

Jennings County Parks and Recreation Master Plan



2020-2024



JCPR MP

Plan developed in coordination with the Jennings County Parks and Recreation Board



Plan drafted by Greg Martin, Director JCPR

JCPR MP

2020-2024



Table of Contents

Section One:	Introduction	(page 5)
Section Two:	Goals and Objectives	(page 11)
Section Three:	Features of Jennings County	(page 15)
Section Four:	Supply Analysis (JCPR specific, page 53)	(page 29)
Section Five:	Accessibility Analysis	(page 75)
Section Six:	Public Participation	(page 79)
Section Seven:	Issues Identification	(page 97)
Section Eight:	Needs Analysis	(page 125)
Section Nine:	New Facilities Location Map	(page 135)
Section Ten:	Priorities and Action Schedule	(page 143)
Appendix:	Miscellaneous	(page 156)

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Section One:

Introduction



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Description of Park Board

The Jennings County Park Board was created in 1967 in anticipation of the transfer of the Muscatatuck State Park back to the citizens of Jennings. The park was deeded back to Jennings in 1968. The ordinance creating the Board was rewritten in 1993 and was supplied in the Appendix of last master plan.

The Muscatatuck was the only property under direct management of the Board until 2007 when Eco Lake Park was given to the County and the Department.

The Park Board partners annually with many agencies. They have provided office space for a regional Experience Works, Inc administrator. They have had lease agreements in prior years with Jennings County Tourism Department, as well as the “Friends of the Muscatatuck River Society” water quality educator. There is some discussion to reformulate the partnership with the Tourism Department, which would open the park Visitor Center back to a county-wide Visitor Center.

Twice over the past twenty years, the Park Board struck out to partner with the local municipal recreation department (North Vernon Parks and Recreation), trying to create one local department with increased staffing, budget, etc. This partnership was never formalized, although supported by both organization directors.

JCPR has partnered with the small town of Vernon on significant projects. An IDNR Urban Forestry Grant as well as a State Historical Marker Grant were both garnered with the assistance of JCPR. Both groups are working together along with the municipality to fulfill community wide trail opportunities and have applied for the second phase Next Level Trails Grant.

JCPR is subsidized by the county general budget. The Parks Department also has a non-reverting fund for funds generated from their properties. Camping and building rental are the two main income generators.

Description of Department Staff

Jennings County Parks and Recreation Department has three full time employees. There is no funding for part-time labor. JCPR is an arm of the county government and works within their framework.

JCPR had partnered with the Experience Works program and the National Able Network, providing workers in the field and sometimes in the office, yet this opportunity has not been a consistent partner of late.

JCPR utilizes a camp host to increase campground security and assist in permit collection.

Overview of the Park Board/Department

A more in-depth history of the department can be found in the past master plans. This overview will primarily discuss items in the last planning cycle.

At the beginning of last planning cycle a cloud based RMS (reservation management system) had just been instituted (2014). This has proven to be a much needed technological upgrade, although significant computer skills are necessary for staff.

The main focus out of last cycle planning was geared towards playgrounds and creating camping at Eco Lake Park (ELP).

Although the department had hoped to get camping open at ELP, it was always understood that a significant grant and/or county council assistance would be needed. The “Lowe’s Community Partnership Grant” was applied for (twice), yet the grant was not competitive. Most available grants tend to not grade this upgrade well. This will be discussed later.

The department was successful in most other objectives. After receiving a \$30,000 grant for raising \$60,000 in a challenge grant, JCPR used these funds, submitted, and was awarded a \$70,000 matching grant for purchase of playground equipment. This essentially was buy one unit for Muscatatuck and get a free unit for Eco Lake Park. JCPR installed both units saving the county installation costs.

JCPR was then awarded funds for a spray-grounds, with accompanying grants for shade structures and benches. JCPR had to fund installation of the spray-grounds, but did shade installation in-house.

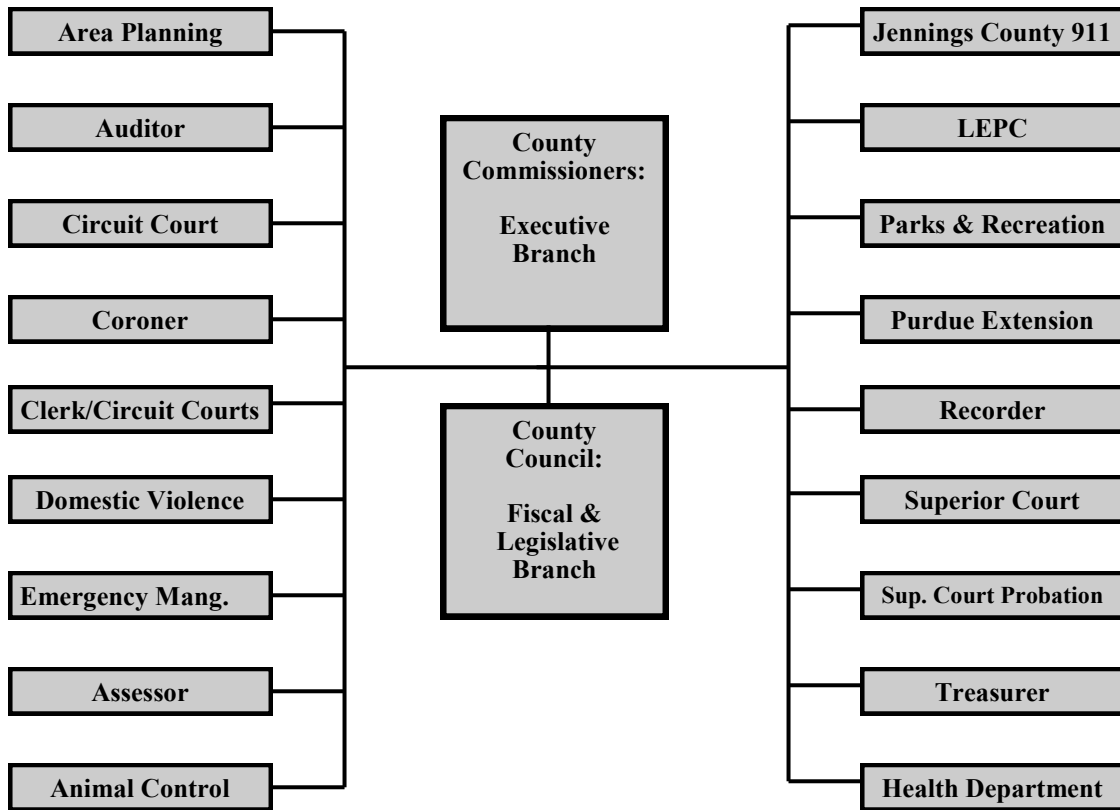
Two larger pieces of equipment were itemized in the cycle. JCPR bought and funded a new truck in 2018, and a new mower in 2019.

Road work had been itemized on the Muscatatuck Park’s main road, as had bridge work. Since the main park road is a county road that sees significant commuter traffic, the maintenance is done by the County Highway Dept. Both issues were taken care of. The road at ELP also had some work completed (\$10,000 stone, plus grade work).

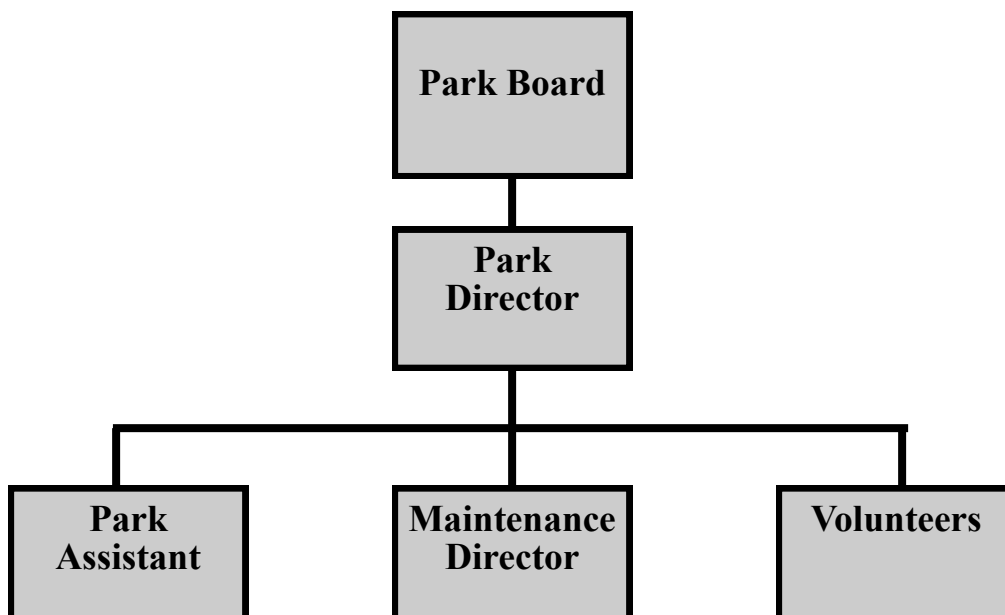
Upgrades to the barn structure had been itemized. With the department installing playgrounds this upgrade did not materialize due to time constraints and the use of the barn as storage. It was also superseded somewhat in importance due to removal of the older Director’s residence, which had also been used as storage. This will clean up the Muscatatuck Park’s front/east entrance.



Organizational Chart of Park Board Relative to Local Government



Organizational Chart of Staff Relative to Park Board.



Overview of the Department's Management

JCPR is a small department. Three individuals take care of two parks totaling 344 acres, mowing roughly 75 acres. JCPR had partnered with the County Tourism Department from 1998 to 2009, until it was administratively dissolved. These two agencies shared an office assistant that was provided and funded by the Experience Works Program. JCPR has had this office assistant position filled intermittently since 2009.

JCPR utilizes a camp host to help check in campers after hours. The camp host has limited other duties like cleaning and stocking the bath house.

The Director stays in the office as much as possible when the office assistant is off or the position is unfilled. Often the office must be closed for the Director to assist the crew, consult with contractors, work with the Auditor, etc.

Each of the three employees work weekends during the busy season (mid April to mid October) with an alternating rotation. Weekend hours are usually split in to am/pm shifts.

JCPR does not directly program events or programs. They do partner with multiple agencies to run various races (running, color, obstacle/mud, mountain biking) and at times day camps. Music and Beer festivals have been tried, but have not stayed steady. Funding from these events are profitable, but varies as the events change.

JCPR makes the majority of their Non-Reverting funding (funds generated from the facilities) from the campgrounds. A heated Community Building generates the second most revenue and is rented on average 80 times per year. Shelter house rentals generate the third largest income. Miscellaneous income is generated from firewood, showers, salvage, etc. Shelters are rentable, but are first come first serve when not rented. The Muscatatuck Park has many annual events (special events, family reunions, etc.) and the shelters are often rented during the day, then used by non-paying visitors afterward.

Average five-year Non-reverting funds were approximately \$73,000 and has increased almost \$30,000 over the last planning cycle. The department is subsidized by an average budget (five year) of approximately \$141,375. The department's funding has stayed steady for the most part, with all government departments getting an average 3% increase per year. During the recession the park saw a larger reduction (11%) than other departments that were decreased (5%). JCPR did not see a substantial increase in funding after the second park was acquired. In 2017, the council did increase the general budget appropriation for the second assistant. The park had had to pay 50% of this annual salary, yet the county absorbed this, thus freeing approximately 14,000 annually since 2017.

After the recession there was a small group of officials that had tried to sell both Park facilities. This group was not well supported, nor did they get too far before opposition mounted. Ultimately the initiative was not pursued.

Definition of Planning Area:

Jennings County Parks and Recreation Department is a county-wide department. This study will overview elements throughout the county, yet will focus on a few county owned properties. Historically, the department has concentrated on the Muscatatuck Park. They acquired the Eco Lake Park property in December 2007. This property has seen some improvements (via three grants), yet with minimal increased funding to the department.

Jennings County has a wealth of outdoor recreational opportunities at the State and National level. These areas will be covered in the county inventory.

JCPR, Vernon, and North Vernon have all come together to formulate a Community-Wide Trails Plan. A few additions and modifications will be discussed later. A significant INDOT grant (1.2 million) funded the long desired "Gum Street" trail along an abandoned railway (B&O). Bids were let in 2015, with construction completed in 2017. The trail was subsequently named the Muscatatuck Trail, and is hugely popular.

The trails committee has been working aggressively on other potential trails and connector. An upgraded Trails Master Plan will be presented within this plan.

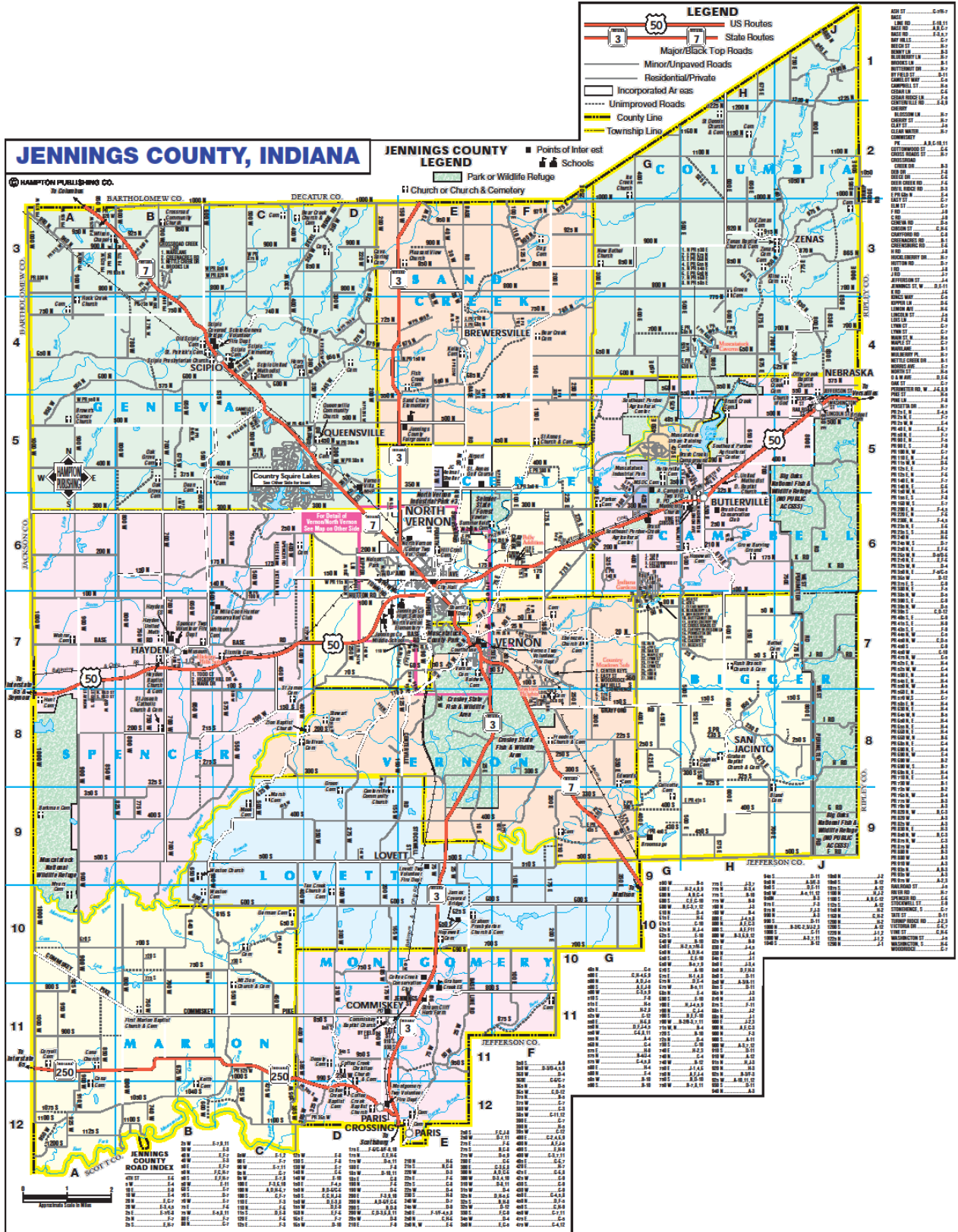
Jennings County is set in the rolling hills of southern Indiana. Nice hardwood forests dress the multiple stream and river ravines. Winding rivers and streams have sculpted limestone bluffs to create many interesting and significant geological features. Many of these features may warrant increased promotion.

Total acreage of the county is 245,120 acres or approximately 376.6 square miles. The county is divided into 12 townships. North Vernon is centrally located in the center of the county with Vernon (the county seat) one mile south.

Jennings County is conveniently centered equidistant to Indianapolis, Louisville, and Cincinnati (roughly 65 miles from each.). Major interstates do not enter the county, but US Highway 50, and State roads # 3 and #7 supply good access in and out of the community. During this last planning cycle the state built a significant by-pass around the city (US 750). This has increased transportation efficiency, and has helped keep larger commercial traffic out of the small city.



Jennings County, Indiana



Source: <http://www.jnru.org/pdfs/jc.pdf>

Section Two:

Goals and Objectives



Goals and Objectives of the Department

The core goals of the Jennings County Parks and Recreation are:

Study and implement industry standards at various levels of operation. Acknowledge errors and find solutions to rectify conflicts.

Listen to the public's expressed issues, conflicts, and desires and find potential actions of resolution.

Communicate with local leaders representing the communities recreational demands.

Work with North Vernon and the Jennings County School Corporation to promote and realize the potential at the proposed Sand Creek School-park area.

Work with Vernon and North Vernon to update a community wide trails plan. Specifically, JCPR hopes to connect to the historic Tunnel Mill and Crosley SFWA, historic Vernon, Rock Rest Falls and the Calli State Nature Preserve, as well as North Vernon Parks

Promote a healthy lifestyle through increased marketing of our parks and specifically our trail system.

Protect the historical and natural aspects of both the Muscatatuck Park and Eco Lake Park.

Maintain the grounds of both parks with increased sensitivity to aesthetics as well as safety.

Use our parks unique features to offer creative and enjoyable recreation at the lowest cost possible to all our citizens.

Increase revenue by increased usage of our amenities and/or expansion of the product.

Goals and Objectives of the Park Board

The following are core goals of the Jennings County Park Board:

Communicate with local elected officials to solidify funding and increase the knowledge of the Parks' worth and utility.

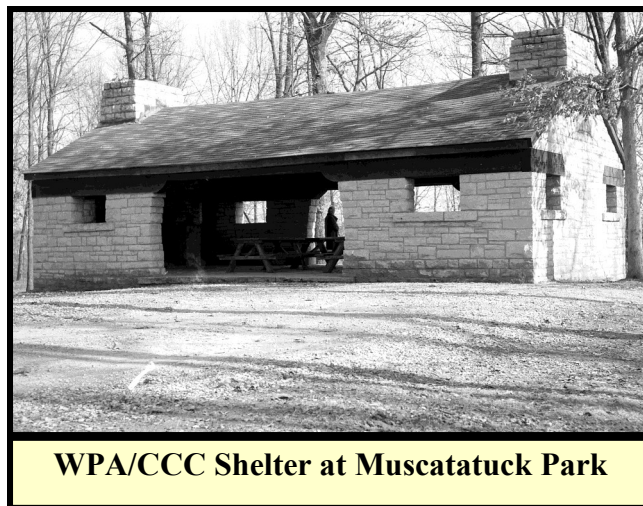
Manage the Parks with fiscal responsibility, creativity, foresight, with increased knowledge of industry standards, models, and trends.

Collaborate with NVPR to increase the importance and impact of Parks and Recreation in our community.

Limit the negative activity (vandalism) that the parks are sometimes subjected too.

Make the Park and Recreation facilities safer in general and more inclusive to all.

Increase the revenue generating capacity of the parks without inflating the prices and limiting usage to the underserved in our community.



WPA/CCC Shelter at Muscatatuck Park

Goals and Objectives of the Master Plan

The main objective of this study is to analyze current recreational issues in Jennings County and provide a basis for action. Some specific items to be completed with this plan are:

Revisit our Mission Statements for the department, and each individual park.

Define areas that are in need of improvement. Study alternatives for improvement, compare costs, and then define specific actions (in some cases limitations) to upgrade these areas.

Classify, protect, and preserve significant recreational, educational, historical, cultural, and natural resources.

Preserve and protect open space.

Cooperate with public and private groups and individuals in developing recreational resource relationships (partnerships). Create a network of communication and planning amongst the area professionals.

Survey the local public to better facilitate their needs and desires.

Study possibilities of acquiring additional park land. Trail and greenway corridors are considered a high priority.

Communicate, advertise, and promote unique recreational opportunity with the hope of increased understanding leading to specific action in the community.

Become more comprehensive and insightful in approach and methodology of supplying recreation.

Study and utilize funding sources to the best advantage of our residents.

Improve the quality of life in Jennings County.



Mission Statement of Jennings County Parks and Recreation

Our Mission is to:

“Provide adequate and diversified recreational opportunity to meet the needs of the citizens of our community, while protecting and promoting our significant natural and historic resources.”

JCPR has successfully administered and studied six consecutive cycles of recreational planning. Grants have been pursued and implemented in a wide and community oriented manner. Creative proposals have been presented. Some have been adopted and others only debated. Creative programming has been witnessed through partnerships with interested groups and individuals. Tax payer money has been stretched to maximize utility.

JCPR is proud of their accomplishments: the parks are cleaner, more attractive, and provide more opportunity. Income has increased to a significant fruition of its capacity. JCPR has acquired new park lands at no cost to the taxpayer.

JCPR is excited to embark on a new planning cycle. Although the department has seen significant gains in overall “wellness”, there is still room for improvement. “Wellness” of the community and department will be analyzed again. As changes occur so do our needs. The challenges of tomorrow are at our doorstep. There is enormous potential just beyond our reach. Jennings County Parks and Recreation intends to step up and lead the community into another period of enrichment and fulfillment.



Our Mission is to:

“Provide adequate and diversified recreational opportunity to meet the needs of the citizens of our community, while protecting and promoting our significant natural and historic resources”

Mission Statements are great generalizations of our overall goals, desires, and responsibilities. No one recreational department will be the same as the next as no community is like another. Jennings County’s assets and issues are unique. Although this is generally true, JCPR is committed to study other recreation providers, evaluate, then reevaluate. JCPR is open to criticism. JCPR is open to change. The public response to our initiative is very welcome. Increasingly we see a polarity of views, needs, desires, expectations. This is the age of polarity, for better or worse.

Within the last planning cycle there was a small push to sell both Park facilities. This position was extreme, but had support in some circles. Others realize how our recreational amenities do not measure up to state and national standards. This polarity creates a great challenge. It is one of the core goals, of the department through this master plan, to collect enough information to be able to educate the citizens and point our community in the most advantageous direction possible. We believe that information, study, comparison, debate, evaluation, then reevaluation are always needed. We believe that standards adopted across the country have been tested and refined to a great degree. Even though our issues are unique and challenges are great, we must look at our models. We must constantly reevaluate. This is our responsibility and our professional imperative. With all this in mind, we try to create mission operatives for our distinct facilities. No one park can deliver all recreational needs and wants. This is why our recreational model has evolved to where it is today. Conflicting issues need to be separated. Like needs can often be merged. We except our mission as flexible and open minded, but we support the work of our peers in creating a framework for our unique community:

Mission of the Muscatatuck Park: (presented in discussion format)

Muscatatuck Park is a county park. It is the community’s park. It has developed many elements of the “Community Park” classification. It originated as (Indiana’s fourth State Park) and has been striving to be managed as a “District Park”, specifically a “Historic District Park”. The park has natural and historic elements that are unique to southern Indiana. These elements need to be protected and promoted. Camping, mountain biking, and hiking are seeing a significant regional draw. Although the campgrounds is not full to capacity most weekends, the demand is significant and increasing. The Park would be hard pressed to find alternative use that would generate an equal return, without increased investment and significant consequences. Through the years we have seen that the “Community” element works with and sometimes against this “District Park”, usage scenario. In general, though, low intensity community programming and usage is a complement to the park and public in general. We do caution that combining Model classifications can cause conflicts. Aspects of “sports complexes “ are not deemed appropriate for the “District Park” classification. This applies to the “Community Park” and “Neighborhood Park” classifications, as well. Officials would be well served to study the recreational model presented in “Park, Recreation, Open Space, Greenway Guidelines”. This information and model is the gold standard of the industry. Its adherence produces viable results in many successful communities.

Paraphrased: The Mission (or Mission operative) of the Muscatatuck Park is to be managed as a Historic District Park. “Community Park” elements can and should be incorporated into the facility, yet kept in balance as to not infringe upon the natural, historic, and tourism related elements of the park.

The Mission of Eco Lake Park would be much the same as Muscatatuck. Fulfilling the agreement of the donors in producing an open public facility that promotes fishing, camping, and natural resource protection is the main focus of this facility.

Section Three:

Features of Jennings County



Natural Features and Landscape

Jennings County is blessed with rolling hills and winding streams and rivers. The natural landscape possesses a striking beauty that should be considered an asset for recreation as well as quality of life.

There are areas of open space that have recreational potential for various reasons. One main area is adjacent to Sand Creek School, just north of North Vernon. This land is owned by the school corporation. It has been proposed and there is general support that a low maintenance field space through a school-park collaborative effort could be achieved. More discussion of this subject will follow in the subsequent chapters.

Additional open space areas will be studied in our inventory.

Jennings County is uniquely and advantageously located equidistant between three large population centers: Indianapolis, Louisville, and Cincinnati. JCPR has witnessed increased participation from these population centers during special events, like the DINO mountain bike races, obstacle races, and also bouldering. Increased marketing to these centers seems merited for various events.

Jennings County is also home to two National Wildlife Refuges. Currently there are only three in the entire state. Hunting, fishing, and camping (and other outdoor related demands) are generated from these properties and these properties will continue to drive this demand.

With rolling hills and winding rivers, Jennings County has a picturesque landscape. Scenic views are scattered through out the county. Many are centrally located and/or have easy access. Some of these are developed, yet there is potential for many visitor access points of significant beauty. These vistas and recreational sites will be itemized and discussed in our inventory section. (Vernon Gym upper and lower, Rock Rest Falls, Tunnel Mill, Vernon #3 and #7).

Soils are compatible with most regional plant populations, but the clay composition can be a hindrance to field sod plantings. Aeration and irrigation may be needed for top end grass growing usually seen in a athletic complex.

Jennings has a good mix of upland (oak, maple, etc.) and lowland forests (sycamore, cottonwood, etc.) that grow in conjunction with the many hills and drainage channels winding throughout the county.

Limestone Geology and Recreational Opportunity

Jennings County has exposed stone throughout the county. This is most often seen along the Muscatatuck River and other tributaries. The majority of the exposed stone is dolomite limestone (approximately 325 million years old) with examples of other types of limestone present and small amounts of shale. The higher bands or rock, which are newer, often exhibit dense and varied fossils.

The American Indian word “Muscatatuck” translates into “land of windings waters”. The Muscatatuck River and other tributaries have carved out the interesting and erratic river channels, hitting harder stone and then curving in various directions, often in near ox-bow connections.

The curving nature of the river and streams in Jennings makes for interesting kayak and canoe trips. Unfortunately this is mainly seasonal, with summer and fall water levels often too low for quality riding. Caving has also been done for years, yet is somewhat restricted now due to “White–Nose Syndrome” that effects bats. The rock walls along the streams have provided another recreation opportunity that is the young but growing activity: rock climbing.

Rock Climbing

Rock climbing is one of the fastest growing physical activities in the country. Indoor gyms are popping up all over in specific facilities and also in conjunction with recreational centers to elementary schools. Rock climbing evolved out of the mountaineering tradition, but climbing is an elementary activity to the human primate, much like walking, running, and swimming. Climbing is intrinsically interesting as a basic physical activity and is now gaining much popularity from the creation of artificial walls. From mountaineering evolved 5 basic rock climbing forms:

- Aid Climbing
- Traditional Climbing (crack climbing)
- Sport Climbing (often steep or blank wall climbing)
- Bouldering (smaller, condensed difficulty)
- Mixed Rock and Ice (often mostly ice)

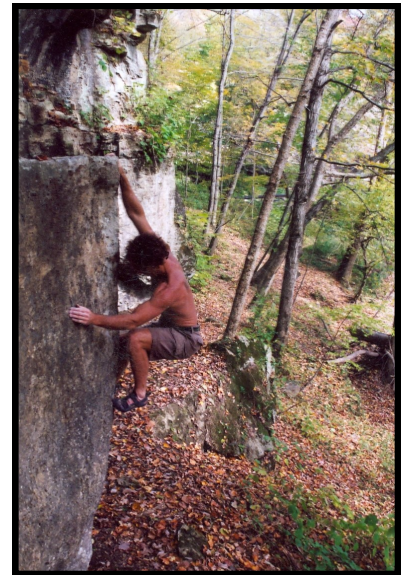
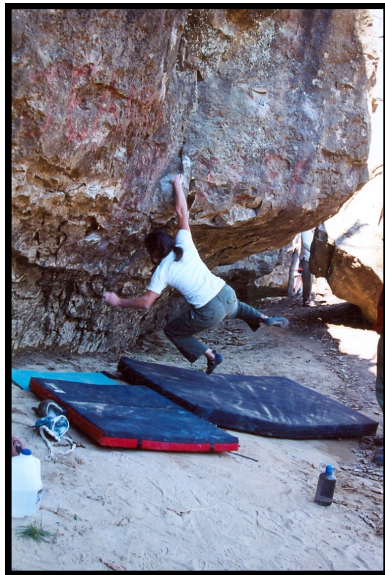
Jennings County does not have a great deal of isolated “boulders”, but the height of most rock walls is of reasonable bouldering height. Some taller climbs are done more safely with a top secured rope (top-roping).

The author has been recently approached about the formulation of an Indiana Climbers Coalition. Although the abundance of good quality stone is smaller, the state and this recreation group would likely benefit from this type of group formulation. There is some discussion that “Strawberry Fields” which will be part of the NLT “Next Level Trails” Grant could be purchased via the above coalition. This could further the grant and mediate a potential liability issue relative to recreational use on easements.

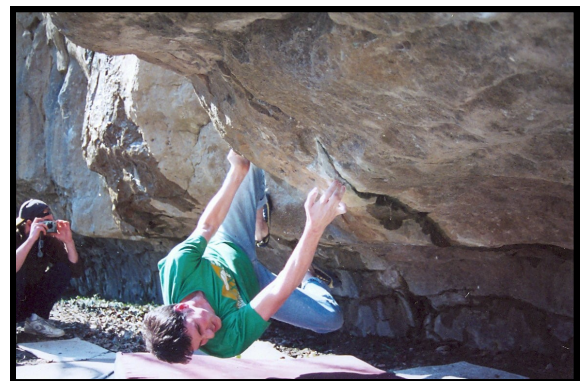
Bouldering is the main form of rock climbing in Jennings. This type of climbing is the most basic form of the sport and uses the least amount of technical gear. Rock shoes and chalk were the 1980's gear. Prior to that, climbers bouldered in whatever tight fitting shoe they could find useful (hiking boots to wrestling shoes). In the mid 1990's climbers started creating pads for bouldering and the sport exploded. It seems odd that climbing a 10 foot section of rock would be that interesting, but due to the difficulty of movement and often tricky problem solving elements, bouldering has become a stand alone activity, were it used to be termed "practice climbing". Younger climbers seem specially attracted to this type of climbing.

Indiana does not have a great deal of rock for outdoor climbing. There are a few sandstone and limestone bluffs scattered around the state. In the late 1980's early 1990's there was a small population of Indiana climbers that frequented the Red River Gorge Area in Kentucky to climb on a regular basis. Red River is now considered a world class climbing destination. Those few climbers were anxious for local rock and then started developing specific climbs, naming them, and grading them (relative to difficulty, quality, and dangerousness).

Bouldering problems were first established in Jennings in 1991. Prior to that the cliff line did see some rappellers. Climbers are now witnessed most every weekend and often during weekdays.



Bouldering is often dynamic, explosive, yet also subtle and balance orientated.



Bouldering often tackles steep terrain using various techniques in powerful and abstract ways.

Watershed and Wildlife Management in Jennings

Jennings County is over 30 percent forested as well as 30 percent agricultural. The combination of forest and field space are good for maintaining a diverse wildlife population. The National and State recreational areas are good examples of active wildlife management techniques and practices.

The Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge is one of Indiana's best examples of a reintroduction to a natural wetland landscape. Their mission is to "restore, preserve, and manage a mix of forest, wetland, and grassland habitat for fish, wildlife and people." They claim wildlife management as their top priority. The property is recognized as a "Continentially Important" bird area, due to their efforts to maintain significant habitats natural to the pre-settler era.

Water manipulation in the form of seasonal wetlands, ponds, and marshes, interconnected and interspersed with managed vegetation areas makes the refuge the natural home to multiple species, including over 280 identified bird species.

The reintroduction of the river otter in 1995 was deemed a significant success. The otters were once regionally threatened/extinct. The program has been an extremely successful reintroduction with otter sightings now all over the county.

MNWR host the "Wings over the Muscatatuck" annual festival. This bird watching event is well attended.

There is currently a large watershed protection initiative in the works within the "Central Muscatatuck Watershed" project. The project plans to protect 26,000 acres of river bottomland. Mitch Daniels states, "This initiative will increase public access to hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, boating, and bird watching, and leave a legacy for future generations by providing a major conservation destination for tourists." <http://in.gov/dnr/healthyriver/6502.htm> "Muscatatuck Overview pdf"

Brush Creek Elementary School outdoor lab has a state recognized program and wetland restoration area. Ron Mulligan was the designer and was recognized for his efforts in 1992.

The Muscatatuck Park has worked with local SWCD to re-introduce wetlands to the property. There is a small linkage of wetland marshes within a natural drainage channel. A larger (yet still small) 1/2 acre pond has been itemized to be created south of these two ponds. Loss of recreational trail space may deter the department from this long range objective, although a pond closer to the campground would be a positive addition for campers.

Invasive Species and Plant Disease Overview

Invertebrates:

Emerald Ash Borer was found in Jennings approximately five years ago. Significant decline has been witnessed. Power companies have aggressively removed the trees from most power lines.

JCPR properties do not have a large percentage of ash trees, but it is still a common tree. Inventorying individuals close to infrastructure is merited. Vernon and Muscatatuck Park had planted (a few) ash trees in the past, yet will hold off from this species till a resistant strain is available. JCPR has worked in conjunction with the IDNR to assist monitoring. Current EAIDNR EAB web site: www.in.gov/dnr/entomolo/5349.htm

Japanese beetles have been witnessed with varying populations. Recent years have been less detrimental.

Plants:

Japanese honey suckle is the most widespread, visible invasive species. Where and when possible this species is removed.

English ivy is also prevalent and visible. JCPR has treated this vine along the main road where it is highly visible and accessible to treat. This species is not listed on the IDNR web site: www.in.gov/dnr/6351.htm, yet local IDNR personnel have suggested that JCPR treat it.

Autumn olive is present on both JCPR properties. In 1991, regional biologists planted this species in conjunction with two newly developed wetland areas at the Muscatatuck Park. Subsequently it was deemed invasive. It is aggressive, hard to work with and remove and is not a preferred species.

All varieties of pear have proven invasive.

Aquatic Species:

JCPR will be interested in aquatic management more in the coming years. Algae at the Eco Lake Park is a seasonal issue. Plant composition is also an issue. The IDNR has suggested practices in their water survey of this property.

Diseases and other issues:

There are many plant and animal diseases that effect various populations. "White-Nosed Syndrome" is one of significance effecting bats.

Drought, higher than average temperatures, and also pollution have been blamed for issues effecting many plants. Norway Spruce has seen mortality all over southern Indiana. Once elegant and thriving trees have been witnessed in decline and dead in all adjacent counties as well as in Jennings. Preliminary research points decline to drought stress, increased temperatures and wetter growing seasons.

Man Made Features In Jennings

Last planning cycle Jennings County was going through one of their largest infrastructure re-investment periods. The US 50 Highway by-pass (US 750) is now complete. This multi-million dollar road upgrade creates a significant thoroughfare around the town of North Vernon. With the varying topography and winding rivers, the location of this road was a significant study taking years. The impacts of this road will mostly be positive relative to recreation. The road network has been tied to many bridges because of the winding nature of the river. The new bypass creates an alternative route for many residents and travelers. The location of these roads will not assist pedestrian travel greatly, as it bypasses town. The extra width of the new roads is a great benefit for bikers, as it ten foot brims on both sides.

It is the general trend that development has been in this area north of town. It is assumed that this trend will continue and increase due to development along this new corridor. Future upgrades to the park system will want to be located accordingly.

State highways #3 and #7, which join and are the same road in town, are the main road (s) leading north and south. This road is was recently resurfaced and widened. Impacts to recreation are considered minimal, but upgrades to sidewalks on both sides of this road are considered significant upgrades. Aesthetics of the town have increased with this upgrade as well as increase ease of alternative transportation. It is worthy to note that a short increase of this sidewalk (one-quarter mile) could connect North Vernon to the Muscatatuck Park via a walking corridor. A "narrows" area could be an impediment to this, but less than one-half mile could connect Vernon to North Vernon. Pedestrian travel is witnessed often (nearly daily) along this corridor even without sidewalks.

North Vernon was the recipient of a 16 Million Dollar Stellar grant (one of two Indiana communities to receive this inaugural grant). This grant funded a smaller block park in the downtown area. Fountains, benches, and decorative elements were added to this area to enliven the downtown area. Impacts were not negative, but this park was considered controversial as it eliminated parking space.

The Stellar grant also provided the matching funds for the INDOT "Gum Street" greenway section of the community wide trails project. This upgrade supplies a paved trail connecting Muscatatuck Park to the small NVPR mini-park. This has been a hugely popular upgrade to for bike/pedestrian access.

North Vernon has just recently added their second community Park, Tripton Park. This upgrade capitalized on the acquisition of the abandoned golf course. JCPR had actively petitioned the city move forward with this project. Funding for this and a significant upgrade to the pool at their other facility were taken care of through bonds (3 million for Tripton Park and 3.6 million for pool upgrades).

There is one larger reservoir in the county, Brush Creek Reservoir. This property had been managed along with a buffer area in the form of a State Wildlife Area. The majority of this area has been taken over by the military and is named Muscatatuck Urban Training Center. A smaller area is still managed for wildlife and issues hunting permits.

This reservoir had also accommodated a campground. Brush Creek Campground. This property has largely been incorporated into the Urban Training Center and is no longer open to the public.

There is one larger reservoir for the north part of the county that is being studied. The possibility of a larger reservoirs with varying levels of water acreage has been studied for at least 20 years. North Vernon will always be looking at alternative (or supplemental) water source. The Zenas project would accommodate that for future generations as well a creating significant water related recreational opportunity.

Another smaller potential lies in the currently abandoned North Vernon Quarry was owned by Hanson Aggregate, yet was purchased by the city. This limestone quarry is being used as a water storage area. Major water recreation in the form of larger boats would not be facilitated in this area, but fishing, swimming, hiking, picnicking, etc. could most likely be developed as supplemental along the banks and fringe of this property. Recreational upgrades here will most likely be looked into in the NVPR next master plan cycle.

The general layout of the community defines to a large degree Jennings recreational amenities. North Vernon Schools are centrally located with elementary schools out side of town roughly 5 to 7 miles in four directions. Jennings students are bused a further distance than any other county in Indiana. The peripheral schools do supply needed recreation to many rural residents, but proximity may still be a limiting factory to many on a day to day basis.

Railroad corridors are still used in the community, but there is significant potential for adopting abandoned railways for greenways.

One main issue discussed repeatedly in the North Vernon Master plan, as well as the Jennings County Comprehensive Master Plan is the lack of thoughtful planning relative to zoning. Jennings and North Vernon have significantly "piece meal" residential, commercial, industrial areas. These two works point out examples where the result is less than desirable (mobile homes placed in residential neighborhoods, etc.). They also made the point that this can and should be deterred in the future, with more thoughtful and stringent design, landscape and other construction standards.

JCPR would need to continue to maintain Vernon/Vinegar Mill trail regardless if awarded the NLT Grant. Gaining easement is needed, if not outright purchase. Increase usage on this section would likely assist in maintenance as it is often overgrown in eastern section. Increased partnership with Vernon may also be needed as their staffing is low and often volunteered. Annual trail days could assist and be incorporated into existing volunteer days (ex. United Way day of Caring).

Historical Jennings

Jennings County takes significant pride in their history. The county was an early Indiana town and played a part in the early history of the State.

Vernon is listed on the National Register of Historical Places in its entirety. This placement is primarily for its early settler architecture and its unique charter, which makes it the smallest county seat in Indiana. This town naturally has a State Historical marker for the same reasons.

Jennings is home to seven State Historical Markers:

- Vernon Historical District
- Muscatatuck Park
- Jonathan Jennings
- Morgan's Raiders
- Kellar Grist Mill
- Hannah Milhous Nixon
- Grouse-line Treaty

Jennings County's Historical Museum is located in Vernon, and they have many artifacts. Muscatatuck Park has an interpretive Visitor Center with a comprehensive overview of the local history along with many historical photos.

The Jennings County Historical Society created a significant spring festival "Sassafras Days". This festival celebrates early pioneer history and specifically does a mock Civil War battle to commemorate the Morgan's Raider's event of 1863. The reenactment is done in partnership with JCPR and is held at the Muscatatuck Park. Other programs are not pursued, currently.

Vernon and Jennings have significant "Underground Railroad" history. The publication, "Southeast Indiana Trails to Freedom" is a good resource on this topic. www.in.gov/dnr/historic/2798.htm : is best general source.

North Vernon has several smaller districts on the National Register of Historic Places. The Downtown, State Street, and Walnut Street districts encompass multiple homes, and the Carnegie Library and Annandale are listed separately. Historic Walking/Driving Tour brochures for both Vernon and North Vernon are available at the JCPR/Muscatatuck Park visitor center.

North Vernon has had a significant history from the rail road era. Although once considered one of the busiest railroads for smaller towns in Indiana, no museum or artifacts are readily available to interpret this rich history, except for a caboose on display in the downtown area.

Cultural Jennings

Ethnically, Jennings County is a (97%) white/Caucasian community with over half of the community living in a rural setting. Relative to recreation we do not miss in the stereotypical hunter-fisher person being a norm.

Historically, Jennings residents embody this stereotype with little deviation. As the county is a good place for this type of recreation there seems to be a good percentage of the population that do hunt and fish. Classically urban pursuits like paved trail biking/walking, "Art in the parks", spray grounds, etc, are less desired. This trend is changing, yet very slowly. Jennings County has one of the worst retentions of higher educational populations in Indiana (87 th of 92 counties with a bachelors' degree or more). College bound youth tend not to come back to Jennings and live. Exposure to national trends are smaller and adopted slower.

With that in mind, hunting, and fishing opportunities are and should be a priority in Jennings. Camping is often related to these activities and is witnessed to be performed often in conjunction with each other.

The rural recreational trends do appear to be changing slowly though. Mountain Biking, Mud Races, Color Races, are well attended. Often these events pull from the Region, but local participation is significant and enjoyment levels seem to support more and varied recreational opportunities.

The Park Theater in North Vernon is a well attended venue for plays, musical performances, and weekend movies. Local and regional bands play often. The local "players" club performs plays through out the year here. This facility shows Sunday matinees, at a reduced price.

Muscatatuck Park has hosted various musical events over the years, but they have not gained sustainability. Medium sized Bluegrass festivals were well attended, but faded away as the main volunteers burnt out. Events created from a department program director could help sustain these functions. Tripton park's new amphitheater will be a nice asset for the city and their preliminary new master plan recommends additional programming

NVPR has a couple musical events in the summer. One is always associated with their July fourth celebration.

Art or other cultural events relative to parks are held, yet not often. JCPR has hosted picture contests and also picture exhibits. JCPR will host an Arts in the park event in 2020.

JCPR partnered with a local business to create the "Fermentation Celebration: Beer and Wine Festival." The event was quite popular, yet extreme heat (timing of event) and a changing of the organizer's business lead to this being dropped.

Economic and Social Factors

Jennings County population has seen slight decreases in population the last two planning cycles. Over 10 years this equals about 1000 individuals. Population distribution is in the table below (Table One) as is general income information compared to the State and to North Vernon.

TABLE ONE (1)			
What?	North Vernon	Jennings County	Indiana
Population	6,712	27,611	6,691,878
Per Capita Income (2013)	\$ 23,558	22,901	\$ 27,305
Median Household Income	\$ 42,200	\$ 48,342	\$ 52,182
Median Value Owner owned home	\$ 78,400	\$ 89,700	\$ 130,200
% Public below poverty line	19.8 %	12.8 %	13.1 %
% Population under age 5	8.2%	6.0 %	6.3 %
% Population under age 18	22.9 %	23.0 %	23.4 %
% Population over 65	16.8 %	16.4 %	15.8 %
% Population white	97 %	97.2 %	85.1 %
% Population with High school education	81.6 %	85.4 %	88.3 %
% Population with Bachelors degree or higher	12.6 %	10.7%	25.3 %

Information provided by www.census.gov and www.stats.indiana.edu (most data: 2013-2017)

North Vernon population has seen decreases of (-3.8%) over the last 10 years. The county is experiencing nearly the same decline (-3.2 %). This is a national trend for rural communities, yet could be a large issue in the future for Jennings. This is happening while the state population increased roughly 3.2%. Age distribution is an important recreational statistic. Most communities are planning for the increase in the baby boomer generation aging over 65. Jennings and North Vernon both saw increases in older population and decreases in youth population. Although this is important Jennings County and North Vernon have over 23% of the population under 18. Programming and supplying recreational amenities to this population distribution will remain important.

Jennings County’s minority distribution is essentially negligible. Gender distributions (female pop.= 49.9 %) are negligible as well. Jennings (and more so North Vernon) has a significant population in groups homes, once housed in the State Hospital.

Jennings Counties retention of educated adults is one of the worst in the state (87 th). Relative to recreation, income and education data suggest that trendy and more expensive recreational amenities would be less attainable in Jennings. This does not suggest that recreational diversity is less desired, although to a degree this may be true due to lack of varied experience. Poverty in children below 18 years old is high, but slightly improving.

Economically, Jennings County was hit hard by the recent recession. From 2005 to 2010, Jennings saw a 72 percent decrease in building permits. The property tax caps have decreased local government funding, significantly. Delinquency property tax in the county exacerbated this issue even more. The issue of delinquent property tax along with foreclosure data will be discussed in more detail in “CSL. Critical Area”, at the end of this chapter.

Jennings County annual unemployment rate (3.4 %) is slightly higher than the state average. Jennings is a net exporter of workers. The impact on local recreation may be that less time is available for commuters to recreate.

Jennings County Population is 27,611, and is not increasing. On the next page we will discuss population stability.

Population Growth and Stability

Most economies use a model that suggests that growth is something that must always be striven towards. The next few generations on the planet will be confronted with a newer model, one that stresses sustainability over growth. Infinite growth is not possible in a finite system. While technology can modify this basic law, there is growing concern on major fronts. With climate change, pollution, poverty, and crumbling infrastructure in many areas becoming more acknowledged and prevalent, sustainability will be an increasingly important topic on multiple levels.

There is a large trend in population decline in rural Indiana. From 2011 to 2012, fifty-four of ninety-two counties shed population. Although Jennings County population increased from 2000 to 2009, basically all those increases were lost between 2010 to 2019. This happened at the same time the state saw increases in population (3.2%). When comparing urban growth to rural growth, urban growth is 5 times faster.

There are numerous factors that lead to population growth and stability. Economic diversity is one key factor to urban growth. People will follow jobs. Jennings County has a large (24.7%) percentage of manufacturing jobs. Construction, warehousing, education, and retail supply roughly 42 percent of local jobs. 15 other categories make up the remaining percentage of jobs.

Jennings had lost a total of 23 (-5.4%) worker establishments over the past 2 cycles. Jennings had also lost over 1000 jobs (-12.7%). Between 2000 to 2010.

One Economic Development spokesperson says that “the first step is to keep people from leaving the county, starting with young people.” Jennings County is retaining less than the state average people aged 24 to 44.

Jennings also has a problem retaining educated workers. Jennings County is 87th of 92 counties relative to percentage (10.7%) of workers with a bachelors degree or higher. Jennings County has the lowest percentage of Graduate or higher workers 2.6%. Of roughly 3221 counties in the USA, only 97 counties have a less educated workforce (last cycle).

It is beyond the scope of this plan to address much of the information provided above. Obviously the issues are complex and a comprehensive approach will be needed to move forward progressively.

Sources: census/quick facts, in.stasts.edu, cdc.gov

Some main components of growing economies/communities are:

- Diverse work establishments
- Educated work force
- Efficient Access routes (interstate and highways)
- Affordable housing
- Quality of life:
 - School
 - Parks
 - Entertainment

Jennings County’s Comprehensive Master Plan looked at much of this information and made many recommendations for local leaders. Zoning issues in the form of code enforcement and implementing increased design standards were heavily stressed.

Instead of creating new developments, existing areas should be reclaimed. Retention of farm land whenever possible was recommended.

Protecting and marketing historic and natural resources to a higher level was also stressed.

The Jennings County Comprehensive Master Plan could have been more publicized and more debated. Increased communication on all fronts will be needed to stabilize the local economy.

Additional statistics are overviewed in the EDC report: www.hoosierdata.in.gov/highlights

The 2017 Community Needs Assessment looked into various needs the local community had in regards to stabilizing population. Three of five categories dealt with quality of life elements:

- #1 Workforce & Jobs
- #2 Education
- #3 Health & Wellness
- #4 Recreation & Entertainment
- #5 Beautification

Jennings County Parks and Recreation does not actively use “sliding fee scales”, “free access days”, or “park prescriptions”. JCPR fees and amenities are very basic without little differentiation. The parks are open with no gate fees and shelters are first come first serve, unless specifically rented. Primitive camping is reasonably priced and significantly lower than state facilities.

JCPR does note that shelters that are rented on weekends tend to get used later in the day or evening by a second or third party. This enables poorer segments of the community to use the facilities free.

The Jennings County Commissioner's have voiced concerns about increasing revenue. They did not specifically request gate fees as likely this would be lost on enforcement. It is only recently that any leaders have taken any significant quality of life issues to heart, that being the city. A few county councilors have noted need, yet have not found the political will to create action.

Both county parks were nearly sold in the recession, and had restrictive covenants not been in place, likely one or both would have changed hands.





Unclean property at CSL

“Parks and Recreation as an economic engine in local communities; strong parks and recreation programs encourage users to spend their recreation dollars close to home, and not just in parks, but in local businesses, restaurants, etc.”

ISORP 2015

“New businesses gravitate toward communities that offer strong quality of life, health, and wellness for their work force.”

ISORP 2015



Abandoned pool near playground at CSL

“New residents attracted to a community bring new tax revenues; residents leaving take their tax money with them. Hoosiers indicate where they prefer to live by moving there.”

ISORP 2015



CSL lake from dam area

Country Squire Lakes (CSL)

Critical Area

As stated in the Jennings County Comprehensive Master Plan 2012, “Country Squire Lakes’ problems are Jennings Counties’ problems.”

CSL was a private housing development managed by Elite Property management Services. The property is going through receivership. Mike Miller is the local receiver. CSL is considered by the Census bureau as a CDP (Census Designated Place). CSL is the second largest community according to the 2010 census, with 3235 (-337 last 5 years) people living in this community.

The Jennings County Master Plan itemized 469 vacant housing units in 2010, or 26.4 percent. Jennings also gained ownership of approximately 1100 lots due to tax delinquency.

The nature of the occupied homes is disturbing as well. Jennings County Median Home Value for Owner Occupied housing Units is (\$82,000) compared to the state which was (\$ 123,000) in 2010. CSL is significantly lower than both at \$ 39,000.

There are numerous issues that surround this area. Road maintenance has been a major issue, and ultimately the county has gained ownership of certain roads. This partnership will assist the CSL roads, but also free up funding for other needs.

The distressed properties have a detrimental effect on the community as a whole. Declining property values, foreclosed homes, tax delinquency, trash, burning of trash, unkempt buildings and lawns, security issues are all present in larger than average degrees.

Although many lots have been cleaned, it has not changed the general character of the area.



Damaged home structure at CSL

The Jennings County Comprehensive plan identifies this area and many of the associated problems as a Critical Sub Area. With that and the previous material in mind we turn to recreation. As might be expected, this impoverished area has more than it’s share of recreational issues. Lack of field space is apparent. Proximity to block parks and neighborhood parks with amenities is lacking. The one main recreation area is small by most standards, and only partially functional. The park is vandalized on a regular basis, so upgrades and maintenance are often undone readily.



Outdated playground at CLS

Like the Jennings County Comprehensive Plan, addressing the issues of this area are beyond the scope of this plan. We do agree that increased communication and partner-shiping with the county would be a good place to start. JCPR would not want jurisdiction over recreational areas at CSL without significant departmental restructuring and an increased budget. Technical assistance in the form of grant writing or volunteer projects using certain groups like the “Lowe’s Hero’s” may be merited.



Major Employers List

Information supplied form: <http://www.jenningsedc.com/about/list-of-companies/>

Company	City	Product/Services
Biehle Electric	Seymour, IN	Electrical Service
Biehle Systems	Seymour, IN	Electrical Manufacturing
CEW Enterprises, Inc. / Plasfinco	North Vernon, IN	Plastic Injection Molding
Chiyoda Montrow Die Mfg.	North Vernon, IN	Stamping and Die
ComPonX, Inc.	North Vernon, IN	Insert molding and wire harnesses
Concept Tool & Engineering	North Vernon, IN	Tool & Die
Dave O'Mara Contractor, Inc.	North Vernon, IN	Highway & street construction Utilities, water and sewer
Decatur Mold	North Vernon, IN	Molds, manufacturing & service steel molds for plastic injection industry
Decatur Plastics	North Vernon, IN	Plastic injection molding
Erler Industries, Inc.	North Vernon, IN	Industrial painting
Exegistics	North Vernon, IN	Logistics
GT Industries		
GERDAU	North Vernon, IN	Heat treatment of metals
Harmon Construction	North Vernon, IN	Construction
Hilex Poly Company, LLC	North Vernon, IN	Plastic bags & plastics recycling
Industrial Machine & Repair	Hayden, IN	Rebuilt stamping and forging equipment
Injection Mold	North Vernon, IN	Custom injection mold & molding
Kromet America	North Vernon, IN	Industrial powder coating
Layman Fabrication, Inc.	North Vernon, IN	Industrial Steel Fabrication
IMI bought out Lee's	North Vernon, IN	Concrete mix and trucking Sand, gravel & concrete
Lone-Star Tool & Die Welding	North Vernon, IN	Tool & die welding
Lowe's Distribution Center	North Vernon, IN	Retailer of home improvement products
Martinrea	North Vernon, IN	Fuel Tubes
Metaldyne	North Vernon, IN	Machine connecting rods
Montrow Group	North Vernon, IN	
Muscatatuck Urban Training Center	Butlerville, IN	Defense
North Vernon Beverage	North Vernon, IN	Distribution of alcohol
North Vernon Industry Corp	North Vernon, IN	Gray iron casting equipment
ONSPOT of North America	North Vernon, IN	Automated snow tire chain device
Patriot Packaging	North Vernon, IN	Custom Boxes and Packaging
Pool Guard	North Vernon, IN	Swimming pool alarms
Quality Mold & Engineering	Vernon, IN	Plastic injection molds
R & M Tool Engineering	North Vernon, IN	Tool & die
SET Enterprises	North Vernon, IN	Rolled steel processing
Southern Indiana Mold Corp.	North Vernon, IN	Plastic molds
Stone Tool & Die	North Vernon, IN	Dies for the forging industry
St. Vincent Jennings Hospital	North Vernon, IN	Hospital
Tempest Tool & Machine	North Vernon, IN	Specialty machining
Webster West Packaging	North Vernon, IN	Corrugated packaging & labeling

Additional Business Listings

1460 AM WJCP
Accuracy Unlimited Firearms, Archery & Range, LLC
Anna Daisys Candies
Arby's
Area Plan Comm of Jenn Co.
Biehele Electric (has list of charities on line)
Big Head Pizza
Bingham Farm Machinery
Bob Woodward Construction
Bootleg Bar & Grill
Bradshaw Building Specialties
Bright Insurance Services, Inc.
Burger King
Butlerville Grocery
Calhoun Construction
Centerstone
Chuck Waggoner, Attorney at Law
Circle K - Marathon
Circle K - Marathon
City of North Vernon
Classic Stained Glass & Gift Gallery
Comfort Inn
Computer Repair Center
Concept Tool & Engineering
Country Chevrolet
CSR Suspension
Curves of North Vernon
Cutting Edge Hair Salon
D & J Mower Sales
Davis Chiropractic & Wellness, PCC
Decatur Mold, Tool, & Engineering
Decatur Plastic Products, Inc.
Diekhoff Mower Sales
Dollar General
Dove & Dillon, Attorneys at Law
Dove, Sharp, Funeral Home, Cremations
Dr. Allan Goins, DDS
DSI/Jennings Rehab Industries
Edward Jones - Anita Reed
Elaine's Massage
Ellis Gas & Oil
Erich K's Collision Center
Expert Eyecare
Eye Care Group, The
Family Dollar
Fast Max
FBPH
FC Tucker Real Estate/Lisa Jines-Plessinger
First Christian Church
First United Methodist. Church
FocusPlanIt
Ford Office Systems
Fresh Printz
Garlitch Ford, Jeep, Dodge
George Uppling & Associates
Goecker Building Supply
Goodwill of Southern Indiana
Graham Creek Sporting Clays
Grateful Grub
Greathouse Hardware
Green, Jeff
Hall, Joe & Susie
Hall, John
Hanson Aggregates
Harmon Construction
Hayden Corner Store
Hearne Vision Care
Hoosier Home Furnishing
Hoosier Street Grill
Howard's Body Shop
Howell Computer Repair
Imagination Graphics
Jackson Co. Bank
Jackson/Jennings Farm Bureau Co-Op
James, Ron & Jeanette
Jay C Food Store
JC Reality
Jenn Co. 911/Emergency Management
Jenn Co. Auditors
Jenn Co. Chiropractic, PC & Chiro-Train
Jenn Co. Community Foundation
Jenn Co. Domestic Violence
Jenn Co. Economic Development Comm
Jenn Co. Farm Bureau
Jenn Co. Farm Bureau Ins
Jenn Co. Historical Soc
Jenn Co. Homes
Jenn Co. Players
Jenn Co. Public Library

Additional Business Listings

Jenn Co. Soil & Water District
Jenn Co. United Way
Jenn Co. Youth Foundation
Jenn Health Care Center
Jenn Northwest Regional Utilities
Jenn Veterinarians, Inc.
Jenn Water, Inc.
John's Gun & Tackles
Joyce's Flowers & Gifts
K & G Sports
Kelley's Florist.
Kentucky Fried Chicken & Long John Silvers
Kiwanis Club of North Vernon
Knobstone Development Group
Lakeside Wood Fire Pizza
Lamb Investments, LLC
Lee's Ready Mix
Lord of Life Christian Church
Jenn Co. Schools
Louis A Wilson Contractor, Inc.
Lowe's Regional Distribution Center
Lucas Muffler & Garage
Lurton's Café
MainSource Bank
MANAR Inc., CEW Division
Marksberry Roofing Co.
McConnell & Finnerty, PC
McCrorry's Jewelry & Repair
McDonalds
Medicap Pharmacy
Meeks & Company Professional Surveying, Inc.
Michelle's Wholesale Jewelry
Miller Tire & Auto Care
Miller's Chiropractic Clinic, PCC
MK Roofing Co., Inc.
Morgan's Lawn Care
Morin's Lawn & Landscaping
Murielle S Webster Bright, Attorney at Law
Muscatatuck Board of Realtors
Muscatatuck Urban Training Center
North Vernon Abstract Co, Inc.
North Vernon Beverage
North Vernon China Buffet
North Vernon Industry Corp
North Vernon Plain Dealer & Sun
North Vernon Rotary #6580
North Vernon Senior Housing
Northern Paint & Supply
Office Center, The
Old National Bank
Old World Plastering
One-of-a Kind Gifts
Onspot of North America
Orscheln Farm & Home
Our Hospice of Jenn Co..
Paint Can, LLC
Papa John's Pizza
Park Theatre Civic Center
Patriot Packaging, LLC
Paul Sandlin Enterprises
Payton Place Auto Group
Pearsons Auto Body
Perry's Pool Shop
Personal Finance Co.
Pfeiffer's Jewelry
Pieratt & Belding, Century 21 Real Estate
Pizza Hut
PNC Bank
Poolguard/PBM Industries
Power Clean Power Washing
Pregnancy Care Center SCI
Purdue Extension Jenn Co.
R&M Tool & Engineering, Inc.
Ringer's Automotive & Self-Storage Depot
River Valley Financial Bank
RLM Veterinary Services, PC
Rob & Joe's Body Shop
Rose Acre Farms
Royalty & Associates
Sabastians Books & Things
Save-A-Lot Food Store
Sawyer, Pickett Funeral Home, Cremations
Schneck Family Care
Schneider Feed & Seed
Schneider Trucking & Excavating
Schwan's
Seale's Auto Body

Additional Business Listings

Sears Hometown Store
SEI Communications
Senior Resource Center of Jenn Co.
SET Enterprises, Inc.
Sharyann's Quilt Box
Shepherd, Jerry & Marie
Sheriff of Jenn Co.
Sisters Floral & Gift, Inc
Smith Benet
Southeast Mental Health Associates
Southern Indiana Mold
St. Anne's Golf Course
St. John's Trucking
St. Vincent DePaul Society
State Farm Insurance - Jim Apple
State Farm Insurance- Greg Hicks
Stearns Supply Center
Steps Dance Center
Stream Cliff Herb Farm
Subway
Taco Bell
Team Fitness - Melissa/Ron Page Personal Fitness
Tempest. Tool & Machine
Thermal-X, LLC
Tim's Kitchen
Tom Jones Real Estate
Tom Lawson Real Estate & Auction Services
Totten Mobile Home Park & Supply, Inc.
Town of Vernon
Treasurer of Jenn Co.
Wal Mart Supercenter
Walgreen's
Wayne Martin (Real Property Lessors)
Wendy's
Windstream Technologies, Inc. (defunct)
Witkemper Insurance Group



“We are very excited and proud of our economic development, but we think recreational development is closely related to that. When a company comes in here to make a big investment, they want to see our infrastructure growing and that employees have areas for recreation.”

John Hall

(former 3 term North Vernon Mayor)



Section Four:

Supply Analysis



Comprehensive Recreational Inventory

The recreation system in Jennings County can be broken down into six major categories based on the type of ownership and the management structure. These types are as follows: Federal, State, Municipal, County, Private, and School. All recreational sites and/or opportunities in the county are considered to be part of the system defined as the study area. It is also important to be aware of the recreational opportunities within one hours driving time. We will consider these items when appropriate.

Jennings County has a substantial percentage of Federally and State owned properties. Likewise the residents of the county are within one hours driving time of a large number of other State and Federal recreation areas.

The county of Jennings is blessed with two very nice and popular parks in the North Vernon City Park and the Muscatatuck Park. These two parks have taken the brunt of the increasing demand for recreational areas. It was an issue if these properties are fulfilling the need of the public? Likely not. The new Muscatatuck Trail and Tripton park are seeing significant usage. Latent demand was obviously present. There is also a growing interest in the acquisition and upkeep of smaller neighborhood parks.

This section of the plan is going to list all of the recreational assets of our county in the best detail that time and format allow. In the following sections we will then compare our system to the recreation model and accepted standards to see how well the system is represented. Proximity to recreational facilities is almost as important as sheer numbers (or acres), so the following sections will analyze this in the supply study. We will also tie in supply and demand with our Issues inventory to make this picture more clear.



Muscatatuck National WR

Federal Recreation Properties

Muscatatuck National Wildlife Refuge

Located in Spencer Township, entrance is three miles east of Seymour-US 50.
Also located in Jackson County

Facilities and Activities:

- 7,724 total acres
- 3,085 acres in Jennings County
- Boat launching ramp
- Bank fishing
- Hunting
- Mushroom & berry harvesting
- Visitor center (w/bookstore)
- Self-guided Auto Tour
- Self-guided Nature Trail/hiking trails

No Admission Fee

Hours: sunrise to sunset

Managed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Manager: Alexandro Galvin

R.R.7, Box 189A, Seymour, IN 47274

(812) 522-4352

muscatatuck@fws.gov

Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge

Located in Ripley, Jefferson, and Jennings County.
Main entrance is located on U.S. Hwy 421, five miles north of Madison.

Facilities and Activities:

- 51,000 acres
- Access by permit (Mon, Fri. & 2 & 4 Sat.)
- Fishing
- Hunting
- Boating (20 foot limit)

Managed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Refuge Manager: Joe Robb

812-273-1783

bigoaks@fws.gov

Army Reserve Gymnasium

Located adjacent to the North Vernon city park

Facilities and Activities:

- Two court gymnasium

At one point, this building was to be transferred to the City Parks and Recreation Department. This never materialized. There is still some discussion that this could happen and be the community "Athletic Club", serving the desired purpose of the YMCA/Girls and Boys Club.

State Recreational Facilities

Brush Creek Fish and Wildlife Area

Located in Campbell Township, this property is now managed primarily by SEPAC with the lake managed by the Muscatatuck Urban Training Center.

Facilities & Activities:

- 2,402 acres
- 150 acre reservoir
- Boat launch ramp
- Canoeing
- Bank fishing
- Hunting (permits via SEPAC)

Management: SEPAC (South Eastern Purdue Agricultural Center) and MUTC, Muscatatuck Urban Training Center

Note: this area was to be fenced in 2008 and access may be restricted or methods modified.

Brush Creek Public Access Site

Located approximately three miles North of U.S. 50, in Campbell Townships. The site is marked with a Public Access sign and is near the Brush Creek Park private camping area (now defunct).

Facilities & Activities:

- Boat launching ramp
- Fishing

Management: IDNR- Div. Fish and Wildlife

Selmeir State Forest

Located in Center Township, 905 East Cnty Rd. 350 N

Facilities & Activities:

- 355 total acres
- Canoeing
- Fishing
- Hunting
- Trails

Management: IDNR- Div. Forestry
Ben McKinney Regional State Forester
812-346-2286
bmckinney@dnr.stste.in.us

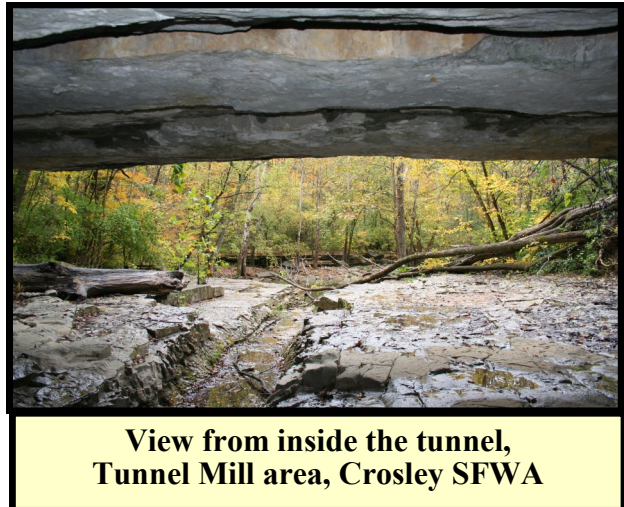
Crosley Fish and Wildlife Area

Located in Vernon Township, 2010 South State Highway #3.

Facilities & Activities:

- 4,228 acres total area
- 13 lakes
- 6 miles of the Muscatatuck River
- Rifle, pistol, and shotgun range
- Archery range
- Hunting
- Bank Fishing
- Boat launch ramp
- Canoeing
- Trapping
- Foot trails (unmarked)

Management: IDNR Div. Fish and Wildlife
Manager: Chad Springer
812-346-5596



**View from inside the tunnel,
Tunnel Mill area, Crosley SFWA**

Crosley FWA Public Access Site

Located in Vernon Township in the interior of the Crosley property on the Muscatatuck River.
Municipal Recreation

Facilities:

- Concrete boat ramp

Municipal Recreation Facilities

North Vernon City Park

Located in Center Township, on St. Rd. #7, North of downtown North Vernon.

Facilities & Activities:

- 29 acres total area
- 8 baseball /softball diamonds
- 2 basketball courts, 1 lighted
- 3 tennis courts (lighted)
- 4 shelter houses
- 3 horseshoe courts
- Concession Stand
- Bathroom facilities (2)
- Playground (2 complexes, many others)
- Nature Trail
- Paved Walking Trail
- RC Track
- Skate park (very rudimentary)
- Park Offices & Maintenance

The City Park Board hired their first Director in 1998 and this position became full time in 1999. First program director was hired in 2003, as a part-time position.

Note: 10 acres of adjacent land is leased from Midwest Natural Gas and is used as a graveled nature trail.

Management: North Vernon Parks and Recreation
Director: Chad Speers
www.nvpr.org

Note: JCPR suggests the “City Park” gets a name?

Perhaps named after Ham Wernke or John Hall or both?



One of two nice newer shelters in the “City” Park

North Vernon Swimming Pool

Located in the block of the City park.

Facilities & Activities:

- Community swimming pool NEW in 2020!

Construction for the new pool facility started in 2019, with work continuing throughout the summer. The pool location was a bit controversial in that it is butted up to a very busy state highway. Both the passerby distraction as well as user experience would likely be better off in a less prominent location. Regardless of that issue (which is now moot) the pool is a significant upgrade. The city used a 3 million dollar bond to finance the project.

Management: North Vernon Parks and Recreation



New pool complex!

North Vernon Mini-Park

Located in Center Township, one block east of Gum St. and one block South of US 50.

Facilities & Activities:

- 1.6 acres total area
- playground
- 2 basketball goals/one court
- small open field

Management: North Vernon Parks and Recreation

Tripton Park

Physical address: 412 S. Madison Ave.

Facilities & Activities:

- 55 acres
- approx. 4 miles of paved walking path
- Playground
- Adult fitness equipment
- Outdoor amphitheater
- Restroom/welcome area
- Pond with fishing dock
- Pollinator habitat

JCPR and the author commend the City of North Vernon on the acquisition, planning, and development of this facility. In our last master plan we specifically urged the city to acquire this land and at a minimum keep it as green space. The municipality did this and much more.

Tripton is the cities second substantial park development. The original “city” park was developed in 1954. 65 years for a second recreational facility was not a progressive strategy.

The park was developed with good vision. It is a “community park” with good balance of openness and amenities.

Management: North Vernon Parks and Recreation



New pathway and playgrounds!

“JCPR Commends the city for following through with the development of Tripton Park. It is well planned and developed.”



Adult fitness equipment under contemporary shade.



Stellar Plaza in down town North Vernon.

Land owned by the city but not managed by the Parks Department

Muscatatuck Trail

Location parallels Gum Street south of US 50 to Muscatatuck park

Facilities & Activities:

- 1.3 mile paved walking/biking path
- Mini-park trail head parking area
- Muscatatuck Park trail head parking
- Watering station
- Benches

JCPR and the author commend the City of North Vernon for the creation and implementation of the long awaited trail along Gum street. In the last planning cycle this project was just gearing up to be bid.

The project was first planned as early as 1995, with the city acquiring an ISTE A grant that year. The city was not in a position to move forward on the project though and the money from the grant was never spent.

Around 2010 North Vernon received a “Stellar Community Grant”. This grant was for 16 million and was separated out into 8 main categories. Renovation of City Hall, downtown parking/streetscape upgrades, façade upgrades, and other items were part of this grant. A portion of this grant (roughly \$300,000) was then used for match money for an INDOT alternative transportation grant. Total project cost were approximately 1.3 million

Management: North Vernon Street Department partnering with JCPR at Muscatatuck Park location.

Rick Marksberry 812-346-1616



Trail head parking at Muscatatuck Park

Saint Anne's Golf Course

Facilities:

- 18 hole course
- 55 Acres

This facility was transferred in ownership to the city of North Vernon in 2014. It is managed by its own municipal appointed Board.

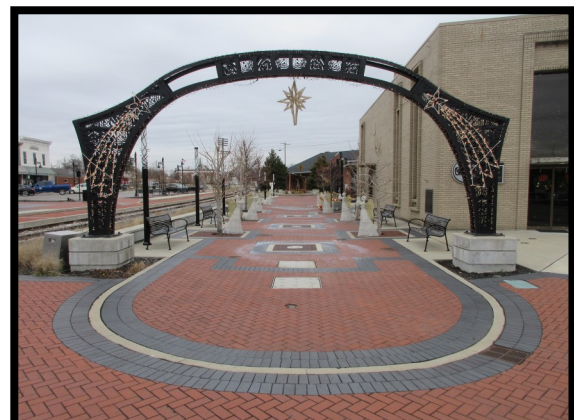
Manager: Robin Brown 812-346-066



Stellar Park

Located down town north Vernon

- Less than 1 acre
- Fountains
- benches



Stellar Park entrance downtown North Vernon

Land Owned By City For Future Use

School Greenway Park (undeveloped)

Facilities & Activities:

- 8 acres
- Small pond

Town Of Vernon Properties

Vernon Commons

Located in Vernon Township

Facilities & Activities:

- 2 acres total land
- 1 shelter house
- concrete basket ball court
- playground complex
- Picnicking
- Boat launch parking
- Art maze

Set aside in the original charter of the town in 1815, the property was the first or one of the first properties to be managed as park land when the area became a state in 1817.

The history of the property and that of Vernon make this a special parcel. JCPR is currently working with the Town of Vernon to secure Next Level Trails Grant funding to make upgrades to the facility and ultimately connect officially to Muscatatuck Park.

The Town of Vernon has made substantial upgrades to the facility over the last planning cycle and facility is well used.

Upgrades proposed in the NLT grant include public rest rooms (only ones in town), a new shelter, and interpretive information to promote the history of the town and park.



Vernon Commons

Significance of the small park historically is important, and support from the state seems merited. With a population of only 309 individuals, the small town is land locked and growth of the tax base not likely. Vernon has and should look to the county for assistance, as it is noted in the counties last masterplan

Management: Vernon Town Council

www.vernon.org
Mayor Dan Wright

Vernon Gym and Park

Facilities & Activities:

- Gym rental
- 5 acres open field
- Small stone shelter

JCPR is working with the Town of Vernon to upgrade the Vernon commons and also this property. Proposed bike / walking pathways have been itemized to connect these two properties, and then ultimately the Muscatatuck Park.

Vernon Gym Park is a nice open field that accommodates many practice sessions of various field sports. The area here would be a great place for a paved walking path. The NLT grant proposal will provide some paved trail, connecting the Commons to the east and Muscatatuck Park to the west. A perimeter path could likely be added to the other half of this trail to create a paved loop.

The proposed river overlook at this area would be a significant amenity and a nice tourist asset. Here the river winds below approximately 00 feet. The area below this overlook is geologically significant. Ultimately, after NLT grant upgrades, a continuation of the Vernon/Muscatatuck river trail section could lead to a near quarter mile trail of exposed limestone nearly perfectly flat. The area below the overlook accessed by the naturally level stone is very peaceful, and picturesque.

“Steps” uses gym as does local basketball league. Building is available to rent, and recently awarded grant to upgrade.

Management: Vernon Town Council

Vernon block/pocket Park

Facilities & Activities:

- Short gravel trail
- Decorative benches

This small park was recently developed and give residence and visitors a nice place to relax along the historic walking tour.

Vernon “Next Level Trail” Trail-head Parking Area

Facilities and Activities:

- Water Street Easement Trail

JCPR has partnered with Vernon to maintain the trail connecting this area along Muscatatuck River heading north the west towards the Muscatatuck Park and historic Vinegar Mill. The trail is nearly flat, is mostly flanked by limestone cliffs, and gives easy access to the river.

Vernon is applying for grants through the IDNR public access program, to assist in the development of river friendly sports.

Management: Town of Vernon partnering with JCPR

County and Township Recreational Facilities

Geneva Township Park

Located in Geneva Township,

Facilities & Activities:

- 37 acres
- 1 picnic shelter
- 3 baseball/softball diamonds
- 2 basketball goals/one court
- Miniature golf
- Playground (3 areas)

Management: Geneva Township Board



Geneva Township Rec. Center

We reached out to all township trustees. Only two of the eleven trustees had any dedicated budget to apply to recreation.

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| • Bob Itell | Bigger 812-718-1494 |
| • Machel Murphy | Campbell 812-458-6447 |
| • Laurie Blackburn | Center 812-346-3966 |
| • Pam Sporleader | Columbia 812-530-6056 |
| • Bill Foist | Geneva 812-392-2880 |
| • James Malcomb | Lovett 812-873-6522 |
| • Robin Deputy | Marion 812-528-1558 |
| • James Redman | Montgomery 812-767-1642 |
| • Frank Schneider | Sand Creek 812-592-3394 |
| • Larry Macschino | Spencer 812-392-3563 |
| • Roger Taylor | Vernon 812-767-0376 |

Paris Crossing Township Park

Old Paris Crossing School located in Montgomery

JCPR reached out the Township Trustee and he explained his townships motivation to turn the old school into a community center.

Facilities & Activities:

- Gym
- Grounds
- Playground



Paris Crossing Community Center (older school)

Jennings County Fair Grounds

Located in Sand Creek Township, 4 miles northeast on St.#3.

Facilities & Activities:

- 40 acres total area
- Community building
- Motorcycle racing track
- Concession stand
- 5 barns
- 15,000 sq. ft. open barn/shelter

Management: Jennings County Fair Board & County Commissioners

Price for community building rental is 600 per day, with a 200 security deposit.

Call: 346-2967 (JC Highway Dept.)



Muscatatuck Park

Located in Vernon Township, between North Vernon and Vernon @ 325 N. St. #7, North Vernon, IN 47265.

Managed by: Jennings County Parks and Recreation



Historic Vinegar Mill 1840



Winter on the Muscatatuck River

Note: There is a more detailed inventory of the Muscatatuck Park at the end of this section.

Eco Lake Park

Location: Geneva Township 970 North State Highway #7, North Vernon, IN 47265

Managed by: Jennings County Parks and Recreation



Lake view in summer, Eco Lake Park



Eco Lake

Note: There is a more detailed inventory of the Eco Lake Park at the end of this section.

Private Recreational Camping Facilities

Campgrounds:

Deer Creek Campground

505 E. Private Drive 250 N.
North Vernon
25 Dependent sites
75 Independent sites

Water: public
PWSID N/A
Sewage Disposal; onsite
Pool: yes
Beach: no

Owner: Deer Creek Campground
William and Kathy Maschino
2355 N. CR 90 E
North Vernon IN 47265
812-346-1683



Gassaway Lake Campground

9355 N 875 W
Elizabethtown
60 dependent sites
0 independent sites

Water: public
PWSID: N/A
Sewage Disposal: Holding tank
Pool: No
Beach: No

Owner: Helen Gassaway
9355 N 875 W
Elizabethtown IN 47232
812-579-6305

Camp closes for winter season.



We note :

Lakeview Campground

930 South 300 East
North Vernon
812-873-7599

- * This facility is no longer recognized as public campground by the Department of Health.

Brush Creek Park Campground

CR 50 North off OS 50 Butlerville

- * This facility is no longer recognized as public campground by the Department of Health. It has been reported that this area is used seasonally for military exercises and does still host overnight stays in conjunction with field exercises.

Private Recreational Facilities

State Cooperative Nature Preserves:

Calli (Violet and Louis J. Sr.) 179 acres in Rec. Inventory of the State.

Owner: Jennings County Community Foundation

Guthrie Memorial Woods (Sarah Lewis)

Owner: Oak Heritage Conservancy

Tribbet Woods

Owner: Oak Heritage Conservancy

Wells Woods (State Forest)

Owner: IDNR

Other Private Recreational Facilities

- Ball Fore Miniature Golf & Bating Cage
- Brush Creek Conservation Club
- Coffee Creek Conservation Club
- Country Squire Lakes
- Fish Creek Long Rifles
- Green Meadows Pay lake
- Jennings Cty. Senior Citizens Center
- Jennings Sportsman's Club
- Kimberly Lake
- Muscatatuck Christian Ranch
- Six Mile Coon Hunter's Club
- St. Ann Recreation Center
- St. Joseph Church and Rec. Center
- Tea Creek Recreation Center
- Twin City Race Track
- Anytime Fitness
- Jennings County Youth Foundation (no location)
- Curves (fitness center) Vernon gym
- Chiro-Train
- Ron Page Zumba 767-2713/767-0720

School Recreational Facilities

All of the active schools in Jennings County, except St. Mary's Catholic School are operated by the Jennings County School Corporation. Schools not currently active are listed and current use and ownership will be listed, in some cases.

Jennings County High School

Located on the west of N. Vernon on US 50.

Facilities & Activities:

- 97 acres total area
- Lighted football stadium
- Running track
- Lighted baseball field (2)
- Practice fields (1 football, 1 baseball)
- Gymnasium
- Tennis Courts
- 3 basketball courts in parking area

High School facilities have posted that the fields may only be used with permit and proof of insurance.

Jennings County Middle School

Located contiguous to JCHS.

Facilities & Activities:

- Baseball field
- Football field
- Swimming pool (indoor)
- Running track (indoor)
- 2 gyms
- weight room (indoor)
- Nature trail (outdoor lab)
- 3 basketball goals in parking area

The Middle School is open to the public on days that the school is open. The use of the running track is usually open evenings and other facilities like the basketball courts are open when teams are not practicing or later in the evening when they are done. The swimming pool is accessible for a small fee.

North Vernon Elementary

Located contiguous to the JCHS and the JCMS

Facilities & Activities:

- 5 basketball goals in parking area
- 3 large playground systems/areas
- Indoor gym

Brush Creek Elementary

Located 4 miles east of N. Vernon on St.# 7

Facilities & Activities:

- Separate kindergarten play area
- 5 playground systems
- 1 basketball court
- 1 soccer field
- 1 baseball diamond
- Pagoda
- Outdoor lab:

Graham Creek Elementary

Located 5 miles south of Vernon on St.# 3.

Facilities:

- Gym
- Playground
- Baseball field
- Outdoor lab

Hayden Elementary

Located north of Hayden off US 50.

Facilities: Fenced, yet open.

- 15 newer playground items
- Preschool kiddy yard
- 4 goal/one court basketball

Sand Creek Elementary

Located 1/4 mile from North Highway # 3, 3 miles from #7 junction.

Facilities:

- Playground (access hidden)
- Soccer field (lighted)
- 2 practice fields
- 4 goal/2 court basketball area
- 200 plus parking lot

Note: Area west and also north could make nice fields (soccer) for park/school facility. This is an active proposal.

Scipio Elementary

Located 1/2 mile south of Scipio on St. # 7.

Facilities:

- Playground
- Baseball diamond

St Mary's Catholic School

Located in North Vernon

Facilities:

- 2 Basketball courts
- Playground

How School facilities add (and do not add) to inventory

School facilities do add to overall recreational inventory. JCSC does have a joint-use agreement, relative to indoor usage. The middle school provides significant recreational opportunity to the public. Swimming and an indoor running track are two main elements. Playground equipment is present outside. Tennis courts are open seasonally. The track is not open, but is not advertised as such. One baseball field specifically states that it is not open to the public. The open field/football field at the middle school has been recently fenced in.

The main issue with school facilities are that they are significantly separated from the public. JC High school, JC Middle school, and North Vernon Elementary school are all adjacent to each other in a somewhat closed access scenario. The complex is accessed by car only from US 50 (three entrances). The east and south borders are separated by a thin forested area with only one pathway for access from the east. The local residents could use the facility as a neighborhood park, approximately a 100 homes would be a quarter mile from the playground area and close to 300 homes within a half of mile. Road access from the east would make this a better option for the general public.

Scipio, Hayden, and St. Mary's elementary have good access to the local population. Other schools are rural.

Inactive or Modified School Facilities

Vernon Elementary

This gym is rented out to the public for daily and hourly rates. The large open field is typically used on a first come first serve basis as is the stone shelter and the outdoor basketball court.

North Vernon Junior High School

This building is being used as an Early Learning Center and an Adult Education Center. Ownership of the building belongs to The Jennings County School Corporation. There was a nice soccer field on the property and a nice parking area. The local soccer club had used this facility for practices.

- Paris Crossing Elementary School (now Township)
- Southside Intermediate School?
- Zenas Elementary (to be raised)
- Marion Township Elementary

Regional Recreational Areas

We are listing regional recreational opportunities that exist for the Jennings County resident within an approximate one hour radius (or 45 miles) from the center of the county. The impact of these areas on supply and demand will be discussed subsequently, and in our supply and demand analysis.

Atterbury State Fish & Wildlife
Brown County State Park
CERA-Land
Clark State Forest
Clifty State Park
Greensburg St. Fish & Wildlife
Grouse Ridge State Fishing Area
Hardy Lake State Recreational A.
Hoosier National Forest
Jackson-Washington State Forest
J.F.D. Lanier State Memorial
Monroe Reservoir
Pigeon Roost State Hist. Site
Perfect North Slopes Ski Resort
Ski World Ski Resort
Spring Mill State Park
Starlite Ski Resort
Yellowwood State Forest
Versailles State Park
Falls of the Ohio State Park
Columbus KOA
Brown County Zip-lines
Mega Caverns Zip-lines

The relevance of these areas relative to the recreational opportunities of Jennings County is based on the concept of the regional park and that of specialty parks. A regional park has certain characteristics and an accommodating size for larger sections of the public. Specialty parks supply a need that would not necessarily be incorporated into an average park system: ski slopes are the example here.

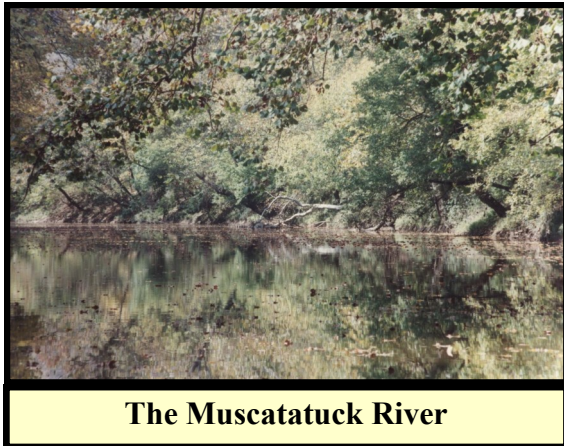
The important point here is that it is assumed that a one hour driving time to a regional park is a justified standard. With this in mind, it seems apparent that the county of Jennings has a wide range of regional parks to choose from. Five State Parks (one is the largest in the state), two large recreational reservoirs, three State Forests, two Fish and Wildlife Areas, and the Hoosier National Forest, along with the counties own amenities of two Fish and Wildlife Areas, one State Forest, and two National Wildlife Refuges leave the county resident with a plethora of amenities to recreate in and around. The list is extensive, as is the acreage, yet so is demand. Do these areas meet our needs? Too many visitors, does indeed, take away from the experience. Today, State Parks and definitely State Reservoirs like Hardy Lake are very crowded. Because of this we turn to our local areas to fulfill most of our recreational needs.



Clifty Falls, Clifty Falls State Park

Jennings County Fishing Waters

Our earlier recreational plans had an extensive list and a detailed description of river characteristics such as: length, width, depth, seasonal variations, pollution sources, access points, fish most likely to inhabit the waters, land use of adjacent properties and associated land game species. Due to the textual manner of that inventory we are leaving this supportive information out of the new JCPRMP, yet if this information is of interest to you, we refer you to the 1992-'97 JCPRMP. The DNR has just recently done a release program for trout. Fisherpeople must have a trout stamp on their licenses.



Jennings County Rivers and Streams:

- Sand Creek
- North Fork Vernon Forks
- South Fork Vernon Forks
- Otter Creek
- Vernon Fork Muscatatuck River
- Tea Creek
- Big Graham Creek
- Wyaloosing Creek
- East Fork Muscatatuck River
- Six Mile Creek and Vernon Forks

Jennings County Lakes:

- Catfish Joe's Pay lake
- Others were previous listed in Inventory

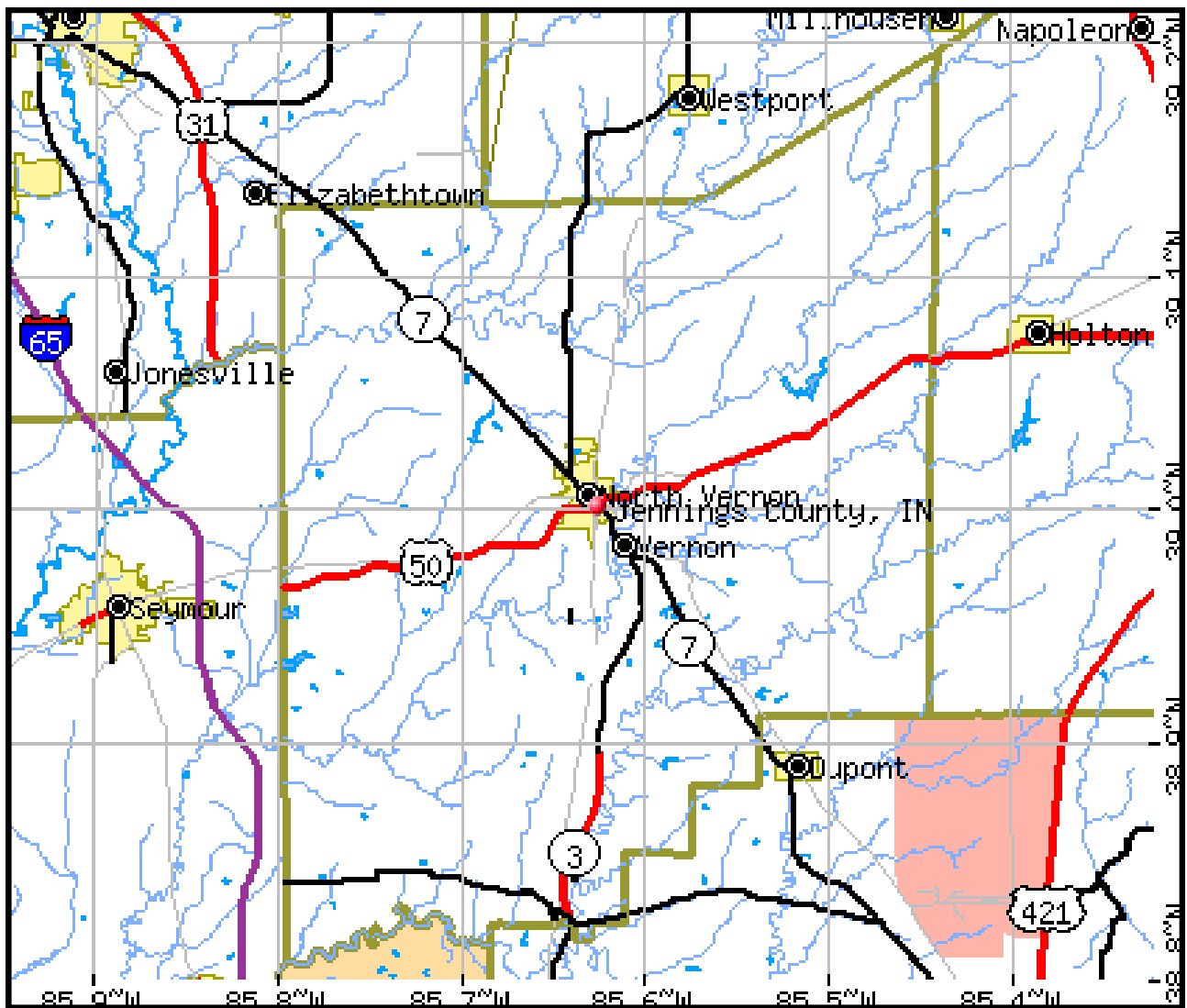
Jennings County has over 130 miles of fishable streams and rivers. These streams support the following species:

- Large Mouth Bass
- Small Mouth Bass
- Rock Bass
- Spotted Bass
- Blue Gill
- Green Sunfish
- Long Eared Sunfish
- Crappie
- Channel Catfish
- Flathead Catfish
- Bullhead Catfish
- White Perch
- Black Suckers
- White Suckers
- Gar
- Buffalo Rough fish
- Dogfish

"One of the biggest problems bass fisherman face today is increased fishing pressure on lakes and rivers. It's a problem that has grown substantially in recent years and one that will become more serious in the years to come."

Kevin Van Jo Dam





Source: <http://www.city-data.com/county/jennings>



Popular fishing spot at the Muscatatuck Park

Jennings County Points of Interest

Cultural and Historical Sites

The 1992-97 JCPRMP described the location, age and other significant characteristics of each site. Due to the textual manner and length of this discourse we are only going to list a sample of the sites of interest in our county. For a more detailed description of the following sites we refer you to our last recreational study.

- Scipio Covered Bridge (1886)
- James Covered Bridge (1887)
- Jennings County Courthouse (1859)
- Vernon Commons (1817)
- Vernon (1815) State Historic Marker
- Heritage House (1838)
- Jordon Funeral Home (Civil War Era)
- Home of Smith Vawter (Prior to 1840)
- Hickman New Residence (1832)
- Henry Pool/John Vawter (1816)
- Whitcomb Apartments (1822)
- Tunnel Mill (1825)
- M & I Railroad Overpass (1837)
- Morgan's Raiders Site (1863) State Historic Marker & Regional Trail element
- Vernon Cemetery (1816)
- Indian (Grouseland) Treaty Lines (1795) State Historic Marker
- Kellar's Mill (1814) State Historic Marker
- Town of Geneva (1817)
- Scipio/Amick Homes
- Hayden (7 major league baseball players)
- Selmier (1827 -Vawter Site & Cemetery)
- North Vernon (1854 Trippville)
- Indian Camp Site
- Quaker Cemetery
- Hicklin Home (Underground Railroad)
- Millhouse Home (Richard Nixon's Mother) State Historic Marker
- Old Barns Home (Kellar)
- Hopewell Cemetery (Church/Indian S.)
- Lurton's Store
- Pleasant Hill Cheese Factory Well
- Deputy Farm (F.D. Hendricks)
- Charles Wright Home
- "Old" Paris
- Curtis Russell Farm
- Wilson's Hill (Water Mill and Cemetery)
- Edwards Home (Cemetery/U.R. Cave)
- Muscatatuck Park State Historic Marker
- Walnut Grove School House (1913)
- Red Brick Inn (1840)
- Vinegar Mill (1830 Ruins Stone Mill)
- Jonathon Jennings State Historic Marker

Jennings County has a proud heritage. These points of interest are a sample of what the county has to offer. The Jennings County Interim Report (1989) has an inventory of historical sites and structures in the county. This report can be found in the Public Library. The Historical Museum as well as the Visitor's Center in the Muscatatuck Park. Vernon would also prove to be helpful with this information.



Historic Tunnel Mill:

This unique area will be highlighted and over-viewed in the Issues portion of Section Seven.

Natural and Scenic Sites

Jennings County has numerous interesting topographic variations that create beautiful and scenic overlooks as well as valleys, coves, and caves. This is a brief list of some of the more interesting areas.



**Rock Rest Falls in
Calli State Nature Preserve**

Many areas in the county have very suitable scenic overlook potential. The county could possibly profit from pullouts, decks, mini-parks or supporting facilities taking advantage of these interesting and naturally beautiful areas. A few possible overlooks are as follows:

- Vinegar Mill Upper Overlook (MP)
- Vernon Gym Overlook
- Tunnel Mill (Above Tunnel)
- County Road 50 N, 175 E, Vernon T. Rock RF
- ST. # 3 & 7, near MP***
- County Road 450 W, Spencer Township
- C. R. 775 E, near Zenas in Columbia T.
- C.R. 850 S. near Commisky
- Montgomery Township



- Crosley State Fish & Wildlife Area
- Tunnel Mill (Crosley)
- Calli State Nature Preserve
- Walker Woods
- Guthrie Woods
- Conboy Woods
- Hemlock Stand Cox's Cave
- Laurie's Cave
- Egan's Cave
- Biehle's Cave
- Henchman Cave
- Muscatatuck Park
- Selmier State Forest
- Wells Woods
- Tribbett Woods



Vinegar Mill Shelter at the Muscatatuck Park

Local Church Inventory

There are 81 churches listed in the County's church directory. Many of these churches have shelters, playgrounds, and other recreational amenities. Unfortunately it is not possible to research all of these areas and study the supply and demand associated with each of these organizations and their facilities. Our list is as follows:

- All Saint's Episcopal
- Azalea Friends Meetings
- Baha'i Faith
- Bear Creek Baptist
- Bethel Baptist Church
- Bible Baptist
- Big Creek Old Regular Baptist
- Brown's Corner Baptist
- Burnt Pines Church of Christ
- Butlerville Independent Baptist
- Butlerville United Methodists
- Centerville Independent Baptist Church
- Christ's Way Christian Church
- Church of the Nazarene
- Christ Baptist Church
- Church of Christ
- Church of Reason
- The C. of Jesus Christ Latter-Day Saints
- Coffee Creek Baptist
- Coffee Creek Christian
- Commiskey Baptist Church
- Commiskey First Baptist Church
- Community Christian Church
- Corinthian Baptist Church
- Crossroads Community Church
- Dupont United Methodist
- Faith Trinity Holiness Church
- First Apostolic Church
- First Assembly of God
- First Baptist Church
- First Baptist Church-Dupont
- First Christian Church
- First Marion Baptist Church
- First United Methodist
- Grace Missionary Baptist
- Graham Baptist Church
- Graham Presbyterian
- Grayford Road Community C. of God
- Harvest Ministry Center
- Hayden Baptist
- Hayden United Methodist
- Highway Holiness Church of God
- Jennings Church of Christ
- Kingdom Hall Of Jehovah's Witness
- Lord of Life Lutheran Church
- Middle Fork Christian
- Muscatatuck St.D. Center Chapel
- Nebraska Church of God
- New Bethel United Methodist
- North Vernon Church of Christ
- North Vernon Church of God
- N.V. Presbyterian Church
- Old Path Church of God
- Otter Creek Baptist
- Pleasant View United Methodist
- Queensville Community Church
- Risen Savior Bible Church
- Rock Creek United Methodist
- Rush Branch United Methodist
- Sardinia Baptist
- Scipio Baptist
- Scipio Baptist Presbyterian
- Scipio United Methodist
- Second United Methodist Church
- Seventh Day Adventist
- St. Anne Catholic
- St. Denis Catholic Church
- Stillwater's Baptist Church
- St. Joseph Catholic
- St. Mary's Catholic *
- St. Paul's Episcopal
- Tea Creek Baptist
- The Lord's Chapel
- Trinity Pentecostal Holiness
- Vernon Baptist Church
- Vernon Presbyterian
- Weston Baptist Church
- Wesleyan
- Wilson Chapel Christian
- Zenas Baptist Church
- Zion Baptist Church

St. Mary's Catholic Church is listed with the schools inventory and has a detailed description of the schools amenities. It should be the goal of the next Master Plan to look at these properties and the associated supply and demand of recreational opportunities.

It can be generalized that these properties do supply a good portion of the local supply of recreational opportunities, especially on Sundays. Churches are a great place for families to recreate, and it has been observed that a few churches have upgraded some of their facilities to accommodate the user. Others have let assets fall into disrepair. It can also be generalized that churches are not supplying enough recreational opportunity to decrease demand for recreational opportunity at other areas, as most facilities in the area are showing increased demand for the amenities on each respective property.

Potential Recreational Developments

- Zenas Project
- North Vernon Quarry Reservoir
- City green way park
- CATP Multiple Phases
- N. Guard Armory Gym Transfer
- Jennings County Youth Foundation Youth Center
- YMCA (defunct)

"The key to success is the willingness of citizen groups and government agencies at all levels to forge new partnerships and work together on the goals set forth..."

***Indiana Trails 2000,
IDNR-DOR***

Summary of Inventory Section

The county of Jennings is home to a large recreational base. The presence of extensive Federal and State recreational land is a great asset to the public and their life styles. The School Corporation as well as the City and County parks supply most day to day recreational needs of the community. We are witnessing over crowded periods at these areas. There are different strategies available to the community to better utilize existing facilities and plan for tomorrows needs. Recreational facilities need to be close enough to the public, the closer the better. Access is often the deciding factor in pursuing a recreational activity.

Having a wide variety of accessible recreational opportunities should be the goal of all communities. This is very important at the younger ages because walking and biking are their means of travel. Alternative transportation, in the form of greenways, walkways, bike trails, bike lanes are important supporting elements of complete recreational systems. Planning for the future needs of the

county will insure positive recreation opportunities. It should be the goal of the community as a whole to secure the support, planning, and implantation for our needs today and for tomorrow.

Many possibilities have been forgone due to lack of concern. Every existing item in our system needs to be maintained and upgraded. Only with a complete system will the community be fulfilled. And only with all of our existing agencies working together can we insure good representation and fulfillment of the needs of all the counties citizens.

"Recreational opportunities should be planned through partnerships with the existing park agencies and also the school corporation to help guide the creation and eventual maintenance of the proposed enhancements while insuring efficient use of our tax dollars."

SCORP 2000





Sand Creek School

Large field to left of School sign is undeveloped and idle. Field is also ideal as a soccer complex as it would only be an extensive of an existing soccer complex. Field would be low cost to maintain and could provide youth soccer a home for a long time, possibly indefinitely.

Northern Bike Path

Approximately one mile of abandoned railway sits in near perfect condition for a trail upgrade. The city owns about half of the length already. Path could connect North Vernon to CSL



Early Learning Center

Once used informally as a neighborhood park, this property still gets some use. Official adoption into a joint-use management scenario with signage, and some amenities (picnic tables, small shelter, etc.) could go a long way. Good location for NVPR Dog Park.

Programs

Jennings County Parks and Recreation does not normally administer department developed programs. JCPR does partner with various groups to provide program like activities, including: summer camps, mountain bike and trail running events, obstacle races and historical events (current main events). JCPR does not have a program director. This issue and the focus of the department have created a cost effective means for providing programs. Only weekday programming could fill an unfulfilled need (within current classification format) as weekend programming (and some evening) creates use conflict.

North Vernon Parks and Recreation is the most suited group to provide programs to the Jennings community. Soccer, softball, baseball, are currently programmed as well a special events. Increased programming with more diverse interests are demanded (as noted by public input), NVPR does handle some of this demand (tennis lessons, adult flag football), but may need to expand to meet the communities needs. Partnering with JCYF could potentially diversify and increase community wide program availability.

The YMCA initiative has failed twice in Jennings. It seems as if concept for a YMCA is fairly well supported, but financially this group has not gained traction in the Community. The last incarnation of the YMCA did try to create programs for a diverse audience as well as the basic leagues. Likely the group tried to do more than possible for the organization. Quality of some programs was criticized.

Jennings County Youth Foundation is striving for many items that the YMCA could not deliver. The practicality of this initiative can be questioned, but the group has shown good success with their intensive effort. Partner-shiping more with NVPR and also JCPR could help add continuity to this organization.

Jennings County School Corporation hosts youth basketball (NVPR administered at one point), and football on their facilities. They had once hosted youth soccer. It is unlikely that this group would host more programs without development of increased facilities. The development of the Sand Creek School unused field is an example that could provide a low cost increase in the quality of Jennings County's available programs.

We list specific facilities and activities at each individual site within the inventory. We revisit Activities here as an overview of the community.

Jennings County Parks and Recreation facilities are generally low intensity passive recreation orientated. A few Special Events break this routine and give the public a location for a large and/or diverse event. To a degree this conflicts with regular usage (camping, trails, and shelter usage).

NVPR provides a large and fairly diverse list of activities. By many standards they provide too many activities for only one developed facility. Soccer games inside the baseball diamonds is a conflict. Listening to remote control cars or a baseball tournament while having a family reunion are others.

JCYF does provide a well attended summer camp at the NV City park (at times at Muscatatuck Park). They create various programs with the city park. They diversify out of the recreation niche with poverty assistance programming.

The school corporation has an open pool (am) at their Middle School facility. They also offer an indoor running track on evenings that do not conflict with official school athletics.

Geneva Township has a nice softball complex. They host adult softball tournaments.

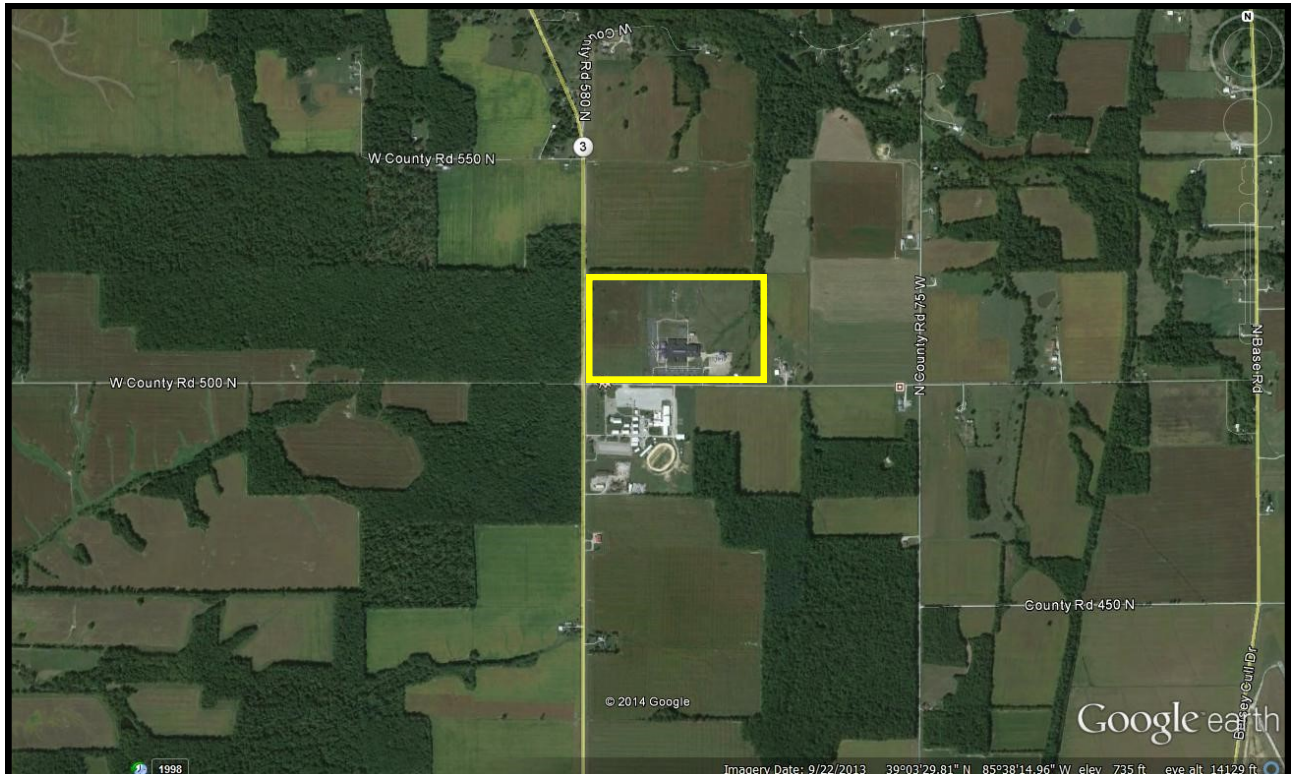
Maintenance Issues

JCPR does an annual review of a detailed maintenance inventory. Daily issues are compiled by both the maintenance Director and the Director. The Director reports maintenance issues to the Park Board monthly.

Relative to the Muscatatuck Park's main road, collaboration with the County Highway Department is done as needed. In some instances JCPR will act proactively in maintaining the main road, above what the Highway Department may choose to do .

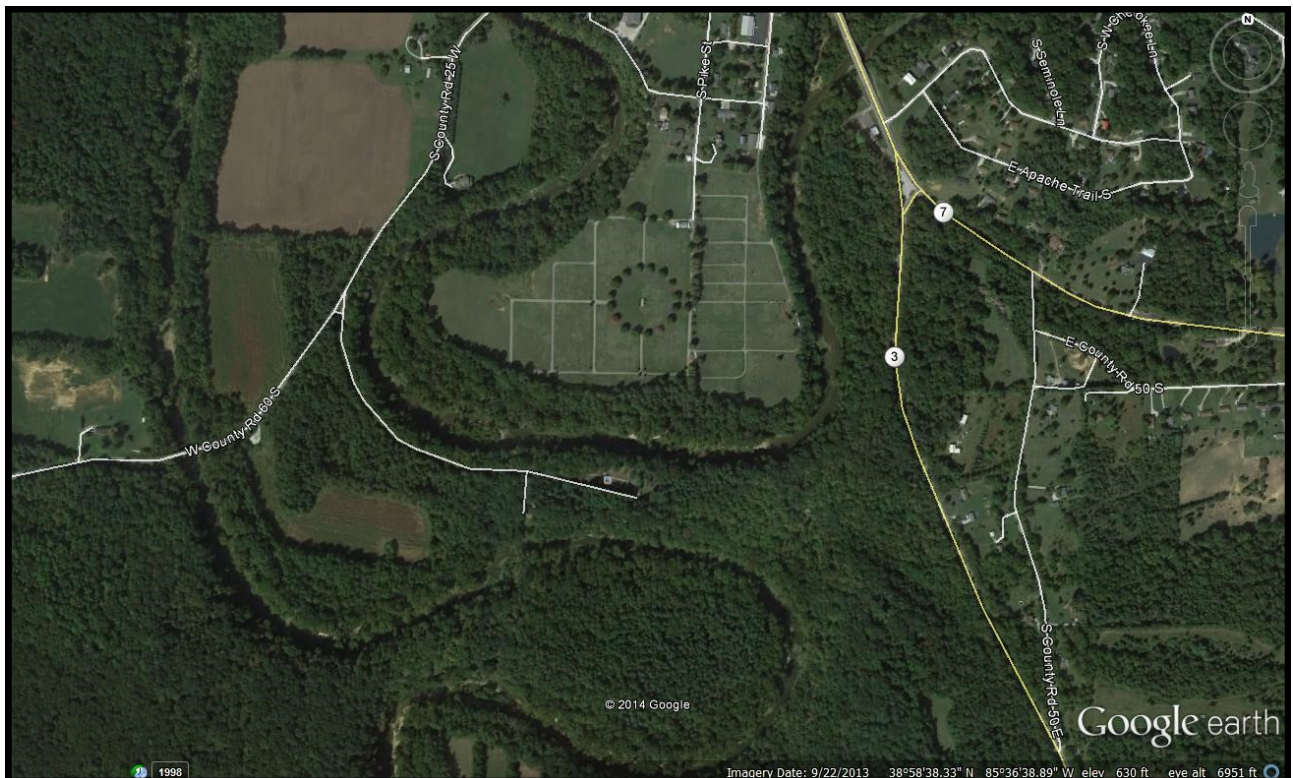


Important System-Wide Properties



Sand Creek School and Soccer Complex (highlighted in yellow), accessed from County Road 500 North

Image supplied from Google Earth

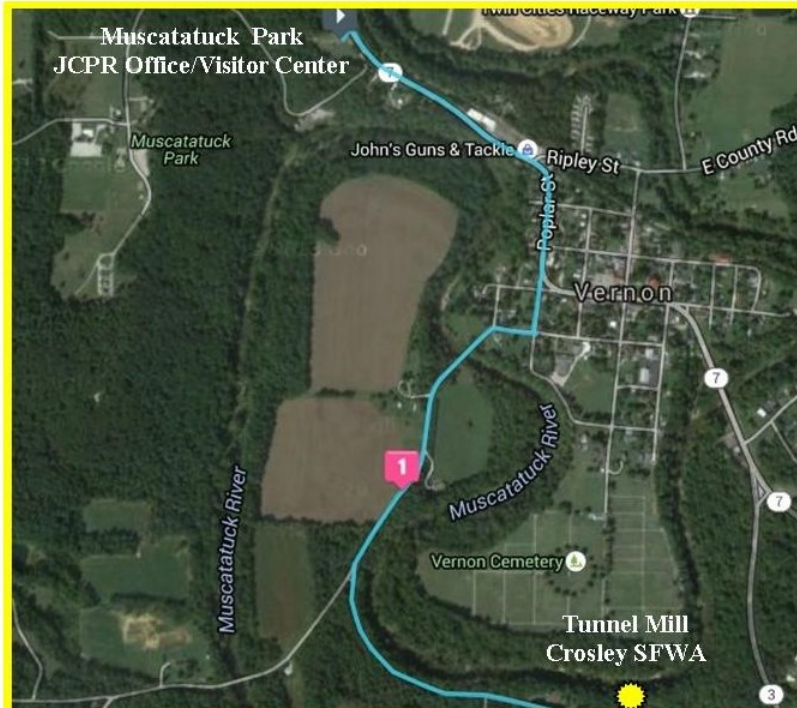


Tunnel Mill, accessed from gravel lane from West County Road 60 S

Image supplied from Google Earth

Historic Tunnel Mill

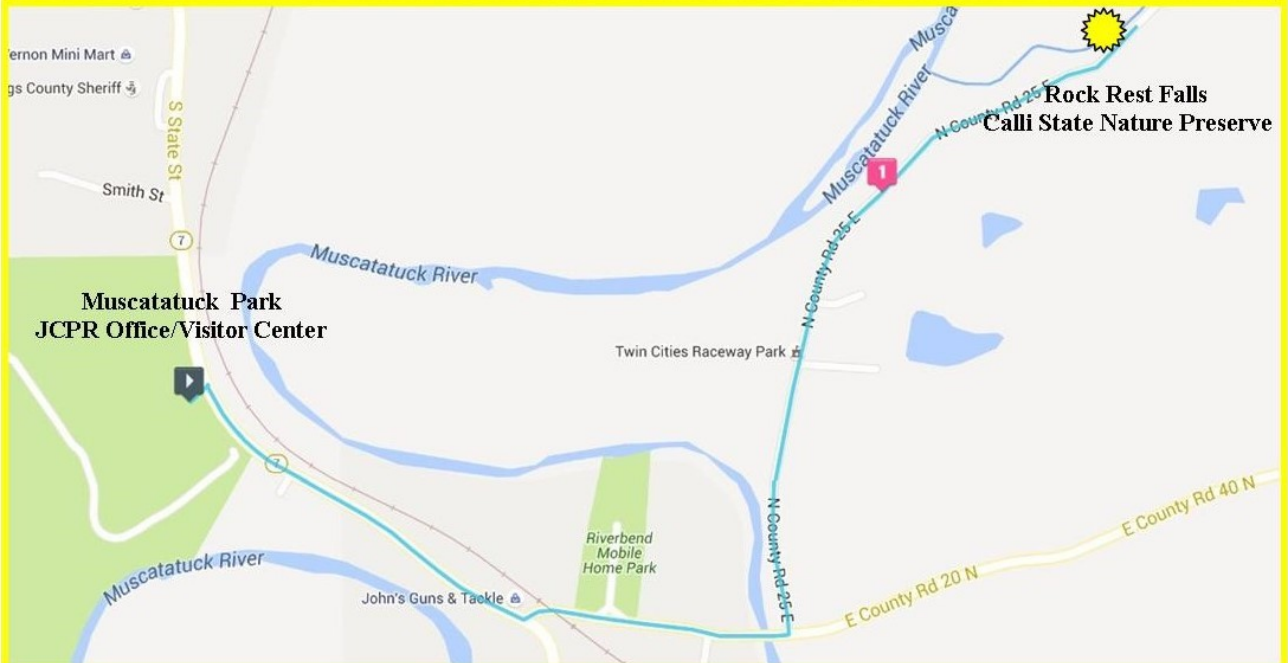
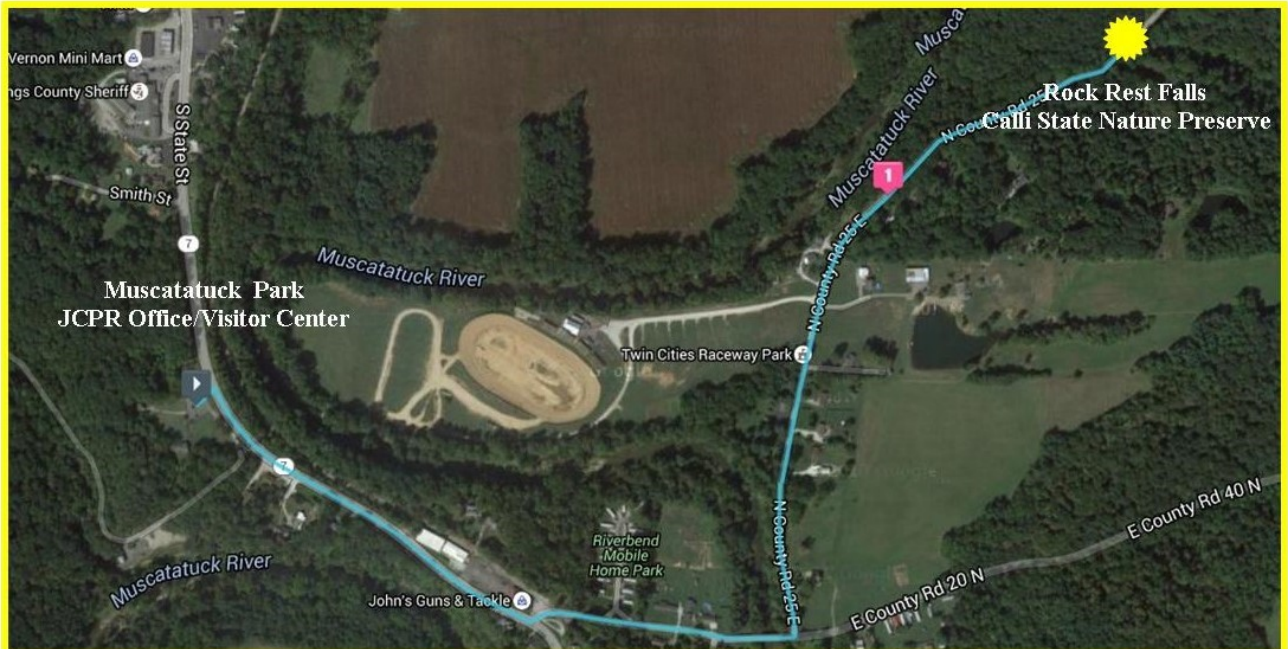
Crosley State Fish & Wildlife Area



- From front entrance of Muscatatuck Park, turn right onto State Highway #3 and #7 (same road).
- Travel about a three-quarters of a mile (0.75) and continue forward onto Poplar St. instead of following the State highway around the corner at the Vernon entry way decorative landscape area (north sign, first of two).
- Travel one block and take a right onto S County Rd 25 W. Continue over Muscatatuck River past two homes on left.
- Take first left onto Baldwin Cemetery Road to end of road and Tunnel Mill trail head, parking on right.
- Mill is accessed by a short (0.2 mile) level hike.

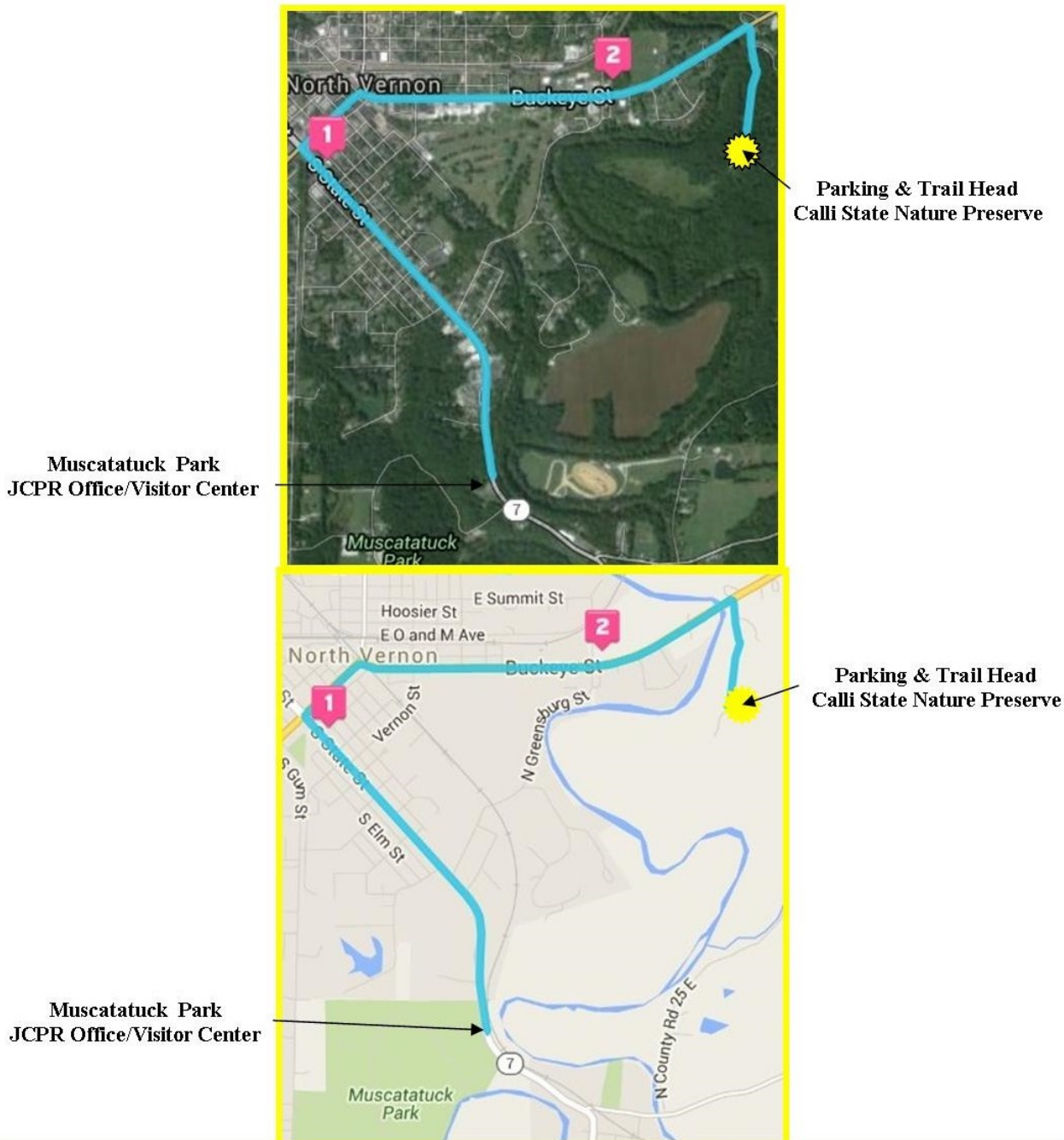
Rock Rest Falls

Calli State Nature Preserve

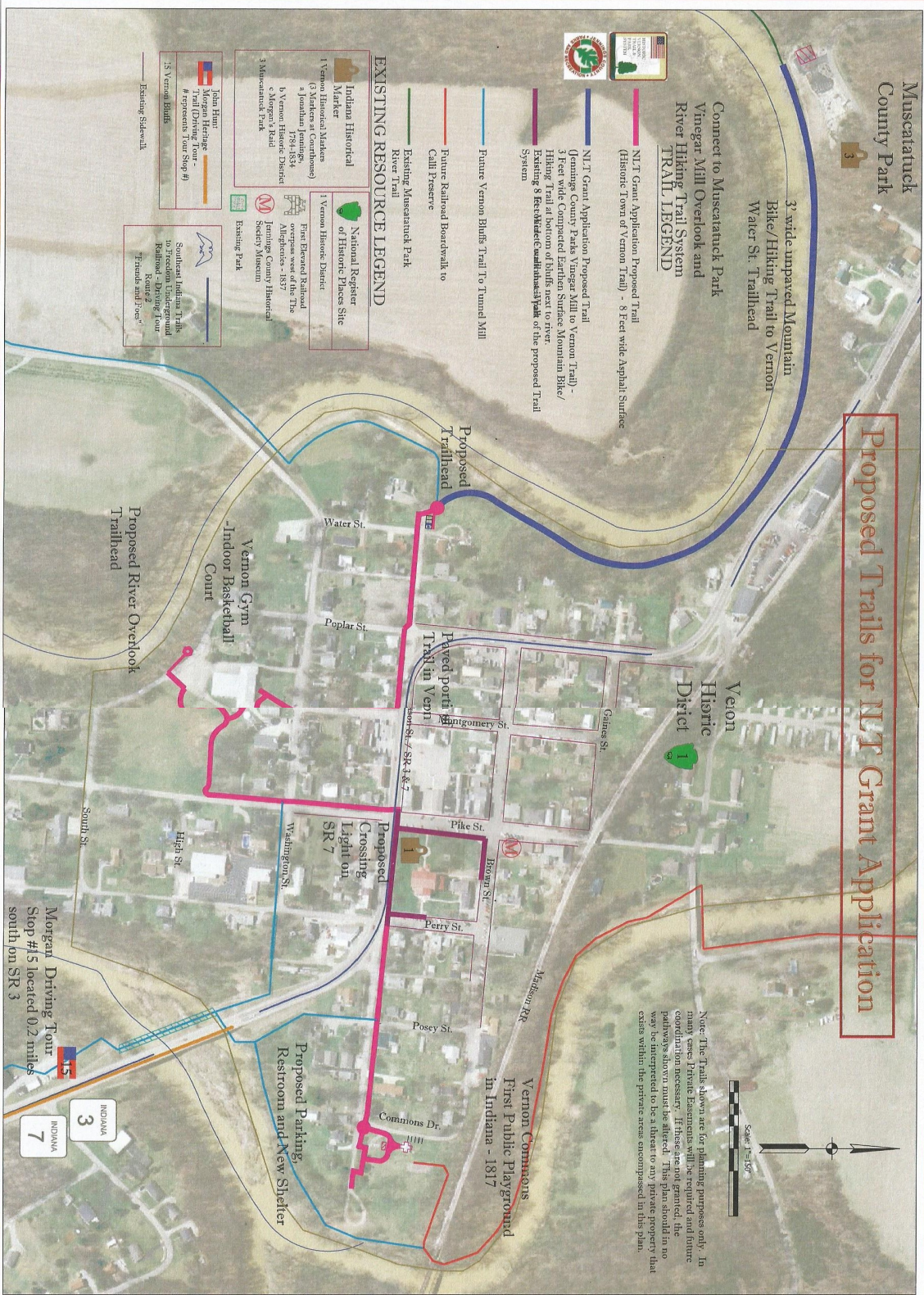


- From front entrance of Muscatatuck Park, turn right onto State Highway #3 and #7 (same road).
- Travel about a half a mile (0.5) and take slight left past “Johns Guns” crossing over railroad on E County Rd 20 N.
- Travel about three-tenths of a mile (0.3), cross over Muscatatuck River and take next left on N County Rd 25 E.
- Rock Rest Falls is about half a mile on the left. Go past Twin Cities Race track and three homes.
- Pull off is parallel to road. If you drive over small stream you have gone too far.
- Sign is likely to be installed late spring 2016, as well as a stair system.
- Falls is best viewed on second level. Travel short distance down steep decline (30 feet).

Calli State Nature Preserve



- From front entrance of Muscatatuck Park, turn left onto State Highway #3 and #7 (same road).
- Travel about a mile (1.1) and take right onto US highway 50 East.
- Continue on US 50 veering right through downtown North Vernon for about 1.3 miles
- Cross over Muscatatuck River and take next right (directly after bridge) onto 40 East (hard to see).
- Travel about a quarter mile on this gravel lane passing a few homes.
- Parking Area is on left and is well marked.
- Trail head has kiosk and sign in table with maps to interpretive trail.



FPBH, Inc.
 Engineers • Surveyors • Planners • Inspectors
 Offices in North Vernon, Seymour, & New Castle
 72 Henry Street, PO Box 47
 North Vernon, IN 47265
 P: (313) 348-2645 Toll Free: 1-866-ENG-FPBH
 www.fpbhonline.com

PRELIMINARY
 NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION

SCALE:	1" = 150'
DRAWN BY:	SC
CHECKED BY:	DW
DATE:	9/2/2019
DESIGNED BY:	SC
DATE:	

FILE NO.: 18-1221
 CLIENT NAME:
 TOWN OF VERNON

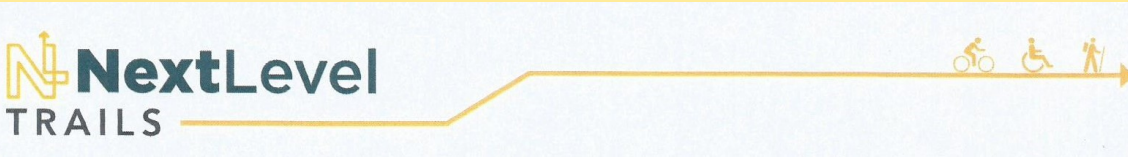
PROJECT DESCRIPTION:
 Application for System NIT Grant

SHEET TITLE:
 Master Trail Plan

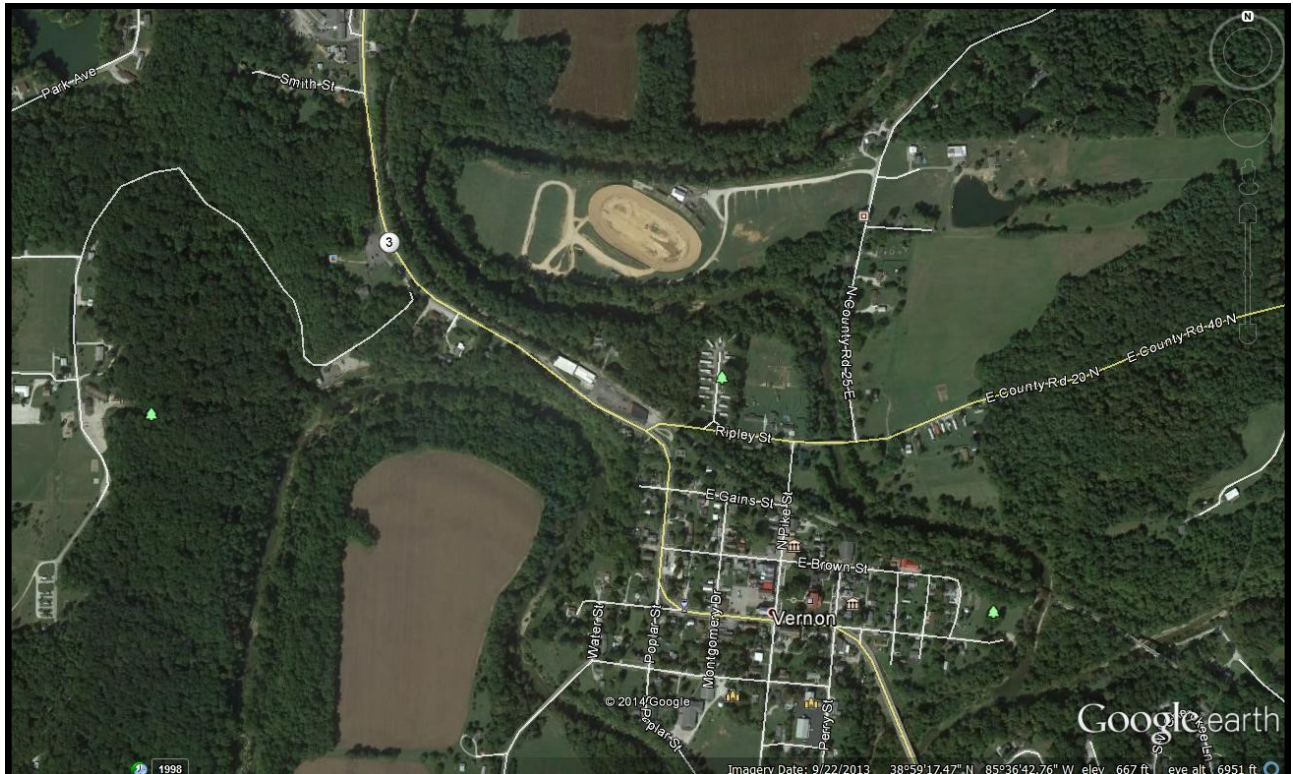
DESIGN PHASE:
 Public Involvement

SHEET NUMBER:
1

Vernon Next Level Trail 2020

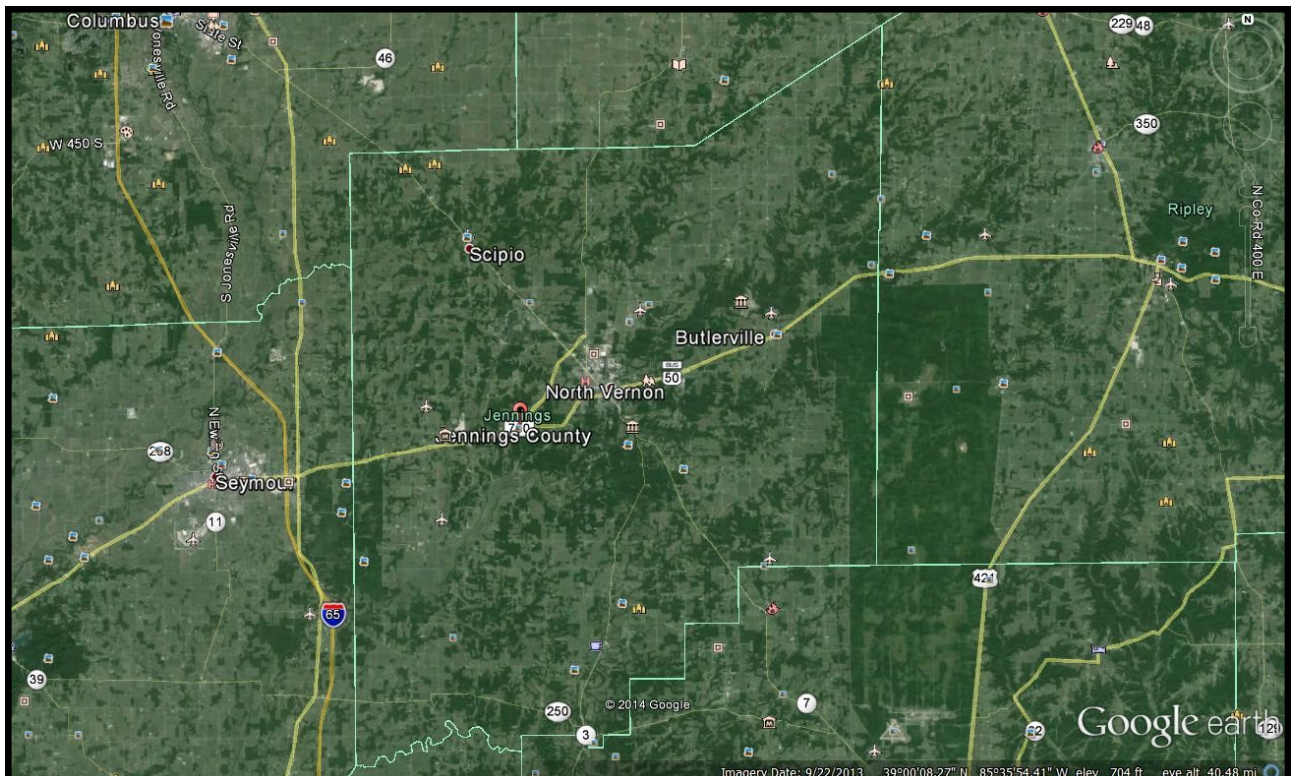


Important System-Wide Properties/Maps



Vernon and Vernon Parcels

Image supplied from Google Earth



Jennings County (US 50, State Roads #3 and #7 are the main thoroughfares)

Image supplied from Google Earth

We supplied a fairly detailed inventory of the county. A few properties will need to be revisited before the final draft. The list of churches and nature sites goes a little beyond the IDNR planning guide and are provided for information. We do note that many churches do provide shelters and sometimes playground equipment. Exact effect on county recreation would be hard to determine.

JCPR recently acquired the Eco Lake property in late 2007. JCPR was not actively looking for additional park land, but was approached by the gifting organization. This acquisition does expand the services of the department. Budgets were not increased with this acquisition.

North Vernon has acquired additional land north of town. Some additional land in a TIF district is currently being studied for annexation. The majority of this land is to be developed into industrial park areas. The majority of this land is north of town.

NVPR acquired a small 8 acre track of land near the JCSC School Complex. This is undeveloped. An easement was granted to NVPR to develop a small gravel trail in a wooded scenario, just north of the City Park. This basically enlarges the City Park 10 acres.

NVPR developed a small 1.5 acre park in 1976. The city park was acquired in 1954. The trend in North Vernon was that new parks were not a priority, NVPR turned that around last cycle!

JCPR has eliminated buildings over the past 10 years, trying to clean up the center of the facility. NVPR has had renovation as well. An older grandstand was removed in the late 1990's. A baseball quad-plex was built a few years later. This renovation is a quality upgrade, but grandfathered the facility into a "Sports Complex" classification.

Jennings and the entire country were hit hard with the recent recession. There was some discussion of eliminating both county park facilities. As the pendulum swings back, we see decent economic recovery and increased usage in both county facilities.

How Does Availability Affect Supply and Demand?

Obviously, availability directly effects supply. In some cases availability will create (indirectly) additional demand in other areas. For example, hunters that visit Crosley SFWA or Big Oaks NWR will demand a place to camp.

Availability in one area could decrease demand in another. JCPR may see campers shift to Eco Lake Park instead of using Muscatatuck Park. We assume that this will happen to a limited degree.

We note that increased supply of trails has made trails more popular, increasing demand.

Likely, having soccer games in baseball diamonds (poor quality) would decrease the demand for the activity. Higher quality products generally increase demand, the same is true for the opposite.

The lack of availability will also create demand. Having community paved trails is being demanded by a large section of the public. This demand is generated by need for facilities as well as comparison of state and regional goals and amenities.

Lack of availability of connector trails and barrier free access restricts youth travel, creating latent demand to recreate in general.

The last county Master Plan noted the need for increased political will to foster an increased quality of life and social and economic stability. This need still needs addressed at the county level.

“At a minimum, developing an alternative transportation plan and strategically planning for acquisition of new park land should be priorities for a new master park plan.”

North Vernon Comprehensive Plan 2009



Northern Trail Head Muscatatuck Trail

Additional Supply Information

Partnership Potential

JCPR and NVPR have been proposed to join. This happened first in 1997, then again in 2003. The later attempt was mostly by the two respective Park Directors. The first proposal was mostly conceptual and presented by JCPR. There is significant logic in a merger. Larger budgets to more easily provide for larger projects. Partnership would have increased the visibility of recreation in the community. Combining the work force could have resulted in increased specialization, increasing quality. Duplication of services and facility use could also be minimized. This partnership is unlikely to materialize, in the short run.

NVPR could partner with the school corporation to develop the sand creek facility. We detail this further in our Issues and Needs sections. NVPR could also partner with this organization for their dog park goal. JCPR is not opposed to assist in development of either of the two aforementioned projects.

NVPR could partner with Jennings County Youth Foundation at an administrative level. This could assist this group in creating continuity. JCPR could assist in this partnership as well. NVPR is a provider of programs though and is better suited for this. Both JCPR and NVPR should facilitate outside programming on their facilities were conflicts do not exist.

The Trails Project is the best example of multi-collaborative opportunity in Jennings. Both Vernon and North Vernon, along with the County have come together to itemize this plan. Joining with the local Jennings County Community Foundation to link to Calli SNP, and the IDNR Division of Fish and Wildlife to connect to Crosley, is important, as well.



Vernon Commons is Indiana's oldest public playground. Vernon Master Plan has conceptual design plans for a much needed upgrade.

Accessibility

The current trail initiative will help create a much needed upgrade to accessibility, initially in two facilities and then ultimately in all centered facilities. Muscatatuck Park is bordered with a residential community. Currently, Gum street was no sidewalks for the majority of its length in this area.

Access from Vernon to North Vernon is limited by a narrow stretch of state highway. This area has no sidewalks and has significant foot travel.

The NVPR mini-park was hidden to most. The Gum Street section of the Muscatatuck Trail has opened up access to this small park. It fits the criteria of a neighborhood park to a degree, yet access from the north is limited by US 50 Hwy, and businesses to the east.

The North Vernon City Park is bordered by State Highway's #3 and #7 to the west. This creates a significant barrier to the residential area just to the west. Access from the south is good. The northern and eastern boundaries are commercial.



Long Street access to School Complex. This much needed lane could be upgraded, and formalized to promote usage.

School corporation properties are significantly isolated. The main complex (High School, Middle School, Elementary School) has three entrances along US 50. One paved sidewalk along US 50 from the east serves this area with a small gravel lane from Long Street providing the best pedestrian access. Roughly 250 homes would be in the service area of the neighborhood park classification.

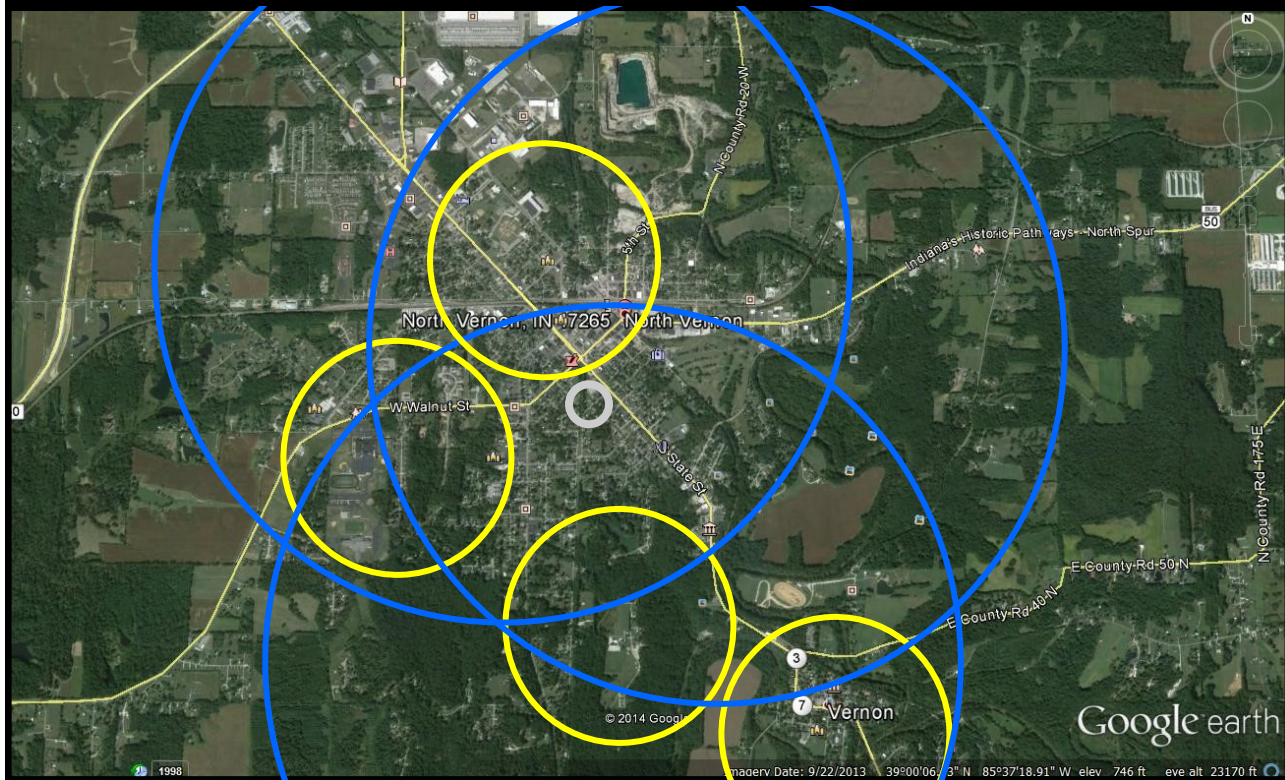
Scipio Elementary serves the local population, but the sidewalk needs attention. Hayden Elementary serves its local population. Brush Creek, Sand Creek, and Graham Creek Elementary are rural with little local population access.

Park and Recreation Model: Park Classifications

This page paraphrases the basic park classifications detailed in *Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines (1996)*. We also reference *Park, Recreation and Open Space Standards and Guidelines (1983/1990)*. The newer publication only makes slight reference to the Historical District Park classification (page 72). As the newer manual is geared towards municipalities and properties that should incorporate Level of Service Standards, District Parks, Regional Parks, Regional Metropolitan Parks, and Historic District Parks are left somewhat undefined, and reference to the earlier manual helps complete our classifications model. We note that both of the last two Indiana Comprehensive plans used the earlier publication model classification system.

Classification	General Description	Location Criteria	Size Criteria
Mini-Park	Used to address limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs.	Less than 1/4 mile in residential setting.	1 acre or less.
Neighborhood Park	The basic unit of the park system, serving the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. Focus is informal active and passive recreation.	1/4 to 1/2 mile radius, uninterrupted by non-residential roads or other physical barriers.	10 to 5 acres.
School-Park	School parks can fulfill the space requirements for other classes of parks: neighborhood, community, sports complex, and special use.	Determined by school district property.	Variable, depends on function
Community Park	Broader purpose than neighborhood Parks. Focus is on meeting community-based recreation needs, also preserving unique landscapes and open spaces.	Two or more neighborhoods, 1/2 to 2 mile radius.	50 to 30 acres, as needed to accommodate desired usage.
Large Urban Park	Broad based community wide purpose.	Serves entire community.	100 to 50 acres, as needed to accommodate desired uses.
Sports Complex	Consolidates heavily programmed athletic fields and associated facilities.	Strategically located for community wide usage.	80 to 25 acres
Historic District Park	Historic Area of natural or ornamental quality. Focus in passive recreating and/or tourist related facilities.	Several Communities, 1 hour driving time.	Often larger facilities (300 acres+), but could be smaller to facilitate specific historical elements.
Natural Resource Area	Lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space, and visual aesthetics/buffering.	Resource availability and opportunity.	Variable.
Green Way/Park Trails	Effectively tie park system components together to form a continuous park environment. Multiple types	Resource availability and opportunity	Variable.
Special Use/Private Park	Either single-purpose use and/or private facility that contributes to complete system.	Variable-dependent on specific use.	Variable.

Population Within Reach of Suggested Service Radiuses



NV City Park and Tripton park as Community Parks
(most appropriate designation for City Park is a Sports Complex)



Vernon, St. Mary's and JCS Complex as Neighborhood Parks



NV Mini-Park



Muscatatuck Park shown with both Neighborhood and Community Park service radiuses (* see note below)

Map above supplied from Google Earth

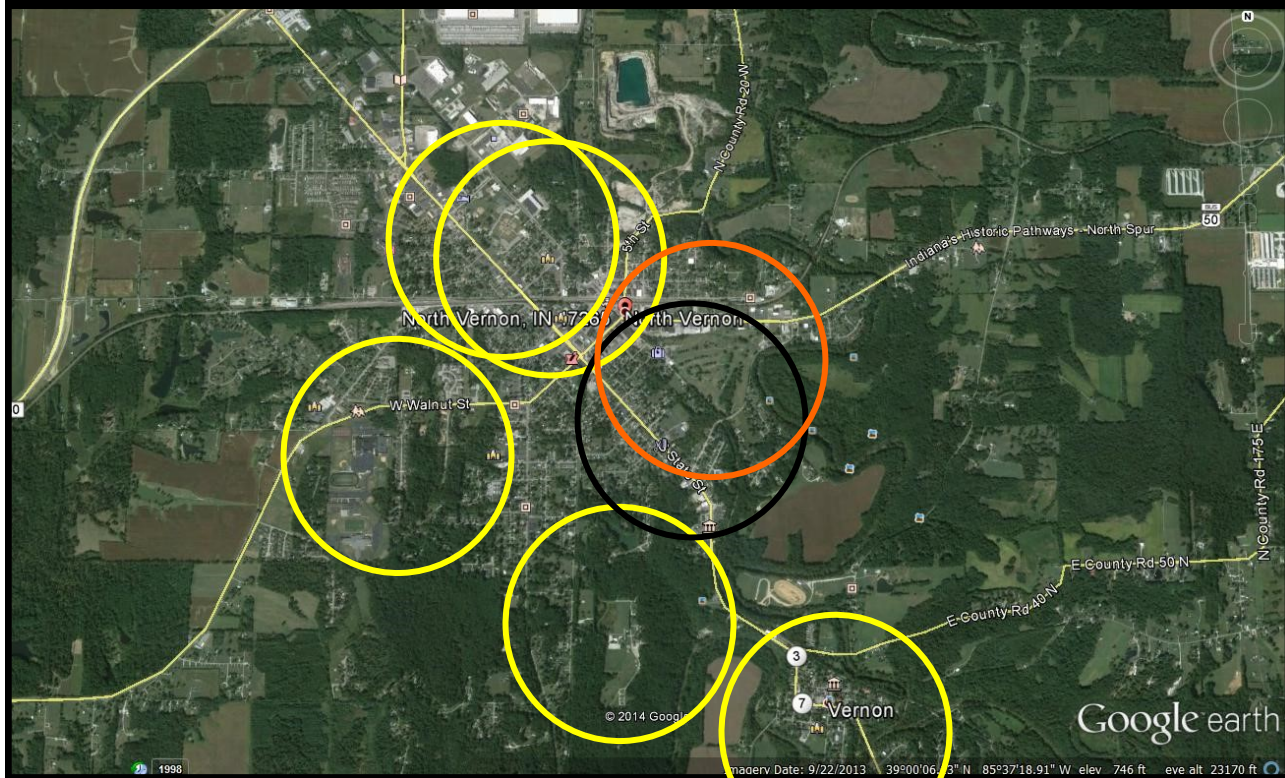
If the city park was just a “Community Park” then the population would be served well with this classification. The city park is in reality being used as a “Sports Complex” as well North Vernon’s “Community Park”. Tripton helps North Vernon significantly.

Vernon is served by the “Commons” and Vernon Gym as “Neighborhood Parks”, with upgrades last cycle.

* We show Muscatatuck Park with both radiuses for comparison only. Technically it is a “Historic District Park”, but doubles as a “Community Park”. This is not optimal, but commonly accepted by most. This limits the appeal as a District Park to a significant degree.

Pedestrian access is currently very limited to most facilities, (except the west entrance to Muscatatuck Park and the mini-park) due to major road ways, and lack of pedestrian paths.

Population Within Reach of Suggested Neighborhood Park Distance (0.5 mile radius)*



Only the JC School , Vernon, and St. Mary’s should be considered a neighborhood park

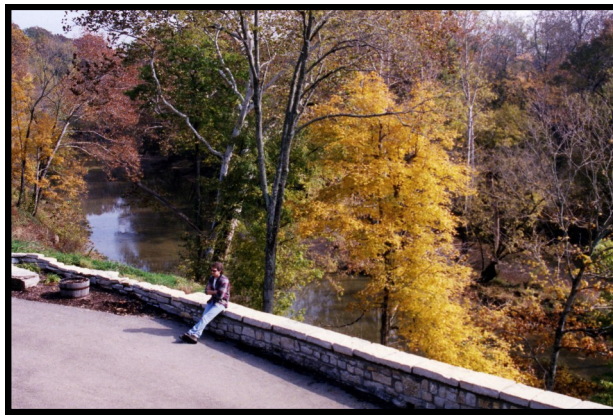
Map above supplied from Google Earth

- We show NV City Park and Muscatatuck Park with “Neighborhood Park” service radius for comparison only. If they were this classification we would note that there is still a significant amount of population underserved. Remove both and we see that this classification is not well represented.
- Vernon’s park amenities are very limited.
- The School Complex has limited access by one paved lane on Long street.
- Access to all facilities is limited. The Muscatatuck Trail has helped..
- Black circle is service area of Early Learning Center. Once used informally as a Neighborhood Park with a field for soccer practice, this area could be utilized better.
- Orange circle is the new Tripton Park. It is a nice Community Park.

“A word of caution about flexible-use polices is that they should not be used as a means to avoid developing a legitimate system capable of meeting the community’s long term needs. For example, a community should not use a neighborhood park for activities that are intended to be accommodated in an athletic complex. Granted, a neighborhood park may have to be used at a higher than desirable level until appropriate facilities can be built. But this type of use should not be considered acceptable on a long term basis.”

**Inventory of:
Jennings County Parks and Recreation Properties**

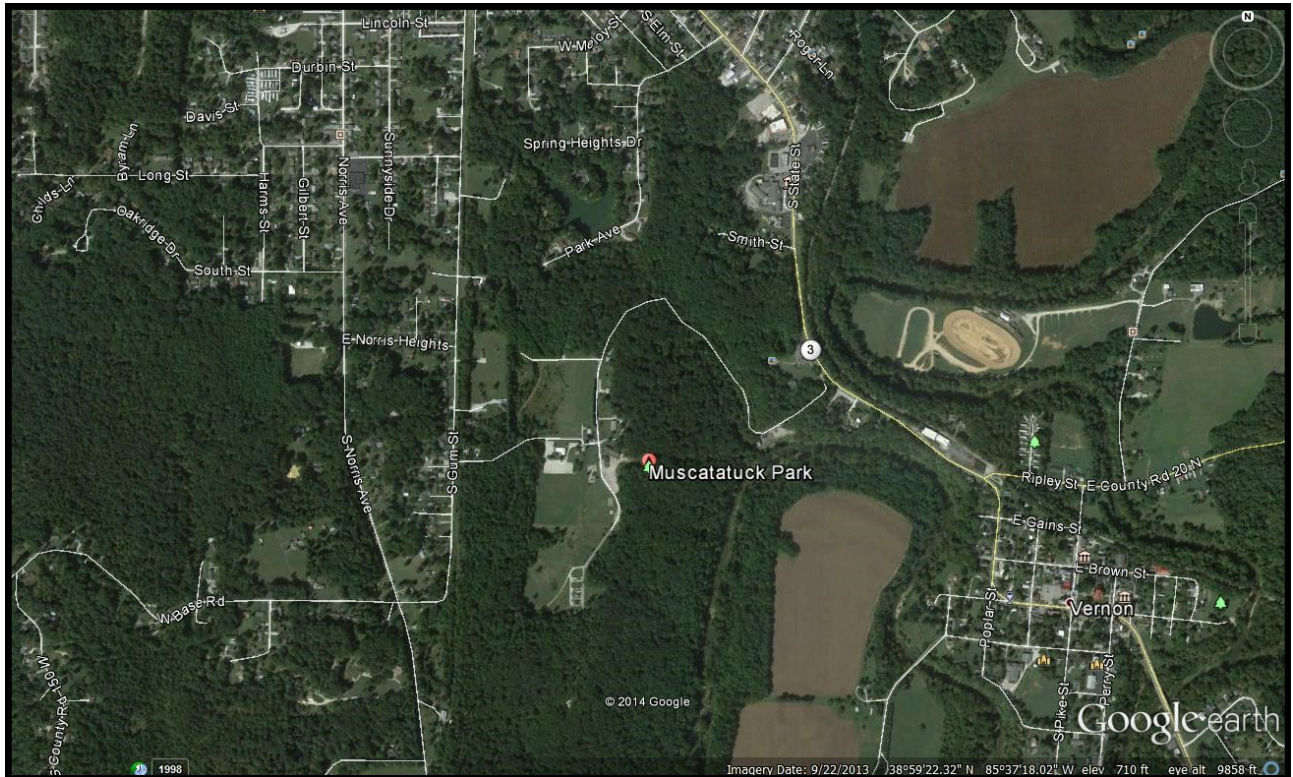
Muscatatuck Park



Eco Lake Park

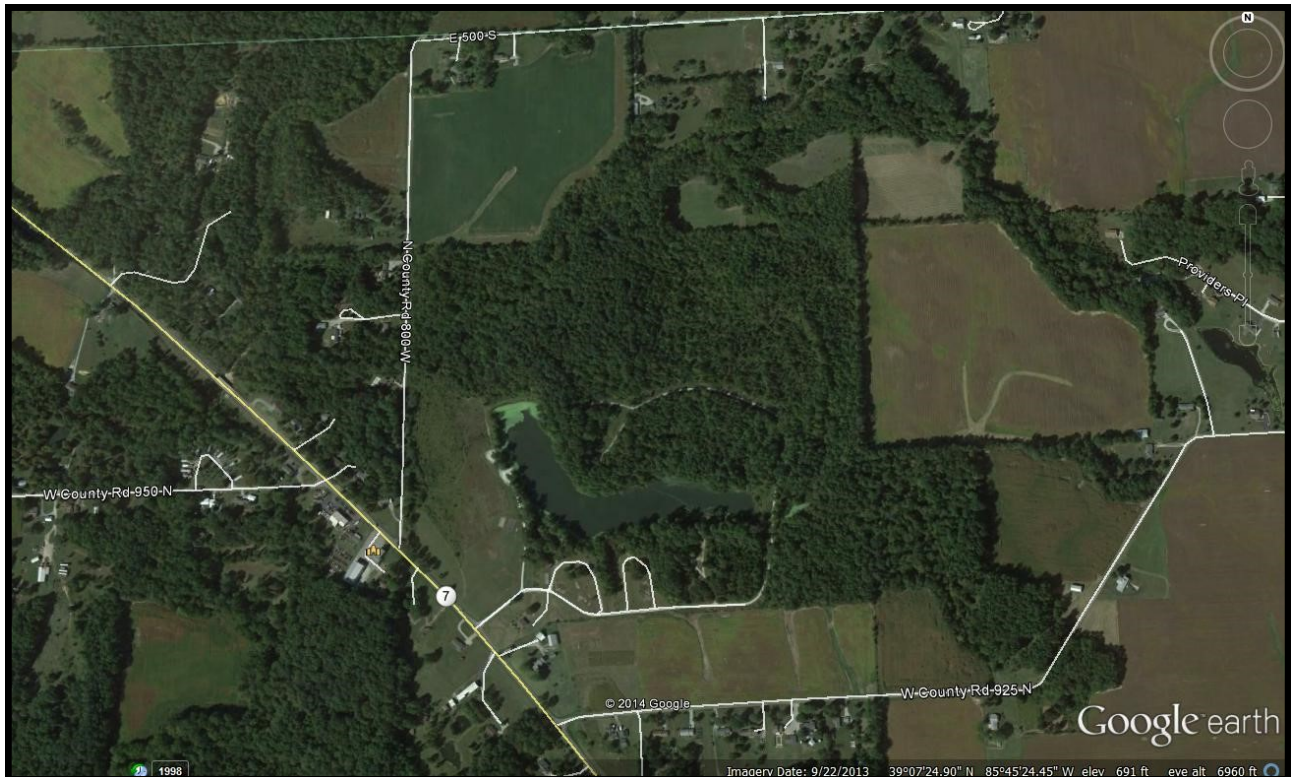


JCPR Properties



Muscatatuck Park, accessed from State Road #3 and Gum Street

Image supplied from Google Earth



Eco Lake Park, accessed from State Road #7

Image supplied from Google Earth

Detailed Inventory of the Muscatatuck Park

Muscatatuck Park

Located in Vernon Township, between North Vernon and Vernon @ 325 N. St. #7, North Vernon, IN 47265.

Facilities & Activities:

- 215 acres total area
- 150 acres approximately forested
- 4000 ft. waterfront on Muscatatuck River
- 9 picnic shelters
- Dining hall “Community Building”
- One-room school house
- Visitor Center “William Read Home”
- 35 electrical/water campsite
- Shower / bathroom facilities
- Primitive camping field
- Group camping
- 2 soccer fields
- Open fields
- 1 basketball goal/half court
- 5 horse shoe pits
- Sand volleyball court
- 9 miles wooded hiking/4 marked trails
- Trails are multiple use
- 1 baseball field
- Playground (complex & 15 single)
- Historic buildings and ruins
- 2 wetland marshes
- Fishing (river)
- Picnic areas

The Muscatatuck Park is managed by the Jennings County Parks and Recreation Department and Board. The board is under the supervision of the County Commissioners and the County Council. The Park is specifically managed by a full-time Director. There are two full time assistants to the director. The park has historically hired Green-thumb/Experience Works (now National ABLE) workers throughout the year. County restitution workers are occasionally incorporated into daily work activities. 1995 was the first year that the park started using a campground host. This worked out to help the efficiency of the camping facilities and freed up the park staff to handle other responsibilities.

The Muscatatuck Park has a total acreage of 215 acres. There are a few areas of encroachment and dispute. The park is comprised of approximately 150 acres of forested area and 75 acres of mostly open grass covered land. The park has two permanent marshes that cover about half an acre and the park has a water front with the Muscatatuck River that is approximately 4000 ft.

The park has a very interesting and varied topography. Numerous drainage channels cut the hills creating a diversified rigorous hiking terrain. The upland forest is primarily Oak-Hickory with a good representation of Maple and Beech. River bottom species are also represented.

JCPR added a new playground complex in 2017, and is currently nearing completion of a small Splash Pad.

A new Bathroom will also be completed soon.

The issue of the glass dump has not been resolved. In 2019 JCPR volunteers harvested approximately 130 gallons of sharp large glass pieces.

Management: Jennings County Parks and Recreation

Director: Greg Martin
812-346-2953

www.muscatatuckpark.com
www.jenningscounty-in.gov/parks/index.php



Campground at the Muscatatuck Park

Facilities

Rental Buildings

The park has six open shelters and a selection of other buildings that can be used for various activities. Modern* denotes electrical outlets, lighting, and water. These buildings generate revenue by reservations. The shelters can be used first come first serve with no charge if not reserved. Locked buildings must be paid for for use.

Shelter 1	1200 sq. ft., open/modern*
Shelter 2	3200 sq. ft., open/modern*
Shelter 3	880 sq. ft., open
Shelter 4	1200 sq. ft., open/modern*
Shelter 5	1200 sq. ft., open/modern*
Shelter 6	1000 sq. ft. open
Dining hall/Kitchen	3000 sq.ft., heated/modern* 2 toilets, sinks, 1 urinal 2 stoves, freezer, refrigerator

Other Public Buildings:

JC Visitor Center “Red Brick Inn/ WRH”	2100 sq.ft
Canyon Creek Shelter	315 sq.ft., open & primitive
Vinegar Mill Shelter	1200 sq.ft., open & modern
Campground Shelter	750 sq.ft., open & modern
Walnut Groove Schoolhouse	1000 sq.ft., modern, no bath.
Shower house	576 sq.ft., 4 showers, 3 showers, 1 urinal
Bathroom	576 sq.ft., 5 toilets, 2 urinals
Camp Privies (M&F)	block building w/pit
Privies	2 privy toilets for winter use

Park facilities not open to public use:

Tractor shed	2000 sq.ft., closed, wood furnace, electricity
Cabin Residence	Removed 2019.
Quail Barn	

Parking Areas:

- Dining Hall 32,000 sq.ft., 70 spaces
- Red Brick 18,000 sq.ft., 33 spaces
- Basketball Area 6,000 sq.ft., 10 spaces
- Playground 12,000 sq.ft., 20 spaces
- Main. Office 6,000 sq.ft., 20 spaces
- Bathroom 1,200 sq.ft, 3 spaces
- Horseshoe 2,000 sq.ft., 5 spaces
- Shower house 600 sq.ft., 2 spaces
- Shelter #1 4,000 sq.ft., 10 spaces
- Shelter #2 4,000 sq.ft., 10 spaces
- Shelter #3 6,000 sq.ft., 15 spaces
- Shelter #4 3,000 sq.ft., 8 spaces
- Shelter #5 3,000 sq.ft., 8 spaces
- V. Mill Shelter 1,200 sq.ft., 3 spaces
- Vinegar Mill 3,000 sq.ft., 8 spaces
- baseball Road & Grass
- Wetland Drive Road & Grass



New Splash Pad to open in 2020!

Playground and Recreational Facilities:

Kiddy playground	5,000 sq.ft., 11 units, e-wood chips
Playground complex	4,000 sq.ft., 1 unit E-wood chips
Camp.	5 item swing 1 slide
Other Playground	4 swings 2 slide Wheelchair swing (stolen)
Horseshoe pits	5 courts lighted,
Volleyball court	1, sand
Basketball court	1/2, concrete, 225 sq.ft.
Baseball	1 field
Soccer	1 full size fields
Other	2 open fields
Trails	4 trails, totaling 9+ miles rugged and level terrain
Campsites	35 electric sites 15 specific primitive field/group camp

All electric sites and the specified primitive sites have a picnic table. The electric sites all have water hookups accessible.

The Muscatatuck Park has nine open shelters that can be used on a first come first serve basis unless otherwise reserved. These facilities have picnic tables, lights, electrical outlets, water, an upright grill, and fire pit. Playground equipment is located in close proximity with the larger playgrounds area close, but not in the most ideal safe location. Trail heads are also close in proximity.

The Muscatatuck Park supplies approximately 30 picnic tables in various places throughout the Park to be used by day visitors. Benches and shade structures are currently being installed.

Estimated Visitor Use for 2019

Activity	# Visitor Days
Shelter Rental (144)	6,000
Shelter FCFS	4,000
Dining Hall (76)	4,000
Visitor Center	1,000
Camping (1975)	6,000
Day visitors	25,000
Soccer	1,000
Civil War R.	1000
DINO (mountain bikers)	2,000
Horseshoe Pits	500
Tame the Terrain	1000
Color Run	750
Other Special events	2,000
Boulderers	500
Cross-country	2000
Walnut Grove	100

Drive through for commuting purposes is approximated at 30 cars a day in 2013 or 9,750 for the year.

In 1992 the MP estimated the annual visitors days to be approximately 50,000. For 1996 the Park estimates that the annual visitation is approximately 60,000 not counting the drive through commuting traffic. Updated use figures estimate total visitor days at 65,000.

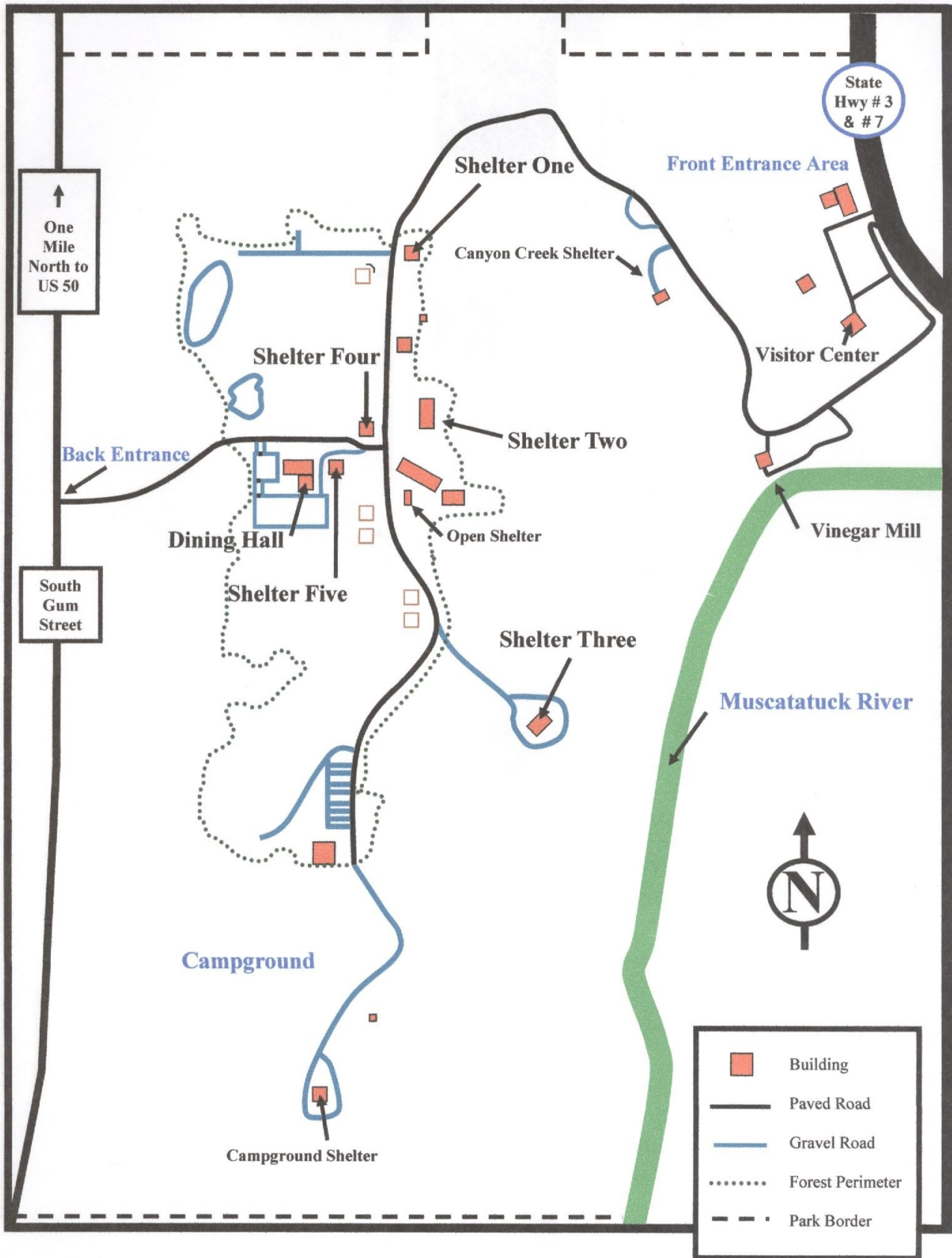
Soccer moved off the Park around 2009. They still use the facility for practices and occasional games. This lowered total usage of the park, but this is considered positive as this activity pushed usage to a dangerously over crowded level. As well as, infringing upon other users.

The methods of approximating visitor use could be improved, but familiarity with the facility and actual receipts gives us fairly reliable data.

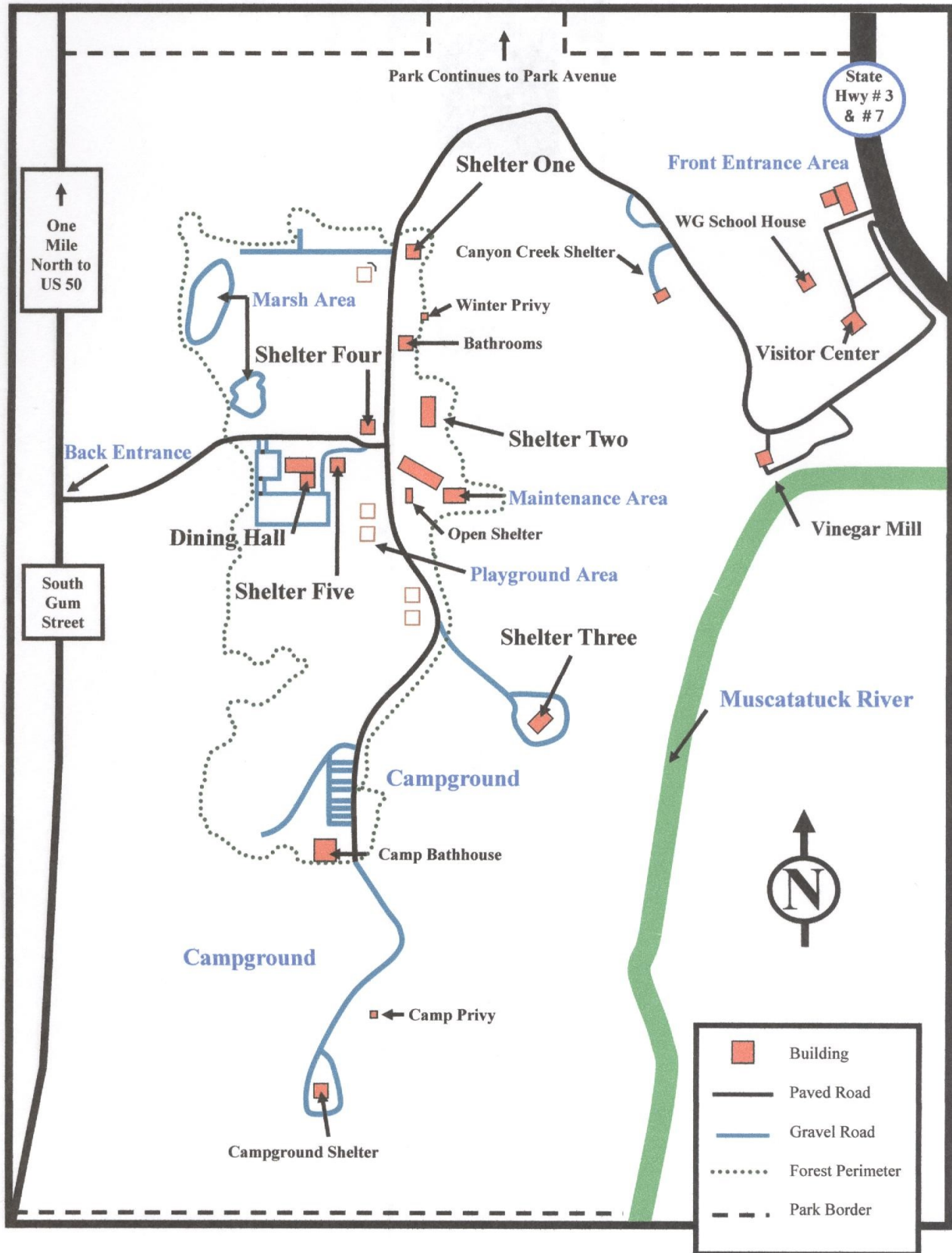


Random day at Vinegar Mill when water is up!

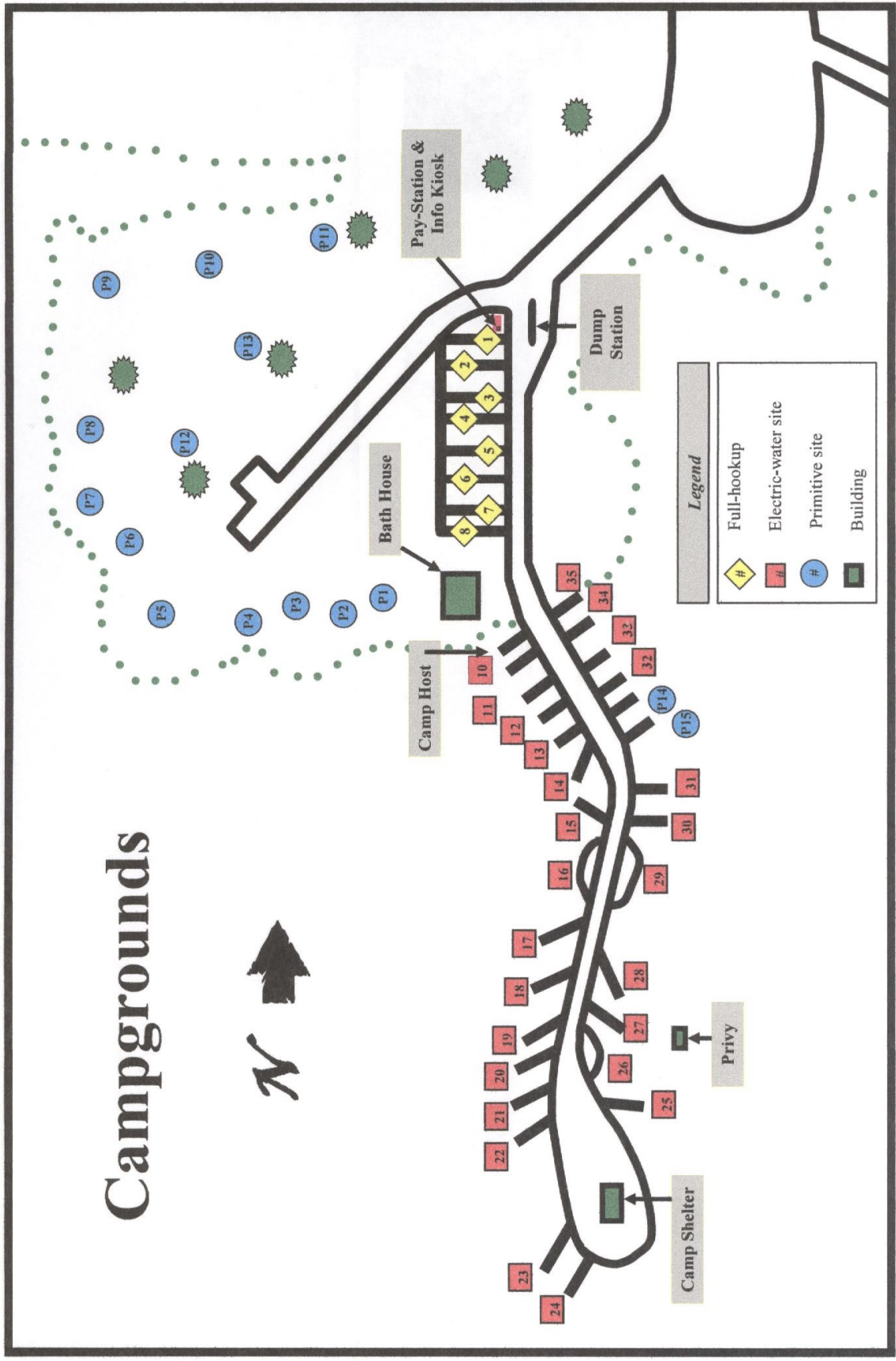
Muscatatuck Park Shelters



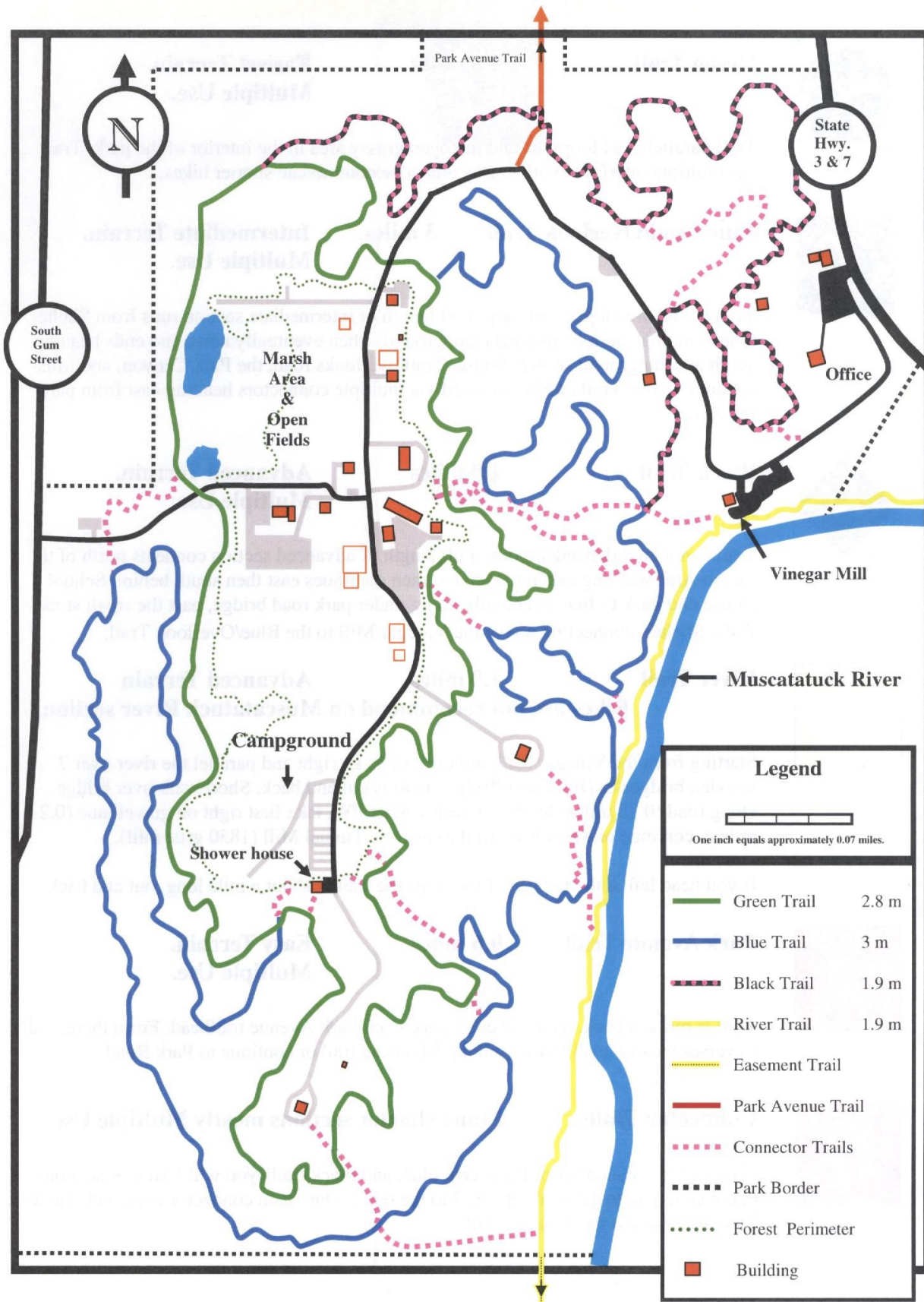
Muscatatuck Park Buildings and Shelters



Campgrounds



Muscatatuck Park Trails



Muscatatuck Trails

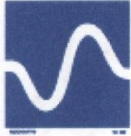


Green Trail

2.8 miles.

**Easiest Terrain.
Multiple Use.**

Trail parallels and loops around the open grassy area in the interior of the park. Trail has multiple interfaces with grassy area to accommodate shorter hikes.



Blue Trail/Overlook Trail

3 miles.

**Intermediate Terrain.
Multiple Use.**

Trail is not an independent loop. Full length of intermediate section runs from Shelter One, winding south behind the campgrounds, then eventually north and ends heading south at campground shower house. Trail overlooks road, the Park Canyon, and Muscatatuck River. Trail can be accessed via multiple connectors heading east from park interior.

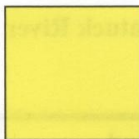


Black Trail

1.9 miles

**Advanced Terrain.
Multiple Use.**

Trail is not an independent loop. Full length of advanced section connects north of the Marsh Area winding east into canyon, then continues east then south behind School House and Park Office, eventually going under park road bridge, past the small stone WPA Shelter, connecting above the Vinegar Mill to the Blue/Overlook Trail.



River Trail

1.9 miles

**Advanced Terrain
Bikes are not recommend on Muscatatuck River section.**

Starting from the Vinegar Mill, after the steps go right and parallel the river over 7 wooden bridges to Dog Farm Bridge. Trail is out and back. Short walk over bridge along road (0.25 miles) leads to Crosley State FW, take first right on gravel lane (0.2 miles), continue on short level trail to historic Tunnel Mill (1830 grist mill).

If you head left at the bottom of the steps the trail is about a mile long, out and back.



Park Avenue Trail

0.6 miles

**Easy Terrain.
Multiple Use.**

Trail is out and back. You can enter park from Park Avenue trailhead. From there, trail traverses mostly level terrain joining advanced trail or continue to Park Road.

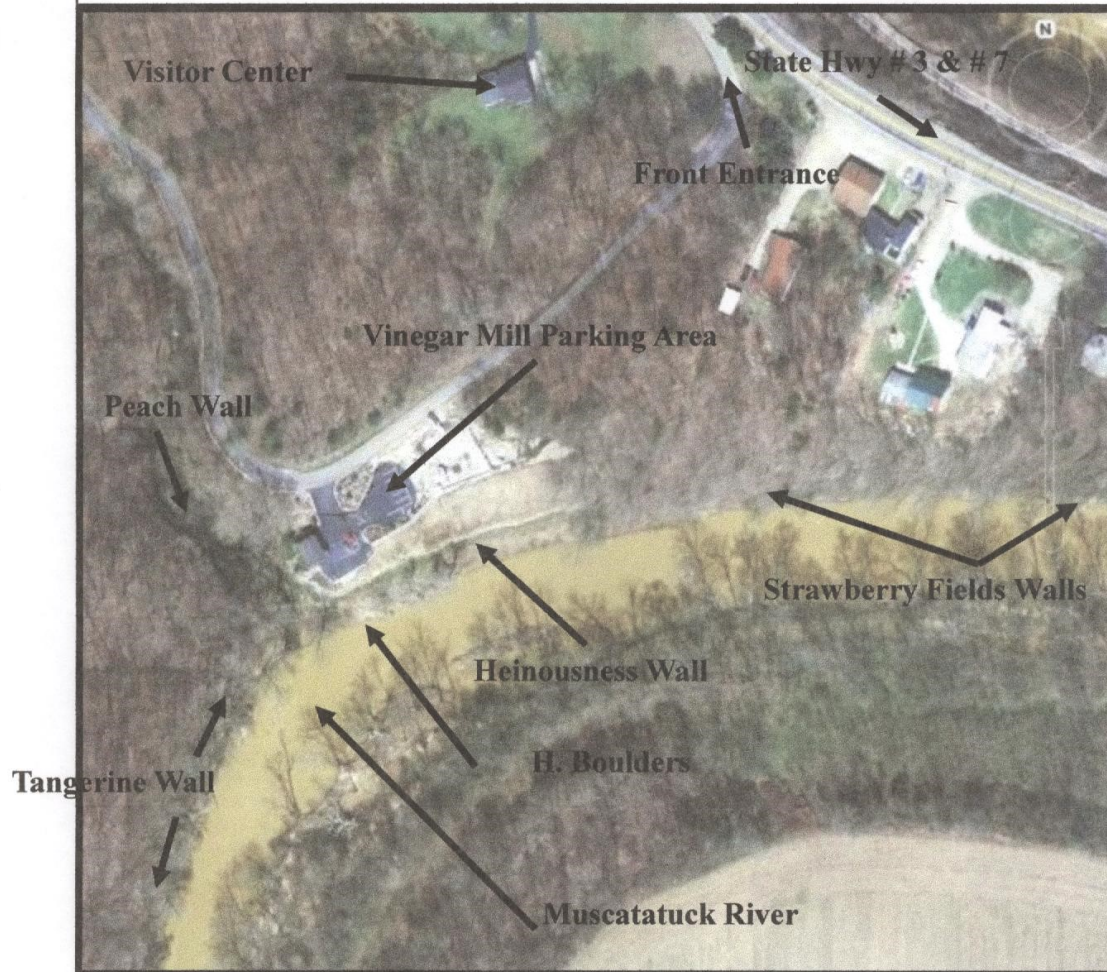


Connector Trails

Many shorter sections mostly Multiple Use.

Crossing many sections of the green, blue, and black trails you will find intersections that enable you to get from one trail to the other. One main connector is behind Shelter Two and leads to the Vinegar Mill.

Muscatatuck Park Bouldering Aerial Map



All of the climbing at the park is located at the Vinegar Mill Area, very easy access for parking and restroom facilities. As you go down (looking south- opposite orientation from this aerial) to the base of the stone steps at the Vinegar Mill:

- look left, all that you see is the Heinousness Wall.
- looking left past the trees and the Heinousness Wall is Strawberry Fields.
- go right at the steps then over the foot bridge and then right again and you will find the Peach Wall.
- go right at the steps then over the foot bridge and then take a left and follow the river to find the Tangerine Wall.

Detailed Inventory of Eco lake park

Eco Lake Park

This property was newly acquired in November of 2007. The property was given to the County Commissioners to be managed by the Jennings County Parks and Recreation Department. The property was given by the Cosco Recreation Committee, which was a nonprofit private organization working with this Columbus based corporation. Cosco was recently bought out by Dorel, but the recreation committee still held the older name.

Location: Geneva Township 970 North State Highway #7, North Vernon, IN 47265

Facilities & Activities:

- 127 acre total area
- 9 acre lake
- Public Access Site
- Beach (needs attention)
- One shelter
- Playground
- Basketball Court
- Baseball diamond
- 6 horseshoe pits
- Picnic areas
- Campgrounds (25 to 70 potential)
- Forested area
- 3 mile trail (some reroutes planned)

Managed by: Jennings County Parks and Recreation

JCPR has created engineered plans with FPBH, Inc. Four phases (A, B, C, & E) of campground Master Plan were approved by State Board of Health in 2015, yet those permits have expired.

JCPR had worked with Lowe's RDC and the Lowe's Charitable Foundation to secure a Community Partners Grant. Tim Grady, then manager of the RDC, believed JCPR had potential to be awarded significant sums from this grant. JCPR attempted twice, yet did not receive funding. Lack of matching funds seemed to play into the lack of success.



Eco Lake Park

Phase D is currently being reviewed by State Board of Health. Not having a bathhouse open for the camp is not deemed positive and may have detrimental long term effects on the success of the camp.

Significant money could be saved with Phase D added to the original bid. The income stream of the camp will be more significant with supporting elements, specially fundamental elements like a bath room shower-house.

JCPR did acquire grants to supply playground equipment for this property, as well as the Muscatatuck Park. Playground complex was installed in 2017.



Front entrance sign at Eco Lake Park



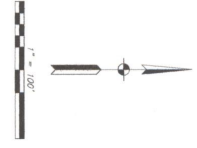
JCPR partnership with the IDNR, public access site.

Eco Lake Park Campground Master Plan



MASTER PLAN

- A1** PHASE 1: WATER EXTENSION TO PAD TO ADD WATER LINE TO EXISTING TRAIL CAMPING PAD & RESTA LOTS (RESERVED)
- A2** PHASE 1: WATER EXTENSION TO EXISTING TRAIL CAMPING PAD & RESTA LOTS (RESERVED)
- B** PHASE 2: WATER STATION (TO BE BUILT BY CAMPING CO)
- C** PHASE 3: ELECTRIC & WATER ADDED TO EXISTING TRAIL CAMPING PAD & RESTA LOTS (RESERVED)
- D** PHASE 4: BATHROOM & SWIMMER HOUSE
- E** PHASE 5: REDEVELOPMENT PRESERVE & SCENIC HIGHWAY
- F** PHASE 6: PAUL THOMPSON SERVICE CENTER (TRAIL CAMPING PAD & RESTA LOTS) ADDED TO SERVICE SITES



SCALE: 1" = 100' DATE: SEPTEMBER 2010 DRAWN BY: TFW CHECKED BY: BRB FOR: GREG MARTIN JOB NO. 10-8166 COUNTY: HENNING COUNTY CITY: ECO PARK PROJECT: MASTER PLAN	Revision Drawn By Date 11 & A2 BRB JRM 04 2011	F P B H, Inc. Engineers • Surveyors • Planners • Inspectors	73 Honey Street P.O. Box 47 North Yarmouth, NS 47265 Phone: (912) 346-2945 Fax: (912) 346-8265 Toll Free: 1-866-254-8888 www.fpbhinc.com
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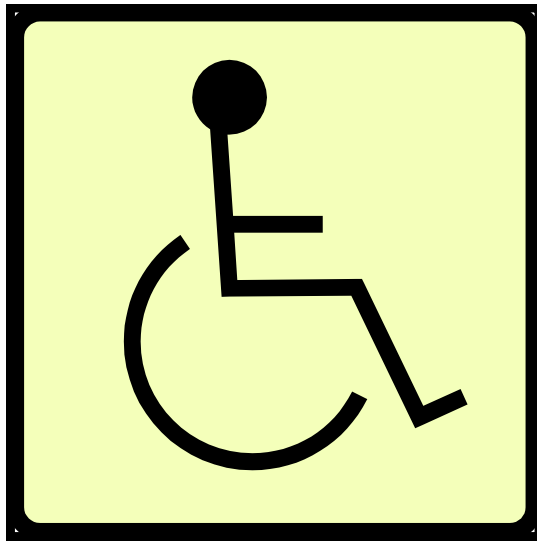
Eco Lake Park Aerial



Image Supplied from Google Earth (Google 2015)

Section Five:

Accessibility



Accessibility and Universal Design

Overview

Jennings County Parks and Recreation Department will administer self evaluation methods as a best management practice.

Self-evaluation of currently accessible facilities

JCPR has made significant upgrades to various facilities over the past 15 years. In 1997 no shelters on the facility had ramps into shelters that were all raised off the ground, many a foot tall. Today all shelters except two smaller shelters (1936/37 CCC/WPA) structures and a non-rented campground shelter have ramps.

Unfortunately the Muscatatuck Park does not have asphalt parking lots in various places. Unloading zones were added in conjunction to shelter ramps that had gravel parking.

Bathroom and shower facilities have had hand rails added.

JCPR did work with a local citizen confined to a wheel chair during this period to overview many of these needs and eventual upgrades. This was considered a positive relationship and fulfilling endeavor.

The 1850 built William Read Home which houses the Department Office and Visitor Center had displays in 2009. Some displays were added up stairs. This stairway was not accessible so the department added a downstairs picture volume so someone not able to ascend the stairs could view the same material.

A handicap playground area was installed in 2010. JCPR received a small grant that included a wheelchair swing that had been placed at the now defunct Muscatatuck State School. This swing was installed as were two strapped swings. A picnic area was created with accessible area, accessible picnic table and appropriate unloading zone. An accessible grill was also added. Resilient surfacing was applied over the concrete area needed for swing protection. This area was created for significantly disabled individuals that were not accustomed to direct sunlight. Originally the group wanted to add this to an existing shelter, but normal rental would have prohibited inclusion during rentals. An area with significant shade was chosen. After installation the area was often used, but then became a teenage hang out. Significant vandalism has removed the grill and multiple tables. Early in 2014 the wheel chair swing was stolen.

Self-Evaluation of currently inaccessible facilities

JCPR adopted the www.adachecklist.org forms as the best means to do self evaluation. Forms for each facility will be kept on file.

The main parking lot to the Dining Hall/Community Building is accessed by two different sidewalks, one from the east and one from the south. These sidewalks are 3 foot and do not meet minimum. The sidewalks open up to gravel parking lots. The sidewalks do not have unloading zones. The south sidewalk could have a perpendicular zone that was recessed into the yard. An extended zone would get a lot of traffic and likely would not be as stable. Paving the parking lot would be ideal, but unlikely in the short run.

The west door does not have the 18 inch swing clearance needed to avoid the door, as it swings. The south entrance does and would be the easiest to modify. Sidewalk/ramp here is also at 9%. Thresholds in this building could be improved.

Bathroom facilities have had hand rails added and the sink was modified to provide access. The bathrooms did not supply appropriate turning radiuses or accessible dimensions. JCPR has started this work in this building in 2015. They have removed a concrete block wall in each of the bathroom units to get the bathrooms closer to the needed standard. Paper towel dispensers are currently too high and should be modified in transition.

Door knobs have been replaced. Improved signage needs re-installed.

JCPR does not wish to modify the 1936/37 WPA/CCC structures. Both of these facilities have tall slabs and are accessed by gravel roads. Ramps and unloading zones in this area would protrude into driving lanes. Potential modifications could be applied, but at a substantial cost while changing the rustic historic natural appearance of the structures. If the roads were paved, than this may need to be reevaluated.

There is one non-rented shelter in a cul-de-sac like turn around in the southern most part of the campground road. The shelter does not have a ramp or unloading zone. The height of this shelter (3 sides) and its proximity to the graveled road do not lend itself well to meet the standard. The north side is level, but has a water hydrant. Accommodating a ramp, unloading zone, and parking spot here is not feasible. The ground here is nearly level at north end.

Ramps to the shelters were built at approximately 3% or better than 1:20. Eco Lake Park between 3 and 4 %.

The campground bathroom stalls are not wide, 3 foot. Modification of these structures are not feasible as the plumbing is concrete and additional space is not present. Shower valves are a bit above the recommended standard.

Doors to this facility need new closers, as do the doors in the dinning hall facility. Opening force is right at the limit and should be modified when the doors are replaced. Towel dispensers in this room are adequate,.

The main park bathrooms have a sidewalk perpendicular to the building with a wider concrete slab in front. This sidewalk is only 3 foot wide. Each of the units (women's/men's) has larger stalls, but they are only 4 foot wide. Other stalls are 3 foot wide. The larger stalls do have better turn radiuses, but are still below standard. The bathroom has a gravel parking lot and does not provide an unloading zone. Designated parking is not present either. Adding a zone and marking this would not be that difficult. Appropriate signage has been placed during most periods. Recent vandalism has removed appropriate signage, which will be replaced upon reopening of the facilities in the spring. Hand towel height is a bit over the maximum

Many of the park's toilets did not meet the correct height requirement, and are being replaced with taller units.

Playground equipment in both facilities have been upgraded and both complex units have engineered wood chips as the resilient surface, which is considered accessible. Both playground units also have accessible sidewalk with unloading zones.

The primitive bathrooms in the campground were built accessible, but there is no accessible pathway to them.

Two parking lots have aged over time and they could use restriping to remark once well marked handicap parking spots (Vinegar Mill and the Visitor Center).

Muscatatuck Park is building new bathrooms and they are designed in accordance with ADA.

Jennings County Parks do not program their own activities through the department. They only host other events programmed through other agencies. Regardless, JCPR should increase diligence to make sure programs are as accessible as possible.

Notice of Requirements

The local government building as well as the courthouse have ADA guidelines posted along with other pertinent employee/citizen information like anti-discrimination labor law.

Grievance

The park board accepts written and oral grievances to be addressed at their monthly public meetings.

Transition Plan

The transition plan is itemized on the next page.

ADA Director

Jennings County has hired a new ADA director. JCPR will be working in coordination with this individual to survey and improve accessibility. Nicci Lucas 812-352-3051, nluucas@jenningscounty-in.gov.



Long wooden ramp to the raised shelter at the Muscatatuck Park.

Programming

Transition Action Plan

The following buildings and amenities will be reanalyzed annually to gauge the progress at each site. The Dining Hall/Community Building is the most used building for the public other than the simple outdoor shelters. JCPR has recently completed the self inspection. Files along with pictures will be delivered to the ADA director and JCPR will work in coordination with this individual to solidify upgrades.

2020 Bathroom (new)

New bathrooms will greatly assist the Muscatatuck Park in meeting ADA standards. All items (access, amenities, other) will be built at ADA standards or greater.

2021 Dining Hall

An unloading zone with appropriate signage should be installed at the south location. Modification of west entrance to cannot create an acceptable grade. Door handle should be replaced. Access sidewalk should be widened.

Older Bathroom

An unloading zone could be installed. Handle features in back stalls could be improved although complete standard accordance is not possible.

Camp bathhouse and primitive bathrooms

Re-plumbing of the shower units should be done to lower access to below maximum height. An accessible walkway should (could) be added to the primitive bathroom. This may require elimination of one campsite. An unloading zone should (could) be added as well.

Signs

Many signs need upgraded and/or replaced

Shelters

Lights and electric outlets should be repositioned lower. Closer at V, Mill

William Read Home

Office ADA compliance is close, but not quite there. Many of the issues are smaller and infrastructure does lend itself to easy fixes.

Parking Lots

The Office/Visitor Center and Vinegar Mill parking lots should both be re-sealed (prior) and then re-stripped.

