



FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY



12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 927 • Fairfax, VA 22035-1118
703-324-8700 • Fax: 703-324-3974 • www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks

For Immediate Release

Judy Pedersen, PIO

September 11, 2015

E-mail: parkmail@fairfaxcounty.gov

IR-082

Press Inquiries: 703-324-8662

Fairfax Parks Are More Popular Than Ever

87% of Residents In Fairfax Report Regular Park Use

Newly released results from a survey conducted as part of the 2015 **Parks Count** Needs Assessment Study, indicates Fairfax County parks are more popular than ever with results reflecting the highest park use numbers received in the last five community surveys. Additionally, **93%** of residents indicate that parks are extremely or highly important to their quality of life - the highest rating in 12 years of measurement.

Fairfax County Park Authority Director Kirk Kincannon stated, “To help manage the increased demand and intensification of park use, the Park Authority has increasingly relied on the use of park volunteers, friends groups, business partners and the Fairfax County Park Foundation to help provide the community programs and services the Park Authority is known for. Like all agencies in Fairfax County, the Park Authority has been dealing with a challenging economy, as use and demand for public services has increased. In 2016 Fairfax County will be looking to address much of the parks systems deferred capital reinvestment through an upcoming park bond referendum.”

Other Key Park Needs Survey Results Include the following:

- Use of parks in Fairfax County surpasses the national average: 87% of households have visited parks operated by FCPA in the past 12 months; the national benchmark is 79%.
- The two most important services for the Park Authority to provide are: 1) preservation of open space and the environment; and 2) provision of opportunities to improve physical health and fitness.
- The three most important (expressed needed) parks and facilities are: paved walking and biking trails, large parks and small community parks.
- The three most important outdoor or indoor facilities are: swimming pools, exercise and fitness facilities and indoor gyms (basketball, volleyball, etc.).
- The most important programs/activities are: biking, hiking, walking, exercise/fitness, special events and concerts.

Continued on Page 2



If accommodations and/or alternative formats are needed, please call (703) 324-8563, at least 10 working days in advance of the registration deadline or event. TTY (703) 803-3354.

- The top four actions households are most willing to fund with County tax dollars: expand/renovate walking/biking trails, purchase land to preserve open space, restore/maintain natural areas, and upgrade/renovate existing park buildings.
- If given \$100 to spend on parks, households would spend it this way:
 - Repair/maintain existing parks and infrastructure: \$30
 - Upgrade/expand existing park facilities: \$22
 - Conserve and maintain natural and historic resources: \$18
 - Acquire new parkland and open space: \$17
 - Develop new recreation and parks facilities: \$13
- 62% of households rated high quality parks, trails, recreation facilities and services as ‘extremely important’ to the quality of life in Fairfax County; another 31% rated it ‘highly important’.

The purpose of the survey is to provide statistically valid, objective, and quantitative data reflecting public input relating to park and recreation needs. Including such a survey in a park and recreation needs assessment study is an industry best practice.

PROS Consulting LLC, a nationally-recognized leader and expert in the parks and recreation industry, was selected as the primary consultant to provide assistance for the needs assessment. ETC Institute/Leisure Vision, a member of the consultant team, administered and is analyzing the need survey. ETC is an industry leader in the design, administration, and analysis of park and recreation surveys.

In March of 2015, surveys were sent to 15,000 randomly selected Fairfax County households. A threshold of 3,000 responses was needed for analysis; 4,665 responses were obtained. The completed surveys yield a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of +/- 1.4%.

A full summary of the survey results can be found on the Parks Count website at: <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parkscount/> For more information contact the Public Information Office at 703-324-8662.

###