts, weddings)	○	●		\$1,800	\$12,340
Total				\$18,050	\$64,090

## Annual Maintenance Estimate

	Annual Maintenance
Developed Acreage	\$15,000
Undeveloped Acreage	\$28,500
Total	\$43,500

\* Maintenance estimate does not include increased maintenance for future additional restrooms and amenities for expanded camping use.



# Indian Creek Park | Philo

## Overview

### 5 Acres Developed, 10 Acres Undeveloped

Indian Creek Park is a beautiful regional park with sites for car camping and access to a swimming hole and a nature trail, among other amenities. Indian Creek Park has the highest revenue of all of the County parks (which is very limited), with the Indian Creek Park use fees accounting for most of the County's park revenue. However, many social trails are eroding the landscape, the park bathrooms are inadequate for camping, and there is no effective registration system for camping or day use. Additionally, illegal fires are a major concern. Fencing along the creek and along the park property boundary is in disrepair.

## Amenities Summary

Camp Sites (162)	Good
Day Use-Picnic Area (164)	Good
Fee Collection Area	Good
Landscape Areas / Trees	Good
Nature Trail (153)	Fair
Parking (165)	Fair
Restroom (159)	Good
Restroom (166)	Good
Signage	Fair
Upper Indian Creek Trail (156, 158)	Fair
Water Access (296)	Good

## Health and Safety Hazard

- The existing wire fencing is broken, rusted and dangerous, and should be removed and replaced with split rail or similar fencing.

## Minimum Function

The following are upgrades needed for Indian Creek Park to either be in adequate condition for a potential concessionaire to take over operations or for the County to be able to operate it adequately. Below are the minimum improvements needed and maintenance costs:

### Minimum Capital Improvements

- Restrooms should be added to the far end of the campground to make the park more suitable for camping.
- The picnic areas should be upgraded to provide a barbecue, more tables, and a trash can.

### Minimum Maintenance Costs

- Indian Creek Park has 5 acres of developed land to maintain at a projected cost of \$7,500 per acre (due to its remote location).
  - Cost: \$37,500/ year
- There are 10 acres of natural areas to maintain at a projected cost of \$750 per acre.
  - Cost: \$7,500/ year

Total maintenance costs: **\$45,000/ year**

## Future Improvements

The following improvement is not urgent but would enhance the use of Indian Creek Park:

- Add signage to improve wayfinding in the park

## Operations Model

There are two options for operations:

- The County continues to manage with the addition of an online reservation system and ongoing maintenance to improve fee collection and use of the park; or
- A concessionaire, likely an adjacent business owner, could contract with the County to manage and take care of the park with a percentage of the collected fees going to the County. The concessionaire could maintain restrooms, campground, and be responsible for collecting and removing the site's trash.

## Staff Implications

There will need to be staff to negotiate and oversee a concessionaire agreement. If managed by the County, dedicated maintenance staff and other staff oversight of the park to protect from fires and illegal activities.

## Costs and Potential Revenues

### Capital Cost Estimate

	Health and Safety Hazard	Minimum Function	Future Improvements
Add restroom		\$210,000	
Upgrade day use picnic areas		\$11,400	
Improve signage			\$7,500
Remove and replace fencing along creek	\$67,500		
Total	\$67,500	\$221,400	\$7,500

### Revenue Potential

	Highest potential	With Major Improvement	With More Staff	Revenue (low)	Revenue (high)
Camping	●			\$15,125	\$43,875
Events (Rentals, concerts, weddings)	●	●		\$3,600	\$24,680
Total				\$18,725	\$68,555

### Annual Maintenance Estimate

	Annual Maintenance
Developed Acreage	\$37,500
Undeveloped Acreage	\$7,500
Total	\$45,000





# Low Gap Park | Ukiah

## Overview

### 10 Acres Developed, 70 Acres Undeveloped

Low Gap Park is a well-used community park with many features including an amphitheater, archery range, disc golf course, dog park, and volleyball courts, among others. While much of the park is in fair condition, some facilities need to be replaced or updated (amphitheater, picnic shelter, caretaker area, bridge). Some areas also need vegetation management, erosion control, maintenance and ecological restoration. There are substantial opportunities to improve the park and increase community use.

## Amenities Summary

Amphitheater (133)	Poor
Archery Range (128)	Good
Basketball Court (137)	Fair
Canyon Creek Trail	Fair
Disc Golf Course	Fair
Dog Park (141,301)	Excellent
Fitness Course (129+)	Good
Horseshoe Pits (145	Fair
Lower Orr Creek Trail	Fair
Parking (151)	Poor
Picnic Areas	Fair
Play Lot (139)	Good
Play Lot (148)	Good
Entry/ Vehicle Access Bridge	Poor
Restroom/ Caretaker Space (206, 207)	Poor
Tennis Court (149)	Fair
Upper Orr Creek Loop Trail	Fair

## Health and Safety Hazard

Low Gap has a number of major issues that need to be addressed for the safety of its users and protection of the County's assets. Some of these needs are already in the approved County budget, as noted in the Capital Cost Estimate table on the next page. Below are the necessary safety improvements:

- The main entrance bridge needs serious repairs or replacement in order to be safe for users.
- The caretaker structure and restroom should be secured to prevent break-ins (short-term solution).
- The amphitheater is not serving its function, and is an attractive nuisance which should be removed.

## Minimum Function

The following are upgrades needed for Low Gap Park to either be in adequate condition for the County or community partner to be able to operate it adequately. Below are the minimum improvements needed and maintenance costs:

### Minimum Capital Improvements

- The asphalt on the basketball court is cracked and should be resurfaced.
- The asphalt in the parking lot is in poor condition and needs to be resurfaced.

### Minimum Maintenance Costs

- Low Gap Park has 10 acres of developed land to maintain at a projected cost of \$5,000 per acre.
  - Cost: \$50,000/ year
- There are 70 acres of natural areas to maintain at a projected cost of \$750 per acre.
  - Cost: \$52,500/ year

Total maintenance costs: **\$102,500/ year**

## Future Improvements

These improvements are not urgent but would make the park more attractive and enhance its use.

- Remove caretaker structure and restroom with failing septic system.
- Add two Greenflush or equivalent vault toilets, including one accessible toilet.
- Add signage to promote better wayfinding on trails and decrease erosion associated with trails around the disc golf course.
- Upgrade picnic areas with barbecues, additional tables, and trash cans, including two new group picnic areas.
- Add two shade structures to the group picnic area.
- Consider striping existing tennis courts to accommodate pickleball as an alternate use.

## Operations Model

The County can continue to own and operate the park, but will continue to incur significant annual maintenance fees of at least \$102,500. Maintenance of the natural areas could be done, in part, by volunteers, and the County should consider partnering with a community organization to oversee maintenance. Working with the community and establishing a formal Friends of the Park could help to create a steady supply of volunteers and funding improvements.

## Staff Implications

The park needs ongoing maintenance and care due to high level of use. In addition, staff are needed to oversee and manage volunteers who are doing trail maintenance or other activities.

# Costs and Potential Revenues

## Capital Cost Estimate

	Health and Safety Hazard	Minimum Function	Future Improvements
Bridge safety enhancements	\$50,000		
Bridge repair	\$1,000,000		
Secure caretaker structure & restroom	\$15,000		
Remove caretaker structure & restroom			\$90,000
Add double vault toilet on septic			\$300,000
Remove amphitheater	\$30,000		
Signage for disc golf course			\$15,000
Upgrade and expand picnic areas			\$18,000
Add shade structures to group picnic areas			\$75,000
Resurface half-basketball court		\$7,500	
Erosion /trail repair and management	TBD		
Resurface and restripe parking		\$45,000	
Tennis/ pickleball courts			\$15,000
Total	\$1,095,000	\$52,500	\$513,000

\*Vault toilets without running water would be \$100,000

## Revenue Potential

	Highest potential	With Major Improvement	With More Staff	Revenue (low)	Revenue (high)
Group Picnic Areas	●			\$8,480	\$32,480
Events (Rentals, concerts, weddings)	●	●		\$1,800	\$12,340
Summer Camp	●		●	\$2,400	\$7,500
Community Programs/ Classes			●	\$1,920	\$9,600
Sports, outdoor programs			●	\$3,200	\$14,400
Fitness/ Bootcamp programs			●	\$3,840	\$14,400
Youth Programs (Outdoor adventure; nature, etc.)			●	\$720	\$7200
Total				\$22,360	\$97,920

## Annual Maintenance Estimate

	Annual Maintenance
Developed Acreage	\$50,000
Undeveloped Acreage	\$52,500
Total	\$102,500



# Mill Creek Park | Ukiah

## Overview

**15 Acres Developed, 385 Acres Undeveloped (Including 50 acres with trails)**

Mill Creek Park is a well-used regional and community asset with spots for fishing, swimming and group picnics. Multiple trails lead to beautiful views of the dam and surrounding landscape. However, the remote location of the park encourages late night partying and trash. There are also safety issues with fencing, which allows access to parts of the dam. Additionally, port-a-potties are poorly maintained and bathrooms are dark and unappealing, wayfinding is lacking, and there is a lack of maintenance personnel for picnic rentals. Social trails cause erosion around the lake. There is still a strong opportunity to make Mill Creek Park a more regional draw with additional upgrades.

## Amenities Summary

Fishing Dock (74)	Good
Group Picnic Area	Good
Horseshoe Pits (58)	Fair
Lakeside Trail	Poor
Mill Creek Ridge Trail	Good
Parking (65, 75, 67,69)	Fair
Picnic Areas (203)	Fair
Play Lot (56)	Good
Port-a-potty (68, 204)	Poor
Restroom (200)	Fair
Scorpion Trail	Good
Signage	Poor

## Health and Safety Hazard

- Railings need to be added to the bridge near the group picnic area entrance to be safely used as a pedestrian bridge.



Minimum Function

There are many upgrades needed for Mill Creek Park to either be in adequate condition for a concessionaire to take over operations or for the County to be able to sufficiently operate it. Below are the minimum improvements needed and maintenance costs:

Minimum Capital Improvements

- The picnic sites need to be improved and made more accessible through grading and surfacing.
- The current restroom is not ADA accessible or welcoming to users, and should be replaced or significantly upgraded.
- Port-a-potties should be replaced with vault toilets or similar low maintenance permanent bathrooms.
- Lake access points from the trail on the far side of the lake should be improved to reduce erosion and allow safer public use.
- Wayfinding and regulatory signage at the park should be replaced/ added.

Minimum Maintenance Costs

- Mill Creek Park has 15 acres of developed land to maintain at a projected cost of \$5,000 per acre.
  - Cost: \$75,000/ year
- Mill Creek Park has 50 acres of natural areas with trails to maintain at a projected cost of \$750 per acre.
  - Cost: \$37,500/ year
- There are 335 acres of natural areas without trails to maintain, at a projected cost of \$50 per acre..
  - Cost: \$16,750/ year

Total maintenance costs: **\$116,750 / year**

Future Improvements

These improvements are not critical but would make the park more attractive and enhance its use.

- Repair the bridge in the park to improve safety and ensure ADA accessibility, and allow vehicles to cross.
- Repair trails on the south side of the lake to address erosion and ensure safe longer-term lake access.
- Improve small picnic areas with barbecues, additional tables, and trash cans.

Operations Model

The County should consider opportunities to partner with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to share operations and maintenance costs, as well as coordinate with the County DOT, which manages dam maintenance, to explore potential funding. The County should also consider partnering with local organizations to help with park management and trail maintenance.

Staff Implications

Increased maintenance demands created by high weekend use of this park could be addressed by additional weekend staffing.

Staff may consider contacting BLM regarding an operations and maintenance agreement. The County should also dedicate staff to coordinating with the US DOT for potential funding support.

Costs and Potential Revenues

Capital Cost Estimate

	Health and Safety Hazard	Minimum Function	Future Improvements
Maintain bridge to group area	\$18,000		
Bridge repair			\$262,500
Site Accessibility		\$50,000	
Replace permanent restroom		\$300,000	
Upgrade port-a-potties		\$100,000	
Lake Access		\$90,000	\$150,000
Improve Group Picnic Area			\$19,200
Improve Small Picnic Areas			\$19,200
Improve Signage		\$7,500	
Total	\$18,000	\$547,500	\$450,900

Revenue Potential

	Highest potential	With Major Improvement	With More Staff	Revenue (low)	Revenue (high)
Group Picnic Areas	●			\$8,480	\$32,480
Events (Rentals, concerts, weddings)	●	●		\$3,600	\$24,680
Summer Camp	●			\$4,8000	\$15,000
Sports, outdoor programs (fishing)	●			\$1,920	\$9,600
Total				\$18,800	\$81,760

Annual Maintenance Estimate

	Annual Maintenance
Developed Acreage	\$75,000
Undeveloped Acreage with Trails	\$37,500
Undeveloped Acreage without Trails	\$16,750
Total	\$129,250



# Lion's Club Park | Redwood Valley

## Overview

### 4 Acres Developed

Lion’s Club Park is a well-used and well-maintained community park. The park features a play lot, sports fields, and group picnic areas, including a covered picnic structure, among other amenities.

An area of concern is that vandalism has occurred in the park bathrooms, which are open 24/7.

## Amenities Summary

Basketball Court (101)	Fair
Horseshoe Pit (107)	Fair
Parking (102)	Good
Picnic Area (106)	Good
Picnic Area (108)	Good
Play Lot (105)	Good
Restroom (103)	Good
Site Furnishings	Good
Sports Field/ Area (109)	Fair
Sports Field/ Area (110)	Good
Sports Field/ Area (96,98,100)	Good

## Health and Safety Hazard

There are no current health and safety risks to address.

## Minimum Function

The following are upgrades needed for Low Gap Park to either be in adequate condition for a concessionaire to take over operations or for the County to be able to operate it adequately. Below are the minimum improvements needed and maintenance costs:

## Minimum Capital Improvements

- There are no capital improvements needed now to preserve the minimum function of the park.

## Minimum Maintenance Costs

- Mill Creek Park has 4 acres of developed parkland to maintain.
  - Cost: \$20,000/ year

Total maintenance costs: **\$20,000/ year**

## Future Improvements

There are several improvements that would

enhance the use of the park in the future.

- Relocate and combine two half basketball courts into one full court.
- Add wheel stops in the parking lot to prevent drivers from doing donuts in the lot.
- Add picnic tables to the park along with ADA paving.
- Plant trees to provide shade in the park.

## Operations Model

The County should consider continuing to operate Lion’s Club Park as it is currently doing with the a change to the park hours. A legacy policy has the park open 24/7. This should be changed to be in line with typical dawn to dusk hours of operation to reduce vandalism and illegal activities.

## Staff Implications

Due to minimal required improvements to the park, there are no implications for staff.



# Costs and Potential Revenues

## Capital Cost Estimate

	Health and Safety Hazard	Minimum Function	Future Improvements
Relocate Basketball Court			\$15,000
Wheel Stops in Parking Lot			\$3,750
Picnic Tables			\$12,000
Shade Trees			\$2,700
Upgrade play surfacing			\$75,000
Total	\$0	\$0	\$130,750

## Revenue Potential

	Highest Potential	With Major Improvements	With More Staff	Revenue (low)	Revenue (high)
Group Picnic Areas	●			\$4,240	\$16,240
Events (Rentals, concerts, weddings)	●	●		\$1,800	\$12,340
Summer Camp	●			\$2,400	\$7,500
Community Programs/Classes			●	\$ 1,920	\$ 9,600
Sports, outdoor programs			●	\$3,200	\$14,400
Fitness/Bootcamp programs			●	\$7,680	\$28,800
Youth Programs (Outdoor adventure; nature, etc.)			●	\$720	\$7,200
Total				\$21,960	\$96,080

## Annual Maintenance Estimate

	Annual Maintenance
Developed Acreage	\$20,000
Total	\$20,000



# Mariposa Swimming Hole | Redwood Valley

## Overview

### 0.35 Acres Undeveloped

The Mariposa Swimming Hole is a 0.35 acre swimming spot used historically by local residents. Much of the surrounding area is owned by private parties. In order to deter unsafe diving, the County erected a fence along the road and posted signs. Recent fires have affected the area, killing trees and brush and damaging the access point to the water, though the County is currently implementing fire mitigation and hazard fixes in the property. There is inadequate parking at this roadside location.

## Health and Safety Hazard

- Access areas are steep, eroding and dangerous.
- The swimming hole connects to a large culvert under the road, creating an unsafe condition.
- The swimming hole is shallow and rocky in some areas, making diving unsafe. Water access without any supervision makes the swimming hole a liability to the County.

## Recommendation

The Mariposa Swimming Hole is a significant liability and is also a maintenance burden to the County. The County should consider coordinating with the Redwood Valley Municipal Advisory Council or other agency to determine next steps for the site, which could include transferring ownership of Mariposa Swimming Hole to prevent future liability. The County may first need to use disaster recovery funds or partner with the Resource Conservation District (RCD) to rehabilitate the landscape that has been affected by the fire.

## Staff Implications

Staff will need to continue to coordinate fire mitigation and hazard abatement to rehabilitate the landscape that was affected by wildfire.

Staff need to coordinate with stakeholders to discuss the future of the site.

If the County maintains ownership of the site, the County will need to dedicate staff to keeping this access area at a minimally acceptable level of safety and maintenance.

# Costs and Potential Revenues

## Capital Cost Estimate

	Health and Safety Hazard	Minimum Function	Future Improvements
Replace fencing and remove unsafe access	\$50,000		
Signage	\$1,000		
Total	\$51,000	\$0	\$0

## Annual Maintenance Estimate

	Annual Maintenance
Undeveloped Acreage	\$1,500
Total	\$1,500



# McKee Parkway | Potter Valley

## Overview

### 25 Acres Undeveloped

McKee Parkway includes several roadside turnouts and provides access to the east fork of the Russian River. It is currently an access area but could be expanded into a more developed park.

## Amenities Summary

Parking	Good
Port-a-potty	Fair
Signage	Fair

## Health and Safety Hazard

Access to the river and certain parts of the river are dangerous especially with heavy flows. The paths to the riverside has extensive erosion. Together there are a number of potential risks that the County needs to address if it intends to establish as a fully operational park.

## Minimum Function

The following are minimum improvements and maintenance required for the County to operate McKee Parkway adequately as a full park, instead of just an access area.

## Minimum Capital Improvements

- The County should improve signage to facilitate wayfinding.
- New pathways and access needs to be provided.

## Minimum Maintenance Costs

- McKee Parkway has 25 acres of natural areas to maintain at a projected cost of \$750 per acre.
  - Cost: \$18,750/ year\*

\*This only includes undeveloped land as is, and does not include anticipated maintenance costs associated with adding in restrooms or enhancing this from an access area into a full park.



Future Improvements

- The County should provide vault toilets for park users.
- The County should provide picnic areas, including a barbecue grill and tables.

Operations Model

The County could make the McKee Parkway access area into a more developed park with appropriate amenities to ensure sufficient health, safety, and function. The County could partner with a local community organization to help maintain the area.

Staff Implications

Staff would need to be involved in overseeing park development. The County will also need to dedicate staff to keeping this access area at a minimally acceptable level of safety and maintenance.

Costs and Potential Revenues

Capital Cost Estimate

	Health and Safety Hazard	Minimum Function	Future Improvements
Improve Signage		\$2,000	
Provide Restroom			\$200,000
Add Picnic Areas			\$10,000
Total	\$0	\$2,000	\$210,000

Annual Maintenance Estimate

	Annual Maintenance
Undeveloped Acreage	\$18,750
Total	\$18,750



Vichy Springs | Ukiah

Overview

2.7 Acres Undeveloped

McKee Parkway includes several roadside turnouts and provides access to the east fork of the Russian River. It is currently an access area but could be expanded into a more developed park.

Health and Safety Hazard

- This location has historically been a spot for homeless encampments.

Recommendation

Vichy Springs is a potential liability concern and a maintenance burden to the County. The County should consider partnering with the City of Ukiah or identifying a community group to that would be interested in maintaining the Vichy Springs access area. The County should reach out to the City of Ukiah to see if it would consider managing the park and connecting this section of the river to its own existing trails. Ukiah currently plans to create a swimming and community recreation area along a nearby section of the Russian River, and could be a good potential partner.

Staff Implications

Staff would need to consider coordinating the partnership with the City of Ukiah or a community group.

The County will need to dedicate staff to keeping this access area at a minimally acceptable level of safety and maintenance.

# Costs and Potential Revenues

## Capital Cost Estimate

	Health and Safety Hazard	Minimum Function	Future Improvements
Improve Signage			\$1,000
Improve Parking Area			\$3,200
Add Picnic Areas			\$30,000
Replace Entry Fencing		\$7,500	
Total	\$0	\$7,500	\$34,200

## Annual Maintenance Estimate

	Annual Maintenance
Undeveloped Acreage	\$3,000
Total	\$3,000



# Funding Options



## Funding Mechanisms

To implement the recommendations in this report, the County will need to identify additional funding sources including, but not limited to the following: a continuous and sustained source for ongoing maintenance and operations (M&O); dedicated funding for staff to operate and support parks; and capital funding for deferred maintenance and park enhancements.

## Maintenance and Operations Funding

The County needs to identify a dedicated fund that will guarantee the long-term support of County investments in parks and the community.

### General Fund Allocation

County adopts a parks maintenance and operations set aside that requires a set, dedicated, annual allocation to parks. While this would provide consistent annual funding, the Board of Supervisors would be required to dedicate funds to parks in potential conflict with other budgeting priorities.

### Lighting and Landscaping District

The County could investigate a landscaping and lighting district ballot initiative that would directly fund the maintenance and operations of parks through a special property tax. Developing a district and successfully passing the ballot measure would require two-thirds approval from property owners and based on the regional nature of many of the parks may be challenging. However, it is worth further evaluation. Under Proposition 218, the community is required to reaffirm a vote for this adjustment making this funding source potentially difficult to retain.

### Transient Occupancy Tax

The County may be able to identify existing tax funds that could support parks. This may include an expansion of the County's Transient Occupancy

Tax (TOT). If this is the desired route, it is important that the County clearly define the percent allocated to parks so it cannot be reallocated to a different need.

### Sponsorship/Donations/ Adopt-a-Park Program

The County could institute an Adopt-A-Park program and Sponsorship program that could be used to increase funding for park projects. The programs would need to be designed to clearly identify roles, benefits, and the commitment expected by adopters (funding, volunteering, etc.).

## Capital Funding

Opportunities for capital funding are more extensive and often can be easier than maintenance and operations funding, as they support a one-time activity, and/or the construction of a tangible object that a donor or partner supports.

### Grants

The County has the opportunity to apply for a variety of grants to help fund programs and capital programs. Grants would be most likely for activities or efforts that consider environmental improvements and access to parklands, enhance services to underrepresented communities, or promote and support art/drama. Projects that provide multiple benefits can increase the possibility of successful grant applications.

### Aligning with other key issues

The County Parks Needs Assessment identified a number of characteristics of the County that may be able to help bolster funding applications beyond simple park grants. This includes elements related to climate and resilience, equity and underserved communities to name a few. The following are some of the highlights that can and should be incorporated or focused elements for future grants.

- Mendocino County is less well off than the rest of California with 20.2% of the population

in poverty, and a median income of \$46,528. California's median income is \$75,277.

- The County is rural in nature with just 22.6 people per square mile compared to California's average of 232 per square mile.
- The County has a large Hispanic community (23.2%), with a majority of white residents (65.9%).
- Recent wildfire, drought, and climate impacts that may be mitigated by parks.

### Public/Public and Public/Private Partnerships

There are a number of dedicated community members and groups who would be interested in supporting the parks in some way - often as volunteers or in some cases as full partners. Developing formal partnerships and support systems to make these opportunities as fruitful as possible is critical for the County.

### Environmental Non-Profits and Agencies

There is potential for additional funding and partnerships with the California Coastal Commission, the Coastal Conservancy, United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), California State Parks, and other local and regional non-profit environmental groups.

## Out of the box ideas...

A potential option for the County is to investigate the development of a unique kind of funding source – a mitigation bank for environmental protection of certain habitats. A mitigation bank is used for developers who must offset the impacts of their development with the preservation or enhancement of another property. In order to build, the developer may need to buy “credits” in a mitigation bank, which goes to restore, support and protect the same kind of land in a different, though relatively nearby location.

Nearby Lake County has successfully developed funding through licensing with cell companies and placing cell towers on park lands. That approach or other commercial ventures may benefit the parks.