

CHAPTER 3

Organizational Structure

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Introduction

Effective organizational structure promotes and enables the implementation of goals and objectives by managing resources, defining responsibilities and clarifying the division of work functions. The structure of an organization can provide for efficient communication and decision-making processes which improve employee performance and reduce internal conflict. With clearly defined responsibilities and work functions, employees are able to stay connected to the organizations' goals and objectives, specialize in individual functional areas and offer enhanced service to park patrons through effective management of existing and potential resources.



Development of an effective organizational structure is essential to the ability of the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission (OCPRC) to fulfill its mission to provide "quality recreation experiences that encourage healthy lifestyles, support economic prosperity, and promote the protection of natural resources."

Role of the Commission

Since 1966, OCPRC has managed parklands on behalf of the County of Oakland, Michigan. Established under Public Act 261 of 1965, the 10-member Parks Commission board is made up of six elected officials and four members of the public appointed by the Oakland County Board of Commissioners. The elected officials who serve by virtue of their office include:

- [Oakland County Executive](#)¹ or designee
- [Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner](#)² or designee
- One member of the [Road Commission for Oakland County](#)³
- Three members of the [Oakland County Board of Commissioners](#)⁴

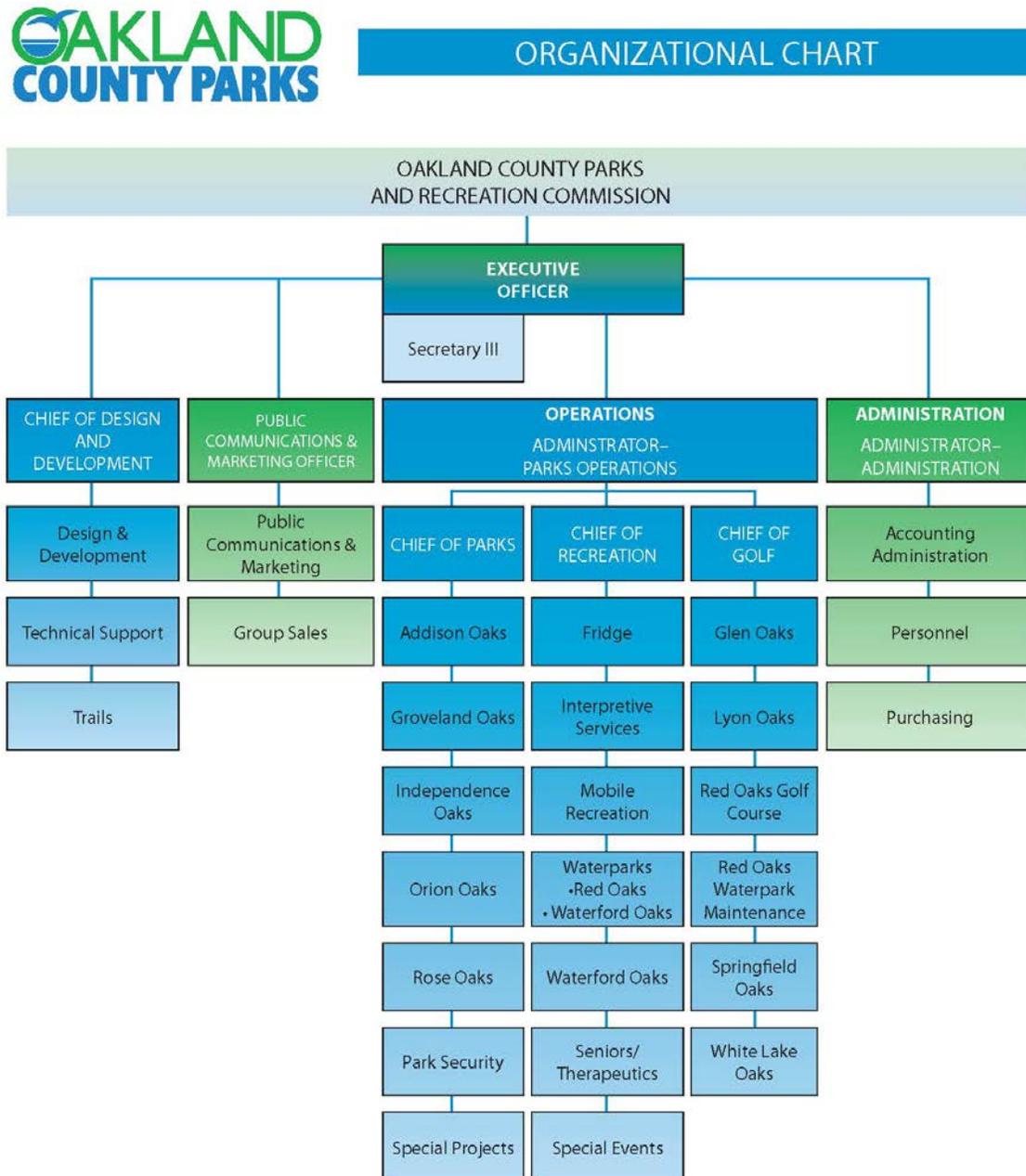
The Parks Commission is responsible for planning, developing, and operating parks and recreation facilities, making rules and regulations of the parks system, establishing a fee structure and approving budget expenditures. The Parks Commission is also responsible for recommending the acquisition of new parkland, the acceptance of grant funding, and the entrance into use agreements, all of which require the approval of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners.

Funded by a one-quarter mill tax levy renewed every ten years, the OCPRC currently manages 6,700 acres of open space which provides recreational opportunities to more than 1.8 million guests annually. In order to offset the cost of park maintenance and operations, OCPRC has instituted fees and charges at many park facilities; including vehicle access permits at several park sites. OCPRC also utilizes volunteers and partnership agreements to support park development, operations and programs. Nearly 70 full time and approximately 600 part time employees contribute to the overall goals of the organization, providing OCPRC the unique opportunity to make advancements and improvements through internal efforts and staffing.

Organizational Structure prior to 2008

Prior to 2008, the organizational structure of Oakland County Parks and Recreation included an Executive Officer, two Administrators, a Public Communications Officer, and four Chiefs who oversaw Design & Development, Parks, Recreation, and Golf, respectively.

Figure A: Organizational Structure Prior to 2008

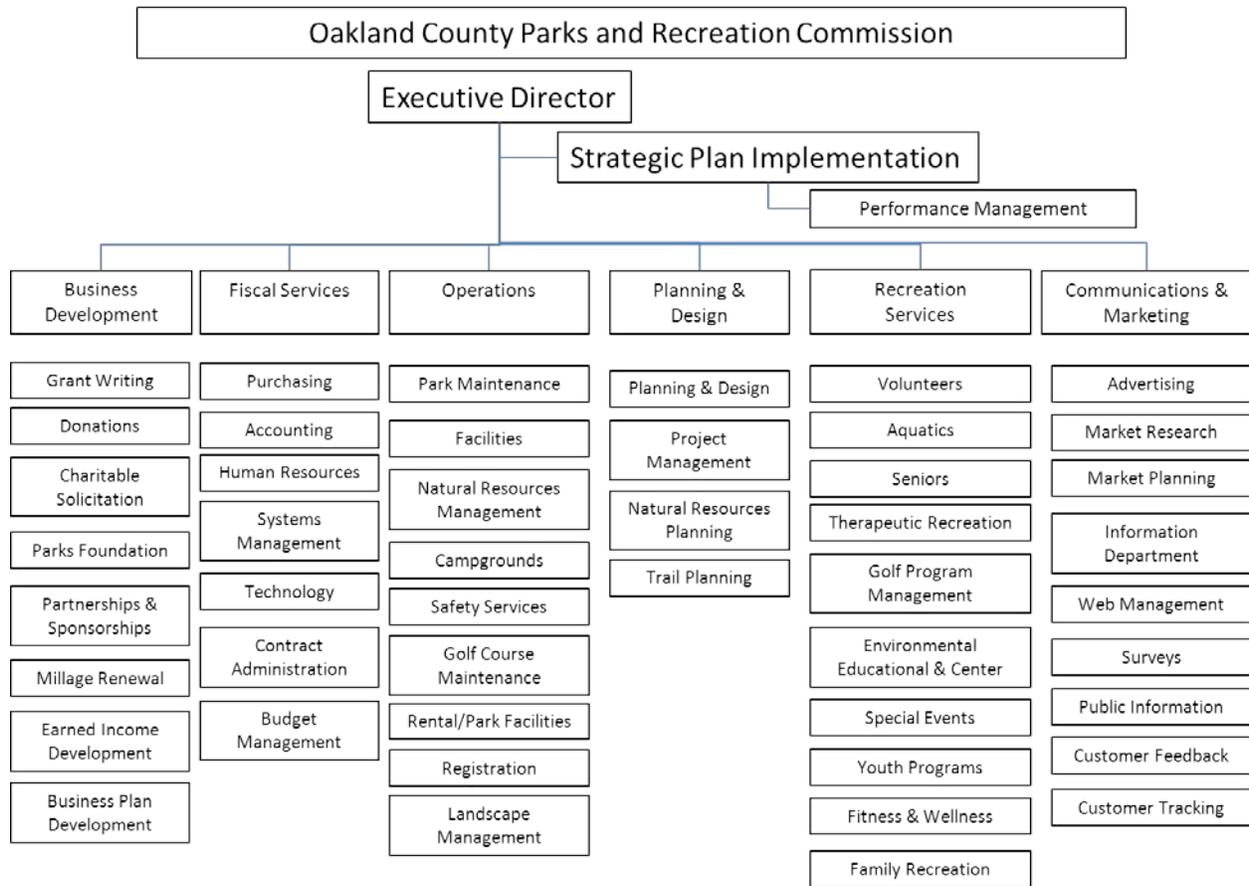


Need for Reorganization Identified by the 2008 Strategic Plan

In 2008, the Parks System contracted with PROS Consulting to develop a 10-year strategic master plan – the *Oakland County Parks Strategic Plan (2008 Strategic Plan)*. A significant amount of community and stakeholder input was used to develop the strategies in the plan in an effort to ensure that future organizational decisions would be aligned with resident needs. The *2008 Strategic Plan* was designed to provide the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission direction in reducing the cost of operations and maintenance of park properties.

The functional recommendations for reorganization did not address specific staffing or roles, but offered that, “Overall, the implementation of the strategies will make Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission stronger, more efficient, sustainable and innovative in its approach and management of the park system for years to come. It will require a shift in management thinking and policy development, as well as tough decisions to implement the strategies outlined” (PROS Consulting, 2008).

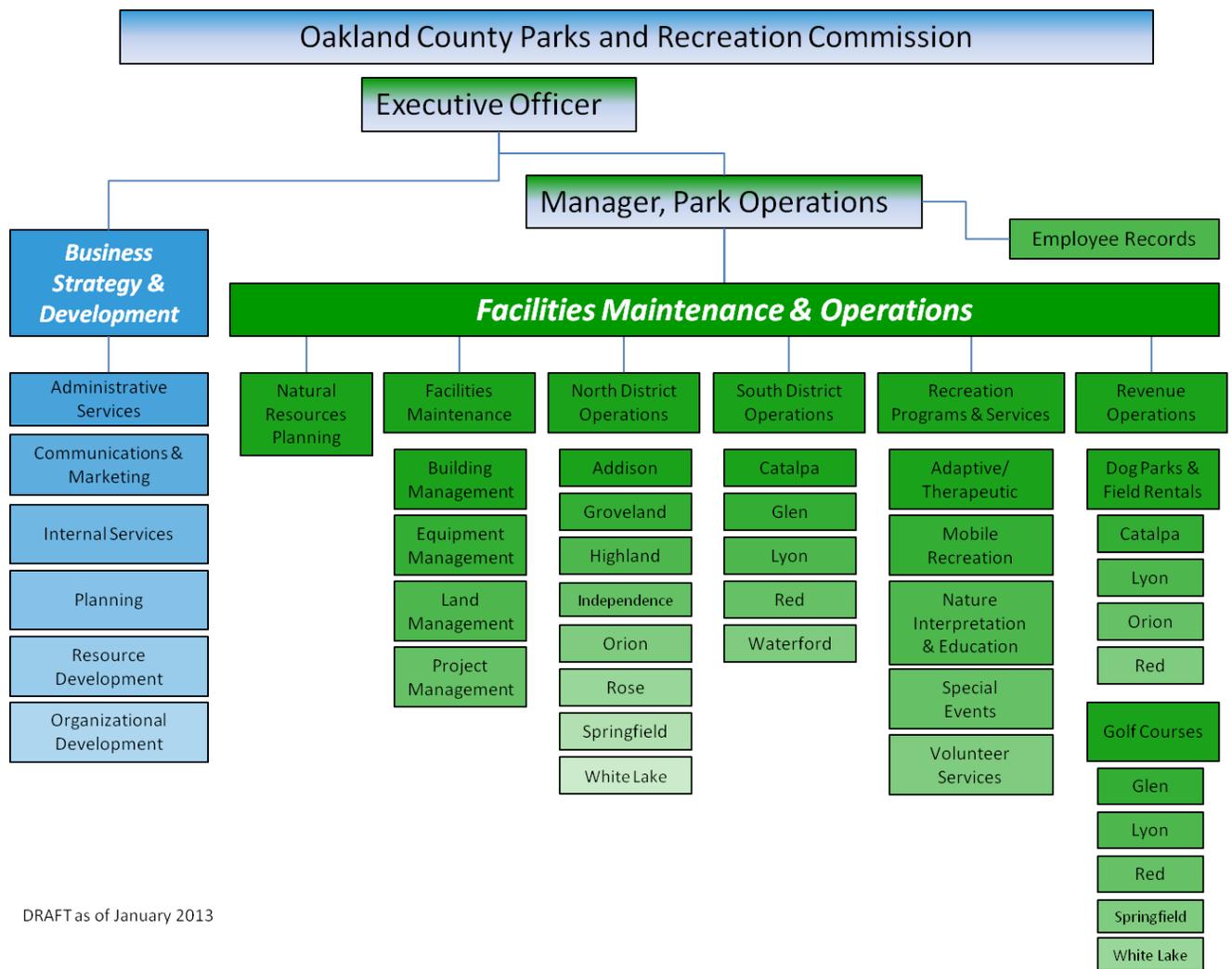
Figure B: Functional Organizational Structure⁵ Recommended by the 2008 Strategic Plan



Current Organizational Structure

The *2008 Strategic Plan* recommended a functional organizational structure to increase operational efficiency by focusing on a financially-sustainable system. At that time, the focus of the reorganization was to promote the sharing of resources and increase the cost effectiveness of Oakland County Parks and Recreation operations by coordinating services and maximizing productivity. Staff operations are led by an Executive Officer, a Manager of Parks and Recreation, and four Chiefs who oversee Facilities Maintenance, North District Operations, South District Operations and Recreation Programs and Services, respectively. Natural Resources Planning and Revenue Operations (including Dog Parks, Field Rentals and Golf Course Pro Shops) report to the Manager of Parks and Recreation directly, allowing for direct communication and facilitated decision-making as the organization shifts its focus from previous activities to these functions with implementation of the Strategic Master Plan.

Figure C: Current Functional Organizational Structure (January 2013)



DRAFT as of January 2013

Meeting Organizational Objectives of the 2008 Strategic Plan

Since implementing the *2008 Strategic Plan*, Oakland County Parks and Recreation employees within this structure have achieved the following objectives:

- Began tracking the cost of services, including supplies, equipment and labor in the Collaborative Asset Management System (CAMS). This data management system facilitates decision making by providing input into the cost of service for various maintenance activities.
- Developed and implemented 15-year forecasts for infrastructure maintenance and improvements that have promoted standards of maintenance for parks assets. Major maintenance projects are scheduled based on the life cycle of the infrastructure, and the year built/last year repaired criteria.
- Developed and implemented prioritization criteria for the Capital Improvement Project (CIP) budget which has facilitated fiscal responsibility in capital improvement planning, education of partners and staff on infrastructure investments, and equity in development of park properties. The established criterion for CIP prioritization includes evaluation of public need based on regulation & safety requirements, business revenue opportunities, and enhanced customer service.
- Developed operational standards and policies to facilitate equity and fairness in decision making.
- Established a stronger, more positive connection to Oakland County government services which has provided for transition of full-time accounting and fiscal services resources to Oakland County Management & Budget, support for Information Technology Roadmap implementation, transition of the Oakland County Market operations to Parks and Recreation, and the ongoing development of partnerships with Planning and Economic Development staff on programs & special events that draw new patrons and revenue opportunities into the parks system.
- Obtained 76.6% voter approval in 2010 for the 10-year renewal of the quarter mill that funds approximately 60% of the parks system budget.
- Established a volunteer program, including policies and training, recruiting efforts and advertising to develop advocacy and support all areas of the parks system, including programs, events and maintenance operations.



The Role of Volunteers

More than 340 volunteers, including members of the local and surrounding community, contribute to the success of many recreation and environmental programs. Volunteer programs established as part of the *2008 Strategic Plan* are designed to enhance the service offerings of OCPRC staff in a variety of areas, such as:

- **Adaptive Recreation:** hosting special sport and social events for individuals with physical and cognitive disabilities. Activities include special events/socials, teaching and adapting sports skills for individuals with disabilities.
- **Natural Resources:** participating in seasonal stewardship activities and annual clean up days, conducting wildlife surveys and caring for park and natural areas, including monitoring bluebird, wood duck and bat boxes; invasive plant control and water quality surveys, native seed collection and helping with special events and interpretive programs.
- **Operations Support:** assisting in a variety of tasks, including but not limited to: administrative tasks, program expertise and general clean-up activities. Specific examples of operations support activities include: providing technical assistance at Bicycle Motocross (BMX) practices and races; assisting campers by answering questions, providing directions, assisting with check-in and explaining park rules as campground hosts; participating in special events and annual clean-up days at three dog parks. Additionally, members of the 4-H Gardeners Restore Our World club (GROW) along with Michigan State Extension Service Master Gardeners, have established an 1800s Heritage Garden around the Ellis Barn and assist with tours, educational programs and manning the antiques table during events. At golf courses, volunteers act as starters, rangers, cart attendants and pro shop/phones assistants in addition to assisting with tournaments, leagues and special events. Nordic ski patrol members provide “eyes and ears” for Independence Oaks park on the trails during the ski season and ensure skiers safety.
- **Special Events:** assisting with one-day events, including mountain bike races, fishing events, trail runs, Halloween events, waterpark special events and senior days.

OCPRC benefits from well-established relationships with community members and volunteers who act as advocates to the parks system by enhancing customer service and programming opportunities for park patrons.



Relationship with Other Agencies

OCPRC seeks to develop partnerships that establish equitable and sustainable long-term relationships with like-minded organizations to help further its mission, expand opportunities for Oakland County residents through the creation of new programs, activities and the sharing of resources, and maximize the use of OCPRC resources to allow for more efficient and effective programs and operations.

OCPRC currently benefits from a variety of dedicated partners who support park development, facility maintenance and management as well as recreation programs and services opportunities. Public, private and non-profit agencies contribute funding for acquisition of parkland, facility development, and programming opportunities. Partners provide educational resources, subject matter expertise and other resources to support OCPRC's vision and goals. Examples of are listed below.

- **Park Development Partnerships (funding or planning and development expertise):** Carls Foundation, DTE Energy, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan Department of Transportation, Michigan Economic Development Corporation, Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services, United States Department of Energy and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.
- **Facility Maintenance and Management Partnerships (onsite services or sharing and implementing industry best practices):** Clinton River Area Mountain Bike Association, Greater Detroit Soaring and Hiking Society, Forgotten Harvest, Michigan State University, North Oakland Headwaters Land Conservancy, Oakland Audubon Society, Oakland County 4-H Fair Association, Six Rivers Regional Land Conservancy, The Stewardship Network and Wayne State University.
- **Recreation Programs and Services Partnerships (program coordination or marketing and outreach):** First Tee of Michigan, Michigan Barn Preservation Network, Michigan Cricket Association, Michigan Geocaching Organization, Michigan State University Extension, Oakland Conservation District, Oakland Equestrian Coalition, Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner's Office, SOLAR Club and Waste Management.

OCPRC continues to evaluate and refine existing and future partnership opportunities in order to provide enhanced park development, facility maintenance and recreation programs and services opportunities for local residents and park patrons.

Future Organizational Strategy

Since implementation of the *2008 Strategic Plan*, significant full-time staff reductions have occurred through retirements, voluntary attrition and reallocation of resources. Current staff members are focused on standardization activities including the pooling of resources, operational policies and procedures and cross-training. Current economic conditions countywide require that the filling of any full time vacancy be approved by the County Executive Budget Task Force which is comprised of the County Deputy Executives and supported by the Departments of Management & Budget and Human Resources. This external scrutiny on the filling of full-time positions has required the management team to thoughtfully evaluate the need for each position, and fill many full time roles with part-time staff.

Table 1: Comparison of Number of Employees in FY2009 and FY2012^a

	2009	2010	2011	2012	Net Change 2009-2012
Full-Time Employees	95.14	77.65	77.00	68.00	-27.14
Part-Time Employees	689.40	642.80	661.20	664.40	-25.00
Total Budgeted Staffing	784.54	720.45	738.2	732.4	-52.14

The directive from the OCPRC to staff members and outlined in the *2008 Strategic Plan* is to increase park attendance while increasing cost recovery⁶ organization-wide. This directive has required the management team to reconsider the standards of maintenance as well as additional revenue opportunities. In addition to using historical channels for communicating OCPRC offerings, the management team continues to explore opportunities to improve marketing and communication activities, provide additional outreach programming and enhance existing partnership opportunities in an effort to increase the overall visibility of the parks system.

Future organizational opportunities will focus on increased park visitation, revenue generation and cost recovery. These activities will require enhanced business acumen, industry expertise and policy development across the parks system. The shift in focus from a reduction in operations staff to an increase in revenue generation activities will be evident in a variety of staffing strategies. The transition from the existing organizational structure to future staffing will occur through multiple strategies, including but not limited to, reallocation of existing resources, training of existing staff, reallocation of open positions, and/or strategic succession planning. Each of these strategies will be based on desired functions and evaluation of existing resources to reach desired organizational functionality given current countywide economic conditions.



^a Employee position counts were obtained from the approved annual budgets for the fiscal years 2009 through 2012. Numbers are expressed as full-time equivalents (FTE) – i.e. an FTE of 1.0 means that the person is equivalent to a full-time worker, while an FTE of 0.5 signals that the worker is only half-time. Budgeted full-time positions are occasionally “under-filled”, which means that the entire set of hours for the job are not utilized – this results in the decimal figures seen in 2009 and 2010.

References

PROS Consulting. (2008, April). Oakland County Parks Strategic Plan. *Summary Report*. Waterford, MI: OCPRC.

Notes

¹ Oakland County Executive – Oakland County is headed by an elected County Executive whose responsibilities are similar to those of a governor or mayor of a large city. The County seat of Oakland County is Pontiac. The County Executive administers the government on a day-to-day basis, proposes new programs and revamps existing programs, representing the interests of more than one million county residents. www.oakgov.com/exec/

² Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner – The Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner and his office have the responsibility of planning, developing and maintaining designated surface water drainage systems in Oakland County under Michigan State law, known as Drain Code, Act 40 of 1956 (and has other statutory duties as Agent for the county). The office consists of three customer focused areas: 1) Customer Service, 2) Infrastructure Service, 3) Inspection/Permitting/ Planning Service. www.oakgov.com/water/

³ Road Commission for Oakland County – The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) is the county-level road agency in Oakland County, Michigan, serving the road needs of Oakland County for more than 90 years. RCOC maintains more than 2,700 miles of county roads, over 230 miles of state highways and approximately 1,500 county, city and state traffic signals in Oakland County. www.rcocweb.org

⁴ Oakland County Board of Commissioners - The Board of Commissioners governs Oakland County. The Board, re-organized for 2013, consists of 21 members, one from each of 21 equally-populated districts. Each district elects a commissioner every two years. Commission duties include: Establishing and revising County policies; establishing the property tax millage rate; adopting the annual county budget; and establishing the Authority, Duties and Responsibilities of County Departments. www.oakgov.com/boc/

⁵ Functional Organizational Structure represents the business functions of the organization and how they relate to one another. It does not specify staff positions.

⁶ Cost Recovery: Cost recovery represents the percentage of operating expense that is funded by agency revenue and is calculated as the ratio of agency revenue divided by operating expense. A higher cost recovery generally reflects a lower amount of subsidy from tax revenue.