

9 PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

The County of Mariposa’s recreation needs and facilities can be divided into three major categories: community recreation facilities that people use on a daily or weekly basis; regional recreation facilities found only in a rural area, such as hiking, camping and equestrian trails; and visitor oriented recreation opportunities provided by Yosemite National Park and the National Forests of the Sierra Nevada. Over one-half of Mariposa County is publicly owned lands of the National Park, National Forests, or Bureau of Land Management.

9.1 COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

The County Parks and Recreation Department manages all the recreational programs offered by the county. In addition, it manages the use of buildings available to the public for group and individual functions. These buildings include Darrah Hall, Midpines Hall, Woodland Hall, Golden Stag Hall, McCay, and the Masonic Hall (which is rented by the county). They also take reservations for outdoor facilities at Coulterville Park, Red Cloud Park, and Mariposa Park. Users of these parks are generally interested in reserving specific picnic areas or shelters.

Fees for the use of Division-managed facilities include a rental charge ranging from \$15.00 to \$60.00 depending on the type of group and the facility, a refundable cleaning deposit of from \$30.00 to \$100.000, and the cost of insurance. If groups are considered a community service organization, they can apply for a waiver of the rental and insurance fees, which can be granted by the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Use of facilities is variable but tends to be growing each year. Some facilities are home to activities that meet on a regular basis, such as Scouts or Garden Clubs, while others primarily provide sites for single occasion uses such as receptions and dinners. The Parks and Recreation Division also coordinates the county’s sports programs including swimming lessons and free swim, Little League, softball (men’s and women’s fast-pitch, men’s and women’s slow-pitch and co-ed slow-pitch), basketball (men’s league), AYSO soccer, tennis, youth football and a summer recreation program.

9.2 RECREATION SITES

The County of Mariposa administers 60.5 acres of developed parkland. In addition, the County has dedicated, accepted the dedication by the Lake Don Pedro subdivision of approximately 150 miles of 8-foot wide hiking/equestrian trails winding between properties in the subdivision in both Mariposa and Tuolumne Counties. A description of the County-maintained recreation sites is provided in the following sections.

9.2.01 CATHEYS VALLEY PARK

The size of the site is 5 acres, and facilities currently consist of a community hall with kitchen facilities; picnic benches; fireplaces; an automatic sprinkling system; a water system; and lawn and trees.

There are lighted ball diamond and soccer fields, and to the south a picnic field with picnic tables and barbecues. This park has a paved parking lot in front of the community hall, but because people continue to drive to picnic sites near the hall, the picnic area is crisscrossed with compacted tracks. The park has a pump and a well allowing the ball field and most of the landscaping to be irrigated.

The park and the hall are heavily used for civic activities such as the Catheys Valley Garden Club, 4-H and various receptions and organizations meetings. The ball fields are used primarily for practice games and to absorb the Little League overflow from the primary fields at Mariposa High School. Because of its location adjacent to Highway 140 and attractive setting, opportunity exists for this park to become a link in the County's regional tourism system.

9.2.02 COULTERVILLE PARK

This site is 2 acres in size and facilities consist of a swimming pool; dressing rooms; restrooms; picnic area; barbecues; lights; horseshoe pits; playground equipment; sprinkler system; a turf area. Two tennis courts were installed with State Park Bond Act Funds; these courts need to be lighted for nighttime use. First priority for improvements will be a new bathhouse and rest room complex to replace currently inadequate facilities.

The pool was resurfaced in the summer of 1990 with a new fiberglass coating, financed through State Park bond monies. Summer pool attendance averages approximately 2,000 users a month during the three-month swim season.

Coulterville Park is the site of several annual events, including the Gunfighter's Rendezvous, Firemen's 4th of July Picnic and the Coyote Howl. These events draw hundreds of people from all over the county and beyond, and are of tremendous local importance, both socially and economically.

There is some concern about the underground utility situation in the grassy area of the park. Years of undocumented repair, renovation, and expansion of service have left a crisscross of underground utilities. While no problem is known to exist, this situation deserves investigation and documentation.

9.2.03 DARRAH PARK

The park, which has a site of one acre, is the site of Darrah Hall, a historic schoolhouse converted to community center use, a shaded picnic area with tables and barbecues and a fenced playground. The hall has a kitchen and restrooms, and second sets of restrooms are located adjacent to the picnic area. The park has a gravel area designated for parking. The hall is currently the home of the Mariposa Preschool Co-op, an organization that rents the space from the county. The hall is also occasionally used for other private gatherings, but

because of its size and condition and because it is “off the beaten path” it does not get the use it might normally get in other parts of the county.

Once a year, Darrah Park is the site of the Mariposa County Pioneer Wagon Train, an event where historic wagons journey out of Yosemite National Park’s Pioneer History Center en route to the town of Mariposa. The wagons, their stock and the people involved spend the night on private land adjacent to the park and celebrate that evening with a barbecue at the park. The following day the entourage rides into town for a parade. This event is usually held the first weekend in June. The park is also the site of summer Farmer’s Markets. These events have become both commercially and socially successful.

9.2.04 EL PORTAL PARK

Facilities at this 2.5-acre site consist of a swimming pool, built in 1979 and tennis courts built in 1975. In 1978, the National Park Service installed night-lights for the tennis courts, and in 1990, the courts were resurfaced. Adjacent to the courts is a small sand volleyball court installed by members of the community, which is extreme despair. A large gravel area provides parking. Between the courts and the school is a grass ball field owned and administered by the Mariposa Unified School District. As designed, the field is not large enough for an official Little League diamond although reorganization of the field to increase the foul line length would rectify this problem. Also in the area adjacent to the school is a small exercise facility that was built and is maintained by a parent’s group.

There is also a small park with grass, a basketball court and picnic facilities in downtown El Portal. This park is on Federal land and no agreement exists for county cooperation in development or maintenance of this facility. The school utilizes a year-round system, which changes the demands on the El Portal Pool and on recreation in El Portal in general. Until 1990, the pool had been used as part of the curriculum for the elementary school.

The National Park Service has plans for further development of housing in the El Portal area. Most plans being discussed at this time show the tennis court site as a site for new housing. These same plans indicate new courts below the school adjacent to the pool. However, given the fact that most of this community is on Federal land, the county has limited jurisdiction with respect to the provision and maintenance of facilities since they can only be developed at the discretion of the National Park Service.

9.2.05 HORNITOS PARK

Facilities currently consist of a community hall with kitchen facilities; a storage area; fenced-in park area; picnic and fireplace facilities; lawn and trees; restrooms; a water and sprinkling system; playground equipment; and a basketball court. The size of the site is 1.3 acres.

The far south end of the park is defined by the remnant of a wall presumably from a Wells Fargo Bank building of the Gold Rush era. The park is nearly delineated by stone and block walls on the west and east edges. The portion of the park between the fenced grass area and the Golden Stag Hall is in disrepair. A variety of steps, fences and poles attempt to limit vehicle traffic in this area. Adjacent to the Golden Stag Hall are the remains of the Ghirardelli Store, and the site as a whole is of significant historical interest. The property is in private ownership.

9.2.06 MARIPOSA PARK

Facilities at this 14-acre site consist of a swimming pool; dressing rooms; restrooms; a picnic area with tables and fireplaces; an outdoor theater, stage, and storage; tennis courts with night lights; a sprinkling system; parking facilities; lawn and trees; playground equipment; and an office building. In 1979, an additional tennis court and a double practice court were added along with an irrigation system.

The park is the current location of the weekly summer Farmer’s Market in Mariposa: the grassy area is popular for informal soccer and other sport practice. The pool is used for the swimming component of the physical education program at Mariposa and Spring Hill High Schools, as well as by several elementary schools that host Spring Swims.

9.2.07 RED CLOUD PARK

With funds from the 1976 State Park Bond Act, this park of 7 acres was improved with a rock wall; refurbished restrooms; a new water system; night lights; an outdoor sink; twelve barbecues; an twelve picnic tables. The park’s main attraction is a 30 by 60 foot concrete dance floor, lighted and surrounded by seating. The park has no lawn area, nor does it have paved parking, although a hand-built rock wall attempts to separate vehicle areas from pedestrian use areas. The park has a dozen picnic tables and barbecues, a rest room building, a deep pit barbecue area, horseshoes and potable water.

9.2.08 WOODLAND PARK

An allocation of the 1976 State Park Bond Act was used to begin park facilities in the Bootjack area, when some of the funding was used to purchase this site of 10.5 acres. Woodland Park operates in conjunction with Woodland School (K-6), despite the fact the two are separated by Woodland Drive and administered by different entities. The school uses the fields and surrounding areas for physical education classes, nature study and the like. Additionally, the county rents the community center to a local organization for a before and after school day care (latchkey) program.

9.2.09 ATHLETIC FIELDS

In 1960, Mariposa Parks and Recreation Department and Mariposa High School jointly developed approximately 12 acres of athletic fields on the Mariposa High School site. Ultimately, this facility has been built out to include one high school baseball field and three softball/Little League diamonds (one in each of the four corners of the rectangular site) and a large upper field used primarily by the High School. All four diamonds are lit although the variety in the age and type of lighting makes some diamonds better lit than others. Soccer is played across the outfields of the four diamonds. Primarily the Little League program uses the two easterly diamonds.

The fact that several diamonds are in close proximity on this site makes these fields the preferred location for scheduling tournaments. They are also more convenient for parents who may have several children playing in different games on a single day. These fields accommodate the bulk of Little League games while fields at Woodland and Catheys Valley take the overflow games and provide practice fields.

9.3 RECREATION STANDARDS

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) sets forth recreation standards for communities based upon population. Mariposa County had a base population of 16,100 in 1999, and with an annual 2 percent growth rate (322 persons/year) for 15 years, the County’s population would reach 20,930 in 2015. Table 9-1 identifies the recreation needs based upon NRPA standards for this projected population.

Table 9-1: Mariposa County Recreation Needs Based Upon National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Standards

Activity	Number of facilities per/ population	NRPA Standard for 20,930 population	Existing in Mariposa County Parks, in 2000	Additional Needed
Badminton	1:5,000	4.1	0	4
Basketball	1:5,000	4.1	NA	?
Handball	1:20,000	1.0	0	0
Tennis	1:2,000	10.5	7	3
Volleyball	1:5,000	4.1	0	4
A. Baseball Lighted	1:30,000	.7	0	3 total (lighted and unlighted)
B. Baseball, Little League	1:5,000	4.1	2	
C. Softball	1:5,000	4.1	5	
Field Hockey	1:20,000	1.0	1	0
Football	1:10,000	2.1	2	0
Soccer	1:10,000	2.1	2	0
Golf-Driving Range	1:30,000	.55	0	0
¼ mile track	1:20,000	1.0	1	0
Multi-Purpose Rec. Courts	1:10,000	2.1	0	2
Trails	1:region			
Archery	1:50,000	.4	0	0
Skeet/Trap	1:50,000	.4	0	0
Golf, 9 holes	1:25,000	1.0	0	1
Golf, 18 holes	1:50,000	.4	0	0
Swimming Pools	1:20,000	1.0	3	0

Source: NRPA Standards.