



CALVERT COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION

Marketing and Outreach Plan

**175 Main Street
Prince Frederick, MD 20678**

**Fiscal Year 2020 - 2022
July 2019 – June 2022**



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Marketing and Outreach Plan Table of Contents

I. Executive Summary.....	3
II. Vision, Mission, and Values.....	3
III. Department Overview.....	4
IV. Situation Assessment.....	7
V. Goals and Objectives.....	12
VI. Segmentation, Target, and Positioning.....	13
VII. Marketing Tools / Communications Mix.....	13
VIII. Evaluation Process.....	18
IX. Annual Review of Plan.....	20

Attachments

- A. Communications & Media Relations Service Level Agreement
- B. County Social Media Policy
- C. Parks & Recreation Style Guide

I. Executive Summary

The Department of Parks & Recreation, hereinafter referred to as “Department,” is in the business of planning, developing, implementing and professionally managing the parks, programs, policies and procedures, facilities, special events and leisure services established under the leadership of the Board of County Commissioners, County Administrator, Parks Administration, and the associated advisory boards of Calvert County.

The Parks and Recreation Marketing and Outreach Plan, hereinafter referred to as “Plan,” outlines the general marketing and outreach strategy, assesses the business climate, addresses outreach goals and objectives, outlines appropriate policies and procedures, as well as outlines resources for the Department. The Plan is developed in accordance with the Calvert County Strategic Plan, Calvert County Comprehensive Plan, Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan (LPPRP), Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan, and policy documents organized by the Department of Communications & Media Relations. The Plan is updated every three (3) years by the Parks & Recreation Director and leadership staff with annual review to address any immediate changes in trends or outreach needs. This allows for the opportunity to re-evaluate various components of the Plan and revise plans and systems in order to provide for synchronicity in all County efforts.

A seasoned, dedicated, motivated group of professionals from diverse backgrounds and experiences drive the Department’s accomplishments. The Department’s mission and leadership guides the efforts to evaluate the needs of the community and work towards providing parks, facilities, and recreation programs that improve the quality of life of residents and visitors to Calvert County.

II. Vision, Mission, and Values

Vision

“The Calvert County Department of Parks & Recreation strives to enhance the health, economy and well-being of our community through sustainable practices, leisure opportunities and environmental stewardship.”

Mission

“In partnership with Calvert County residents, the Department of Parks & Recreation cultivates programs, parks and services that positively impact quality of life; preserve natural and cultural resources; promote economic stability; and satisfy community needs for opportunities in recreation, wellness, knowledge, and connecting with nature.”

Values

The Department values being able to SERVE. The acronym SERVE means many things, while it focuses on the following.

Sustainability: The act of safeguarding people and property, caring for resources, preserving nature and quality of life, economic stability, conservation of our landscapes and wildlife, efficiency in our work and stewardship to the community.

Engaged: Being energized about what we do, involved in our community and in improving our work, being positive, motivated to meet the needs of our fellow employees and community, and working collaboratively to find solutions.

Respectful: Showing appreciation for support, considerate and empathetic to those that need our assistance, cooperative in our daily interactions, and by being perceptive and proactive to a possible need.

Visionary: The act of being innovative, enthusiastic, forward thinking with a knowledge of the overall mission and vision of the Department.

Excellence: Providing quality programs and services, showing integrity in all that we do, taking ownership of the good and the bad, being transparent and accountable for our actions.

III. Department Overview

The Department supports and maintains 40 properties and 22 school recreation parks totaling 2,293.53 acres.

As noted in the 2017 Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan, Calvert County park facilities fall into nine categories and include:

Park Category	Number of Sites
Mini Parks	1
Neighborhood Parks	3
Community Parks	7
District Parks	3
Regional Parks	1
School Recreation Parks	22
Special Use Areas	13
Open Space/Natural Resource Lands	10
Undeveloped Sites	4

Note that the number of sites listed may differ from the total number of parks as more than one category may be applicable to a single facility.

Mini Parks

This the smallest designation of county designated park types. Mini parks are generally one acre or less in size and designed to address a location specific recreation need.

Neighborhood Parks

These are designed to be the recreational and social hub of a neighborhood and includes small open space areas and/or developed recreation facilities. These parks are generally less than ten acres in size.

Community Parks

These parks are designed to meet the recreational needs of multiple neighborhoods or larger sections of the community, as well as preserving open spaces and natural landscapes. They typically include athletic facilities for sports as well as playgrounds, picnic facilities, basketball and tennis courts, cycling, dog parks and trails for hiking and cycling.

District Parks

These facilities not only draw visitors from Calvert County but also attract tourists from outside the county and state. They are designed to serve as large, active recreation hubs in each of Calvert County's three election districts. These sites provide fields, courts, and associated recreation infrastructure for team and individual sports and recreation activities. These parks include Dunkirk District Park, Hallowing Point Park, and Cove Point Park. All three facilities boast multiple athletic fields, tennis and basketball courts, playgrounds and picnic areas.

Regional Parks

These parks are designed to serve the needs of a large portion of the county and provide developed recreation facilities, such as sports fields and associated infrastructure, and/or preserved natural areas and open spaces. Regional parks are generally larger than 50 acres in size.

School Recreation Parks

These facilities are the portion of a school or public educational institution available for public recreation use outside of school hours and usage. Limitations on public access and use varies by school site. These are based on agreements with the Calvert County Board of Education and the Department. This includes twenty-two (22) sites for indoor recreation activities, and eleven (11) sites for outdoor recreation activities.

Special Use Areas

Facilities that serve a specific, single purpose. These sites include facilities such as pools, campgrounds, boat ramps, community centers and golf courses. Some of these facilities are relied on to be at least partially self-sufficient and produce enough revenue to not adversely impact ad valorem tax dollars. Those facilities include Chesapeake

Hills Golf Course, Breezy Point Beach & Campground, all aquatic facilities and concessions.

Aquatics Facilities: Edward T. Hall Aquatic Center, Cove Point Pool, Kings Landing Pool
Edward T. Hall Aquatic Center is the only indoor competition pool in Calvert County and is open year-round. It is located in Prince Frederick, the central area of the County. This pool features a 50 meter by 25 yard competition pool, leisure pool with water slides and a heated therapy pool. Cove Point Pool is an outdoor seasonal pool in Lusby, the southern area of the county. This pool features a lap pool, wading pool, and leisure pool with water slides. Kings Landing Pool is an outdoor seasonal pool in Huntingtown, the northern area of the county. This pool is located within a nature park and in the past was a YMCA teaching pool.

Concessions: Countywide

Concessions are year round at Chesapeake Hills Golf Course through the restaurant and bar. All other concessions located within ball field parks and Breezy Point Beach are seasonal operations. In 2018, a Concessions Manager was hired to address upgrading the food service structures at all facilities into a comprehensive concession program. Staff is currently in that transition.

Breezy Point Beach & Campground

This facility is located in Chesapeake Beach in the northern area of the county. It is a beach park with camping on the Chesapeake Bay. This facility features daily admissions for beach visits as well as daily and seasonal camping. Seasonal camping is from May through October each year. Picnic areas, concessions, restrooms, and equipment rentals are available at this location.

Chesapeake Hills Golf Course

This facility is located in Lusby, the southern area of the county and is the only golf course in Calvert County. Chesapeake Hills features 6,545 yards of golf from the longest tees for a par of 72. The course rating is 72.3 and it has a slope rating of 126. Designed by Jim Thompson, Chesapeake Hills opened in 1968. The course features Bermuda grass fairways on gently rolling hills surrounded by towering trees. Several lakes and creeks meander through the course, providing scenic beauty and golfing challenges.

Open Space/Natural Resource Lands

By protecting the forests, waterways, and other habitats, these parks provide opportunities for the public to explore, discover and learn about the natural heritage of the county. These areas preserve natural systems, unique landscapes, and/or local areas of unique social or ecological value. These areas offer outdoor recreation opportunities compatible with the natural landscape, cultural heritage, and ecological values of the site.

Undeveloped Sites

These properties are acquisitions that are planned to become future park facilities when funding is available for development.

Products and Services

The Department offers a wide variety of products and services throughout Calvert County. This includes:

- Maintenance of parks and green spaces including athletic and multipurpose fields, trails and boardwalks.
- Aquatic facilities including a state of the art indoor aquatic center in Prince Frederick, a full-service waterpark in Lusby, and community pool in Huntingtown.
- Recreation, therapeutic recreation, and nature programming provided by staff, contractual vendors and third party contracted organizations.
- Development of capital improvements including the construction, maintenance, and enhancements of facilities.
- Operation of community centers that provide age appropriate programming to include summer camp programs.
- Maintenance and operation of a variety of hard courts including tennis, basketball, volleyball, skate parks, and pickleball.
- Athletic services to include youth and adult sports such as basketball, football, kickball, softball, tennis, field hockey, golf, soccer, swimming, baseball and lacrosse through staff, contracted vendors or third party contracted organizations.
- Variety of special events that celebrate health and leisure pursuits.
- Outlets for boating, canoeing, kayaking, and paddle boarding.
- Camping, fishing, hiking, biking, and equestrian activities.
- Concession services for athletic fields, beach and aquatic facilities.
- Volunteer and research opportunities.
- Watchable wildlife opportunities.
- Rental facilities for use by the community for meetings and special occasions.
- Protection, conservation, and restoration of natural habitats.

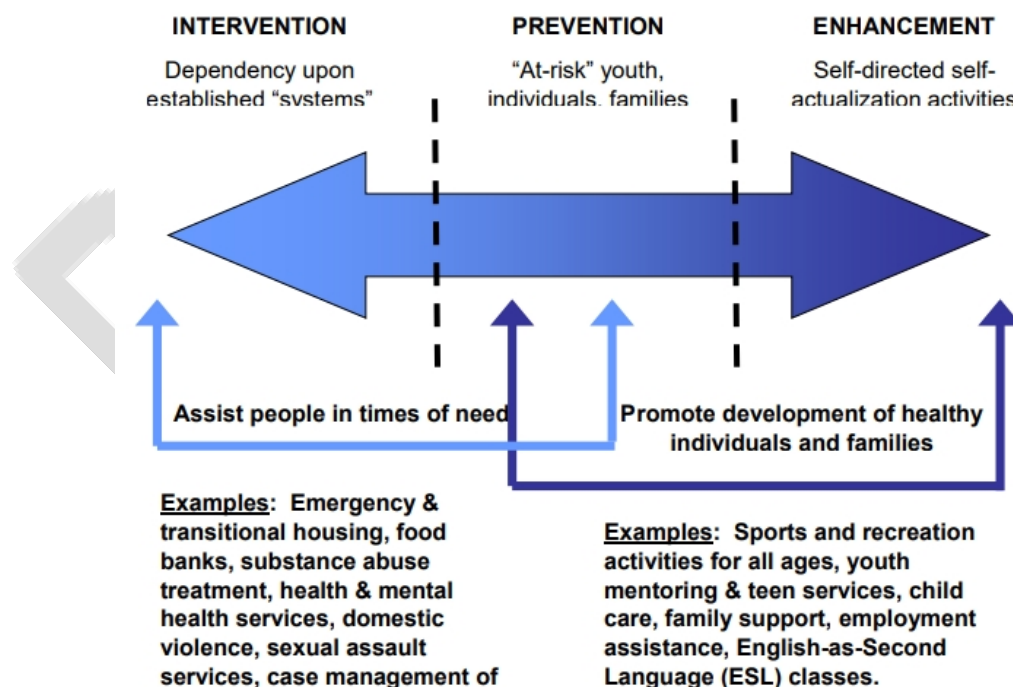
IV. Situation Assessment

The Department is a complex organization with four divisions; Natural Resources, Parks & Safety, Recreation, and Special Facilities. Special Facilities consists of a majority of revenue producing programs inclusive of, Aquatics, Concessions, Breezy Point Beach & Campground, and Chesapeake Hills Golf Course. This organization encompasses 165.5 FTEs and a \$10.5M annual operating budget. Services range from the more traditional parks and recreation services that people immediately associate with Calvert, to therapeutic recreation services and snow removal. Overall, the Department collects approximately \$4M in user fees and charges each year, and this revenue represents a significant contribution to the Department's budget and thereby benefits many other

services. Virtually all Department revenue comes from totally discretionary expenditures by our customers for the purchase of Department products and services. In this way, our department is unique to the County organization in that we are the only major discretionary service department in the County. While customers do not have a choice of who they purchase water from, buy building permits from, or which fire station serves their home, they do have the choice of which recreation programs they participate in. Our offerings are priced consistent with the Revenue and Fee Policy as described in the Revenue & Fee Manual, the County does not charge a fee for many activities, like visiting a neighborhood park, hiking one of the County's trails, or some drop-in activities at community centers and facilities. However, these choices also need to be effectively marketed and communicated to our stakeholders.

In order to communicate how these programs fit together, the Department uses a tiered pricing structure adapted to a service continuum to depict the interrelationships between our services and programs.

Human Infrastructure Continuum



Despite (and because of) this diversity, we need a consistent approach to understanding, relating, and communicating who we are and why our services are important to the larger community. Unlike a for-profit organization, we cannot measure all of our successes using traditional yardsticks such as return on investment, market share, same store sales, or revenue growth. In many ways, managing a diverse public sector organization is more complex, and the unique challenge is to balance revenue goals while at the same time accomplishing the public service mission. This dichotomy can be extremely challenging, so a strategic marketing and communications program is

a critical tool.

Given the Department's broad orientation and the diversity of services, this plan is not solely about developing catchy ways to advertise our products or grow demand, but is a hybrid that also includes organizing the Department to deliver essential services as effectively as possible. The Department clearly recognizes that prior successes cannot be taken for granted and that constantly improving service delivery is hard work. Therefore, the Department needs to continually evaluate and modify the current structures and resources to ensure the marketing program operates in a relevant and effective manner.

Examination of Demographic Trends

The need for a systematic approach to marketing and community outreach is more important than ever. Calvert County has seen significant change over the past several years, and the community has changed as well. For example, demographic information obtained from the U.S. Census shows the increased ethnic and economic diversity of the community, a growing number of older adults, and changing family structures and expectations for how people live, work, and play. These changes are rapid and ongoing, and thus requires a nimble organization to respond to emerging opportunities and needs.

Established in 1654, Calvert County is one of the oldest counties in the United States. With a population of 91,502 in 2017, Calvert is the 10th lowest in population in the state however the smallest in land mass at 213 square miles. This accounts for a population density of 429.6 inhabitants per square mile. Calvert's nighttime population swells as residents return home from employment in other areas such as the Patuxent River Naval Air Station in St. Mary's County, retail centers in Charles County, the State Capital in Annapolis, and from high paying jobs in Washington D.C.

Prince Frederick, the county seat, is located 41 miles southeast of Washington, D.C., and 60 miles south of Baltimore. Although the population has grown over time, Calvert County retains its rural character and agrarian roots, offering good schools, a clean environment and good quality of life. Calvert is a peninsula bound by the Chesapeake Bay on the east and the Patuxent River on the west, defined by steep cliffs and woods on the bay side while rolling fields slip gently down to the river on the other. The county's many creeks provide refuge for wildlife and scenic areas for boating and fishing.

There are two incorporated towns in Calvert County: North Beach and Chesapeake Beach, located on the bay at the northeast corner of the county. In addition, the Comprehensive Plan identifies seven "Town Centers." These include (from north to south) Dunkirk, Owings, Huntingtown, Prince Frederick, St. Leonard, Lusby, and Solomons.

Residents and visitors hold high expectations for the quality and cleanliness of the

Department's facilities and for the customer service they receive. In addition, they expect affordable prices and exceptional value on the services offered. The Department recognizes that it is the face of Calvert County government for many residents and visitors. Reaching the county's diverse population with effective communication and excellent service is fundamental to maintaining and enhancing local government's positive public image.

As mentioned, the demographics of Calvert's residents has changed over time. Calvert's residents are aging, attaining a higher education level, are increasingly migrating from other areas as a haven from the busy cities of Washington D.C., and congested commuter counties of Prince George's, Charles, and Anne Arundel. Calvert saw a 19% growth rate from 2000-2010, and a 3.1% growth rate from 2010-2017. While much of Calvert's growth can be attributed to an increase of commuter families, the business centers of Dominion Cove Point LNG and the Calvert Cliff Nuclear Power Plant have significantly contributed to the County's growth. In essence, the growth is small, comparatively. A lack of affordable housing options stifle potential growth within the County and lead to families choosing to reside in neighboring jurisdictions.

While the trend of diversification in Calvert is slow, it is changing. From 2000-2010 Calvert saw an increase in those of African-American (0.29%), Asian (0.54%), and Hispanic (1.18%) heritage. While the factors driving diversity are many, one of the primary drivers is the growth of visitors to facilities from other areas with a diverse background. Being on the Western Shore of the Chesapeake Bay, it is important to realize the influx of those from other areas looking for a waterfront, beach atmosphere without having to travel as far as Ocean City on the Eastern Shore. The Department continues to struggle to establish methods of communicating with this population, and understand recreation needs.

Economic Climate

In 2017, median household income is estimated at \$106,247 and is ranked as the fourth wealthiest county in the State of Maryland, 25.7% higher than the State average. This indicates a higher likelihood for discretionary income and meeting that community need for their choice of recreational activities.

In general, residents and visitors hold high expectations for the quality and cleanliness of the Department's facilities and for the degree of customer service they receive. In addition, customers expect affordable prices and exceptional value regarding the services the Department offers.

Even in the context of high median income households, the poverty rate among Calvert families grew from 2.8% in 2010 to 6% in 2017. The State of Maryland has a poverty rate of 9.3%. The homeless population in Calvert has also increased and the one homeless shelter through the non-profit, Project Echo has its 40 beds filled every night as of a report in 2019.

The Department offers a scholarship program to those who may have a financial need called the Therman Gray Memorial Scholarship to pay a portion of program costs to Calvert County residents. This program has not been utilized to its fullest extent and has recently been highlighted to the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board to be included in the Revenue and Fee Manual.

Market Coverage by Alternative Providers

Calvert, like most other jurisdictions, has a variety of public and private, scheduled and informal, structured and unstructured, recreation opportunities available to residents and visitors. Whether it be through the direct provision of recreation programs or through the use of parks, open space, and other recreation facilities, the Department seeks to achieve several goals in the delivery of structured recreation programs and activities. Calvert is served by a variety of recreation service providers, including private non-profit (Boys & Girls Club, club sports, etc.), private for-profit (World Gym, resorts, etc.), and other governmental agencies (Calvert County Public Schools, Town of Chesapeake Beach, Town of North Beach, State of Maryland, etc.). This does not include the activities available in surrounding counties including St. Mary’s, Anne Arundel, Charles, and Prince George’s.

The Department focuses the majority of its programming and activities on introductory and basic skill development geared to address the needs of specific target populations. Services to non-target populations, and advanced and highly selective activities, are provided through the community’s other recreation organizations and through our special facilities operations. In addition, the Department places an emphasis on providing programming to meet the needs of teens, youth, seniors, individuals with disabilities, and those with limited opportunities for recreation. Many times, services to these individuals are not available elsewhere in the community, and the Department plays an important role in filling gaps.

Alternative Service Providers

<p><u>Agriculture / Events</u> 231 Farm and Outdoor Sports Calvert County Extension Services (4-H) Canaan Farms Chesapeake Beach Resort & Spa Future Farmers of America Lucky Cricket Farm Spider Hall Farm TydeWydd Farm</p> <p><u>Aquatics</u> Calvert Aquatics Club College of Southern Maryland – St. Mary’s Chesapeake Beach Waterpark PG Sportsplex</p> <p><u>Arts & Dance</u> Abigail Francisco School of Classical Ballet</p>	<p><u>Child Care</u> 3 Bs Little Buddies Family Childcare LLC Bright Beginners Child Care Busy Bee Nursery Calvert Nursery School Carter's Webb Learning Center Creative Kids Learning Center Dawns Early Light Early Childhood Center Friendly Daycare Center The Grapevine Early Learning Center Grover Place Childcare Inc Huntingtown Early Learning Center Inspired Minds Early Childhood Education Center Judy Center Kids Campus Early Learning Center Laceys Little Learners</p>
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<p>American Bellydance LLC Annemarie Garden BADD Company LLC Calvert School of Dance Cassidy Music Celtic Society of Southern Maryland Center Stage Dance Inc Garrett Music Academy Julie Rogers Studio of Dance JPozz Music No Tyme to Cook Pottery Patch Sacchetti Music San Gabriel's Guitar Studio Sherry's Dance Studio Wine and Design Kids and Parents Painting</p> <p><u>Athletics Facilities</u></p> <p>Bethel Way of the Cross Calverton School Cardinal Hickey Academy CSA Fieldhouse / Field Church by the Chesapeake (soccer fields) Dunkirk Baptist Church First Baptist Church of Calvert County Gray's Field (near Mt. Harmony) Middleham & St. Peters Episcopal Church Navy Recreation Center NRC Our Lady Star Church Plum Point Rd. Field Saint John Vianney Church St. Paul United Methodist Church</p> <p><u>Athletics Programs</u></p> <p>Bayside Blues Girls Softball Beach Buccaneers Calvert All Stars Cheer & Tumble Calvert Babe Ruth Calvert County American Little League Calvert Cannons Lacrosse Calvert Cutters Baseball Calvert Elite Soccer Calvert Flag Adult / Youth Calvert Fury Girls Softball Calvert Men's / Women's Softball Calvert Soccer Association Calvert Tide Baseball Chesapeake Orioles Baseball Christian Men's Softball Dunkirk Warriors Huntingtown Hurricanes</p>	<p>Learning Ladders Child Development Center Little Ones Family Day Care Little Protégés Early Learning Centre Noahs Ark Learning Center Inc Prime Time Childrens & Youth Activity Center Serenity Child Care Center Sleepy Hollow Daycare Smart Start Learning Center</p> <p><u>Children's Services</u></p> <p>Adventure Point Youth Activity Center Boys & Girls Clubs of SoMD (Lusby) Boys & Girls Clubs of SoMD (North Beach) Boy Scouts Calvert Collaborative for Children & Youth Calvert County Libraries East John Youth Center Girl Scouts Kids Place</p> <p><u>Equestrian</u></p> <p>Dakota's Legacy Horseback Riding Linda's School for Wayward Horses Patuxent Run Stables River Stable</p> <p><u>Fitness and Wellness Centers</u></p> <p>Barefoot Wellness Blue Earth Yoga Calvert Crossfit Cross Fit Merit Elite Fitness Evolution Training Athletics Fitness For Less LLC Fitness Works Health & Wellness LLC Full Spectrum Fitness GoatToBeZen Yoga GROW Yoga Poston's Fitness for Life Results Fitness Sculpted Fitness Studio Skipjack Crossfit World Gym</p> <p><u>Golf</u></p> <p>Breton Bay Golf Course Mellomar Golf Course Wicomico Shores Golf Course</p> <p><u>Martial Arts</u></p> <p>Black Belt Academy of Prince Frederick Calvert MMA Academy Elite Martial Arts Academy Master Parks TaeKwon Heroes Martial Arts_</p>
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<p>Jennies Chesapeake Gymnastics Club John McGuffin Basketball Lord Calvert Bowl Northern Calvert Little League Owings Outlaws Football Prince Frederick Eagles Football Solomons Steelers Football Southern End Football Alliance Southern Maryland Bulldogs Football</p> <p><u>Boating / Water Sports</u></p> <p>The Amazing Ocean (Dive Instructor) Bunky's Charter Boats, Inc. Chesapeake Bay Outdoors LLC Chesapeake Boat Rentals Paddle or Pedal, North Beach Patuxent Adventure Center Sail Solomons The Sailing Academy Scuba Center and Outdoor Rec Solomons Boat Rental</p>	<p><u>Natural Resources</u></p> <p>American Chestnut Land Trust Bayfront Park / Brownie's Beach Calvert Cliffs State Park Calvert Nature Society Chesapeake Ranch Estates Campground Jefferson Patterson State Park & Museum Seahorse Beach Wetland Overlook Park</p> <p><u>Senior Services</u></p> <p>Calvert County Office on Aging Calvert Pines Senior Center North Beach Senior Center Southern Pines Senior Center</p> <p><u>Therapeutic Recreation</u></p> <p>Adult Day Care of Calvert County ARC of Southern Maryland</p>
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V. Goals and Objectives

The Department has identified three areas of important emphasis as goals for marketing to and educating the public. These goals are:

1. Be the first choice.
2. Reach everyone.
3. Educate on what CCPR does and offers.

Be the first choice

- Create social media outlets on Facebook for Breezy Point Beach & Campground as well as Chesapeake Hills Golf Course to be a leading entity in the field.
- Develop individual marketing and business plans for Chesapeake Hills Golf Course, Breezy Point Beach & Campground, and Aquatics facilities.
- Develop business plan for food & beverage operations.
- Continuously evaluate and respond to public satisfaction as pertains to quality of program, public service, and facility.
- Research ideas to increase functionality and interactivity of Department Activity Guide.

Reach everyone

- Create a Department-wide social media outlet for Twitter, Instagram, and filters for Snapchat to reach additional demographics of park users.
- Produce promotional materials in both English and Spanish for highly diverse

programs or facilities.

- Continuously evaluate effectiveness of marketing and outreach efforts.
- Increase presence on social media to include scheduled posts, live streaming, events and videos.
- Distribute more to outside agencies (Chamber, local business, Realtors).
- Develop partnerships with local businesses to extend reach through sponsorship and in-kind exchange opportunities.
- Expand options for online registration and information gathering.

Educate on what CCPR does and offers

- Develop an “Information Booth Kit” and staff training guide for use at special events throughout the County.
- Create a presence on sites like “Nextdoor” to inform and interact with community.
- Schedule public speaking engagements throughout County including school career days.
- Expand “Did you know?” segments from just social media to other electronic, or “at park” outlets.
- Expand community day activities throughout the park system.
- Increase participation in July as National Parks & Recreation Month with expanded promotions and activities.
- Develop an interactive park map with assistance from Technology Services and subsequently a campaign for outreach.
- Develop outreach campaign to brand educate which may include but is not limited to mascot branding and merchandising.

VI. Segmentation, Target, and Positioning

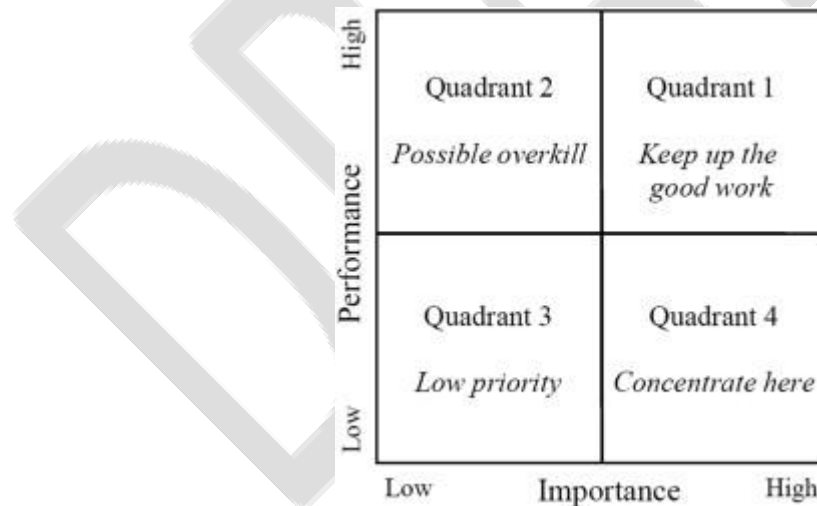
While the Department strives to serve all residents of and visitors to Calvert County, the typical customer possesses one or more of the following characteristics: is concerned about physical and mental wellness; is interested in the natural environment; is civic-minded; has a need for non-school-hour programming; is seeking a social outlet; or is seeking a recreation or leisure opportunity. This information is gathered through many methods including generalized public input, surveys, and customer data.

With this information, it is easy to see that the Department has the opportunity to reach the majority, if not all, residents and visitors to Calvert County. However specific programs, facilities or opportunities are more popular among specific groups. For example, summer camps are targeted to parents while a “glow” basketball program is targeted towards teenagers.

As we look at how we are reaching target markets, it is important to look at how the Department occupies the minds of not only elected officials, but other decision makers, citizens and residents. Positioning the Department as the first choice in recreational pursuits is just as important as positioning the Department as an essential service to the

community. To do this, staff has looked at the Importance-Performance (I-P) analysis based on customer interactions, public input, surveys, and other customer data. This includes the resident survey conducted for the Land Preservation, Parks & Recreation Plan adopted in 2017.

Using this, the Department can focus positioning on the desired public benefits falling in the “Keep up the good work” quadrant. These items include recreational activities such as team sports, arts and cultural activities, and natural resources. However, as expectations are being met in this quadrant, less emphasis has been historically on these areas causing for funding and attention to not increase with the passage of time. Items within the “low priority” quadrant are those that are not a high importance and not looked at with a high public sentiment. These are not selected for positioning as they are not of high importance. Although benefits within this quadrant may be viable, residents have not shown that these are of importance to them. These include items such as other recreational programs such as dance and martial arts. The good news, is that the Department does not have items in the “possible overkill” quadrant. This tells the Department that we aren’t maintaining things that are perceived as low priority. Where the positioning opportunities arise are the quadrant “concentrate here” which for the Department includes in general water access, health and fitness, and trails.



In consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and Land Preservation, Parks & Recreation Plan, outdoor passive recreation combined with a health and fitness aspect is of high focus for the Department. Thus, the Department should position based on those aspects. Further data is needed to address positioning strategies for Department business operations including aquatics operations, Chesapeake Hills Golf Course and Breezy Point Beach & Campground.

VII. Marketing Tools / Communications Mix

The Department’s promotional toolkit includes a variety of print, electronic, and media relations tools. In recent years, the organization has seen a shift to a greater reliance on

digital communications, which has allowed for more targeted, and more frequent communications with our customers. The Department continues to struggle with outreach to new customers.

Program staff is required to coordinate with the Department of Communications & Media Relations (CMR) staff when producing promotional materials. A professional graphic designer (Media Specialist) is employed by CMR and their services are available to all County staff. This designer has a strong understanding of Department programs and services, and develops a number of high impact promotional campaigns each year. CCPR accounts for nearly 70% of this individual's staff time. This service is included in the County's general fund budget through CMR, so there is no direct cost to program staff for using in-house designers. In addition, the Department contracts with a vendor for printing services, and maintains relationships with several local vendors for additional marketing and outreach services.

In addition, advertising budgets are housed in CMR. Staff of both departments meet on an annual basis to develop an advertising plan for the year. The Department also maintains an annual Service Level Agreement with CMR (Attachment A) which ensures maintenance of service throughout the year.

Current promotional efforts include several key components.

Activity Guide

The Department's main publication to promote programs and activities is the CCPR Activity Guide. There are approximately 40,500 copies produced and published four times each year and sent directly to approximately 39,500 resident homes, as well as being available at community centers, schools, libraries, and online through the website and social media.

Advertising, New and Traditional Media

The Department places advertisements in publications, including the Calvert Recorder newspaper and Recreation News. Though advertising is generally targeted toward revenue-generating activities, a recent focus has also been placed on raising awareness of the broad array of parks and natural areas available in Calvert. From a quiet hike through the trails of Battle Creek Cypress Swamp or a naturalist guided hike, to being a part of the saw-whet owl banding program, the Department has many amenities which appeal to both visitors and residents alike.

Though little quantitative data exists on the efficacy of paid advertising, several program evaluation responses have indicated that customers learned about Department programming through advertising. As word-of-mouth is one of the Department's best advertising methods, reaching even one participant could result in several new participants registering for programs in the future.

Staff have occasionally placed advertisements in Calvert Recorder, though its

distribution is more limited than other publications, and its reader demographics do not necessarily match those of our core target audiences. Most advertisements are associated with events or activities that have a social services component. The Department tested online advertisements on Calvert Recorder's website. This campaign resulted in very few click-throughs, and was not at all effective. Additional opportunities to purchase online advertisements have not been sought due in part to the department's experience with the Calvert Recorder online advertisements. In addition, many Internet users are turning to advertisement blocking utilities (one popular extension in Firefox, for example, has nearly 19.5 million users), which render many banner advertisements or pop-ups ineffective.

The Department has explored social media as an advertising vehicle, and has tested paid advertising on Facebook on several occasions. The value of social media advertising is the ability to finely target messaging based on very specific criteria. Unfortunately, many of our programs are for youth under the age of 13 (the minimum age for Facebook users), and targeting parents via advertising can be challenging due to their broad age ranges and interests. We continue to experiment with these tools, and explore whether there is sufficient return on investment for expanded use.

Internet

While the County is undergoing a large website redesign, pages listing information with parks and recreation events and programs account for a large percentage of the top pages visited. Aside from the main Department page, the Edward T. Hall Aquatic Center, Breezy Point Beach & Campground, and online registration reach the highest number of visitors for the Department. The Department's Recreation Automation Specialist along with program managers and coordinators, maintain web pages for each park, community center, and major program area. These pages are updated regularly and revised to coincide with the release of each new issue of the Activity Guide and includes pertinent items such as news flashes and openings and closings of facilities.

Online Registration

In 2018, over 41% of participants registered online for programs through RecTrac and almost 98% registered for Natural Resources programs through Calvert Nature Society's website. Online registration offers customers with a quick and easy way to register and pay for activities, and provides the department with the opportunity to add classes outside of the traditional brochure publication schedule.

There are several reasons for the variation in staff assisted vs. online registration rates. While some involve access, convenience and ease of use are significant factors when customers choose where to register. Programs in the Aquatics category, for example, are generally reoccurring activities. The Department is finding that many of the customers who regularly participate in those programs simply stop at the front desk of the program facility at the end of the current session. Their choice to use a staff-assisted registration option is primarily due to convenience. Conversely, registrations for Natural Resources programs is completely online through partner Calvert Nature

Society. These programs are popular and fill up almost immediately. By offering online, it allows customers to register from the convenience of their own home, to ensure they have the best chance of secure program spot for an upcoming session.

The online registration outlet is currently provided through the program RecTrac and has a customer friendly search function for program registration. A way to tie the electronic brochure directly to the online registration is a function of customer service that has not been attempted, however is an idea to lessen the number of “clicks” a user has to go through to register for a program.

Public Relations & Media Relations

Public relations and media relations efforts are structured to publicize and promote the County/Department and its programs to its various stakeholders. The Department sends a request to CMR who directs staff to write and send new releases for review to the Director of Communications & Media Relations as well as the Director of Parks & Recreation. Once approved, it is then disseminated to the media. The County enjoys a very positive relationship with the media. It is our practice to respond to all media inquiries the day they are received, even if it is after hours. This conveys our understanding of the reporter's tight deadlines and demonstrates our willingness to provide them with the information they need in a timely fashion.

All media inquiries are directed first to Division Chiefs, Deputy Director or Director as appropriate. Any response is then provided to the Director of Parks & Recreation and CMR. Each week the Director of CMR provides an update to the Board of County Commissioners and County Administrator on media touches for that week. The County maintains a news archive, enabling members of the media and the public to read news releases at will and to potentially generate story ideas. News releases are posted to the archive when they are distributed to the media. The archive can be found on www.calvertcountymd.gov.

Social Media

The Department maintains and manages its social media presence primarily through Facebook, a social network. Facebook is used primarily as a customer engagement tool because it invites users of the Facebook pages to offer comments, suggestions and feedback. In addition, Facebook boosts prove to be highly effective to reach people with little cost compared to print advertising. The Department prefers to respond to questions and comments directly on the Facebook page rather than through direct message as this gives other readers the benefit of the information and positions the Department as responsive and customer focused. Currently the Department operates a Department-wide and Aquatics Facebook page.

With the assistance of CMR, a page for Breezy Point Beach & Campground as well as Chesapeake Hills Golf Course is planned. Future venues up for consideration are YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter accounts as well as Snapchat filters. These venues will be established for target audiences that engage in parks and recreation programs

and events. The Department is required to go through CMR for postings to be reviewed and approved through a third party tracking and analytics program called Hootsuite. The Director and Recreation Division Chief have the authority to post emergency messages such as closures or cancellations without the review process. The County's Social Media Policy (Attachment B) is a Board of County Commissioner's directed policy housed under CMR.

Print Collateral

CMR creates hundreds of print collateral items annually, including banners, signs, postcards, reports, flyers, brochures, exhibits, newsletters, maps, handbooks, rule books, certificates, forms, banners, invitations, etc. In general, when a request is made for collateral, CMR works with staff to determine the most appropriate type of collateral for the project's objective and target audience.

Included as Attachment C, the Department's style guide focuses on brand awareness and uniformity throughout all marketing materials, facilities and programs. Consistent and proper branding increases the Department's ability to effectively and efficiently reach the community by making marketing materials more easily recognizable with increased awareness. All materials are uniform colors, format, and logos as appropriate.

Electronic Communication

With the majority of our customers registering for programs and activities online, electronic communication has become an important part of the communication mix. It is extremely cost effective and enables us to measure results more efficiently than print collateral. We use Constant Contact, SurveyMonkey, and RecTrac to send electronic campaigns as needed and electronic newsletters monthly to more than 14,953 + Constant Contact people who have opted to receive such information. Constant Contact enables us to track how many people open each campaign, how many click the links, and how many forward to another person. RecTrac allows staff to immediately email or text class participants.

Additional methods of electronic communication include the Department's weather hotline which advises users of the status of field usage on any given day. As well as email and text alert messages through Everbridge. This mass communication platform allows the Department to send important messages directly to those that sign up for notifications by email, phone, and text message. These are reserved for emergency messaging as well as park and field closures.

Events

Attendance at events can be an extremely effective method of advertising programs and services. The Department regularly participates in several events which allow staff to connect directly with potential program participants. In addition to events such as these, the Department works to find other venues to connect with customers. This initiative has a need to become more organized and centralized. As the Department's promotional efforts are largely decentralized, there is minimal coordination on messaging, booth

content and appearance, and event staffing.

Implementation Tactics

Tasks required to implement and monitor each strategy are listed in this section. With each task, the person responsible for the task and a completion target date are indicated. Having a plan of action with specific tasks ensures that the details are clear and that specific persons are accountable.

Task	Description	Person Responsible	Completion Date
#1	Targeted mailings to Calvert families	Recreation Automation Specialist, Recreation Division Chief, CMR	Quarterly / As needed
#2	Increase use of Facebook page – post upcoming activities, announcements, contests	Recreation Automation Specialist, Recreation Division Chief, CMR	Ongoing
#3	Represent Department at special events	All trained staff	Ongoing
#4	Engage media in Department projects and activities	Director of Parks & Recreation or designee, CMR	Ongoing
#5	Distribution of information to outside agencies	Director of Parks & Recreation or designee, CMR	Ongoing
#6	Development of promotional strategies for internal special events and programs	Organizing staff, CMR	Ongoing
#7	Inform citizens of public meetings and public input activities	Organizing staff, CMR	1-2 weeks prior, 2 days before, and throughout
#8	Customer Service / Program Surveys	Executive Administrative Assistant, Division Chiefs	Ongoing / post activity
#9	Customer Service enhancement and training	All staff	Ongoing
#10	Attention grabbing course descriptions	Recreation Coordinators	Upon entering in RecTrac
#11	Publish electronic newsletters and promotions	Special Facilities staff, Division Chiefs, CMR	Ongoing
#12	Updated and relevant website content	Managers, Coordinators, Division Chiefs, Recreation Automation Specialist,	Monthly

		CMR	
#13	Updated and relevant online registration content	Managers, Coordinators, Division Chiefs, Recreation Automation Specialist	Ongoing

See attached Service Level Agreement (Attachment A) for specific responsibilities as agreed upon with the Department of Communications & Media Relations.

VIII. Evaluation Process

Monitoring and evaluating the planning activities and status of implementation of the plan is as important as identifying the strategic issues and goals. One advantage of monitoring and evaluation is to ensure that the Department is following the direction established during planning. Evaluation can be measured in many ways which include direct measurement and indirect measurement. Evaluation of marketing or outreach campaign is conducted following the completion of the campaign. This ensures that successful marketing strategies are emphasized, and unsuccessful strategies are reviewed for applicability and changed as necessary.

Direct Measurement

1. Program registrations
2. Attendance at events
3. Revenue generated through sponsors and donations
4. Revenues generated (Special Facilities)
5. Attendance at public meetings
6. Social media analytics
7. Surveys

Indirect Measurement

1. News coverage
2. Website and social media traffic
3. Distribution network of collateral
4. Word of mouth referrals

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IX. Annual Review of Plan

The annual review of any plan is an essential component in the overall planning process. Our department's proactive philosophy anticipates community and constituent needs and budgetary constraints rather than reacting to them. The Marketing and Community Outreach Plan will be reviewed and updated as needed by department leadership staff annually in June.

Approved by:
Shannon Q. Nazzal, CPRE
Parks & Recreation Director
July 1, 2019