

2019 - 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

GROWING. PIVOTING. HONORING.



CHARLESTONCOUNTYPARKS.COM



Painted Bunting at
Caw Caw Interpretive Center

Message from the Executive Director

Dear Charleston County Residents:

I am pleased to present to you the Charleston County Park & Recreation (CCPRC) Commission Annual Report for fiscal year 2019-2020. Operating an 11,000-acre park system under great uncertainty during a global pandemic required tremendous focus, continuous communication, balancing priorities, vital decisions and commitment to the safety of our staff and visitors. During the beginning of the pandemic our parks closed for two months. We used this time to complete several maintenance projects in anticipation of re-opening. Many of our administrative employees worked remotely using MS Teams to hold virtual meetings and conduct business. We even launched an electronic onboarding system to safely process seasonal summer employees. Detailed safety plans were developed so visitors could feel safe and comfortable in our parks.

During this time, we had to assess the financial impact of closed parks, cancelled rentals and cancelled programs and events, while managing our ongoing expenses. Fortunately, CCPRC had the foresight years ago to establish a six-month operating reserve fund that would allow us to maintain operations with limited revenues. This was the rainy day we hoped we would never see, but we were prepared to use these funds to sustain us. I believe it was the dedication, innovation, and resilience of our staff that enabled us to safely reopen the parks in May of 2020.

Remarkably, we also opened our new Stono River County Park that features trails, boardwalks and beautiful river views. We built the Dunes House at Folly Beach County Park after it was destroyed during Hurricane Irene in 2011. Additional improvements to the park include renovating the Sol Legare boat landing, repairing the boardwalk at Palmetto Islands County Park and a new bathroom at the James Island Campground primitive sites. New programs we offered included swim lessons at the West County Aquatic Center and the Ukweli – Searching for Healing Truth Poetry series at McLeod Plantation Historic Site. We even partnered with Rusty Bull Brewery to launch a custom beer called Sun's Out Pale Ale with a portion of the proceeds going to support the Charleston County Parks Foundation. In an effort to strengthen our communication we redesigned our website. It was also important to ensure our staff were fairly compensated according to market rates and other factors so we completed the Archer Compensation and Classification Study.

In spite of all the challenges this year including Hurricane Dorian in September 2019, we have emerged stronger than ever. We were reaccredited for the second time by the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies by earning a perfect score. While we continued to manage restrictions due to the pandemic we received many expressions of gratitude from our visitors for the park system reopening and how much coming to the parks meant to their well-being. We reported 2.6 million visitors this fiscal year, which was slightly less than the prior year. Ultimately, this year can be summed up in three words - GROWING, PIVOTING, HONORING. I wish to thank our community and our staff for their unwavering support this year. Overall, I felt great satisfaction that our mission of improving the quality of life in Charleston County was accomplished. I could not be prouder.

Warmly,

David Bennett
Executive Director
Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission



David Bennett

Photo on Cover:
Starlight Yoga at Folly Beach County Park

Agency Overview

The Charleston County Park & Recreation Commission operates over 11,000 acres of property, including regional parks, beach parks, a historic plantation site, landmark fishing piers, waterparks, boat landings, a climbing wall, a challenge course, an interpretive center, an equestrian center, cottages, a campground, a marina, and event facilities. We also offer a variety of recreational services - festivals, camps, classes, programs, and more.

Mission Statement

The Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission will improve the quality of life in Charleston County by offering a diverse system of park facilities, programs and services.

Vision Statement

To be distinguished as a nationally accredited and financially sustainable park and recreation agency through our commitment to preserving our natural, historical and cultural resources, offering a clean, safe and exceptional visitor experience that is accessible to all.

Core Values

Community Enrichment

Enabling lives through education and programs

Leadership

Providing professional staff development

Fun

Delivering fun to customers

Exceptional Customer Service

Always focusing on you

Health and Wellness

Providing and promoting healthy lifestyle opportunities

Quality

Striving for quality throughout the park system

Diversity and Inclusion

Creating a park system that reflects the diversity of our community

Safety

Ensuring safe and secure environments

Accessibility

Removing barriers to make programs and facilities accessible for all

Stewardship

Preserving and conserving cultural, natural, and historical resources

Building a Legacy

Maintaining a vision for the future while sustaining a healthy park system



CHARLESTON COUNTY PARK & RECREATION COMMISSIONERS



Teddy Manos
Chair



Collin Bruner
Vice-Chair



Eduardo Curry
Secretary-Treasurer



Lisa S. King



Mattese Lecque



Dale Aren



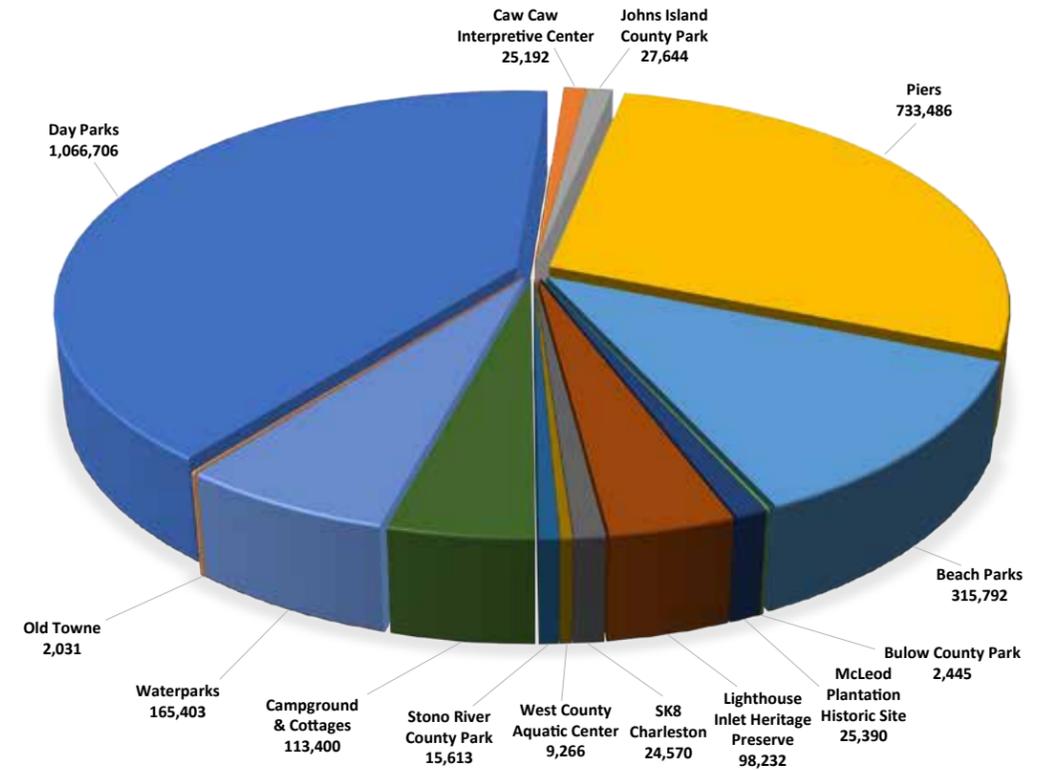
Brad Taggart



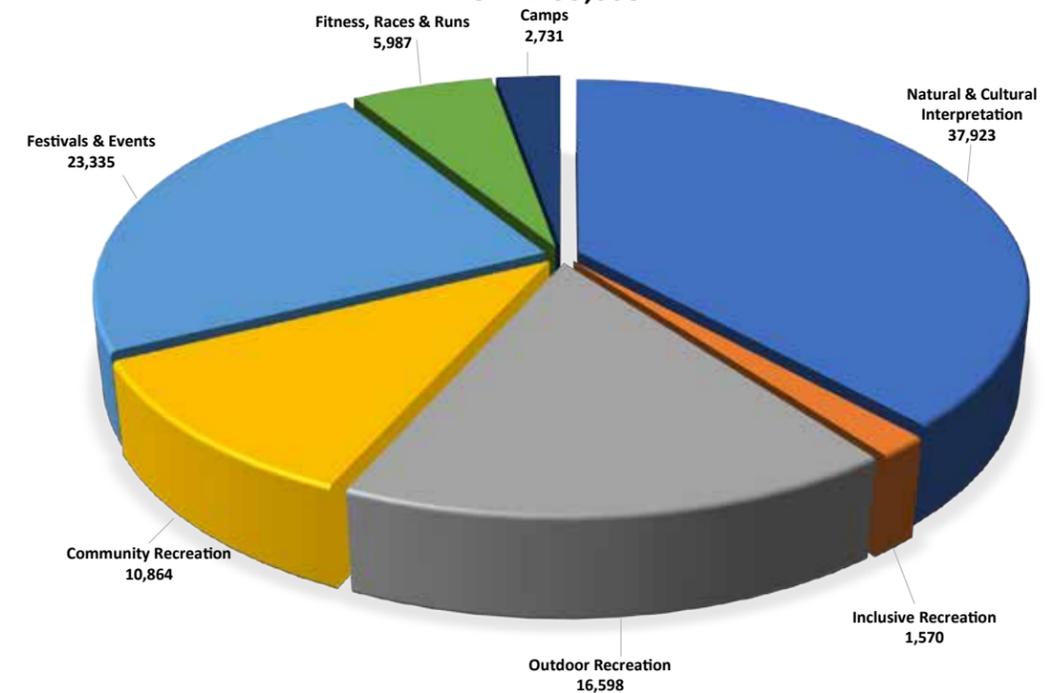
Latin American Festival at Wannamaker County Park

Patrons at Play

FY19/20 PARK & FACILITY ATTENDANCE TOTAL: 2,625,170

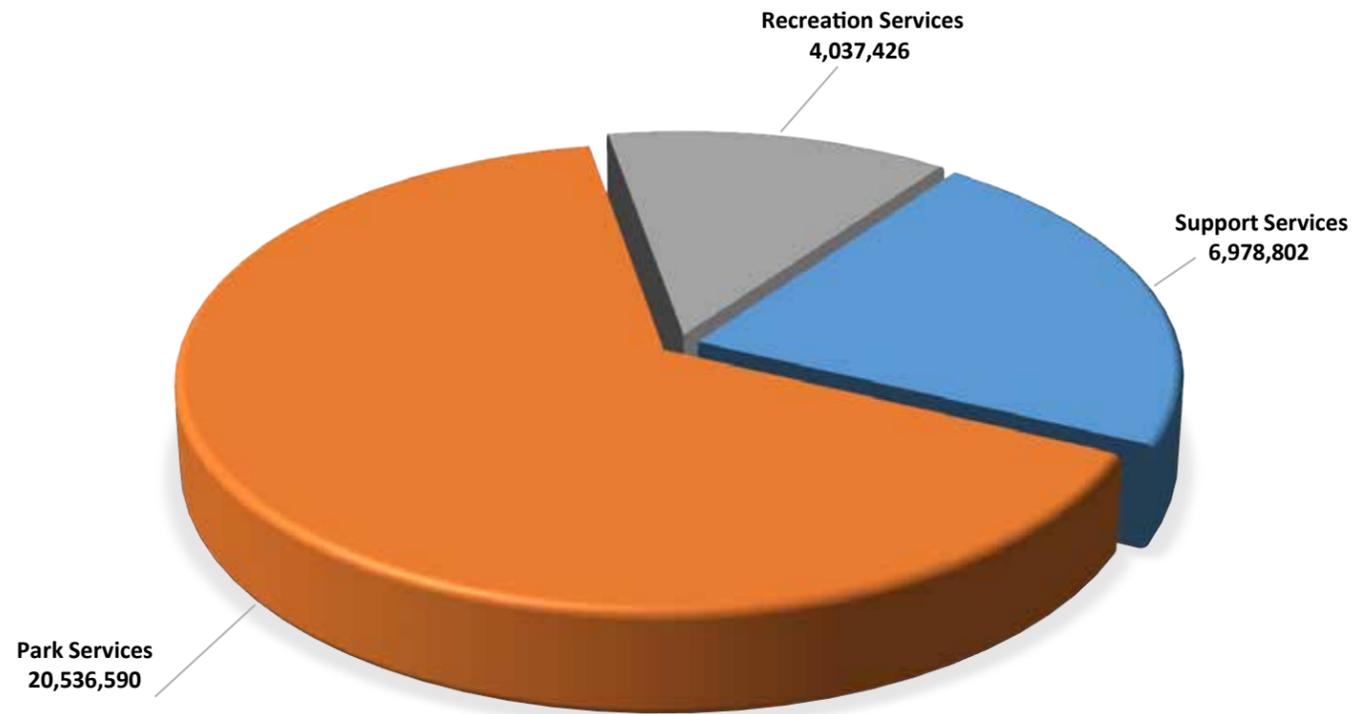


FY19/20 SPECIAL EVENTS & PROGRAMS ATTENDANCE TOTAL: 99,008

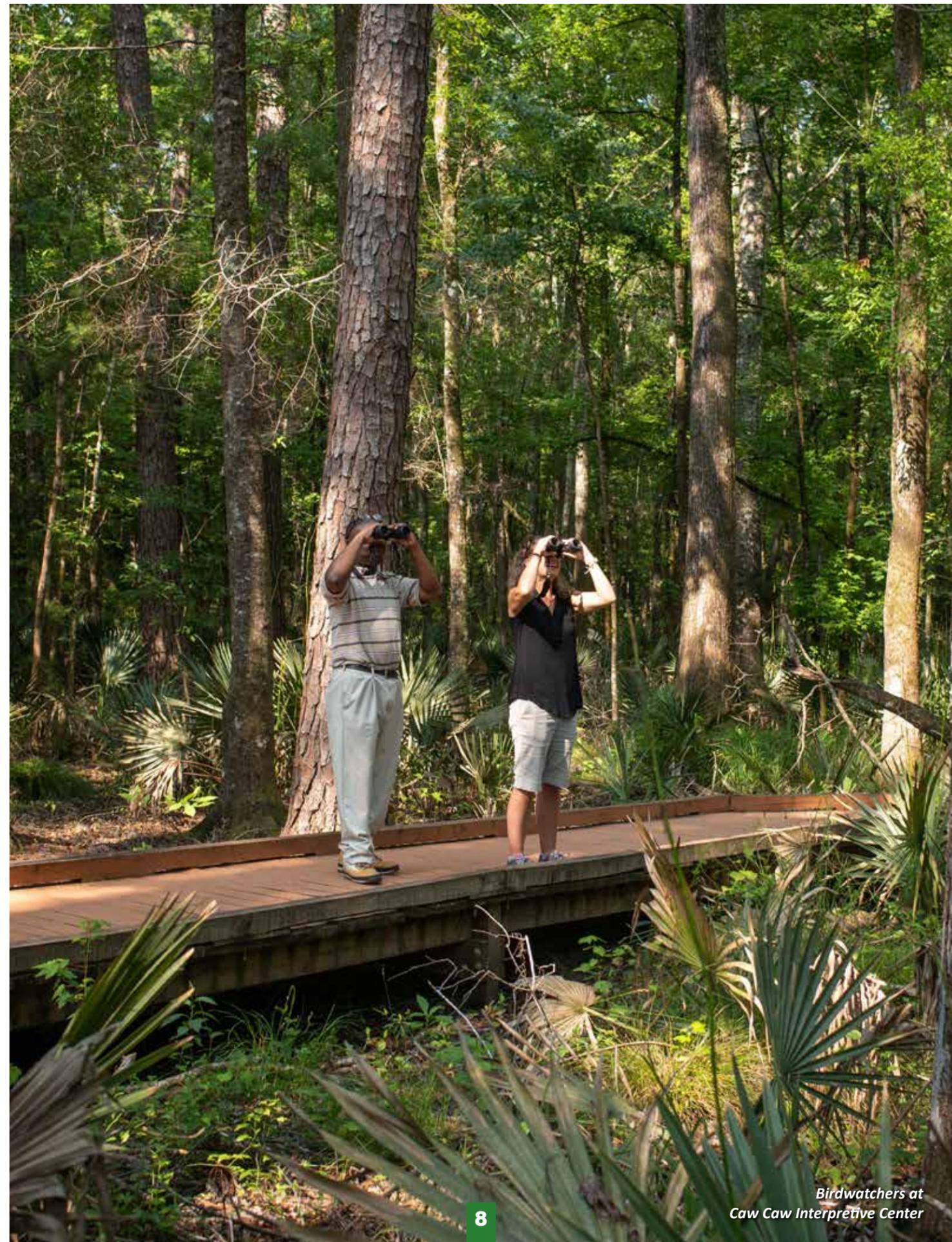
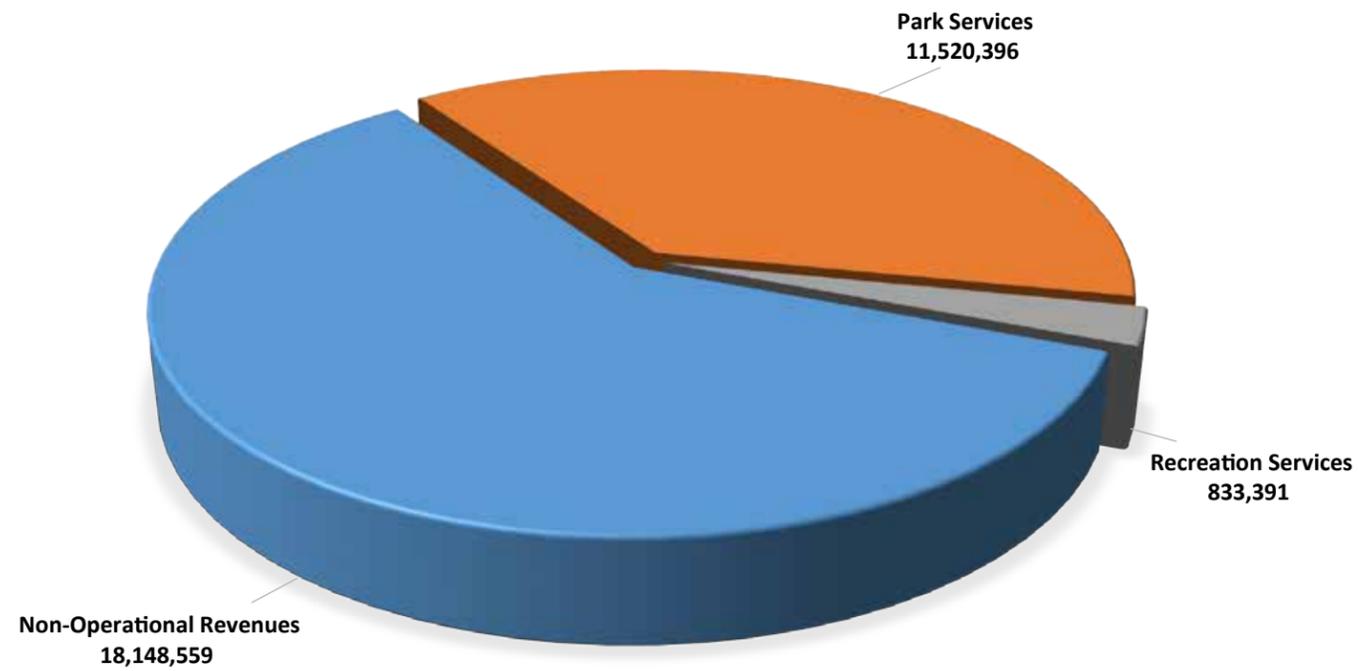


Your Dollars at Work

FY19/20 TOTAL EXPENDITURES
TOTAL: 31,552,818



FY19/20 TOTAL REVENUES
TOTAL: 30,502,346





Stono River County Park

Growing

Stono River County Park Opens

In March of 2020, Stono River County Park opened to the public. The 85.5-acre site is situated in the West Ashley and Johns Island areas of the City of Charleston, near the Limehouse Bridge. It includes approximately 25.3 acres of highland, a 12.2-acre marsh island, and 48 acres of marsh adjoining the Stono River. The West Ashley Greenway terminus is within a half mile of the site, so the property provides an excellent opportunity to serve as a trailhead.

Amenities at Stono River County Park include a marsh boardwalk around 1,000 feet in length, trails with overlooks including a half-mile trail on the big island of the Stono River, restrooms, a picnic area, bike racks, a bike repair station, a chilled drinking fountain and a 39-space parking area. CCPRC received the property in December 2012 through a generous donation from the Speedwell Foundation Mike and Jenny Messner and Paul and Betsy Shiverick.

Dunes House Opens at Folly Beach County Park

A newly built Dunes House opened in June 2020, after the original structure was demolished by Hurricane Irene in 2011. The Dunes House features outdoor showers, changing stations, restrooms, concessions, and viewing deck. The building was designed to take advantage of the park's beautiful sunset and ocean views. The Dunes House also offers a drop-off area, ADA parking and a crossover to the adjacent beach. Walls of the first level of the Dunes House were designed to break away to protect the building in the event of storm surge.

In addition to the Dunes House, the park also unveiled several other new amenities, including two new boardwalk access paths from the parking lot to the beach with showers and changing stations, and improvements to the park's Pelican Watch Pavilion.

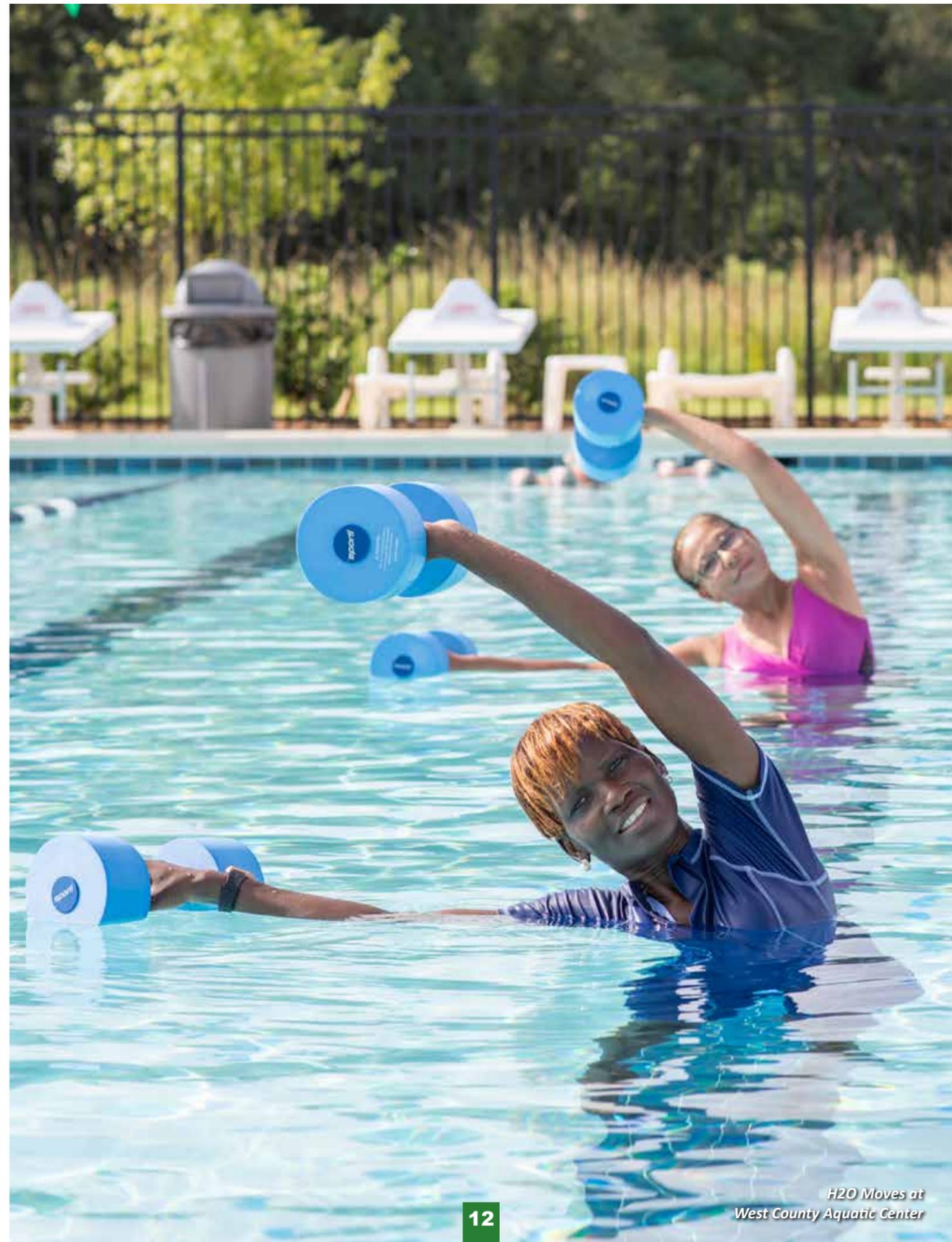
Growing (continued)

Swimming Lessons at West County Aquatic Center

The West County Aquatic Center in Hollywood opened in June 2019 and began offering swimming lessons through the nationally acclaimed Starfish Swim School. The pool also offered H2O Yoga. These programs are directly tied to the pool's goal to provide a place for fun and fitness, but also to support drowning prevention initiatives.

Ukweli: Searching for Healing Truth

A new five-part poetry, lecture and dialogue series was started at McLeod Plantation Historic Site, called Ukweli: Searching for Healing Truth. The events featured poet Horace Mungin and were moderated by radio host Osei Chandler. Ukweli is Swahili for "truth," and during the programs Mungin read his poetry and the readings were followed by discussions with black scholars and authors who contextualized the poems.



H2O Moves at
West County Aquatic Center



Primitive Campground Restroom at James Island County Park

Enhancing

Sol Legare Boat Landing Improvements

The Sol Legare/Battery Island Boat Landing on James Island received repairs and improvements in 2020 including the removal and replacement of the floating dock and construction of a new fixed crabbing and fishing pier.

Primitive Campground Restroom

James Island County Park received a new Primitive Campground Restroom. The new primitive campground restroom was pre-fabricated and delivered to the park. It also serves The Outdoor Zone.

Palmetto Islands County Park Center Boardwalk

The Palmetto Islands Park Center boardwalk repair project was completed. The project involved partial replacement of stringers, deck boards, hand rails and stairs. Cross bracing, joists, hangers and pile caps were also added to further stabilize the structure.

Timber Thinning

Forest management thinning projects were conducted at Laurel Hill County Park in Mount Pleasant and Spring Grove Future County Park located in West County. Thinning is the process of removing trees to reduce the volume of wood to healthier levels benefiting both people and wildlife. Thinning overgrown forest stands helps reduce the risk of wildfires, an especially pertinent issue for surrounding neighborhoods. CCPRC's Planning staff worked closely with the contractors to ensure the park's cultural and natural resources would not be adversely impacted by the thinning.

Enhancing (continued)

Website Redesign

CharlestonCountyParks.com received a redesign in early 2020. The updated website prominently features our parks, events calendar and other offerings. The new design features easier navigation, ADA enhancements and updated aesthetic design.

Employee Compensation

CCPRC completed a Compensation and Classification Study in FY 19/20. The purpose of the study was to conduct a professional evaluation of its compensation structure and develop a plan to assure CCPRC retains and compensates a high-quality workforce. The project included a job analysis and evaluation, market analysis, integration of internal and external equity considerations, pay plan development, and recommendations for implementation for 183 full-time employees. As a result of the study, The Archer Company recommended adjustments to job titles, job classifications, compensation, and exempt/non-exempt status based on the Fair Labor Standards Act from the Department of Labor.

Accessibility Audit

Charleston County Parks began a year-and-a half long accessibility audit in early 2019, retaining the WT Group as a consultant to evaluate our compliance with the ADA and overall accessibility. The consultants not only examined 51 facilities or parks, they also engaged staff and members of the community. At the conclusion of the audit, the WT Group detailed their recommendations to our agency's parks, programs, and services more accessible to individuals with disabilities.





David Bennett & Mattese Lecque
receiving the accreditation

Honoring

CAPRA Accreditation

CCPRC completed their five-year re-accreditation process through the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). CCPRC earned a perfect score on its assessments and received the distinction at the 2019 NRPA Annual Conference, ranking them among elite park and recreation agencies and departments across the country. The CAPRA Visitors Report noted that CCPRC met all of the standards and the visitors did not request any follow-up information within the 30-day post-visit period. CCPRC is among less than 1% of all National Parks and Recreation agencies to accomplish this feat.

CCPRC received their initial CAPRA accreditation in 2014. CAPRA provides quality assurance and quality improvement of accredited park and recreation agencies throughout the United States by providing agencies with a management system of best practices. CAPRA is the only national accreditation of park and recreation agencies and is a valuable measure of an agency's overall quality of operation, management and service to the community. Out of thousands of agencies in the country, only 169 parks and recreation agencies have earned accreditation.

Honoring (continued)

SK8 Charleston - Triple 8 Clash Madness

SK8 Charleston was selected as one of six shops/parks on the East Coast to participate in the 'Triple 8 Clash Madness' Battle of the Skateshops. Local skater, Conor Kerr, represented SK8 in this unique video contest. Popular opinion determined a best of the East and a best of the West. Conor won the East Coast bracket by a substantial margin making him one of two finalists. A judging panel of professional skaters selected Conor as the winner. Conor and a guest won a trip to the Clash at Clairemont pro skate contest in San Diego, CA. SK8 Charleston manager, Josh McFadden, joined them as a representative of CCPRC and SK8 Charleston for this excellent networking and promotional opportunity for the park.

Campground Honored

The Campground at James Island County Park received the Campendium's Campers' Choice Award for 2019. The Campground was selected in Campendium's Best County Parks Category on a national level. The Campground was also selected as Best Camping in South Carolina. In 2019 the Campground also received USA Today's award as the nation's Best Campground or RV Park.





Pivoting

A Challenging Year

The 19/20 fiscal year presented several challenges. From a hurricane to a global pandemic CCPRC faced these challenges and effectively worked to overcome them and, in many cases, created new opportunities.

Hurricane Dorian

In September 2019, Hurricane Dorian swept by the Lowcountry causing parks to close and several events such as Dog Day Afternoon at the water-parks to be canceled. There were no significant damages from the storm, however all of the parks needed clean-ups. Many CCPRC staff from across divisions assisted in these clean-up efforts.

Pivoting (continued)

Covid-19 Global Pandemic

The Covid-19 global pandemic impacted every area of CCPRC. When the pandemic first began CCPRC limited several park amenities such as rentals and food sales, and then eventually all parks and facilities were closed. During these closures CCPRC engaged with customers on social media by offering virtual nature programs, games and even a virtual Lowcountry Cajun Festival.

In early May, CCPRC began a tiered reopening of the parks beginning with unmanned properties. Eventually all of the parks were reopened with new safety guidelines in place. The waterparks also reopened on June 15 with a reduced capacity.

While nearly everything was changed due to the pandemic, CCPRC staff remained flexible and created new processes to safely offer access to our parks and programs.





Sun's Out Pale Ale

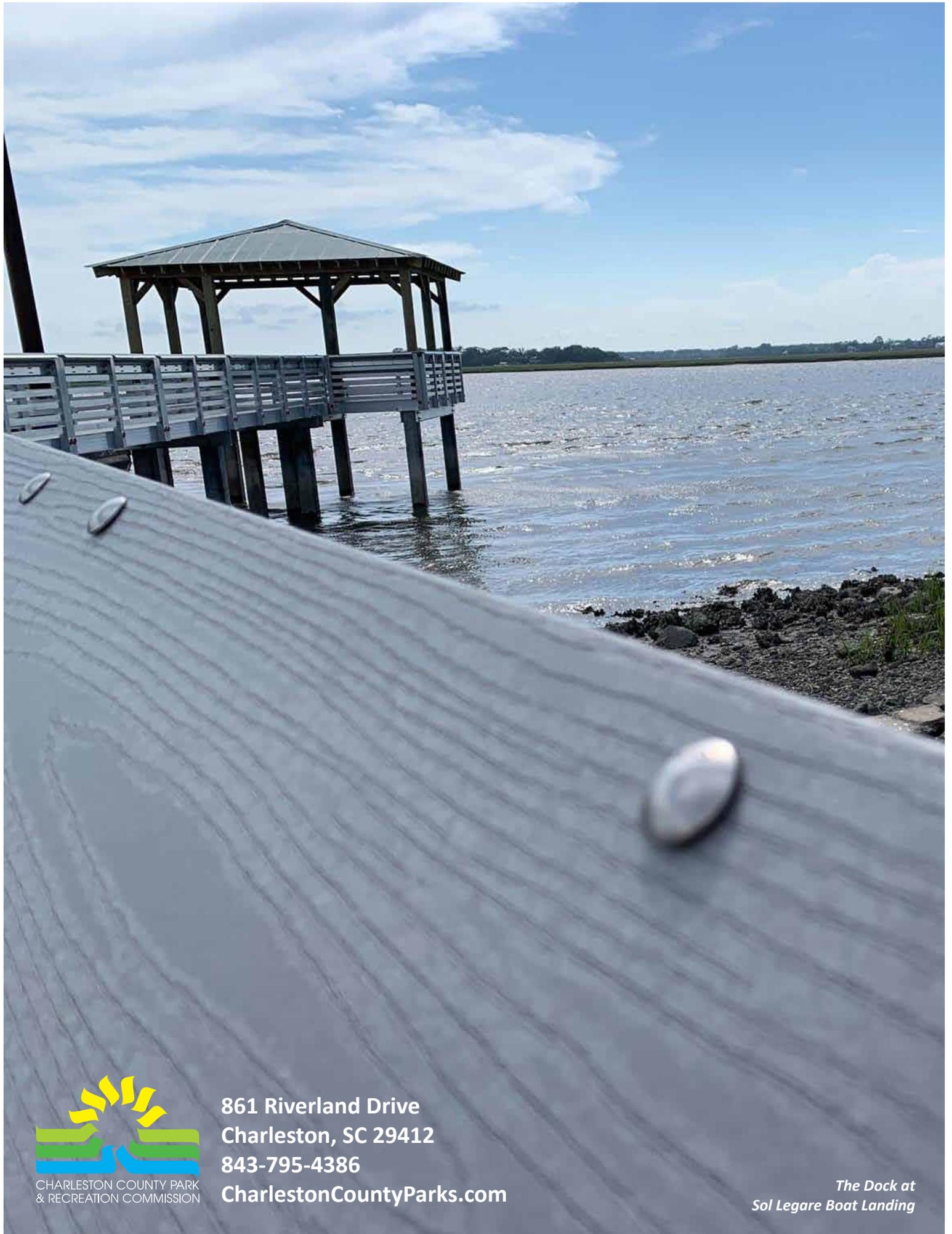
Supporting

Sun's Out Pale Ale Premieres to Support the Foundation

The Charleston County Parks Foundation joined forces with Rusty Bull Brewing Company to produce a custom beer specially formulated for the Foundation called Sun's Out Pale Ale. The beer is sold at select CCPRC festivals and events with a portion of the proceeds donated to benefit the Foundation. A classic pale ale, crisp with a touch of hops, the beer pairs well with a day on the water, good times with friends, and concerts in the park.

Tourism Advertising Grant for McLeod

The South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism awarded Charleston County Parks a Tourism Advertising Grant to promote McLeod Plantation Historic Site. The grant was used to advertise McLeod to out-of-market audiences and to encourage visitors to experience this important Gullah/Geechee heritage site that explores the lives of people - black and white, enslaved and free - who lived there.



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*The Dock at
Sol Legare Boat Landing*