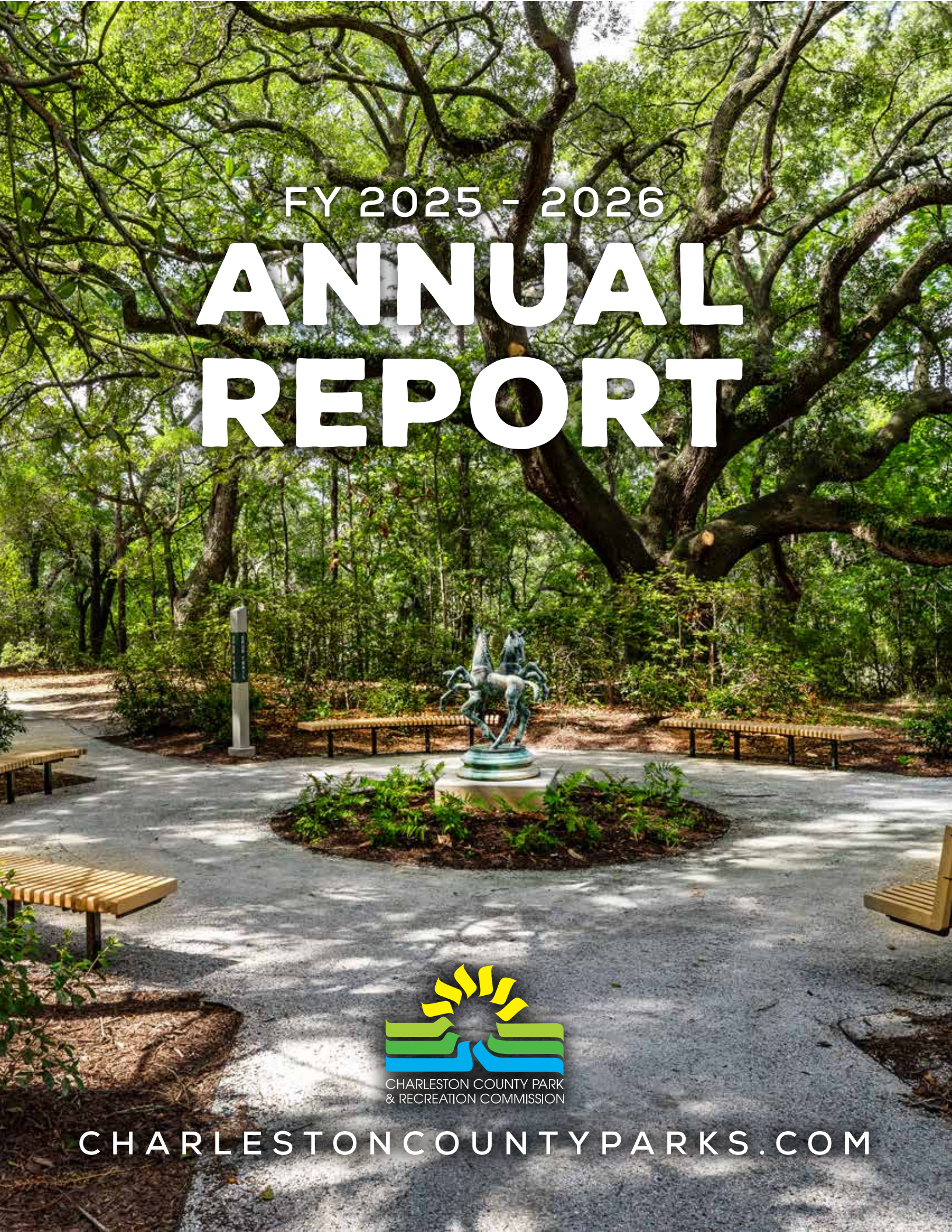


FY 2025 - 2026

ANNUAL REPORT

CHARLESTON COUNTY PARK
& RECREATION COMMISSION

CHARLESTONCOUNTYPARKS.COM

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Executive Director, Kevin Bowie

Dear Charleston County Community,

It is my pleasure to share the Charleston County Park & Recreation Commission 2025-2026 Annual Report.

A highlight of the year was opening Old Towne Creek County Park in West Ashley. This 67-acre park represents years of planning, community input, conservation, and collaboration. With accessible trails and boardwalks, scenic marsh views, a nature-inspired playground, an arboretum, and opportunities to explore the site's history and ecology, Old Towne Creek is a wonderful addition.

Throughout the year, we expanded access and created new opportunities across our agency. We acquired new properties, improved accessibility at our parks and beaches, preserved archaeological and historic resources, and shared new technology that makes it easier for people to connect with our parks.

Looking ahead, we continue to align our resources with our community's needs. The approval of $70 million in general obligation bonds this year will allow us to create new parks, expand recreation in the rural parts of the county, and make improvements at existing facilities such as Wannamaker County Park, waterparks, and boat landings.

I am grateful to our citizens, commissioners, staff, partners, and volunteers who helped make this past year so memorable and look forward to all that we will continue to build together.

I hope to see you in the parks soon.

Warmly,

Kevin F. Bowie

Kevin Bowie
Executive Director

MISSION

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

VISION

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

CORE VALUES

COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT
Enabling lives through education and programs

STEWARDSHIP
Preserving and conserving cultural, natural and historical resources

FUN
Delivering fun to customers

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION
Creating a park system that reflects the diversity of our community

ACCESSIBILITY
Removing barriers to make programs and facilities accessible for all

QUALITY
Striving for quality throughout the park system

HEALTH & WELLNESS
Providing and promoting healthy lifestyle opportunities

EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE
Always focusing on you

SAFETY
Ensuring safe and secure environments

LEADERSHIP
Providing professional staff development

BUILDING A LEGACY
Maintaining a vision for the future while sustaining a healthy park system

FISCAL YEAR 25-26 BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



Brad Taggart
Chair



Mattese Lecque
Vice Chair



Amy Adams
Secretary-Treasurer



Lisa S. King
Commissioner



Garrett Lacy
Commissioner



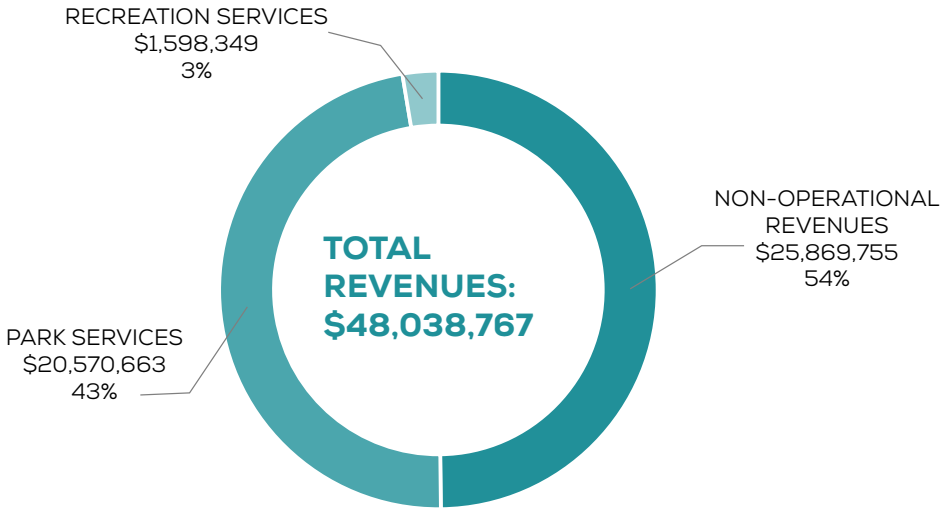
Merriweather Mulé
Commissioner



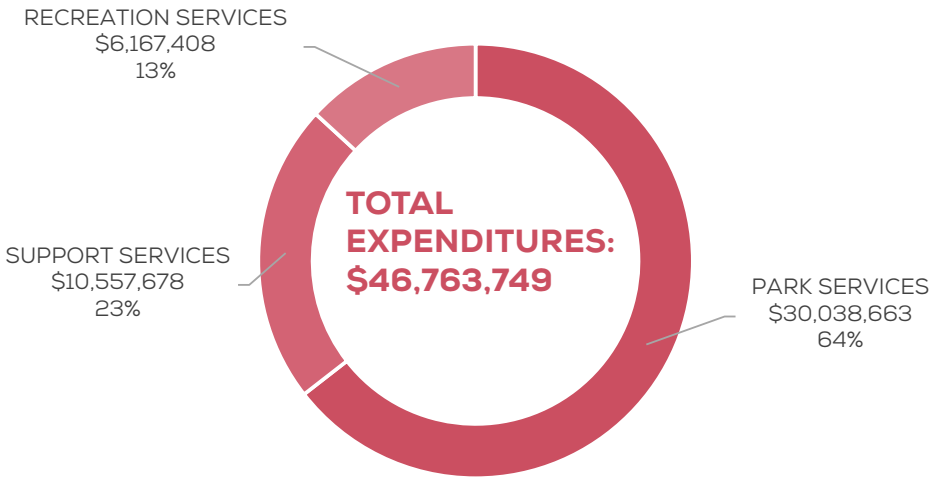
Noah Rosenthal
Commissioner

YOUR DOLLARS AT WORK

FY 25/26 REVENUES



FY 25/26 EXPENDITURES



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

PARK AND FACILITY INVENTORY

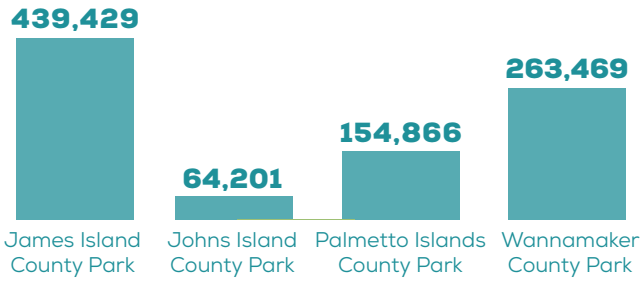
3 ADVENTURE SPORTS ATTRACTIONS	3 BEACH PARKS	19 BOAT LANDINGS
1 CAMPGROUND	2 COMMUNITY CENTERS	4 DOG PARKS
3 HISTORICAL SITES	1 MARINA	2 PIERS
4 RECREATION COMPLEXES	5 REGIONAL PARKS	13 RENTAL FACILITIES
1 SWIMMING POOL	3 PASSIVE RECREATION PARKS	3 WATERPARKS

TOTAL PARKS AND FACILITIES: 67

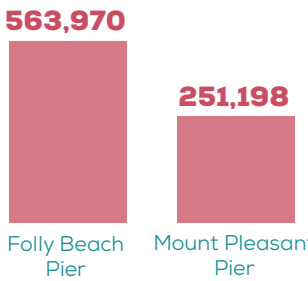


PARK AND FACILITY ATTENDANCE

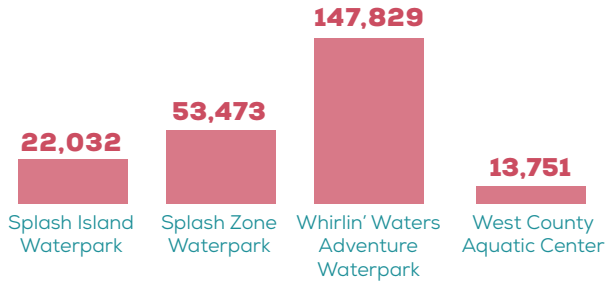
REGIONAL PARK ATTENDANCE



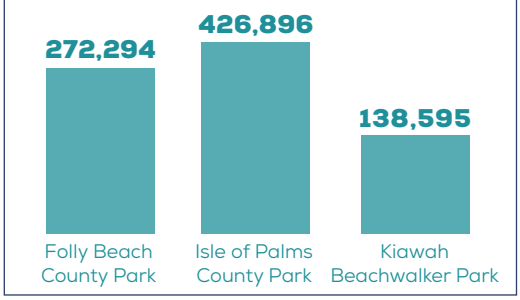
PIER ATTENDANCE



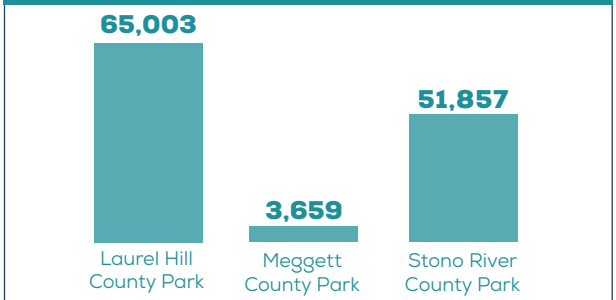
WATERPARK AND POOL ATTENDANCE



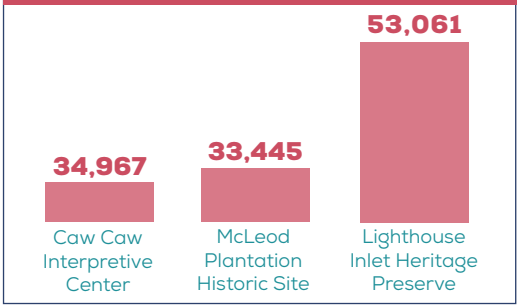
BEACH PARK ATTENDANCE



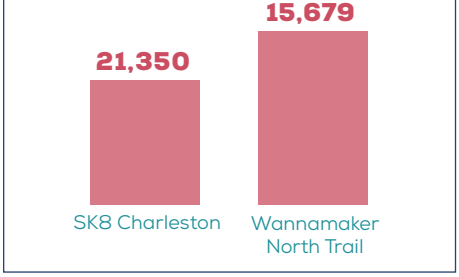
PASSIVE RECREATION PARK ATTENDANCE



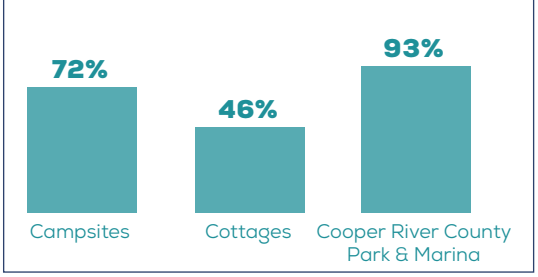
HISTORICAL SITE ATTENDANCE



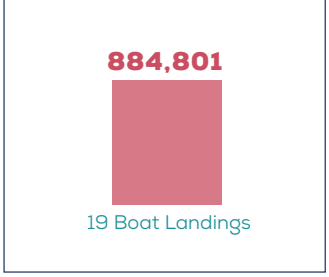
SKATE PARK AND BIKE TRAIL ATTENDANCE



RENTAL OCCUPANCY



BOAT LANDINGS



RECREATION PROGRAMS

262 CHALLENGE COURSE	**243** CLIMBING WALL	**94** COMMUNITY RECREATION
1,927 CULTURAL HISTORY	**572** EDUCATION	**46** FESTIVALS AND EVENTS
84 HEALTH AND WELLNESS	**29** INCLUSIVE RECREATION	**265** NATURAL HISTORY
83 OUTDOOR MISC.	**153** YOUTH CAMPS	

TOTAL RECREATION PROGRAMS: 3,758



PROGRAM & EVENT PARTICIPATION



3,457
CHALLENGE COURSE



25,083
CLIMBING WALL



45,785
COMMUNITY RECREATION



30,171
CULTURAL HISTORY



12,225
EDUCATION



24,375
FESTIVALS AND EVENTS



8,221
HEALTH AND WELLNESS



2,815
INCLUSIVE RECREATION



14,010
NATURAL HISTORY



1,243
OUTDOOR MISC.



212,163
HOLIDAY FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS



2,683
YOUTH CAMPS

TOTAL PARTICIPATION: 382,231

ACHIEVING OUR MISSION

Improving the quality of life starts with listening to our community and then aligning our resources and priorities with what our residents have told us they need. This approach is reflected in our 10-year comprehensive plan, 2033: Parks & Recreation for All! (PARFA), and our five-year strategic plan, which together provide a clear framework for decisions, investments and annual objectives.

The 2026 authorization of up to $70 million in general obligation bonds is a strong example of this strategic alignment in action. Charleston County Parks used community input, long-range planning and identified capital needs to establish priorities for future investments. The bond provides funding for projects including the development of Cooper River County Park; a new playground at Wannamaker County Park; investments in rural recreation, including the purchase of property in the east county; and improvements to existing facilities, including our waterparks and many of our boat landings, such as Remley's Point, Sol Legare, Shem Creek and W.O. Thomas Jr. In addition, the agency continues to make improvements identified through our ADA transition plan.

This approach connects what our community needs with a process for determining where resources can have the greatest impact. Our comprehensive plan was developed through extensive public engagement, including more than 3,000 surveys, community conversations, workshops and pop-up events. These priorities continue to guide our strategic and capital planning today.

For Charleston County Parks, fulfilling our mission means working with our residents and partners to develop parks, programs, and opportunities to serve our growing community.



TEAM ENGAGEMENT

4 WAYS WE ENGAGED AND SUPPORTED OUR TEAM

1

The annual Maintenance Rodeo at Johns Island County Park brings Charleston County Parks' maintenance team members together for a day of friendly competition, teamwork and skill-building. Employees from parks across the county participate in timed challenges using riding mowers, tractors, backhoes, trailers and other equipment. More importantly, the event provides an opportunity for employees to connect outside their normal routines and responsibilities. The day concludes with a division-wide cookout, strengthening relationships, boosting morale and fostering a greater sense of belonging across the maintenance team.

2

Composed of an HR representative and a manager from each division, Charleston County Parks Internship Committee was developed to act in a steering capacity for the summer intern program. Along with brainstorming for recruitment, recognition, service projects and more, the committee planned team outings to encourage camaraderie and gain practical work experience by working on a group project that supports our strategic plans. This experience helps better prepare interns for future employment with one intern describing her experience as "an unforgettable summer with a truly impactful organization."

3

The Social Media Ambassador Program gives Charleston County Parks employees an opportunity to help tell the agency's story from the perspective of those who know our parks best. Employees can submit photos and videos captured during their work, giving the agency a broader and more authentic look at the people, places, and experiences that make Charleston County Parks unique. Employees have submitted more than 40 photos and videos, reaching more than 500,000 people, generating more than 4,000 shares and 290,000 video views. The program creates a direct connection between employees and the agency's public-facing storytelling.

4

Charleston County Parks launched a mentor program in 2025 for employees seeking to grow professionally. The purpose of the program is to strengthen our workforce so they can be a more valuable contributors to the agency's success. This is accomplished by transferring knowledge, boosting career development, building connections which leads to greater employee satisfaction, retention, and engagement.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

3 PROGRAMS TO BETTER SERVE AND INVOLVE OUR COMMUNITY

1

In March 2026, Gold Pass members were sent a survey designed to better understand member perceptions, visitation habits, program interests, and preferred communication channels. The survey collected 4,357 responses and provides valuable insight into how members use and value their park system. The results demonstrate exceptionally strong satisfaction and loyalty among Gold Pass members. Respondents overwhelmingly view the Gold Pass as a strong value, visit parks frequently, and associate Charleston County Parks with positive emotional experiences including relaxation, nature, family time, and community.

2

Participating in community events positions our staff as experts, allows us to meet constituents where they are, and strengthens community connections all while creating engaging experiences for staff. In 2023, we launched the Community Relations Bureau, a program that matches staff with community events. Prior to the Bureau's creation, we often had to decline requests to wellness fairs, school, and other events due to staffing. Today, the Bureau includes over a third of our staff, and last year we attended 36 community events, a number that has doubled each year since inception. Recognizing the growing demand, we created a Community Relations Coordinator position in 2026.

3

Charleston County Parks has expanded access to a lifesaving resource through a partnership with Charleston Center, a division of Charleston County Government. The partnership provides Opioid Rescue Kits containing Naloxone (Narcan) at publicly accessible locations throughout the park system, including James Island County Park, SK8 Charleston, Stono River County Park, Folly Beach Pier and Lighthouse Inlet Heritage Preserve. Each box includes instructions for administering Naloxone, providing clear guidance for members of the public during an emergency.

MAKING AN IMPACT

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

1

We are proud partners in the Youth Apprenticeships program through Trident Technical College. Apprentices (rising high school juniors and above) receive paid on-the-job training with our maintenance staff along with related classroom instruction. Students who complete the two-year program receive one year of free college credit alongside national credentials from the U.S. Department of Labor. Two of our 2025 apprentices ranked within the top five of the HVAC program and one, in industrial maintenance, graduated high school early.

2

Over the past three years, Charleston County Parks has made significant progress in preserving and understanding the archaeological history contained within its park properties. In 2026, the agency brought archaeological collections previously housed in five locations across South Carolina and Georgia together under one roof at the Warren Lasch Conservation Center in North Charleston. The centralized collection is now being systematically cataloged, preserved and evaluated, creating a stronger foundation for research and public interpretation. Four artifacts have already undergone conservation treatment, with additional objects being considered for future display, exhibits, signage and educational programs throughout the park system.

3

In an effort to make one of the agency's most popular sports more accessible, Charleston County Parks partnered with nonprofit adaptive sports organization Catalyst Sports to offer Adaptive Climbing programs at James Island County Parks' Palmetto Peaks climbing facility. Climbers with disabilities of all experience levels are welcomed to this encouraging environment that highlights individual strengths and fosters growth, using specialized adaptive climbing equipment and trained staff and volunteers. The local coordinator of the Catalyst Sports chapter is a national para climbing champion and international bronze medalist, serving as a powerful example of what it means to overcome obstacles.

INNOVATING

2 INNOVATIONS THAT ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

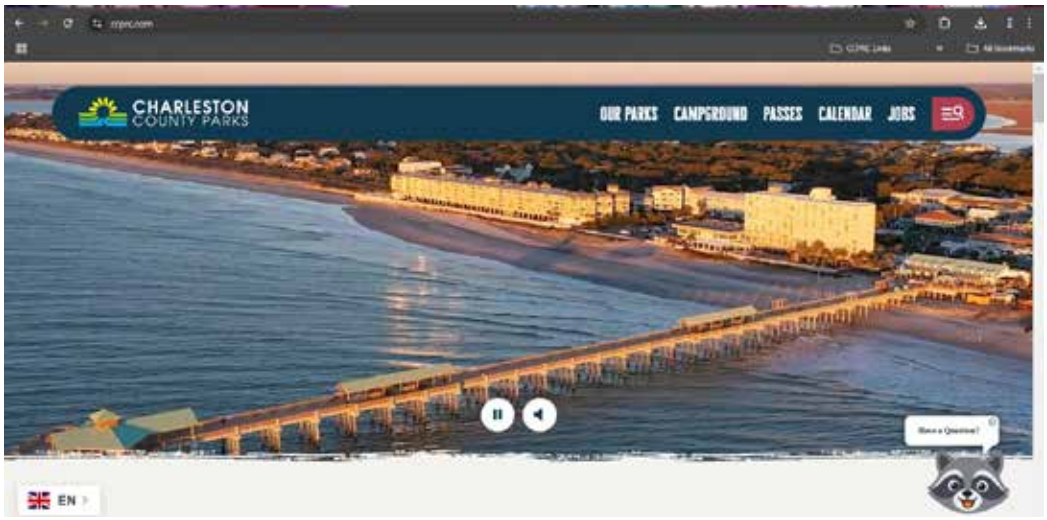
1

In April 2025, Charleston County Parks launched a newly redesigned website, creating a more accessible, user-friendly digital front door to Charleston Countys Parks' programs, services, and locations. This transition included a modern website platform built to better serve the needs of our community. Improved navigation, enhanced search functionality, responsive design, and clearer content make it easier for residents and visitors to find the information they need.

The new platform also strengthens Charleston County Parks' ability to communicate with the public. Staff now have more efficient tools to manage content, promote programs, and keep information timely and accurate. This means visitors can spend less time searching for information and more time connecting with the parks and experiences Charleston County Parks provides.

2

Park visits and planning adventures got even easier with the launch of the Charleston County Parks app. Gold Pass holders can now use their phones as their membership card at park entrances, while all guests can view upcoming and past registered activities, register for programs, and receive important notifications. Whether heading to the park for a day of fun or joining a program, the Charleston County Parks app makes it easier to manage memberships, registrations and activities in one place.



CREATING ACCESS

WAYS WE ARE EXPANDING ACCESS

1

In partnership with Waymaker Offroad Wheelchairs, Charleston County Parks offers powered wheelchairs at our beach parks at no cost. During the off-season, the chairs are moved to other parks for trail use. These powered wheelchairs allowed 64 users with disabilities independent experiences in 2025. To further increase beach accessibility, we improved and expanded the boardwalks, shower area and a wheelchair observation deck at Isle of Palms County Park and added accessible beach mats at our other beach parks.

2

In 2026, Charleston County Parks acquired 94-acres south of Awendaw for future development as a public park. Using Charleston County Greenbelt funds, the agency partnered with a local family foundation with a mutual vision to bring recreational opportunities to this under-served rural community. Amenities could include trails, pond access, a swimming pool and more.



IMPROVING HEALTH & WELLNESS

2 INNOVATIONS THAT ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

1

In May, Charleston County Parks outdoor recreation staff assisted with an immersive safety training event hosted by the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Paddlecraft Safety Program, in partnership with the American Canoe Association. Held at James Island County Park across five instructional tracks, the event included on-water and on-shore instruction for more than 50 active duty and civilian participants involved with boating safety education and outreach. The program was designed to strengthen skills, leadership and community outreach in paddler safety.

2

Charleston County Parks' fitness and wellness team introduced a Gentle Yoga Flow program at recreation centers in the rural communities of McClellanville and Hollywood. Helpful for beginners and those living with physical challenges, the program focuses on gentle, movement to improve range of motion, balance and flexibility while fostering a sense of calm and enhancing overall well-being. This active living program aims to introduce older adults to new experiences and people in the community.



EMPHASIS ON SUSTAINABILITY

2 WAYS MAKING OUR WORLD A BETTER PLACE NOW AND FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

1

Charleston County Parks advanced environmental sustainability by installing a Motus Wildlife Tracking System at Caw Caw Interpretive Center, connecting the park to a global network monitoring wildlife migration. The solar-powered tower reuses an existing power pole, extending its life while adding a new conservation purpose. Six antennas provide approximately 15 miles of detection coverage, tracking tagged birds, bats, and insects. Within months, the system recorded its first species, an American Kestrel. The data supports research on migration routes, timing, and behavior while creating opportunities for public education and conservation.

2

The stabilization and opening of the historic dairy building at McLeod Plantation Historic Site marks another step in preserving Charleston County's cultural resources while making them accessible to the public. Stabilization work preserved key historic features and allows visitors to safely enter the structure for the first time. The building contains architectural and archaeological evidence spanning centuries of change. Its opening expands the visitor experience while creating new opportunities for research, interpretation, learning, and discovery about the people and generations who shaped the property.



OLD TOWNE CREEK COUNTY PARK GRAND OPENING

On June 30, 2026, Charleston County Parks celebrated the opening of Old Towne Creek County Park, the first county park located in West Ashley. The 67-acre property offers a welcoming place to enjoy nature, recreation and the area's rich history, with accessible trails and boardwalks, scenic marsh views, a nature-inspired playground, and opportunities to discover the site's unique ecology and past.

Old Towne Creek County Park is a living memorial to Emily Simmons Ravenel (1886–1971), established by her daughter, Emily Ravenel Farrow (1915–2011). Both women were passionate gardeners and planted many of the ornamental plants that can still be enjoyed throughout the property today. In her estate plans, Mrs. Farrow placed a conservation easement on the land, ensuring it would remain protected from significant development and preserved as a quiet place for learning, reflection and connection with nature.

Charleston County Parks purchased the property from Lowcountry Land Trust in 2011. Following years of planning and community input, construction began in 2023, bringing the vision for this special property to life. In 2026, Old Towne Creek was added to the National Register of Historic Places in recognition of its unique landscape setting and architecture. The park is also home to an accredited Level I arboretum, adding another layer to its opportunities for exploration and learning.







CHARLESTON COUNTY PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
861 Riverland Drive, Charleston, SC 29412
CharlestonCountyParks.com | (843) 795-4386

2025 - 2026 Annual Report
Printed November 2026

