



Putnam County

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT**

EAR-based Amendments

Putnam County
2509 Crill Avenue, Suite 300
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**Recreation & Open Space Element
Putnam County**

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A. Introduction

Putnam County adopted its Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) in 2009. The data and analysis for the Recreation & Open Space Element is being updated to address the recommendations of the EAR and to extend the short term and long range planning timeframes to 2015 and 2025, respectively. The EAR recommendations for the Recreation & Open Space Element are as follows:

- Revise Objective F.1.5 to set a new measurable standard for the implementation of a Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- Add waterways to the system of recreation sites, pursuant to Section 163.3177(6)(e), F.S.

B. Inventory of Facilities

1. County-Owned Recreation Facilities

Putnam County has a strong recreation system. Putnam County provides a range of active and resource-based recreational opportunities for all citizens. Active recreational facilities generally provide user-oriented recreation designed for a specific purpose such as tennis, basketball, softball, or soccer. Resource-based recreation facilities utilize the natural environment to provide recreation opportunities for hiking, fishing, swimming, or boating. Putnam County has 201.8 acres of parks and recreational facilities. Table 1 provides an inventory of recreation facilities owned and operated Putnam County. County parks are depicted on Map 1: *Existing Recreation Facilities*.

Table F-1: Inventory Of Putnam County Parks And Recreation Facilities

Facility	Location	Acreage
Francis Youth Complex	Francis	29.7
Central Complex (Triangle Park)	Palatka	30.0
Rotary Park	Palatka	2.0
South Putnam Complex	Crescent City	34.3
West Putnam Complex	Interlachen	26.8
West Putnam Babe Ruth Complex	Interlachen	9.0
Melrose Complex	Melrose	11.4
Bostwick Park	Bostwick	1.5
San Mateo Park	San Mateo	7.5
County Ball Park – south of SR 100	Florahome	1.0
County Ball Park – north of SR 100	Florahome	1.0
Johnson Ball Field	Johnson	7.0
Veterans Memorial Park	East Palatka	2.3
Lake Como Park	Pomona Park	1.0
East Palatka Park	East Palatka	2.0
Etoniah Park	Bardin	5.0
San Mateo Woods Park	San Mateo	3.0

Silver Lake Park	Palatka	0.3
Heritage Park	Melrose	2.0
Tanglewylde Center	St. Johns River and West River Road	25.0
Total		201.8

Source: Putnam County Parks and Recreation Department, 2008

2. Public Access to Waterways

Putnam County has 10 boat ramps, which give public access to the many freshwater lakes and the St. Johns River. In addition, there are four municipal boat ramps and three State owned boat ramps. Public access to lakes and river is a critical component to the water related recreational activities and economic development for Putnam County. Putnam County is known as a prime destination for bass fishing. Table 2 lists all of the public access boat ramps. County boat ramp location area depicted on Map 2: *Putnam County Boat Ramp Locations*.

Table F-2: Public Boat Ramps and Facilities

Facility	Location	Ownership	Acres	Ramp Lanes
Shell Harbor Boat Ramp	North of Welaka	County	0.10	2
Browns Landing	South of Welaka	County	0.50	1
Palmetto Bluff Road Boat Ramp	Bostwick	County	0.50	1
St. Johns River – Pico Road	East Palatka	County	0.50	1
St. Johns River – Elgin Grove Boat Ramp	East River Road	County	0.50	1
Lake Grandin/Dicks Lake	Lake Grandin	County	1.00	1
Georges Lake Boat Ramp	George's Lake	County	0.20	1
Oklawaha River Boat Ramp	Ocala Nat'l Forest	County	1.00	1
Ft. Gates Ferry	Fruitland	County	0.10	1
Georgetown/Drayton Island Boat Ramp	Georgetown	County	0.20	1
County Sub-total			5.10	11
Crescent Lake Boat Ramp – L#1	Crescent City	Crescent City	0.50	1
Lake Stella Boat Ramp	Crescent City	Crescent City	0.05	1
Welaka Boat Ramp	Welaka	Welaka	0.10	2
J.C. Godwin Riverfront Park	Palatka	Palatka	9.00	2
Municipal Sub-total			9.65	6
Rodman Recreation Area Boat Ramp	Rodman	State	1.00	1
Kenwood Landing	Rodman	State	1.00	1
Rodman Dam Boat Ramp	Rodman	State	0.10	2
State Sub-total			2.10	4
Total			16.85	21

Source: Putnam County *Boat Ramp Locations Map*, 2006; Putnam County Parks and Recreation Department, 2008.

3. Facilities Owned and Operated by Other Public Entities

a. Federal Facilities

Ocala National Forest:

The Ocala National Forest lies in Putnam, Marion, and Lake Counties and is one of three national forests located in Florida. This area, encompassing 23,627 acres in Putnam County, represents a major resource not only to Putnam and the other counties in which it is located, but also to the region, State, and nation. A variety of recreational opportunities are offered including: fishing, hunting, camping, swimming, canoeing, and hiking. The U.S. Forest Service manages the Ocala National Forest.

Lake Ocklawaha (Rodman Reservoir):

Lake Ocklawaha, located in south-central Putnam County, is accessed through the Ocklawaha, Rodman, and Kenwood Recreation areas. Facilities include two boat ramps and canoe launching areas, parking, restrooms, fishing, hiking, camping, 16 picnic tables, shelters, and grills.

Welaka National Fish Hatchery:

The Welaka National Fish Hatchery was built in 1926 and was originally operated by the State of Florida. The Hatchery was transferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1938. The land area encompasses approximately 385 acres. Ponds are operated at two locations. Those ponds near the aquarium are known as the Welaka Unit, and a second group of ponds about three miles south of headquarters is called the Beecher Unit. The Beecher Unit is named for the spring that serves as the water supply. Beecher Spring has a flow of 4,000 gallons per minute at a constant temperature of 72 degrees. Water for the Welaka Unit comes from a well 423 feet deep and from the St. Johns River. Fish bred at the Hatchery, as well as other native species of fish, amphibians and reptiles, are on display at the aquarium. Information and brochures pertaining to the Hatchery and its operation are also available at this location. An observation tower, interpretive information and a 0.75-mile nature trail are located at the Beecher Unit. Many species of water birds can be observed in this area.

b. State Facilities

Etoniah Creek State Forest:

This newly created State Forest was initially proposed as a “mixed use” development of regional impact but was purchased by the State. It consists of 8,679 acres and includes a portion of Etoniah Creek within its boundaries. The Forest is located west of Palatka near the unincorporated community of Florahome. Recreational opportunities include fishing, hunting, camping, canoeing, biking, horseback riding, and hiking. The Florida Division of Forestry manages the Forest.

Welaka State Forest:

This Forest is located just south of Welaka and consists of 2,288 acres along the east bank of the St. Johns River. The Forest contains two springs, one of which delivers 13,000 gallons per hour. Recreational opportunities include fishing, camping, boating, horseback riding, and hiking. The Florida Division of Forestry manages Welaka State Forest.

Ravines State Gardens:

One of the oldest in Florida, this park was created in the 1930's during the Franklin D. Roosevelt Administration as part of the Civilian Conservation Corps program. It is located in the City of Palatka and contains the only known slope forest in Putnam County. Ravines State Gardens consists of 146 acres. Recreational opportunities include a multi-use paved trail, an exercise trail, hiking trails, jogging, and picnicking. There is a recreation center available for community events.

Katharine Ordway Preserve and Carl Swisher Memorial Sanctuary:

The Katharine Ordway Preserve is adjacent to the Carl Swisher Memorial Sanctuary. The combined 9,000-acre area is owned by the University of Florida (UF) Foundation and managed by the Florida Museum of Natural History. The Preserve is located south of the unincorporated communities of Melrose and Putnam Hall. The Preserve is the home of the Ordway-Swisher Biological Station for the study of forestry, ecology, and biology. The Preserve is dominated by rolling sand hills and old fields that overlook large basin marshes and upland sand hill lakes. There is also a small area of planted pine and mesic flatwoods. The Preserve is home to many rare species associated with sand hills. The Preserve is not open to the general public.

Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway:

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers own the Greenway. The Greenway runs across four counties and is part of the former Cross Florida Barge Canal project. The Greenway is located adjacent to the Barge Canal and Lake Oklawaha south of Palatka. Recreational opportunities include hiking, hunting, fishing, and horseback riding.

Carl Duval Moore State Forest:

The State Forest consists of 306 acres in two separate parcels. It is located west of Palatka and southeast of Interlachen and has hiking trails, picnic areas, parking, restrooms, and an observation deck.

Dunns Creek State Park:

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Recreation and Parks, manage the State Park. The Park contains 6,222

acres of land with significant frontage along Dunns Creek and has hiking and biking trails.

State Water Bodies:

Crescent Lake:

Crescent Lake lies in Putnam and Flagler Counties. Facilities include boat ramps, marinas, campsites, and picnic tables. The lake's surface area is 27 square miles.

St. Johns River:

The St. Johns River flows northward through Putnam County from the north end of Lake George. Fish camps, numerous boat ramps, marinas, fishing piers, campsites, picnic tables, and picnic shelters are situated along its banks.

Lake George:

Putnam, Marion, and Volusia Counties share Lake George, whose surface area is 73.1 square miles.

c. Water Management District Facilities

The following are some of the resources-based recreational areas that are owned and managed by the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD). SJRWMD lands are listed on Table 5 of the Conservation Element Data and Analysis.

Caravelle Ranch:

This conservation area consists of 13,383 acres adjacent to the confluence of the Ocklawaha and St. Johns Rivers south of Palatka. The area also includes portions of the Cross Florida Greenway along the Barge Canal. Recreational opportunities consist of hunting, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, biking, and limited primitive camping.

Dunns Creek Conservation Area:

This area contains 3,182 acres and is located along the north bank of Dunns Creek just south of San Mateo. Recreational opportunities consist of hunting, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, biking, and limited primitive camping.

Lake George Conservation Area:

The Lake George Conservation Area is located in both Putnam and Volusia Counties and consists of 25,461 acres. Approximately 8,300 acres are located within southeastern Putnam County adjacent to Lake George. Recreational opportunities include hunting, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, and limited primitive camping.

Murphy Creek Conservation Area:

This conservation area consists of Murphy Island, an 854-acre island on the St. Johns River located just south of Palatka, and 853 mainland acres located adjacent to the south side of the island. Recreational opportunities consist of canoeing, boating, fishing, hiking, and primitive camping.

J.A. Ginn, Jr. Parcel:

This parcel of land is located just north of the City of Palatka within an area of hardwood swamp adjacent to the St. Johns River. The parcel contains approximately 71 acres.

Seven Sisters Islands:

This 280-acre conservation area consists of a string of seven islands located in the St. Johns River in the Satsuma area. Recreational opportunities are limited due to the fact that the islands consist primarily of wetlands.

Horseshoe Point Conservation Area:

The 2,757-acre Horseshoe Point Conservation Area is located just southeast of Palatka between Lundy Road and the St. Johns River with more than six miles of riverfront. Recreational opportunities are currently limited to hiking and wildlife observation.

Plum Creek Parcel:

This 4,202-acre parcel of land was purchased in 2001 and a management plan is currently being developed for the site. The parcel is located just west of Palatka within an area known as the Rice Creek Swamp.

d. Putnam County School District Facilities

Within Putnam County there are 18 public schools, including two community colleges, three high schools, one K through 12 school, four middle schools, and nine elementary schools. Of these, 14 have recreational facilities on site. The degree to which these recreational facilities are available to the public and/or to special groups varies from school to school. Some of these facilities do provide recreational opportunities to County residents. For example, Pop Warner football utilizes the Palatka High School (Veterans Memorial Stadium) for games. Jenkins Middle School and Palatka High School gymnasiums are used for youth sports programs such as basketball.

4. Privately Owned Facilities***The Rice Creek Sanctuary and Recreational Trail (part of the Florida Trail)***

Located near State Road 100, this 250-acre area provides 10 tent campsites, five nature trails, and a hiking trail. The Georgia Pacific Corporation owns the area.

Florida National Scenic Trail (FNST)

The FNST began with volunteers of the Florida Trail Association (FTA) more than 25 years ago. Utilizing public lands where possible and developed under agreements with private landowners elsewhere, the FNST threads its way through the state, and currently there are over 1,000 miles of trail available for extended hiking opportunities within Florida. FTA volunteers, and state and federal agencies, work to maintain the FNST. Where the trail is located on public lands such as the Ocala National Forest and Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway, the FNST is open to anyone. However, on private lands the trail is limited to members of the FTA. Within Putnam County, the FNST traverses the Ocala National Forest, crosses over the Rodman Dam, runs along the levee of the former barge canal, crosses over the canal at the Buckman Lock, and winds north on private lands where it eventually passes through the Etoniah Creek State Forest and exits the County near Lake George.

In addition to the private resource-based facilities identified above, there are also numerous privately owned recreational facilities within the County which provide recreational related facilities to residents and tourists alike including fish camps and resorts, marinas, Boy Scout camps, campgrounds, and golf courses. Because these facilities are private, they are not included in the inventory for determining level of service for recreational facilities. However, they are valuable recreational opportunities to residents and visitors because they satisfy a large part of the demand for resource related recreation in the County.

5. Open Spaces

There is a large amount of open space in Putnam County in the form of wetlands, including privately owned wetlands. Many of these wetlands are also owned by federal and state agencies including the SJRWMD.

A number of bottomland hardwood and cypress swamps and fresh-water marshes border the St. Johns River, its tributaries, and the Ocklawaha River between Rodman Reservoir and the St. Johns River. These wetlands serve important functions such as flood storage, maintaining water quality, and providing wildlife habitat. One of the largest wetland systems in the County is located between Palatka and Interlachen and is known as the Nine Mile or Rice Creek Swamp, and forms the headwaters of Rice Creek. Portions of this swamp are located within the Georgia Pacific Wildlife Management Area. Much of this swamp and surrounding upland areas provide some of the State's rarest plants, animals, and natural communities with a land base necessary to sustain them into the future. Wetlands along the lower portion of Rice Creek, Dunns Creek, and the St. Johns River south of Palatka are habitat for the swallow-tailed kite. These important open spaces account for approximately 182,700 acres within the County. Of this total, about 85,000 acres, or 46 percent, are already protected within public and/or private conservation areas (Ocala National Forest, Etoniah Creek State Forest, Welaka State Forest, Swisher Ordway Preserve, Dunns Creek Conservation Area, Dunns Creek State Park, Lake George Conservation Area, Seven Sisters Islands,

Murphy Creek Conservation Area, Cross Florida Greenway State Recreation and Conservation Area and Caravelle Ranch Conservation Area).

6. Trails Master Plan

In 2003, the Putnam County Chamber of Commerce applied for the Kodak American Greenways Award Grant to fund a series of public workshops to solicit community input for a Master Plan for Trails Development. The Putnam County Chamber of Commerce Trails Development Committee developed a Master Plan. In 2007, the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) formally adopted the Trails Master Plan. The Trails Master Plan was amended in 2009.

The adopted Trails Master Plan establishes the following vision:

“To establish Putnam County as the trail hub of Florida while enhancing and enriching the quality of life of Putnam County citizens through the development of cycling, pedestrian, equestrian, paddling and other trails that serve as recreational amenities, alternative connectors to community destinations and economic stimuli.”

In order to achieve the vision, the trails development effort will:

- Provide unique recreational experiences for cyclists, roller-bladers, joggers, equestrians, walkers and commuters to and from work.
- Provide important alternative connecting paths between neighborhoods, schools, parks, public lands, business/retail and downtown centers.
- Offer unique eco-tourism experiences for visitors and to promote Putnam County’s historical, recreational and downtown destinations.

Figures F-4, F-5, F-6, F-7, and F-8 are included to depict the existing and future recreation trails in Putnam County.

C. Analysis

1. Level of Service (LOS)

In 2006, the BOCC revised its LOS standard for recreation and open space. Instead of an LOS based on specific park types and recreational facilities, the BOCC adopted a parkland standard based on acreage with recommended guidelines for recreational facilities. The level LOS standard is as follows:

Policy F.1.3.2 *The County shall adopt an overall parkland (Community, Neighborhood, Mini-Park, and Special Use Facilities combined) level of service of 1 acre per 500 persons. The County will consider the following guidelines for the provision of recreational facilities:*

Boat ramps:	One lane per 3,700 persons
Football/soccer fields:	One field per 8,500 persons
Tennis courts:	One court per 7,000 persons
Picnic areas:	One table per 6,000 persons
Community center:	One building per 60,000 persons
Basketball goals:	One goal per 3,800 persons

Equipped play area:	One area per 8,500 persons
Swimming pool:	One pool per 50,000 persons
Baseball/softball field:	One field per 3,500 persons

Based upon projections from the U.S. Bureau of Census, the Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR), and the Putnam County Planning & Development Services Department, the population of Putnam County is expected to increase. The total County population in 2009 was estimated by BEBR to be about 74,608, with 66,300 of the total living in the unincorporated area. By 2025, the projected total County population is anticipated to be about 75,808, with a projected 67,673 of the total living in the unincorporated area. This is an increase in total population of 1,200 persons within the long term planning timeframe. In order to meet the adopted LOS standard the County will need to have a total of 151.6 acres of parkland. There are currently 201.8 acres of County owned recreational facilities. This figure does not include any municipal, State, or federal recreation and open space acreage.

2. Recreation and Open Space Needs

Parklands serve two purposes: first, to conserve open space and natural resources and second, to provide outdoor recreational opportunities. Conservation of open space through the acquisition of recreation areas is one of the best means for securing and maintaining open space. The community visioning workshops held in 2002 indicated a citizen desire to expand and diversify the County's recreational programs for all ages. Demand for outdoor recreation opportunities can be met by providing parks for resource-based pursuits such as boating or picnicking, and parks for active user-oriented pursuits such as tennis, baseball, and basketball.

Sources of funding for new parklands may include park and recreation impact fees, user fees, fees collected for fishing and hunting licenses, county grant funds, State grant funds, and city funds. The federal government also has a funding program through the National Park Service, known as the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON). The State of Florida receives an annual apportionment and this money is distributed through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. These monies are available to local governments for use in projects that meet the State's comprehensive outdoor recreation plan. State grants are not entitlement funds, and the County must compete with other counties for funding. Several Florida counties have initiated bond programs that are used as a pool for matching funds. The State generally favors grant proposals that contain matching monies.

In Putnam County's Five Year Capital Improvements Program there are several projects planned that will improve the County's Recreational LOS, as follows:

- Improvements to the West Putnam Amphitheater and Park
- Improvements to the Tanglewylde development
- Improvements to the multi-use facility at the central recreation complex















