



2026 ANNUAL REPORT

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INTRODUCTION



2026 Parks & Recreation Month Proclamation

The 2026 Annual Report is based on the goals from our 2023-2028 Strategic Plan and outlines our accomplishments from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026. It showcases the priorities of the Anne Arundel County Department of Recreation and Parks (DRP) in Maryland, focusing on promoting community wellness, enhancing sustainable initiatives, improving park accessibility, fostering partnerships, and efficiently managing resources to meet our residents' evolving needs.

Throughout the year, we worked towards specific, achievable, and measurable action items outlined in the five themes of our Strategic Plan listed below. This dynamic document guides our department in resource allocation and decision-making.

- 1 . Service & Engagement**
- 2 . Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**
- 3 . Sustainability and Stewardship**
- 4 . Fiscal Responsibility**
- 5 . Employee Recruitment and Retention**

With our ongoing commitment to our mission to "Enjoy Life, Explore Nature, and Restore Health and Well-being," we have remained focused, aligned, accountable, and adaptable. This professional dedication has enriched the lives of all Anne Arundel County residents and contributed to our vision and goal of "Make Life Better!"

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Commission for Accreditation of Recreation and Parks Agencies (CAPRA)

Anne Arundel County Recreation and Parks is one of the few CAPRA-accredited agencies in Maryland, achieving national recognition from the NRPA for meeting 151 strict operational standards. This accreditation involves thorough self-assessments, site inspections, and reviews to ensure adherence to the highest level of safety, management, and community service standards.

Land Preservation Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP)

The LPPRP is a state-required, master plan, updated every five years to guide local parks and conservation. Keeping this plan up to date is essential for securing state funding through Program Open Space. The Department has finished the community input survey and will now begin working on the draft plan.

Professional Development

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Awareness Committee (I.D.E.A.)

The IDEA Committee is a dedicated internal group of stakeholders focused on ensuring all public programs, services, and spaces are fair and open to everyone.

Recognizing Our Outstanding Team's Success Committee (R.O.O.T.S)

The ROOTS Committee recognizes and rewards exceptional employee contributions to boost morale, strengthen teamwork, and inspire a culture of excellence aligned with our agency's mission and values.

New Position: Operations Administrator

The Department added a new position to the leadership team this year: an Operations Administrator. This role establishes structure and oversight for administrative, financial, and communications functions, fostering cohesiveness between the Parks and Recreation divisions.

ORGANIZATION

165 FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES
1,050 PART-TIME EMPLOYEES

Jessica Leys, Director
Erica Matthews, Deputy Director
Christin Bender, Operations Administrator
Chris Carroll, Parks Administrator
Kim Cluney, Recreation Administrator
Bruce Bruchey, Chief of Planning & Construction
Lisa DiGiacinto, Business Administrator
Heath Neiderer, Chief of Marketing & Communications
Tammy Anderson, Chief of Child Care Services
Jacque Hurman, Chief of Recreation Services
Ed Hottle, Chief of Athletics
Alison Woodfield, Chief of Cultural & Natural Resources
Nolley Fisher, Chief of Park Operations
Josh Thomas, Chief of Park Maintenance



WHO WE ARE



2025 Summer Camp

Vision

To enrich the lives of all residents of Anne Arundel County. **We Make Life Better!**

Mission

We Create Opportunities to **Enjoy** Life, **Explore** Nature, and **Restore** Health and Well-being.

Core Values

Responsibility, Enjoyment, Service, Teamwork



AWARDS



Maryland Recreation and Parks Association Raising Up Award

WB&A Trail Patuxent River Bridge

The WB&A Trail Patuxent River Bridge project has successfully closed a long-standing gap, connecting Anne Arundel and Prince George's Counties with a continuous, toll-free 12.7-mile off-road corridor. By rerouting cyclists and pedestrians away from busy roads onto a safe, scenic path, the project enhances public safety and integrates Central Maryland into major national networks like the East Coast Greenway and the American Discovery Trail. This initiative promotes regional heritage tourism and interstate cycling, thanks to collaboration among local governments, state transportation leaders, engineering partners, and trail advocacy groups.



Maryland Recreation and Parks Association Practitioner Award

Anne Arundel County Child Care Behavioral Specialist Team

The Anne Arundel County Department of Recreation and Parks Child Care Division nominated its ten-member Consultant and Specialist Team for the MRPA Therapeutic Recreation Branch Practitioner Award for their outstanding work in inclusive recreation. Serving over 3,000 children across 53 sites—18% of whom have specialized needs—this experienced team develops personalized support plans based on IEPs and medical protocols. With hands-on specialists and comprehensive staff training in behavior management and safety, they ensure that children with complex needs thrive in safe, inclusive environments during their elementary school years.

AWARDS



Maryland Recreation and Parks Association Community Organization Award

Bicycle Advocates for Annapolis and Anne Arundel County (BikeAAA)

Anne Arundel County Recreation and Parks nominated Bicycle Advocates for Annapolis and Anne Arundel County (BikeAAA) for its 13-year commitment to safe, accessible cycling. Through partnerships with local government and community groups, BikeAAA helped expand the county's trail system, including the WB&A Trail Patuxent River Bridge, and raised over \$450,000 for local nonprofits through the Lifeline 100 ride. Initiatives also include Wheels of Hope, which provides refurbished bikes for those in recovery and at-risk youth; Cycling Without Age, which offers trishaw rides to seniors; and youth bike safety courses at County parks.



Maryland Recreation and Parks Association Planning & Design with Environmental Protection in Mind

Mayo Beach Park Adaptive Day Camp and Maintenance Building

The Department enhanced its seasonal landmark by replacing an aging structure with a 4,750-square-foot Adaptive Day Camp and Maintenance Building. Situated on a 23-acre peninsula along the Chesapeake Bay, the new facility maintains the original footprint while serving the county's 35-year-old adaptive day camp. It accommodates summer campers of all abilities and functions as a year-round venue for adaptive programming. The project also prioritized environmental stewardship by safely relocating a nesting Osprey pair to a new platform outside the construction zone.

AWARDS



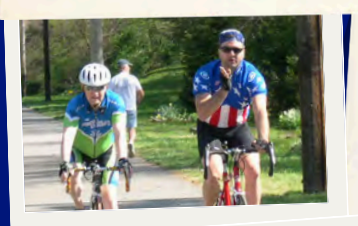
Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary, Emory Waters Cabins

Anne Arundel County Department of Recreation and Parks Construction Management Association of America

Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary New Cabins, Environment Category

The Baltimore Chapter of the Construction Management Association of America (CMAA) awarded the Anne Arundel County Department of Recreation and Parks its Project Achievement Award for the Environment for the new park cabins at Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary. This project, completed with Development Facilitators, Inc. (DFI), added overnight facilities that enhance public enjoyment and support ecological research.

Located near the Patuxent River in Lothian, Maryland, the project includes eight cabins, a community pavilion, a fire pit, and a bathhouse, along with extensive sitework and stormwater management. DFI's construction management team, led by Nichole Higgins, played a key role in its success. David Wissmann, DFI's President, expressed pride in contributing to the preservation of the sanctuary's natural environment.



AT A GLANCE

Residents and visitors of Anne Arundel County can enjoy a variety of services and programs offered through the Department's parks, recreational amenities, and childcare facilities.



6,240,000

Park and Trails Visitors

490,000

Recreation Participants



46,000

Athletic Participants

18,000

Community Members Served - Events



7,000

Child Care Participants

\$49,000,000

Total Capital Projects Funding
Building the Future

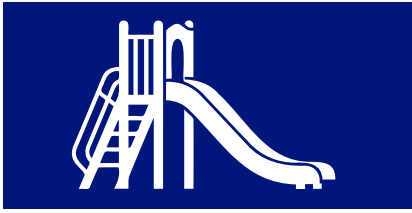






PARKS DIVISION

PARKS & TRAILS



157 Parks & Natural Areas



200 Trail Miles



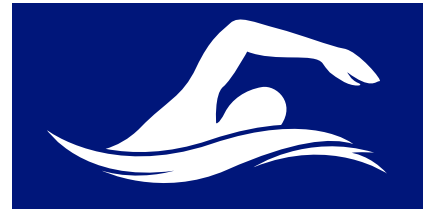
5 Historical Sites



3 Boat Ramps



27 Cartop Boat Launches



2 Swimming Beaches

Strategic Accomplishments

- Embedded customer service training into the Ranger School and Jumpstart. **[Goal 1.1.a]**
- Increased regular meetings with Superintendents and established measurable output objectives to solve problems. **[Goal 1.1.c]**
- Conducted surveys of all Park Interpretive Programs. **[Goal 1.1.c]**
- Executed ADA Improvements through Capital Project P584300. **[Goal 2.1.a]**
- Created a quick-start guide to inclusive programming from the Park's Bureau Interpretation working group. **[Goal 2.2.a]**
- Improved consistency of the signage throughout community parks and recreation facilities. **[Goal 2.3.a]**
- Conducted daily Park Ranger patrols at Regional Parks and Trails, with a minimum bi-monthly patrol of all community parks. **[Goal 2.3.c]**
- Evaluated land classifications and made necessary changes to ensure the best use of land. **[Goal 3.2.a]**
- Fully implemented formal Ranger/Maintenance training for all new rangers and maintenance staff, including both full-time and part-time employees. **[Goal 5.2.a]**

PARKS & TRAILS

Highlights

- Established a master inventory list for the Parks Division.
- Completed 678 park renovation projects. Developed and implemented a bi-annual (Spring and Fall) Ranger Maintenance School and Jumpstart.
- Established Inclusive Program Guide.
- Since the start of 2026, over 4,000 park program attendees.
- Since the start of 2026, over 150 park programs have been offered to the public.

Did you know?

The Department of Recreation and Parks manages both parkland owned by the Department and leased properties through partnerships with Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) and other county agencies.

Our System at a Glance:

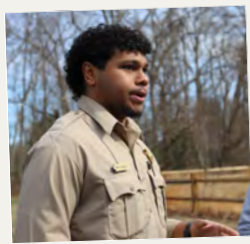
- **Parkland & Facilities:** 97 community parks, 29 natural areas, 13 future development sites, 7 regional parks, 6 community wharves, and 5 historic sites.
- **Water Access:** 21 cartop boat launches, 3 boat ramp locations, and 2 designated swimming areas.
- **Trails:** Just over 200 miles of paved and unpaved trails, anchored by 5 regional trail systems:
 - Baltimore and Annapolis Trail (B&A), Baltimore, Washington International Trail (BWI), Broadneck Peninsula Trail, South Shore Trail, and the Washington, Baltimore and Annapolis Trail (WB&A).



Toddler Hike, Quiet Waters Park



Adventure Camp, Fort Smallwood Park





RECREATION DIVISION

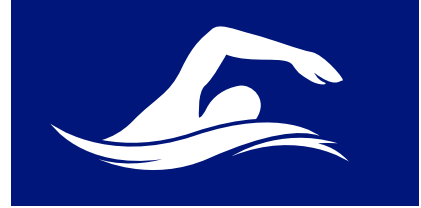
RECREATION



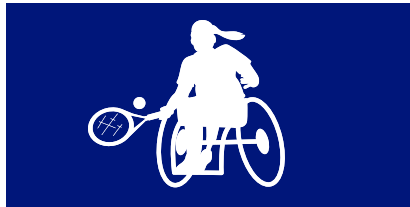
3 Recreation Centers



3 Ice Skating Rinks



2 Aquatic Centers



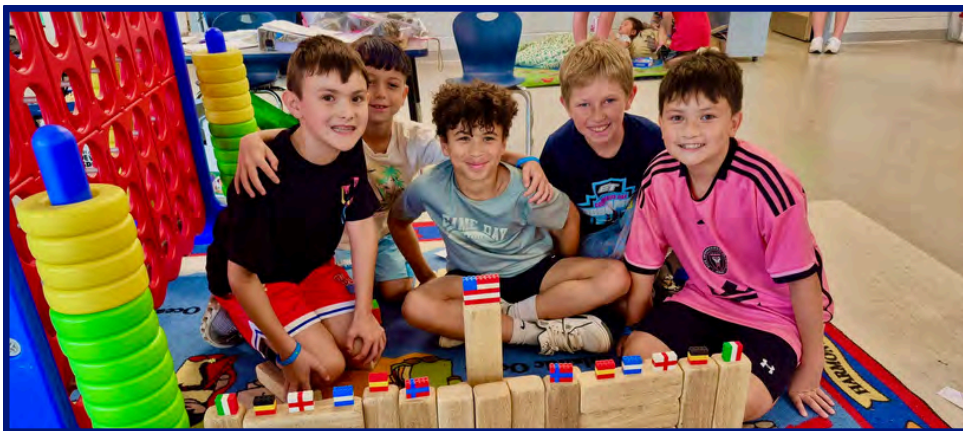
2 Adaptive Fields



2 Golf Courses

Strategic Accomplishments

- Evaluated all recreation programs and achieved a customer service rating of 85%. **[Goal 1.1.c]**
- Held a Grandparent-Child Pickleball Tournament with Senior Centers. **[Goal 1.1.e]**
- Implemented the Adaptive Programs Committee. **[2.1.b]**
- Increased all programming in STEM, Summer Camp, and Recreation by 5%. **[Goal 2.2.a]**
- Secured programming at North County Recreation Center and Deep Run Recreation Center to begin community center programming to align with the new Brooklyn Park Community Center (Rec Connect). **[Goal 2.2.a]**
- Increased recreation and adaptive programming by adding 2-4 new programs annually. **[Goal 2.2.a]**



2026 Summer Camp

RECREATION

Highlights

- Established the Adaptive Advisory Committee to identify additional opportunities and programming for the adaptive community. The DRP and the Maryland Special Olympics planned and executed programs during the winter, spring, and summer sessions. Programs included Chair Yoga and adaptive fitness at Deep Run Recreation Center and Bocce Ball at Lake Waterford.
- Launched Rec Connect Programs for aquatics, adaptive, and recreation programs. Rec Connect bridges the gap between the community's potential and access, offering bite-sized, affordable recreational opportunities. Programs include One Day Fun Day, Drop In Sports, Basic Water Safety Skills Swim Lessons, Golf, and Adaptive fitness.
- Maintained a staff retention rate of 77% from summer 2025 to summer 2026.
- Began accepting room rental requests for community events at Deep Run Recreation Center, while continuing to add additional programming, including Creative Kids, Mini Makers and Movers, and classes for participants ages 2-5.
- During the annual Recreation Division retreat, we established goals and objectives that align with DRP's Strategic Plan. We created three committees: programming, financial, and administrative, each of which meets monthly to work towards achieving our goals.
- Hosted an intergenerational pickleball tournament at three locations in August, providing grandparents, parents, and children an opportunity to play pickleball together and learn the game in a slow-paced environment.



North Arundel Aquatic Center, Splash Pad

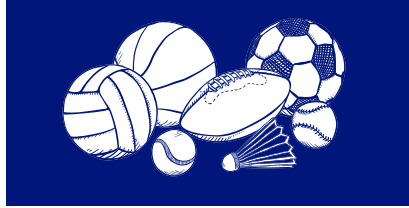


ATHLETICS DIVISION

ATHLETICS



1,897 Youth Teams



92 Youth Athletic
Organizations



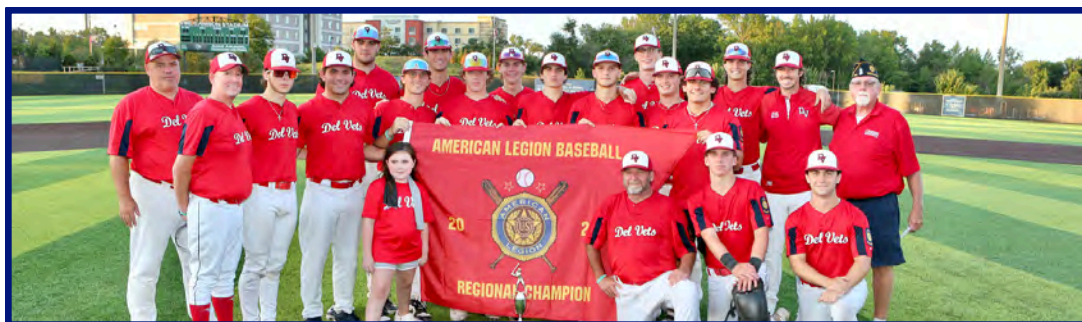
245 Adult Teams

Strategic Accomplishments

- Implementation of 222-FAST for user groups to contact on-call staff for field needs. **[Goal 1.1.a]**
- Reviewed athletics information to determine future needs. **[Goal 1.3.a]**
- Partnered with the Marketing Division to capture and highlight key operational wins, amplifying the Department's impact through internal channels and public narrative campaigns. **[Goal 1.3.b]**
- Established open meetings with Athletic commissioners throughout the County to inform and obtain feedback. **[Goal 1.3.b]**
- Established a youth sports association for basketball. **[Goal 1.3.b]**
- Increased staff visibility at athletics events. **[Goal 1.3.b]**
- Established sportsmanship award recognition for every county-sponsored youth sports league. **[Goal 2.3.b]**

Highlights

- Revised coaches' pledge to promote sportsmanship awareness.
- Established the number 410-222-FAST for after-hours assistance for user groups.
- Conducted a light audit, saving the county over 400 hours of lighting usage countywide.
- Enhanced onboarding process for part-time seasonal employees to better serve our community in the field.
- Successfully hosted 424 baseball games at Joe Cannon Stadium.
- Served 752 soccer teams.



American Legion Regional Championship, Joe Cannon Stadium

CHILD CARE DIVISION

CHILD CARE



53 Child Care Sites



7,000 Children Served
School Year & Summer

Strategic Accomplishments

- Addressed the Child Care Fund's budget concerns and future planning by presenting a proposal to balance the fund. **[Goal 4.2.b]**
- Provided additional training for the child care center and administrative staff. **[Goal 2.2a]**
- Opened an additional Child Care location in partnership with Anne Arundel County Public Schools in November 2026. **[Goal 2.2.a]**
- Implemented cross-training for Maryland State Department of Education vouchers in preparation for the new regional plan. **[Goal 5.2a]**
- Implemented a short-term weekly coverage schedule for Child Care Program Specialists. **[Goal 5.3.a]**
- Created a long-term regional plan for Child Care with a supervisory team that will collaborate to accomplish the goals of their units. **[Goal 5.3.a]**

Highlights

- Opened a 53rd child care location at Van Bokkelen Elementary School for before- and after-school child care. Van Bokkelen also represents our 8th Child Enrichment Center (CEC) location, serving children for just \$5/month for families.
- Obtained Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) certification for all Child Care Administrative Office team members, Center Directors, and Lead Staff. Additionally, one Child Care Program Specialist also obtained their certification to teach MHFA on behalf of the entire Department.
- Participated in the National Endowment for the Arts "Big Read" literacy program in partnership with the Chesapeake Children's Museum. Each Center Director specifically promoted literacy-rich activities and enrichments within their child care centers, and the Chief of Child Care Services completed book readings for each of our 53 locations during the Spring of 2026.



CAPITAL PROJECTS DIVISION

CAPITAL PROJECTS



92 Contracts in Progress



\$49,000,000
Total Capital Project Funding



358.83
Acres Preserved

Strategic Accomplishments

- Completed construction of the Broadneck Peninsula Trail. **[Goal 4.3.a]**
- Completed the construction of the WB&A Trail. **[Goal 4.3.a]**
- Hired for vacant positions or filled with contractual staff. **[Goal 4.3.c]**
- Identified opportunities for expanded water access at existing parks. **[Goal 4.3.a]**

Highlights

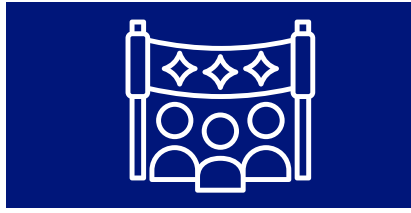
- Completed and opened WB&A Trail Bridge over the Patuxent River, connecting Anne Arundel and Prince George's County trail systems.
- Completed and opened a \$6.5 million refurbishment of Brooklyn Heights Park.
- Completed and opened new \$5.5 million Tanyard Springs Park in Glen Burnie.
- Opened Phases 3, 1B and 5 of the Broadneck Peninsula Trail, marking completion of the approx. 8-mile trail.
- Completed shoreline erosion protection and water access improvements at Spriggs Farm on the Magothy Park.
- Completed and opened new campground and cabins at Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary.
- Completed and opened the Splash Pad at the North Arundel Aquatic Center.
- Completed and opened the Mayo Beach Park Day Camp and Maintenance Building.



Brooklyn Heights Park, Ribbon Cutting

COMMUNITY OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNITY OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT



57 Community Events



18,000 Residents
Served through Events

Strategic Accomplishments

- Partner with County Agencies and County Council members to distribute DRP resources and promote community events and services. **[Goal 1.1.e]**
- Distributed external weekly newsletter and internal quarterly Director's Newsletter. **[Goal 1.1.g]**
- Used social media and marketing measures to communicate with County residents. **[Goal 1.2.a]**
- Regularly reviewed and updated all DRP webpages. **[Goal 1.3.a]**
- Worked with the Parks Division to have consistent branding and messaging for regional and community park promotional materials, programs, web pages, and signage. **[Goal 1.3.b]**
- Conducted annual target, participation, and tracking of a diverse array of public and stakeholder events. **[Goal 1.3.d]**
- Created and published a Spanish guide with Parks, Recreation, Athletics, and Child Care resources and programs. **[Goal 2.2.b]**



National Night Out, Kinder Farm Park

COMMUNITY OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

Highlights

- Developed and implemented a comprehensive public engagement campaign for the 2027 Land Preservation Parks and Recreation Plan Survey.
- Developed and implemented an internal protocol to ensure compliance with federally mandated ADA guidelines for website applications.
- Produced and distributed four seasonal program guides.
- Executed ribbon-cutting and ground-breaking events, including WB&A Trail Patuxent Bridge, Tanyard Springs Park, Broadneck Trail, North Arundel Aquatic Center Splashpad, Jug Bay Cabins, Mayo Beach Adaptive Day Camp, Brooklyn Heights Park, and Odenton Park.
- Commenced comprehensive review of all park webpages and branded materials, including public brochures, signage, and maps.
- Park Pass New Fee Structure Campaign: Created a comprehensive public notification campaign for a new fee structure for daily/annual park passes.
- Healthy Anne Arundel “Walktober” Initiative: Partnered with the Healthy Anne Arundel Coalition to create a month-long "Walktober" initiative designed to build active lifestyles through interactive fitness challenges
- Initiated the new Anne Arundel County Public Library (AACPL) Park Pass Initiative. Partnered with AACPL to launch a park pass library loan program, allowing library patrons to check out a park pass for seven days of free access.
- Hired a Content Creation Specialist for video production.



Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary Cabins, Ribbon-Cutting



SUMMARY

The Anne Arundel County Department of Recreation and Parks continues to serve millions of residents and visitors by providing opportunities to enjoy life, explore nature, and restore personal well-being.

The primary focus is on providing comprehensive recreational programs for residents and safeguarding valuable land by managing and maintaining over 160 parks and natural areas.

From our specialized facilities—including three recreation centers, three ice rinks, two swim centers, two golf courses, and premier athletic complexes—to our essential child care and adaptive recreation services, the Department continues to provide resources that meet the unique and evolving needs of our community.

By maintaining a vast network of regional and community parks, natural areas, and historical sites, we help preserve our environment and heritage for future generations. We invite the public to stay engaged with our progress through our active social media presence and weekly newsletter as we continue to build a healthier, more connected Anne Arundel County.



2025 Annual Department Meeting

APPENDIX

Theme 1: Service & Engagement

Theme 1 Goals:

- Provide Excellent Customer service. [1.1]
- Embrace Technology to Maximize Efficiencies. [1.2]
- Increase visibility of the Department of Recreation and Parks in the community by proactively communicating. [1.3]

Theme 2: Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Theme 2 Goals:

- Promote accessibility of programs and facilities to patrons. [2.1]
- Provide diverse programming opportunities. [2.2]
- Provide a safe and welcoming environment in parks and facilities. [2.3]

Theme 3: Sustainability & Stewardship

Theme 3 Goals:

- Promote Resource Conservation through good stewardship of the environment. [3.1]
- Conserve, enhance, and acquire natural areas and historical sites. [3.2]
- Increase green space in Anne Arundel County. [3.3]

Theme 4: Sustainability & Stewardship

Theme 4 Goals:

- Maintain and share financial and budgetary data. [4.1]
- Operate within the fiscal year budget appropriation. [4.2]
- Continue public infrastructure investment. [4.3]
- Continue to be a Certified Accredited Parks and Recreation Agency through the National Recreation and Parks Association. [4.4]

Theme 5: Employee Recruitment and Retention

Theme 5 Goals:

- Attract and retain a diverse workforce representing Anne Arundel County. [5.1]
- Provide professional development opportunities for all employees [5.2]
- Create employee recognition and engagement initiatives. [5.3]
- Establish a volunteer management program. [5.4]



STAY CONNECTED!

Visit our website at [**aacounty.org/recparks**](https://aacounty.org/recparks)

Sign up for our weekly newsletter at [**aarecparks.org/newsletter**](https://aarecparks.org/newsletter)

Follow us on social at [**aarecparks**](https://aarecparks)



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Night drop box available after hours



2026 Summer Camp