BUNCOMBE COUNTY
PARKS & RECREATION

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Orientation

Letter from Director

Dear Advisory Board Members,

On behalf of Buncombe County Parks and Recreation, I am pleased to welcome you and thank you for your commitment to serving our community through the Recreation Advisory Board. Your willingness to volunteer your time, expertise, and perspective plays a vital role in helping us fulfill our mission*: to improve the quality of life within our community by providing high-quality recreational facilities, opportunities for social interaction, and programming that encourages health and wellness through active lifestyles.*

As an Advisory Board member, you are an essential partner in shaping the future of our parks, greenways, open spaces, and recreation programs. Your guidance helps ensure that our work reflects the needs, priorities, and values of the residents we serve. The insight you bring—whether through professional knowledge, lived experience, or community involvement—strengthens our ability to make informed, thoughtful, and inclusive decisions.

We are also grateful for the example you set in supporting the core values that guide our department and Buncombe County as a whole. Respect, Integrity, Collaboration, Honesty, and Equity are the foundation of how we serve the public and how we work with one another. As volunteers and leaders, your commitment to these values helps cultivate a culture of trust, transparency, and shared purpose.

Together, we have the opportunity to advance projects, improve facilities, expand programming, and build stronger community connections. Your support and collaboration help elevate our work and ensure that parks and recreation continue to enhance quality of life for all who call Buncombe County home.

Thank you once again for your service and dedication. We look forward to working alongside you in the year ahead and appreciate the important role you play in creating a healthy, vibrant, and connected community.

Sincerely,

Allison Dains

Director, Buncombe County Parks & Recreation, CPRP

Board Member Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of all board and commission members to:

- Ensure individual skills, interests, and commitment align with the goals and expectations of the board
- Maintain an understanding of the role of the board
- Attend an orientation provided by the board liaison.
- Attend meetings on time and be prepared by reviewing any provided documentation.
- Ensure the board or commission acts to foster inclusive representation in its decision making processes.
- Understand the authority of the board comes from the entire group, not just one member; therefore, decisions must be of a consensus or majority nature.

Buncombe County Core Values

Buncombe County is committed to fostering a workplace culture built on our core values. These values guide our interactions, decisions, and service to the community. Our Core Values are: Respect, Integrity, Collaboration, Honesty, and Equity.

Buncombe County Parks and Recreation Mission

Our mission is to improve the quality of life within our community by providing high quality recreational facilities, opportunities for social interaction, and programming which encourages health and wellness through active lifestyles.

Buncombe 2030 Strategic Plan

Buncombe 2030 is the County's next five-year roadmap that guides the County's work and priorities. This plan was nearly done before Helene but was paused and refocused following the storm. Grounded in our mission and values, the plan sets out goals and objectives across key focus areas, including Growth and Development, Community Health, Education, Energy and Environment, and Public Safety. The Focus Areas, Objectives, and Goals below specifically relate to the Parks and Recreation Department.

- **Focus Area: Community Health**
    - Objective 2: Improve outcomes in physical, mental, and behavioral health, and increase social connectedness.
        - Goal 2: Increase number of participants attending County sponsored, in-person programs that offer opportunities for recreation, social connectivity, and promote mental health, physical wellness, and overall wellbeing in the community from 35,111 in 2024 to 41,431 (18% increase) by 2030. A person's connection to their community has a huge impact on long term health outcomes. It is imperative to promote social connections to decrease loneliness and isolation, lowering the risk of related detrimental health impacts observed by public health officials nationwide since the COVID-19 Pandemic. This goal seeks to increase opportunities for Buncombe County community members to engage with others while also enjoying opportunities for physical,

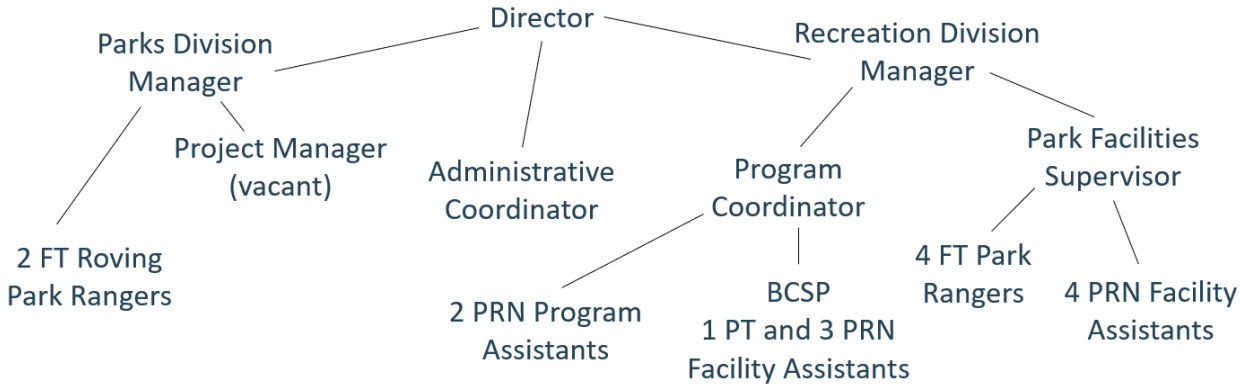
mental, and/or personal enrichment designed to positively impact participants' quality of life. Buncombe County will seek to increase the amount of in-person activities available to the community through County libraries and Parks & Recreation programming by at least 18% over the next four years.

- **Focus Area: Growth & Development**
  - Objective 2: Maximize the use of land, guiding development to targeted growth areas that lead to resilient communities.
    - Goal 2: Complete a minimum of 3.5 miles of Buncombe County managed greenway projects by 2030. Currently, Parks and Recreation have greenways that are in number of funded miles of greenways that are in development and to complete them by 2030 to help develop a more resilient community. In 2024, Tropical Storm Helene altered the landscape in key areas, making some planned projects no longer feasible. However, 3.5 miles of greenway projects have a clear implementation path, and others will be added if they become viable.

Read the entire 2030 Strategic Plan here.

Department Organizational Chart

The Parks and Recreation Department is a small but mighty team. There are currently thirteen full-time staff, one part-time staff, and nine PRN staff. Allison Dains has been the Department Director since May of 2022.



Current Administrative Staff

Director, Allison Dains
Parks Division Manager, Joseph Guseman
Recreation Division Manager, Liz Hoekwater
Administrative Coordinator, Adam Zinke
Park Facilities Supervisor, Jonathan Neary
Program Coordinator, Mac Stanley

Interdepartmental Collaboration

The Parks and Recreation Department collaborates closely with other County departments. This includes General Services for maintenance and mowing of parks and facilities as well as Communications and Public Engagement (CAPE) for assistance with marketing, graphic design, and more.

Facilities

Buncombe County Parks and Recreation manages the following facilities which encompass a total of 583 acres. Amenities include 6.5 miles of walking and hiking trails, Lake Julian boat
launch, two disc golf courses, outdoor basketball courts, and softball, soccer, and baseball fields and more.

Parks

- Buncombe County Sports Park
- Lake Julian Park
- Cane Creek Fields and Playground
- Hominy Valley Park
- North Buncombe Park
- Karpen Soccer Fields*
- Charles D. Owen Park

Pools

- Cane Creek Pool
- Erwin Community Pool
- Hominy Valley Pool
- Owen Community Pool
- North Buncombe Pool

Nature Preserves

- Collier Cove Nature Preserve

River Parks

- Bent Creek River Park
- Corcoran Paige River Park
- Glen Bridge River Park
- Hominy Creek River Park
- Ledges Whitewater Park
- Walnut Island River Park
- Alexander River Park*

*Currently closed

Selected Facilities' Amenities

Lake Julian Park

"Frontside" – 37 Lake Julian Road off Long Shoals Road

- Two Restroom Buildings
- Boat Launch
- Paddle Boat Rentals
- Asheville Sailing Club
- Asheville Youth Rowing Club Docks and Boat House
- Marina – Lockers, Dry Slips, Wet Slips, Canoe and Kayak Racks, Picnic Shelter
- Playground
- Five Picnic Shelters
- Cornhole
- Horseshoes

"Backside" – 56 Fisherman's Trail off Hendersonville Road

- Restrooms
- Asheville Rowing Club Boat House and Docks
- Musical Playground
- Outdoor Exercise Equipment
- Disc Golf Course

Buncombe County Sports Park

- Three Restroom Buildings
- Sand Hill Community Garden
- Dog Park
- Greenworks Green House and Orchard
- Sand Hill Nature Trail Disc Golf Course
- Three grass fields (6,7,9)
- Three lighted turfed fields (1,2,8)
- Three grass fields being lighted and turfed (3,4,5)
- One Picnic Shelter
- Playground
- Musical Playground
- Walking Trail
- Outdoor Exercise Equipment
- Cornhole
- Two Bocce Ball Courts
- Fields 1-8 are managed by ABSYA (Asheville Buncombe Youth Soccer Association)

Hominy Valley Park – Fields and Pool

- Pool
- Playground
- Two Outdoor Basketball Courts
- Five Softball and Baseball Fields
- One Shelter
- Two concession stands
- Restrooms
- Discus Throwing area
- License Agreement with Hominy Valley Recreation Park (HVRP) for softball and baseball fields, shelters, and concession stands

North Buncombe Park – Fields and Pool

- Walking Trail
- Soccer Field
- Pool
- Softball Field (lighted)
- Baseball Field (lighted)
- Two shelters
- Concession Stand / Restroom Building
- License Agreement with North Buncombe Youth Athletic Association for softball and baseball fields, shelters, and concession stand

Park and Pool Visitation

Buncombe County Sports Park	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025*	FY2026
July	19,388	18,665	23,910	27,583	36,164
August	25,306	31,551	37,657	37,843	56,982
September	35,237	32,997	44,292	39,332	59,734
October	29,778	31,393	43,711	34,924	58,471
November	18,377	18,377	26,413	59,218	37,801
December	14,050	12,115	14,144	18,123	
Mid-Year	**142,136**	**145,098**	**190,127**	**217,023**	**249,152**
January	13,193	17,121	24,537	30,044	
February	17,780	21,848	31,411	41,920	
March	30,132	30,438	39,106	59,852	
April	29,860	23,148	41,586	51,640	
May	27,069	18,460	49,943	50,448	
June	22,313	24,189	75,515	43,976	
Total Cars	**282,483**	**280,302**	**452,225**	**494,903**	**249,152**

Lake Julian (Main Park)	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026
July	17,630	17,219	12,179	10,731	17,343
August	18,140	18,691	10,107	8,922	14,864
September	16,072	16,309	9,517	HELENE	14,926
October	15,447	11,905	9,111	HELENE	12,771
November	9,238	7,212	17,007	HELENE	9,269
December	22,213	14,305	18,934	18,922	
Mid-Year	**98,740**	**85,641**	**76,855**	**38,575**	**69,173**
January	6,283	5,899	4,958	8,801	
February	9,157	8,945	7,132	9,104	
March	13,963	10,433	9,912	13,743	
April	15,904	13,145	10,020	14,744	
May	17,535	14,483	12,411	17,199	
June	16,509	20,019	22,969	18,593	
Total Cars	**178,091**	**158,565**	**144,257**	**120,759**	**69,173**

Pools	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026
July	11,781	16,014	22,694	18,265	25,414
August	2,784	4,663	5,870	6,036	4,174
September	224	66	367	145	
October	0	0	0	0	
November	0	0	0	0	
December	0	0	0	0	
Mid-Year	**14,789**	**20,743**	**28,931**	**24,446**	**29,588**
January	0	0	0	0	
February	0	0	0	0	
March	0	0	0	0	
April	0	0	0	0	
May	2,698	241	1,623	486	0
June	18,967	13,838	21,204	21,898	
Total Users	**36,454**	**34,822**	**51,758**	**46,830**	

Current Park Projects

- In Progress: Systemwide Master Plan, Greenways Master Plan, Trails Master Plan, Open Space Master Plan
- Deaverview Mountain - Purchase (scheduled for mid-year 2026) and development of 342 acres to become new County Park using with $4.475M ORLP (Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership) Grant and additional funds secured by the Southern Highlands Conservancy (SAHC) through the Land and Water Fund.
- Charles D Owen Park – Design contract approved for Hoer Schaudt by Board of Commissioners 11/4/25. Phase I includes Engineering and Design. Community outreach will start early this year.
- Hominy Creek River Park – Design contract approved for McAdams Engineering by Board of Commissioners 11/4/25
- Lake Julian – RFQ closed for new bathroom on "backside" of park. Contract negotiations in progress.
- Phase II of Enka Recreation Destination Turf Project in progress.
  - Turfing and lighting fields 3,4,5
  - Includes improving walking path
  - Construction scheduled to be completed spring of 2026
- Buncombe County Sports Park ADA Playground, Pavillion, Ranger Station/Bathroom
  - Construction to begin in October 2026.

Events and Programs

Programs

- Special Olympics
  - Spring Games
  - Year-Round Sports
- CORE (Community Outreach and Recreation Experiences)
- Wander Buncombe
- Birding
- 55+ Club
- Fishing Club
- Disc Golf Club
- Coming soon – Kayak Tours at Lake Julian, Youth Mountain Biking

Events

- Winter Warm-Up
- Dog Eggstravaganza
- Kid's Fishing Tournament
- Family Camp Outs (spring and fall)
- Swannanoa Family Festival
- Earth Day
- Spring Festival
- 4th of July
- Bike Rodeo
- Fall-o-Ween
- Festival of Lights

Special Olympics

Special Olympics Buncombe County is sponsored by Buncombe County Parks and Recreation and serves over700 youth and adults with intellectual disabilities throughout the county during two annual Spring Games events and year-round training in twelve competitive sports. Year-round sports offered include tennis, soccer, basketball, swimming, cheerleading, bowling, alpine skiing and snowboarding, bocce, athletics, and golf.

In 2025, Special Olympics Buncombe County Alpine Skiing Athlete Stephen Foster competed in the Special Olympics World Winter Games in Turin, Italy. Earning a Silver Medal in Super G, Bronze Medal in Giant Slalom and 4th Place in Slalom. In 2022, the Special Olympics Buncombe County Soccer team competed in the Special Olympics USA Games in Orlando, Florida where they earned a Silver Medal in 5 v 5 soccer.

Recreation Division Manager, Liz Hoekwater and Program Coordinator, Mac Stanley are the Local Co-Coordinators for Special Olympics Buncombe County and rely heavily on our volunteers and volunteer coaches to support Special Olympics Buncombe County athletes.

Programming and Event Data

	Participants FY2022	Participants FY2023	Participants FY2024	Participants FY2025		Events FY2022	Events FY2023	Events FY2024	Events FY2025
Programming									
CORE Programming	0	729	674	964		0	26	28	46
Community Hikes / Wander Buncombe	32	55	55	7		3	4	4	2
Day Camp	Not Offered	Not Offered	35	Not Offered		0	0	2	0
55+ Club - New in 2025	Not Offered	Not Offered	Not Offered	18		0	0	0	4
Fishing Club - New in 2025	Not Offered	Not Offered	Not Offered	49		0	0	0	4
Kickball League	Not Offered	Not Offered	60	Not Offered		0	0	1	0
Birding	96	144	152	86		8	8	8	8
Total	**128**	**928**	**976**	**1124**		**11**	**38**	**43**	**64**
% Change		**625%**	**5%**	**15%**			**245%**	**13%**	**49%**
Special Olympics****									
Special Olympics Year Round Sports	75	105	114	147		5	7	7	9
Special Olympics Spring Games - Athletes	0	441	399	614		0	1	1	2
Special Olympics Spring Games - volunteers	0	700	500	1404		0	1	1	2
Total	**75**	**1246**	**1013**	**2165**		**5**	**9**	**9**	**13**
% Change		**1561%**	**-19%**	**114%**			**80%**	**0%**	**44%**
Festival of Lights									
Festival of Lights*	23,480	26,592	26,612	16,020		1	1	1	1
% Change		**13%**	**0%**	**-40%**			**0%**	**0%**	**0%**
Events									
Adult Field Day	Not Offered	Not Offered	15	Not Offered		0	0	1	0
Fishing Tournaments***	86	116	125	66		3	4	4	2
Fall-o-Ween	700	800	713	Not Offered		1	1	1	0
Dog Eggstravaganza	Not Offered	Not Offered	20	20		0	0	1	1
Winter Warm-Up - New in FY25	Not Offered	Not Offered	Not Offered	97		0	0	0	1
Spring Festival - New in FY25	Not Offered	Not Offered	Not Offered	200		0	0	0	1
Earth Day	44	32	24	16		1	1	1	1
Bike Rodeo & Safety Day	30	85	80	191		1	1	1	2
Family Campout**	56	30	242	81		1	1	3	1
Swannanoa Family Festival - New in 2025	Not Offered	Not Offered	Not Offered	200		0	0	0	1
Total	**916**	**1063**	**1219**	**871**		**7**	**8**	**12**	**10**
% Change		**16%**	**15%**	**-29%**			**14%**	**50%**	**-17%**
*FOL FY25 fewer days and no walk through days	**FY25 - Summer campout cancelled due to weather								
***FY25 - No IDD Fishing Tournament held	****FY25 - 2 Days of Special Olympics Spring Games								

Staying in Contact

Social Media

Instagram:
https://www.instagram.com/buncomberecreation/

Facebook:
https://www.facebook.com/buncomberecreation
https://www.facebook.com/lakejulianpark/
https://www.facebook.com/buncombecountysportspark/
https://www.facebook.com/SandHillCommunityGarden/
https://www.facebook.com/buncombecountyowenpool/
https://www.facebook.com/buncombrecreationerwinpool/
https://www.facebook.com/canecreekpool/
https://www.facebook.com/northbuncombepool/
https://www.facebook.com/HominyValleyPool/ =-
https://www.facebook.com/alexanderriverpark/
https://www.facebook.com/ledgespark/
https://www.facebook.com/bentcreekriverpark/
https://www.facebook.com/walnutislandpark/
https://www.facebook.com/glenbridgepark/
https://www.facebook.com/p/Corcoran-Paige-River-Park-100071106001513/
https://www.facebook.com/hominycreekriverpark/

County Communications

Parks and Recreation Newsletter: https://www.buncombenc.gov/891/Parks-Newsletter
Notification Sign-Up: https://www.buncombenc.gov/List.aspx
Calendar: https://www.buncombenc.gov/calendar.aspx

Additional Documents:

- Resolution Establishing Parks, Greenways, and Recreation Advisory Board
- Buncombe County Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Bylaws
- 2025 Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Annual Report
- Buncombe County Ordinances Relating to Parks and Recreation