

FY 2024 - 2025

ANNUAL REPORT



CHARLESTON COUNTY PARK
& RECREATION COMMISSION

CHARLESTONCOUNTPARKS.COM

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Executive Director, Kevin Bowie

I am happy to share the Charleston County Park & Recreation Commission 2024 – 2025 Annual Report.

As we look back over the past fiscal year, there is so much to be proud of. This was a year of growth for us as we acquired some spectacular new lands that will become future park sites. These acquisitions were made possible by our collaborations with local government and private partners (see page 12) and we are very grateful to them.

We are also thrilled to report that our agency received its third National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) reaccreditation, which is a testament to the high standards our staff set and exceed (see page 11).

I'm also pleased to share smaller, but no less significant achievements including the story of our lifeguard Richard Miller, who made an astounding rescue of an injured osprey near the Folly Beach Pier (see page 13). This is just one example of the extraordinary events that take place within our parks every day. From a family picnicking in the meadow to a child making a new friend at summer camp, we are honored to provide spaces and programs that bring people together.

I hope you enjoy learning about many of our accomplishments this past year as you read this report. On behalf of myself and the entire Charleston County Park & Recreation Commission (CCPRC) team, we want to say thank you for your continued support. We are excited about what the years to come will hold and look forward to creating more memories with you.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kevin F. Bowie".

Kevin Bowie
Executive Director

MISSION

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

VISION

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

STEWARDSHIP

Preserving and conserving cultural, natural and historical resources

FUN

Delivering fun to customers

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Creating a park system that reflects the diversity of our community

ACCESSIBILITY

Removing barriers to make programs and facilities accessible for all

QUALITY

Striving for quality throughout the park system

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Providing and promoting healthy lifestyle opportunities

EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE

Always focusing on you

SAFETY

Ensuring safe and secure environments

LEADERSHIP

Providing professional staff development

BUILDING A LEGACY

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



FISCAL YEAR 24-25 BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



Brad Taggart
Chair



Michelle Brandt
Vice Chair



Leslie Skardon
Secretary-Treasurer



Eduardo Curry
Commissioner



Lisa S. King
Commissioner



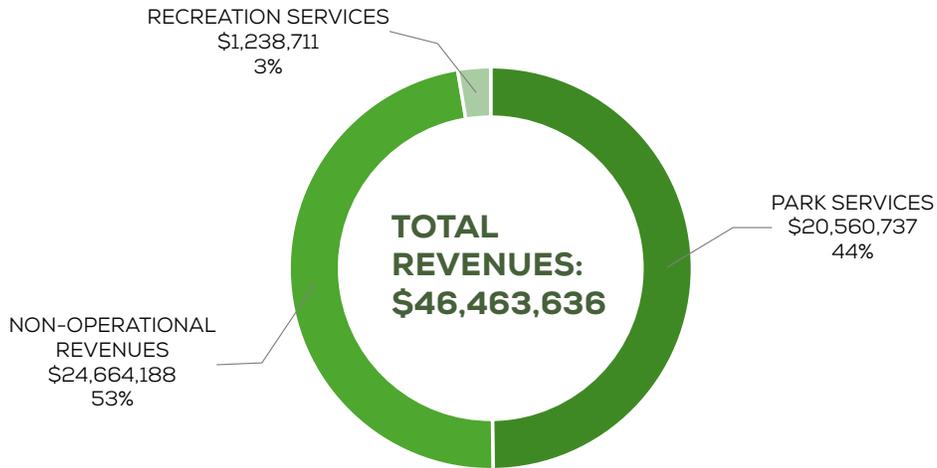
Mattese Lecque
Commissioner



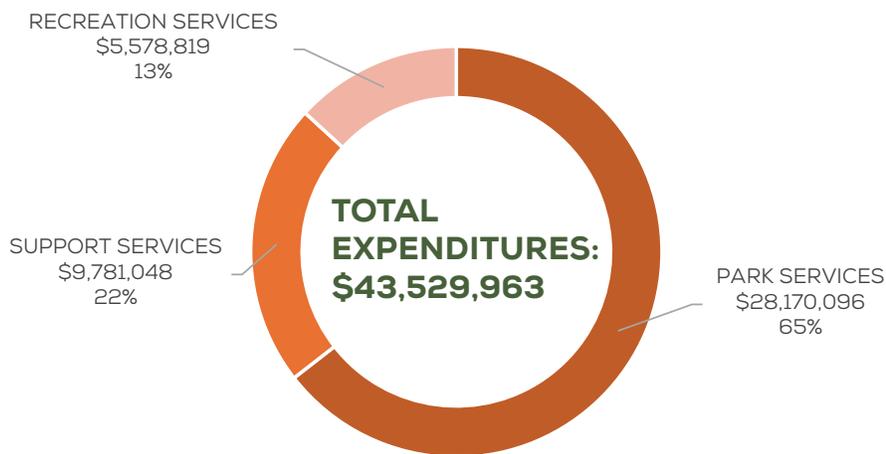
Merriweather Mulé
Commissioner

YOUR DOLLARS AT WORK

FY 24/25 REVENUES



FY 24/25 EXPENDITURES



* The annual net Revenue & Expenditures exclude transfers to the Capital Fund and the increase to the General Funds, Fund Balance.



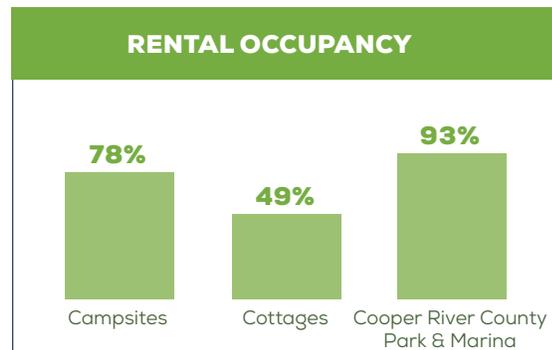
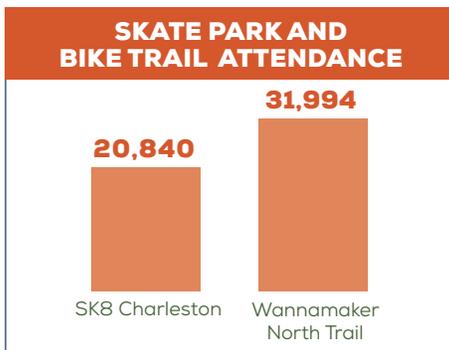
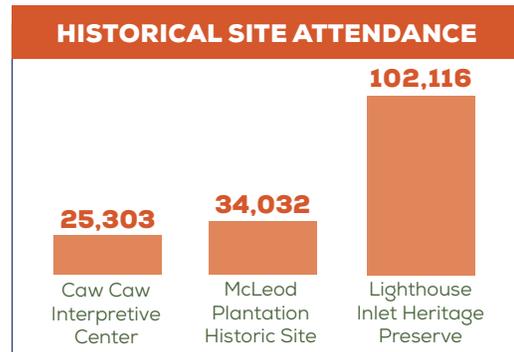
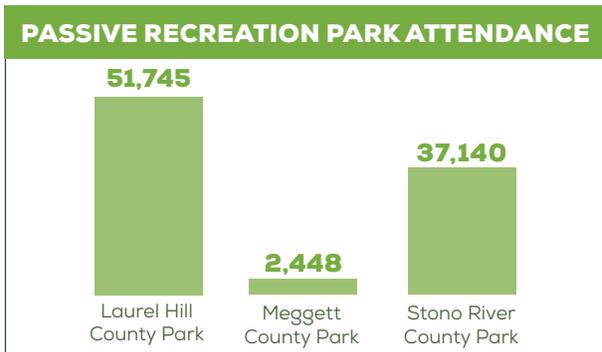
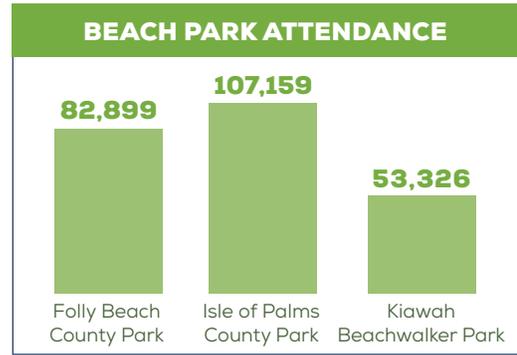
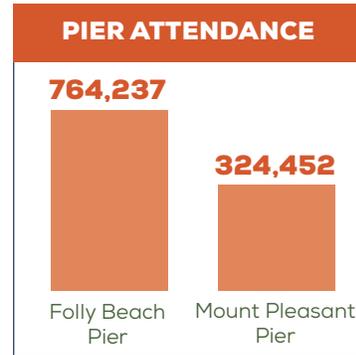
PARK AND FACILITY INVENTORY

3 ADVENTURE SPORTS ATTRACTIONS	3 BEACH PARKS	19 BOAT LANDINGS
1 CAMPGROUND	2 COMMUNITY CENTERS	4 DOG PARKS
3 HISTORICAL SITES	1 MARINA	2 PIERS
4 RECREATION COMPLEXES	4 REGIONAL PARKS	13 RENTAL FACILITIES
1 SWIMMING POOL	3 PASSIVE RECREATION PARKS	3 WATERPARKS

TOTAL PARKS AND FACILITIES: 66



PARK AND FACILITY ATTENDANCE



RECREATION PROGRAMS

180 CHALLENGE COURSE	231 CLIMBING WALL	104 COMMUNITY RECREATION
1,679 CULTURAL HISTORY	532 EDUCATION	58 FESTIVALS AND EVENTS
90 HEALTH AND WELLNESS	30 INCLUSIVE RECREATION	232 NATURAL HISTORY
53 OUTDOOR MISC.	48 PADDLE SPORTS	161 YOUTH CAMPS

TOTAL RECREATION PROGRAMS: 3,398



RECREATION PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

 2,020 CHALLENGE COURSE	 25,431 CLIMBING WALL	 32,171 COMMUNITY RECREATION
 30,759 CULTURAL HISTORY	 11,416 EDUCATION	 30,932 FESTIVALS AND EVENTS
 8,513 HEALTH AND WELLNESS	 2,109 INCLUSIVE RECREATION	 13,101 NATURAL HISTORY
 652 OUTDOOR MISC.	 291 PADDLE SPORTS	 2,938 YOUTH CAMPS

TOTAL PARTICIPATION: 160,333



ACHIEVING OUR MISSION

The mission of the Charleston County Park & Recreation Commission (CCPRC) is to improve the quality of life in Charleston County by offering a diverse system of park facilities, programs, and services. This mission guides all of our decisions both big and small.

To fulfill this mission takes planning and most importantly a lot of listening to ensure our goals are aligned with the needs of our diverse community. Charleston County is over 100 miles long and includes urban, suburban, and rural communities. To serve our community at the highest level we have guiding documents including a 10-year comprehensive plan and 5-year strategic plan. Each of these plans were developed based on public and partner input and include focus areas of expanding access, being relevant, strengthening resilience, increasing connectivity, and maintaining strong organizational health.

When it comes to fulfilling our mission, the CCPRC team is our greatest asset, and we invest in them through initiatives such as our Welcome Academy and Supervisors Academy, along with specialized trainings such as media, emergency medical responder, workplace safety, and information technologies. These programs and trainings build confidence, consistency, and collaboration across divisions.

We are also working to bring our mission to every corner of our community through inclusive programs, partnerships, strategic land acquisitions, and providing ongoing opportunities for public engagement. Examples of this include offering events such as the Senior Sneaker Dances in both McClellanville

and Hollywood, which are on opposite ends of the county, or working with our partners to acquire new properties that will one day become beautiful parks. We also actively seek community feedback through surveys, engagement at local events, and a continual commitment to open communication.

Ultimately, our mission to improve the quality of life in Charleston County and beyond is a shared mindset that guides every decision our team makes.



TEAM ENGAGEMENT

3 WAYS WE ENGAGED AND SUPPORTED OUR #1 RESOURCE – OUR TEAM

1

In 2025, CCPRC achieved its third National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) reaccreditation with a perfect score by satisfying all 154 standards. To achieve this, the Agency created an A-Team comprised of staff across divisions. The CAPRA reviewers provided excellent reviews of CCPRC and said, “The agency’s strength shines through the dedication and long-standing commitment of its staff [who] truly embody the idea of parks and recreation for all.”

2

In FY 24/25, over 30 full-time CCPRC staff members underwent media training. Many of these staff members were selected because they were identified as “subject matter experts” on topics of interest to the news media. This two-hour long training session combined general education on journalism and working with our local news media, with tips and best practices for interviewing. At the end, participants took part in a mock interview session to rehearse speaking on topics they could potentially be interviewed about. The training sessions were conducted by the Public Information Coordinator, who has nearly 20 years of experience in media relations. Conducting these sessions are part of an ongoing effort to prepare and educate staff members proactively, in hopes that they would feel comfortable and confident participating in a media interview if needed.

3

Over the past three years, CCPRC has strengthened employee engagement through two signature initiatives: the Welcome Academy and the Supervisors Academy. The Welcome Academy, a two-day onboarding experience held biannually, has welcomed 111 new employees across five sessions, fostering agency culture and cross-department connections. The Supervisors Academy, offered eight times to 121 participants, provides in-depth leadership development focused on human resources related topics. Both programs are designed to build community, enhance consistency in leadership, and strengthen organizational culture.



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

3 PROGRAMS TO BETTER SERVE AND INVOLVE OUR COMMUNITY

1

CCPRC has partnered with local sports organizations to increase our on-site presence at games, allowing us to engage with new audiences via tabling, in-game promotions, social media promotions, and our mascot Bandit. CCPRC is a featured supporter of the Charleston Battery's Hispanic Heritage Night, which has an average attendance of 3800. CCPRC's Parks and Pucks night at the South Carolina Stingrays hosted over 6400 attendees last year, and our Parks & Pitches night with the Charleston Riverdogs gets us in front of an estimated 4600 baseball fans.

2

CCPRC engages community members through a dynamic volunteer program with over 400 active participants that enhances services and builds public investment in parks. In fiscal year 24-25, volunteers contributed over 5,100 hours, saving the agency more than \$138,000. With 118 opportunities offered, volunteers supported events, stewardship, and daily operations. Incentives like appreciation events and reciprocal passes for 35+ hours encourage retention. Success is measured through tracked hours, cost savings, and repeat participation, which strengthens both community connections and the agency's capacity to serve.

3

Strong partnerships enable CCPRC to expand public access to some of Charleston County's most naturally beautiful spaces. In FY 24/25, CCPRC's collaboration with the Lowcountry Land Trust, along with support from additional government and private partners, added three remarkable properties to the agency's portfolio:

- Sea Island Small Farmers Cooperative Site on Wallace Creek
- 66 acres on Johns Island with access to Simmons Creek
- Holly Grove property, which will add 35 acres to Caw Caw Interpretive Center

By working together, we're able to protect and open more of these landscapes to the public. Looking ahead, CCPRC is excited to create new trails, water access points, and expanded recreational opportunities at these sites, ensuring even more ways for our community to connect with nature.

MAKING AN IMPACT

3 WAYS WE ARE MEASURING AND EXPANDING THE IMPACTS OF OUR WORK

1

Near the Folly Beach Fishing Pier, CCPRC lifeguard Richard Miller spotted an osprey struggling offshore and used his rescue skills to bring it safely to the beach. The young bird was rehabilitated and later released back into the wild by a local bird rehabilitation center. This rare and inspiring outcome highlights the far-reaching impact of staff training and readiness. Beyond swimmer safety, our lifeguard program builds confident, observant leaders whose quick thinking can save lives, human or otherwise. This moment exemplifies our commitment to stewardship, preparedness, and protecting the natural world we serve.

2

CCPRC has improved quality of life through intentional, inclusive programming that ensures everyone has access to recreation. In the most recent fiscal year, more than 2,100 participants engaged in the agency's growing series of inclusive events designed for individuals with special needs and their families. These include Inclusive Swim Nights at waterparks, which offer a calmer, sensory-friendly environment. The agency also hosts an Inclusive Silent Disco and an Inclusive Prom, providing welcoming social experiences for all abilities. An inclusive Santa Claus at the agency's annual Holiday Festival of Lights also communicates through sign language. Each program and event is designed to remove barriers to participation and promote connection. By prioritizing accessibility and belonging across all facilities and events, CCPRC continues to ensure that everyone feels welcome in the parks.

3

Last year, we introduced a series of special events in the rural areas of McClellanville and Hollywood. These towns have fewer resources for hosting events and social gatherings, so CCPRC's efforts to bring the communities together were welcomed and impactful. Senior Sneaker Dances in February hosted over 70 seniors for dancing and socializing. In August, the Back to School Bash offered 170 McClellanville community members family-friendly activities, visits with community organizations, free vision screenings and free school supplies. In December, a Silent Dance Party brought together more than 60 McClellanville residents to dance to dueling DJs.



INNOVATING

3 INNOVATIONS THAT ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

1

Making our visitors' experience as seamless as possible is an ongoing priority for Charleston County Parks. In 2024, the agency launched the Charleston County Parks app. The app allows visitors to see a schedule of their upcoming and past registrations and book their next adventure. It also puts Gold Pass members' membership card right on their phone, creating the opportunity for quick scan access into their favorite parks. Whether heading to the park for a day of fun or joining a program, customers now have easy access to their cards, registrations, and notifications —all at their fingertips.

2

CCPRC enhanced safety operations by implementing Watchtower, an innovative incident reporting and management software. Used by lifeguards and other frontline staff, Watchtower enables real-time logging of incidents ranging from medical responses to rescues, ensuring accurate, timely, and comprehensive documentation. In its first year, 584 incidents were reported, with the majority (23.97%) related to minor medical situations. The software's analytics capabilities allow staff to identify trends, and target training where it is most needed, strengthening both prevention and response. By replacing manual reporting with a centralized, data-driven platform, CCPRC has improved operational efficiency, supported informed decision-making, and enhanced the ability to allocate resources strategically.

3

CCPRC recently began leasing Scythe Robotics' M.52 mower. This fully-autonomous electric mower can be operated in an independent mode, or manually operated. When running autonomously, staff monitoring nearby can focus on detailed landscaping tasks while the mower handles large swaths of grass. The mower ultimately allows CCPRC to care for more areas faster and with consistent results. In its first summer, it mowed 192 acres of parkland, the majority in autonomous mode. The M.52 is not a replacement for employees, but it does free up staff to focus on other tasks while the mower works, thus creating a more efficient operation.

CREATING ACCESS

In recent years, CCPRC has been able to provide thousands of students from Title 1 schools with free field trips. A number of Charleston County School District's schools qualify as Title 1 due to having a high percentage of students from low-income families. Many of these students have recently been able to attend cultural, environmental, and outdoor adventure-based field trips at Charleston County Parks' facilities including McLeod Plantation Historic Site, Folly Beach County Park, Caw Caw Interpretive Center and the Outdoor Zone at James Island County Park. This vital support is provided by the Charleston County Parks Foundation. Each year, the foundation provides around \$20,000 in funding, which helps cover field trip fees as well as busing students to and from the parks if needed. Over 1,300 students were able to attend CCPRC field trips last year due to this program.



IMPROVING HEALTH & WELLNESS

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES TO LIVE HEALTHIER LIVES

CCPRC has expanded its commitment to health, safety, and wellness by investing in emergency medical response (EMR) training for staff across the agency.

Recognizing that parks serve as community gathering places and high-traffic recreational destinations, the agency prioritized equipping team members with the skills to respond effectively in critical situations. Currently, 64 year-round staff hold EMR certifications, representing both full-time and part-time employees across Parks and Recreation operations. In addition, 19 of those staff members

are trained as Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), including one advanced EMT, with 16 of these positions filled by full-time staff. This distribution ensures a strong base of medical expertise available throughout the park system at any given time.

CCPRC delivers three initial 48-hour EMR certification courses and two recertification courses annually, attended primarily by seasonal lifeguards and lifeguard supervisors who serve on the frontlines of public safety. To sustain knowledge and readiness, year-round staff also participate in monthly continuing education sessions, allowing them to refine their skills, stay current with best practices, and prepare for real-world emergencies.



This layered approach to training strengthens both individual and organizational capacity. For staff, EMR training provides professional development and empowers them with the confidence to act under pressure. For the community, it translates directly into improved safety outcomes, whether through swift medical assistance at waterparks, timely response at large events, or effective interventions in daily park operations.

By building an internal culture of preparedness and wellness, CCPRC enhances the overall quality of life for residents and visitors. The agency's investment in emergency medical training ensures that health equity and safety are central to its mission—demonstrating how parks can serve not only as places for recreation, but also as pillars of community well-being.

EMPHASIS ON SUSTAINABILITY

MAKING OUR WORLD A BETTER PLACE NOW AND FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

In partnership with the City of Folly Beach, CCPRC developed the 2024 Dune Management Master Plan (DMMP) to address the long-term impacts of climate change on its coastal properties. This comprehensive initiative prioritizes environmental stewardship and resilience through five core goals: engage, monitor, protect, restore, and adapt. The plan outlines actions including native dune vegetation plantings, strategic sand fencing, educational signage, stakeholder collaboration, and routine monitoring of dune health. The agency has already placed several signs at dune crossovers encouraging beachgoers to stay off the dunes. Thousands of Panicgrass and Sea Oats seedlings were also placed in the dunes during summer 2025. The plan also aligns closely with broader coastal management efforts led by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which led a sand renourishment on the island in 2024 to include 1.2 million cubic yards of sand along five miles of coastline. By restoring natural barriers and fostering community involvement, the DMMP reinforces CCPRC's commitment to sustainability, preparing the park system to respond to sea level rise, increased storm activity, and the evolving needs of a dynamic coastal environment.



TACKLING CHALLENGES

RECOGNIZING AND MEETING AGENCY AND COMMUNITY CHALLENGES

CCPRC has faced the significant challenge of maintaining aging infrastructure at its three waterparks. These facilities are not only complex and costly to operate, but are also vital revenue generators and community amenities. As these waterparks age, essential systems require proactive upkeep to ensure safety, efficiency, and guest satisfaction. Two key areas identified for immediate attention during the 2024-25 fiscal year were sand filtration tanks and electrical systems.

Sand filtration is critical to waterpark operations, as it effectively removes debris, dirt, and other contaminants to maintain water clarity and quality. Proper filtration reduces reliance on chemicals, prevents cloudiness, and minimizes the risk of waterborne illnesses, ensuring a safe and enjoyable environment for all visitors. Recognizing this, CCPRC issued and awarded bids for agency-wide sand filtration tank refurbishment, addressing all three waterparks to extend equipment life and maintain consistent performance.

The multi-step process included removing existing sand, conducting inspections of welds and tank plates, making necessary repairs, abrasive blasting interiors, applying protective industrial coatings, and refilling with clean filtration sand.

Simultaneously, the agency prioritized electrical infrastructure upgrades, installing new electrical equipment racks at Whirlin' Waters Adventure Waterpark. These upgrades improved reliability and safety.

CCPRC identified and addressed this challenge through regular facility inspections and cross-department collaboration between operations, planning, maintenance, and procurement teams. By taking a strategic, system-wide approach to refurbishment and upgrades, the agency ensured that investments addressed both immediate needs and long-term sustainability.

These actions reflect CCPRC's commitment to preserving its popular seasonal attractions, protecting public health, and maximizing operational efficiency. By investing in the longevity of these facilities, the agency is safeguarding its role as reliable, high-quality destinations for residents and visitors while maintaining their contribution to the agency's financial sustainability.





CHARLESTON COUNTY PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION

861 Riverland Drive, Charleston, SC 29412
CharlestonCountyParks.com | (843) 795-4386

