



DRAFT Systemwide Recommendations for the Dallas County Open Space Master Plan

The recommendations outlined in the following pages have been proposed to address enhancement of the entire Parks and Open Space Program. Recommendations fall into one of four categories: **policy**, **program**, **partnership**, and **project**. The categories inform the type of action required to implement various strategies for improving, promoting, maintaining, and protecting the Parks and Open Space Program. The recommendation categories are defined below.

Policy Recommendations

These recommendations relate to modifications to or the addition of policies that guide management, development, and maintenance of the Parks and Open Space Program.

Program Recommendations

These recommendations focus on enhancements or additions to the operational procedures and activities within the Parks and Open Space Program, aimed at improving its management and maintenance practices.

Partnership Recommendations

These recommendations focus on establishing and strengthening collaboration efforts between the Parks and Open Space Program and external organizations, or stakeholders, to enhance resources and support for the program's objectives.

Project Recommendations

These recommendations focus on specific initiatives within the Parks and Open Space Program aimed at achieving defined goals and objectives, involving tangible actions or improvements to enhance the quality and accessibility of a preserve.

Additionally, for each recommendation the related plan goal(s) have been identified, tying back to the four overarching goals established for this plan.

Enhance - Implement context-sensitive improvements to give residents the opportunity to explore and interact with the natural environment in a safe and responsible manner.

Connect - Increase awareness of and access to preserves to better connect residents to nature in their own backyard and throughout the County.

Protect - Conserve and sustain the natural and cultural resources within the County while celebrating the unique features of preserves.

Manage - Employ best practices for managing and funding the preserves and steward strong relationships with partners to ensure longevity of the Parks and Open Space Program.

POLICY		
<i>Strategy</i>		<i>Related Goals</i>
POL.1	Add a park ranger to monitor preserves on a more regular basis to increase sense of safety and maintain a regular presence in the preserves that do not have a preserve management or maintenance partner.	Manage
POL.2	As the number of programs, partnerships, and projects that the Parks & Open Space Program manages increases, add additional staff to balance new responsibilities and reduce deferred maintenance.	Manage
POL.3	Update Chapter 50 of the County Code to reflect more modern practices that align with the recommendations of this Master Plan such as changes to daily operations and natural/cultural resource management.	Manage
POL.4	Update current criteria for accepting property into the parks & open space program focusing on expanding access to existing preserves, increasing ability to provide desired facilities or amenities, and protecting valuable natural or cultural resources.	Enhance, Manage
POL.5	Strive for equitable and accessible distribution of preserve lands throughout the unincorporated areas to fulfill unmet open space and outdoor recreational needs of county residents.	Connect
POL.6	Establish guidelines for 'maintenance modes' for each preserve classification, providing direction for frequency and type of maintenance procedures.	Manage
POL.7	Require new soft-surface trails be designed by a professional firm to utilize their expertise on the best routes, surface materials, and maintenance over time.	Enhance
POL.8	Allocate funding for professional development trainings and attending conferences to grow staff knowledge and learn best practices from peer entities.	Manage
POL.9	Explore developing a cost sharing program between the county and member cities to show accountability and strengthen relationship with partners.	Manage
POL.10	Support the establishment of a Dallas County Parks Foundation to help improve parks through private donations.	Enhance, Manage
POL.11	Develop a design and construction standards manual for preserves within the unincorporated area that guide improvements and maintenance to provide consistent standards and brand.	Manage

PROGRAM		
	<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Related Goals</i>
PROG.1	Continue to grow the volunteer program run by the Dallas County Open Space Coordinator to improve the preserves and reduce overall maintenance costs.	Connect, Manage
PROG.2	Continue to pursue designations to highlight unique elements of the preserves as a way to promote awareness and attract visitors.	Enhance, Connect
PROG.3	Explore opportunities with allied organizations to hold programs within preserves such as bird walks, clean ups, and BioBlitz events to provide new experiences for preserve visitors.	Enhance, Connect
PROG.4	Utilize interpretative signage to highlight unique habitats to support awareness and engagement within the local community.	Enhance, Connect
PROG.5	Align future open space preservation and planning with goals from local Watershed Protection Plans to ensure protection of water resources within preserves.	Protect, Manage
PROG.6	Develop a promotional campaign for 2026 to celebrate 50 years since Lester Lorch Park, the first park in the Parks & Open Space Program, was dedicated as an opportunity to bring awareness to the program.	Connect
PROG.7	Regularly maintain and update the Dallas County Parks & Open Space Program website to provide consistent and current information to the public.	Connect
PROG.8	Implement a robust social media strategy with frequent and varied content to grow awareness of the program and attract new visitors.	Connect
PROG.9	Establish a program for emergency markers along trails to facilitate emergency response and increase safety within preserves.	Manage
PROG.10	Continue to work with partners to pursue grant funding for preserve improvements to diversify funding sources available to accomplish projects.	Manage
PROG.11	Create easily updated marketing materials such as QR codes or digital brochures to increase accessibility to information and minimize time required for future updates.	Connect
PROG.12	Develop educational materials to share with elected officials regarding the benefits of various land management practices to serve as a resource.	Manage
PROG.13	Provide translation of all published materials into predominant languages for Dallas County to increase the audience this information reaches.	Connect
PROG.14	Develop a FAQ about the program to share with preserve management partners and potential partnering entities in order to share consistent information on common topics.	Connect, Manage

PARTNERSHIP		
<i>Strategy</i>		<i>Related Goals</i>
PAR.1	Work with partners such as the Audubon Center and Trust for Public Land to expand stewardship, education, and community access opportunities.	Protect, Manage
PAR.2	Establish a regularly occurring meeting between Dallas County and the preserve management partners to stay informed about recent accomplishments and challenges.	Manage
PAR.3	Build relationships with nature conservation organizations to pursue funding for habitat conservation.	Protect, Manage
PAR.4	Coordinate with Dallas County Health & Human Services to increase community awareness, engagement, and promote healthy lifestyle activities related to open space accessibility.	Connect, Manage
PAR.5	Establish interdepartmental agreements with relevant county departments to align County initiatives and request support where appropriate.	Manage
PAR.6	Partner with a local university with a GIS department to digitize trails and location of amenities within preserves as a way to outsource tasks in a cost effective manner.	Connect, Manage
PAR.7	Have a visible presence at preserve partner community events or activities when appropriate to bring awareness to the Parks & Open Space Program.	Connect
PAR.8	Implement and maintain a regular communication schedule for each preserve management partner including email, virtual and in-person meetings to actively maintain partnership and coordinate project updates.	Manage
PAR.9	Create a DCOSP "How to Enjoy Your Visit" printed brochure with a map of the preserve system or individual preserves and distribute brochures via local and regional entities to share knowledge of the variety of experiences the preserves offer.	Manage
PAR.10	Coordinate with relevant agencies to assist with cultural resource management including determining the best way to share these resources with the public in an appropriate manner.	Protect, Manage
PAR.11	Coordinate with Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPWD) and US Fish and Wildlife (USFWS) where threatened and endangered species are identified within preserves to ensure appropriate action steps are followed.	Protect, Manage
PAR.12	Partner with university and academic institutions to study ecosystem services within preserves as a way to determine the contributions preserves provide for Dallas County residents.	Protect
PAR.13	Explore a partnership with Leave No Trace to bring awareness to caring for the outdoors.	Protect, Manage
PAR.14	Collaborate with partners to seek donation opportunities from corporations and philanthropists as a way to diversify funding sources.	Manage
PAR.15	Work with NCTCOG on regional trail initiatives to learn about resources and funding opportunities.	Connect
PAR.16	Work with partners such as the Texas A&M Forest Service to monitor impact of EAB over time within the preserves.	Protect, Manage

PROJECT		
<i>Strategy</i>		<i>Related Goals</i>
PROJ.1	Work with other County departments with drone equipment for special projects and remote monitoring elements such as vegetation and wildlife health, facility inspections, development planning, and emergency response guidance.	Manage
PROJ.2	Invest in security cameras to help deter vandalism and illegal dumping and improve the sense of safety within preserves.	Manage
PROJ.3	Incorporate permeable surfaces and other low-impact design solutions when updating, enhancing or developing parking lots and trailheads to reduce impacts of run-off during rain events.	Enhance
PROJ.4	Remove existing debris and proactively deter illegal dumping to provide visitors with a safe and welcoming experience at preserves.	Manage
PROJ.5	Utilize best practice clearing techniques to remove invasive plant species and allow native plant species to flourish.	Protect, Manage
PROJ.6	Develop consistent signage to be implemented at preserve entrances and throughout preserves to serve as a recognizable brand for the Parks & Open Space Program.	Enhance
PROJ.7	Utilize software such as i-Tree Eco to quantify the environmental (e.g. carbon sequestration) and monetary benefits that the tree canopy within the preserve system brings to the County.	Manage
PROJ.8	Conduct conditions assessments of each preserve on an annual or bi-annual basis to determine amenities and facilities in need of maintenance or replacement and to maintain accountability.	Manage
PROJ.9	Explore feasibility of larger soft-surface trail loop that would connect Goat Island, Riverbend, Cottonwood Creek, and Palmetto-Alligator Slough to promote eco-tourism opportunities.	Enhance, Connect