

## **Chapter 3: Supply of Outdoor Recreation Resources**

### **The Outdoor Recreation Opportunity Spectrum**

Outdoor recreation encompasses a great variety of outdoor recreational activities because people look for many different types of experiences. The desire for different experiences causes people to choose between solitude or crowds, natural surroundings or man-made facilities, and physically challenging or relaxing activities. Table 3.1 summarizes the outdoor recreational spectrum by presenting its opposite ends. Urban and modern settings, activities, and experiences are contrasted with the primitive and remote end of the spectrum. These distinctions are based on the Outdoor Recreation Opportunity Spectrum developed by the U.S. Forest Service as a framework for describing outdoor recreation in terms of experience, activities and settings.

The spectrum, or range of resources, is also helpful in understanding the different roles played by local, state and federal agencies that manage land and facilities for public outdoor recreation. The federal government manages a large amount of the undeveloped land and water used for outdoor recreation in North Carolina. At the other end of the spectrum, local governments and the private sector provide the bulk of highly developed recreation resources. In North Carolina, state-owned outdoor recreation lands are generally more resource based than most southeastern states.

Natural resources and man-made facilities provide the settings needed for outdoor recreation. Natural resources vary from settings like ocean beaches and scenic mountain vistas to urban open space. A description of park and recreation area classes is presented in Table 3.2.

As much as any trait, North Carolina's outdoor recreation resources can be characterized by their diversity. One common characteristic these recreation resources share is their dependence on land and water resources. Any land or water resource that is used to produce satisfying leisure experience is a recreation resource.

Outdoor recreation activities can be divided into those that depend primarily on a man-made facility and those that depend primarily on a natural resource. The facility-dependent activities, such as tennis courts, can be placed at many locations and still provide a similar experience. Resource-dependent activities, such as sailboating, must be located where suitable natural resources are available.

**Table 3.1. The Spectrum of Outdoor Recreation Activities**

	<b>MODERN/URBAN</b>	<b>PRIMITIVE/REMOTE</b>
<b>SETTINGS</b>		
<b>PROXIMITY</b>	close to home	far from home
<b>SIZE</b>	less than 100 acres	several thousand acres
<b>FACILITIES</b>	extensive facilities	limited or no facilities
<b>NATURAL RESOURCES</b>	man-made environment dominates; natural resources secondary	natural environment dominant; little/no development
<b>ACTIVITIES:</b>	facility dependent	natural resource dependent
<b>EXPERIENCES:</b>		
<b>LEISURE TIME</b>	Participation in short time periods possible	Substantial blocks of time required for participation
<b>MANAGEMENT CONTROLS</b>	More obvious staff presence and controls to provide services and manage greater public use	On-site regimentation low, with controls primarily off-site
<b>SOCIAL INTERACTION</b>	Potentially large numbers of users on-site and in nearby areas	Few people encountered per day
<b>CHARACTER OF EXPERIENCE</b>	Opportunities for competitive and spectator sports and for passive uses of developed parks are common; contact with other people is prevalent, as is convenience of sites and opportunities.	High probability of experiencing isolation from sights and sounds of humans; independence; closeness to nature; tranquility and self-reliance through the application of primitive outdoor skills in an environment that offers challenge and risk.

Sources: *R. O. S. Users Guide*, U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture. *Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines*, National Recreation and Park Association

An inventory of public recreation sites has been performed to measure the supply of the recreational resources in each county. For information about the methodology, refer to Appendix B. The inventory used the area and facility classifications discussed previously to count the parks and facilities at public recreation sites in North Carolina. The statewide summary for the park acreage inventory is presented in Table 3.3, and the summary of recreational facilities is shown in Table 3.4 and 3.5.

**Table 3.2 Park and Recreation Area Class Names and Descriptions**

Area Name	Description
Neighborhood Park	Area for active recreation such as field and court games or using a playground or splash pad. Can also be smaller informal parks for open space activities. Two to eight acres is a typical size. Examples include mini-parks serving residential areas, playgrounds, sports fields and combination playgrounds/sports fields/ passive natural areas.
Community Park	Area providing a wide array of active recreational opportunities including a recreation center with a gymnasium, athletic fields, swimming pool, hard surface courts, and picnicking areas. Natural or landscaped areas are provided for passive recreation. 10-20 acres is a typical size. Examples include large park/school complexes; recreation center/ pool/sports field and court complexes; and community center/park complexes.
District/Metro Area Park	Area serving one or more suburban or rural communities. Similar to the Community Park, these areas offer both intensive recreation activities and natural environment areas. Typical size is 20-100 acres. Examples include intensively developed county-wide or regional parks, and developed public recreation sites at large reservoirs.
Local Parks	Combines Neighborhood, Community, and District/Metro Area parks classes described above.
Regional/State Parks	Area of natural quality for natural resource-based outdoor recreation. Generally, 80 percent of the land is reserved for conservation and natural resource management with less than 20 percent developed for recreation. Typical size is 3,000-5,000 acres. Examples include state parks, state recreation areas, state natural areas, educational state forests and large natural resource-based county parks. Activities include nature study, picnicking, camping, fishing, boating, swimming, and various trail uses.
Dispersed Use/ Conservancy Area	Area for protection and management of the natural environment with recreation use as a secondary objective. Multiple-use management approaches produce natural resource outputs such as timber, agricultural produce and minerals. Examples include state gamelands, multiple use areas of national and state forests, reservoir shoreline buffer lands, and Blue Ridge Parkway acreage. These sites are generally large enough to manage the primary natural resource while providing secondary recreational uses.
Wilderness Area	Area characterized by unmodified natural environment of fairly large size. Low interaction between users, and evidence of others is minimal. Motorized use is not permitted. Typical size is 5,000-15,000 acres. Examples are congressionally designated National Wilderness Areas.

**Table 3-3. Outdoor Recreation Acreage by Operator and Site Classification**

SITE CLASSIFICATION	OPERATOR CLASSIFICATION				Total
	FEDERAL	STATE	MUNICIPAL	COUNTY	
Local	0	0	56,215	50,970	107,185
Dispersed Use	2,681,214	755,645	0	0	3,436,859
Totals:	2,681,214	755,645	56,215	50,970	3,544,044

**Table 3-4. Statewide Totals for Outdoor Recreation Facilities Primarily at Local Parks**

ACTIVITY	FACILITY	MUNICIPAL	COUNTY	TOTAL
Baseball	Fields	784	442	1226
Basketball	Courts	834.5	287	1121.5
Bocce	Courts	42	35	77
Disc Golf	Courses	35	33	68
Fitness / Exercise	Fitness Station Area or Trail	144	60	204
Football	Fields	131	136	267
Playground Use	Playground	1464	517	1981
Playing with Dogs	Dog Parks	37	16	53
Shuffleboard	Courts	48	24	72
Skateboarding	Skateparks	23	4	27
Soccer	Fields	490	391	881
Softball	Fields	539	342	881
Swimming	Pools	147	42	191
Team Sports	Multi-Purpose Fields	879	488	1367

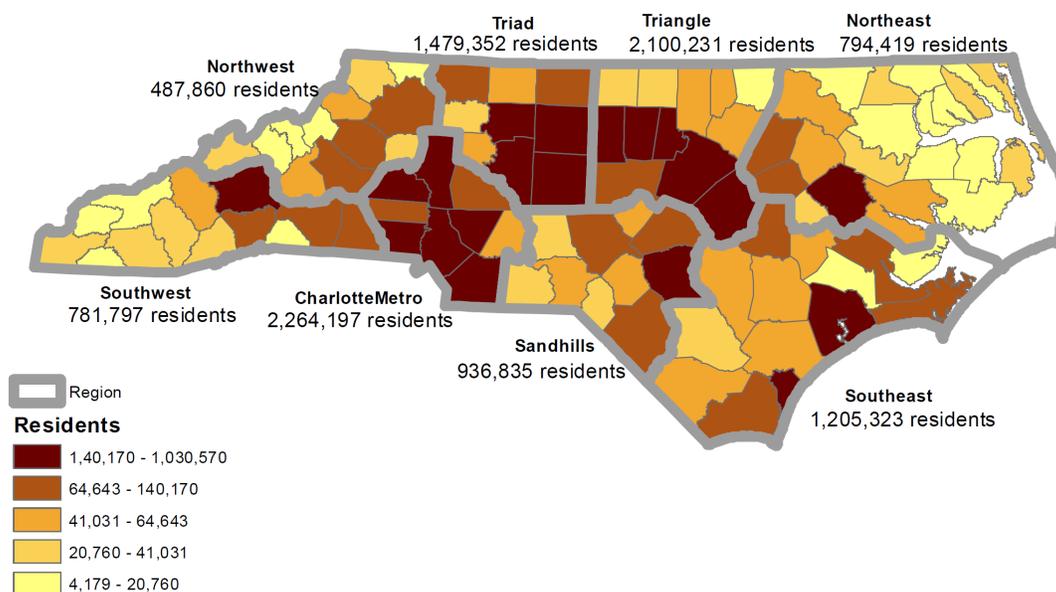
ACTIVITY	FACILITY	MUNICIPAL	COUNTY	TOTAL
Tennis	Courts	1566	563	2129
Volleyball	Courts	249	158	407
Water Play	Sprayground/ Splashpad	14	15	29
Water Play	Waterparks	4	3	7

**Table 3-5. Statewide Totals for Outdoor Recreation Facilities – Local, State and Federal Parks**

ACTIVITY	FACILITY	FEDERAL	STATE	MUNICIPAL	COUNTY	TOTAL
Picnicking	Shelter	34	125	1388	638	2185
Trails (All Types)	Miles	2019	1086	1282	799	5186

### Distribution of Recreation Resources and Population by County and Region

Population totals for eight regions of the state are shown on the map in Figure 3.1. For information about the characteristics of the eight regions, refer to Appendix B. North Carolina's population is most concentrated in the central portion of the state, which includes the Piedmont Crescent, roughly defined by the Interstate 85 and Interstate 40 corridor from the Charlotte Metro area, through the Triad and into the Triangle area.

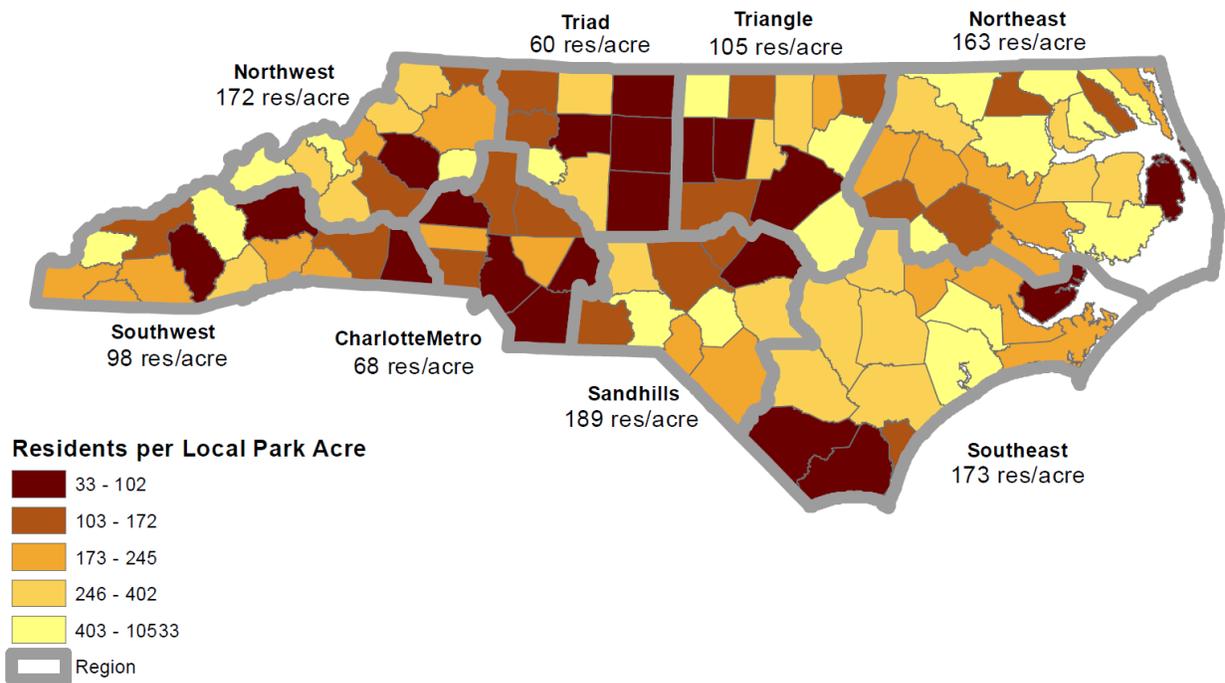


**Figure 3.1 Projected North Carolina Population by Region in 2015**

The Charlotte Metro contains Mecklenburg County with the highest population. The Triad contains Winston Salem, Greensboro and High Point in Forsyth and Guilford counties. The Triangle region includes Durham and Wake counties. Wake County is the second most populated county in the state.

To compare counties and geographic regions, population is divided by the park acreage and recreation facility totals for the county and region. The calculations indicate the number of residents per park acre or recreation facility.

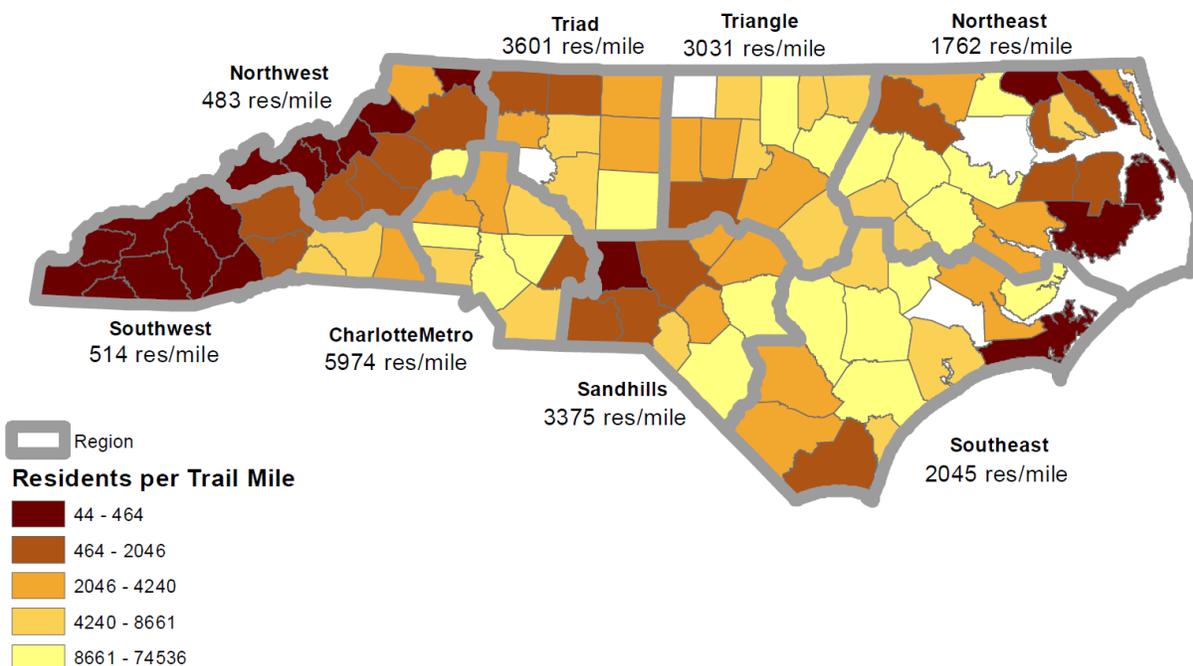
Figure 3.2 shows the counties shaded according to the residents per local park acre as well as average for each of the eight regions. Figures 3.2 through 3.7 display similar information the residents per facility for several recreational facilities. On each map, counties with darker shading have fewer residents per park acre or recreation facility (a greater availability for each resident) and regions with lighter shading have more residents per resource (a lower availability for each resident).



**Figure 3.2 County Residents per Local Park Acre**

**Residents per Local Park Acres:** Residents per local park acre in North Carolina counties ranges from a low of 40-45 residents per acre in Guilford and Mecklenburg counties to a high of nearly 2,000 in Gates and Graham counties. The median for the state is about 200 residents per acre in four counties: Lincoln, Carteret, Vance and Clay. Counties with fewer residents per park acre have a greater availability for each resident and counties with more residents per acre have a lower availability for each resident.

The more populated regions of the state also have more local park acreage for their residents. The three regions that define the Piedmont Crescent – Charlotte Metro, Triad and Triangle – have fewer residents per local park acre. The Triad and Charlotte Metro regions have 60-70 residents per acre. The Triangle region has 105 residents per acre. The Sandhills region has nearly 200 residents per park acre or more people sharing fewer acres.



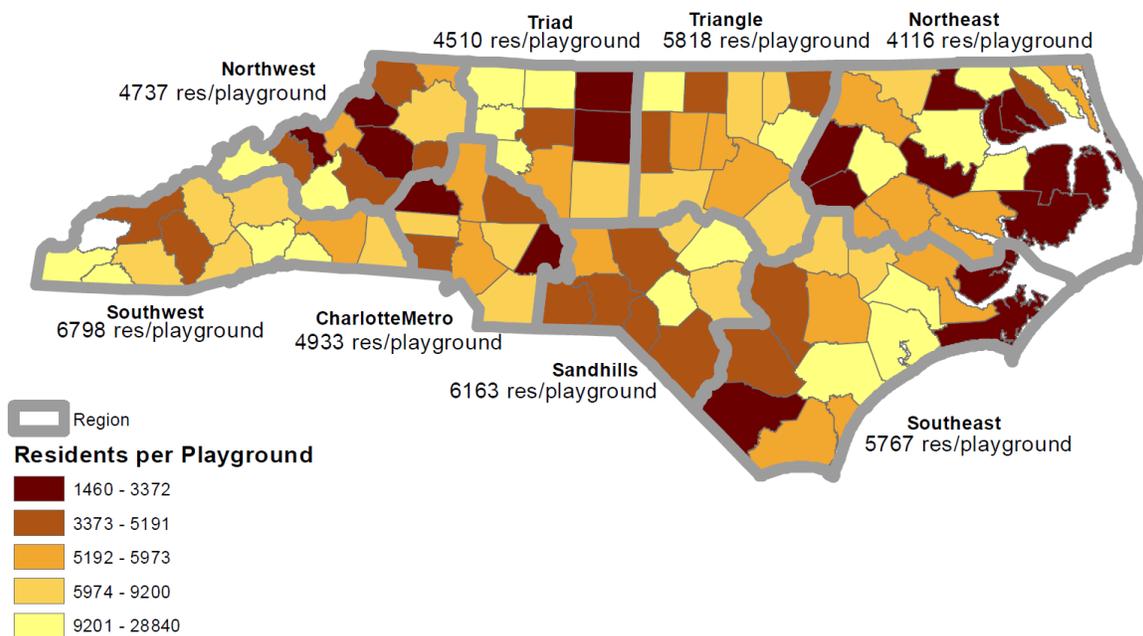
**Figure 3.3 County Residents per Trail Mile (All types)**

**Residents per Trail Mile (all types):** Residents per trail mile in North Carolina counties range from a low of 50-150 residents per trail mile in Graham, Clay, Transylvania, and Macon counties to a high of about 30,000 in Lenoir and Nash counties. The median for the state is about 3,000 residents per trail mile in Currituck, Lenoir and Iredell counties. Counties with fewer residents per trail mile have a greater availability for each resident and counties with more residents per trail mile have a lower availability for each resident.

The Northwest and Southwest regions have more trail miles for their residents and visitors with the availability of state and national parks and forests. The regions have about 500 residents per trail mile. The Triangle region represents the mid-point with about 3,000 residents per trail mile. The Charlotte Metro region has nearly 6,000 residents per trail mile or more people sharing fewer trail miles.

**Residents per Playground:** Residents per playground in North Carolina counties range from a low of 1500-2000 residents per playground in Stanly and Dare counties to a high of about 25,000 in Pender and Caswell counties. The median for the state is about 5,600 residents per playground in four counties: Alexander, Rutherford, Wake and Craven. Counties with fewer residents per playground have a greater availability for each resident and counties with more residents per playground have a lower availability for each resident.

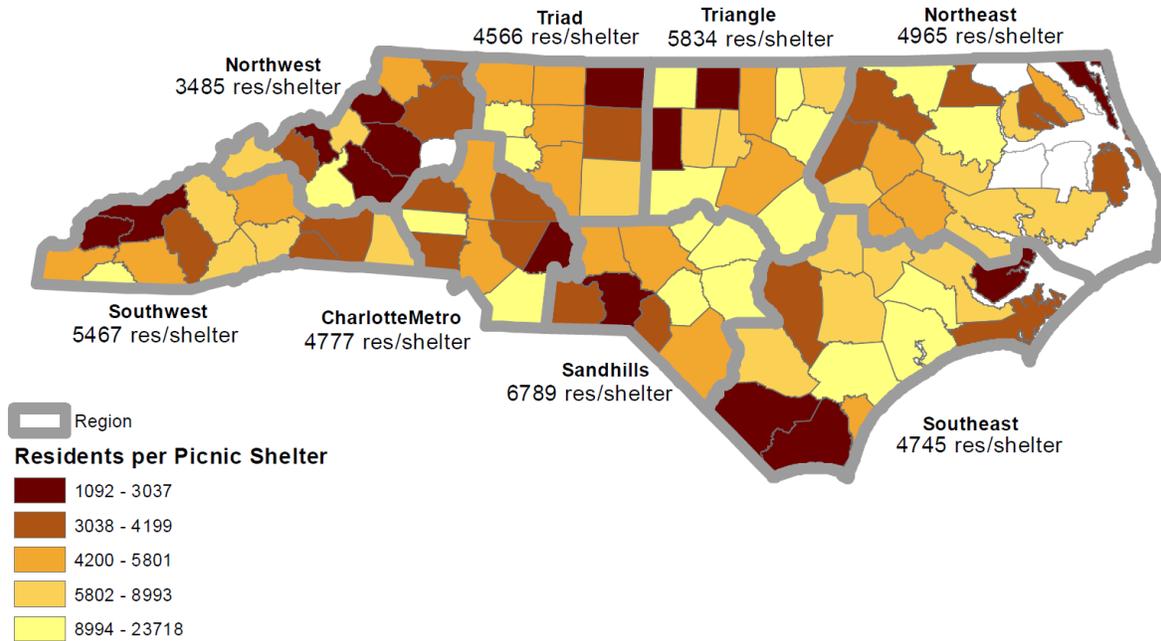
The Northeast region of the state has more playgrounds for their residents. The region has about 4,000 residents per playground. The Charlotte Metro region represents the mid-point with about 5,000 residents per playground. The Southwest region has nearly 6,800 residents per playground or more people sharing fewer playgrounds.



**Figure 3.4 County Residents per Playground**

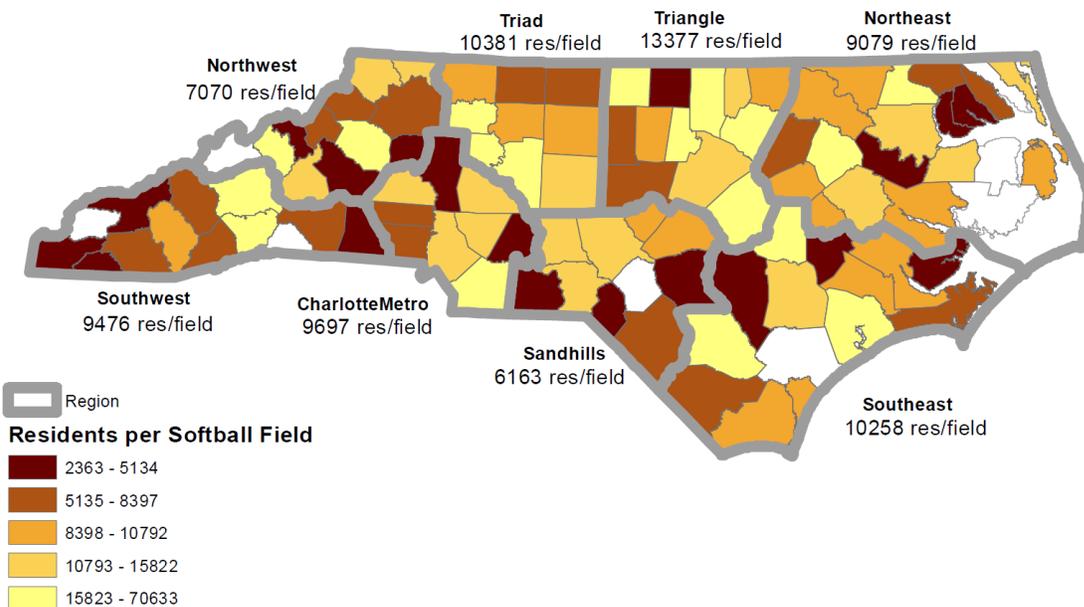
**Residents per Picnic Shelter:** Residents per picnic shelter in North Carolina counties range from a low 1,500 residents per shelter in Columbus and Mitchell counties to a high of about 25,000 in Pender and Caswell counties. The median for the state is about 5,500 residents per shelter in two counties: Ashe and Mecklenburg. Counties with fewer residents per shelter have a greater availability for each resident and counties with more residents per shelter have a lower availability for each resident.

The Northwest region of the state has more picnic shelters for their residents. The region has about 3,500 residents per shelter. The Charlotte Metro region represents the mid-point with about 5,000 residents per shelter. The Sandhills region has nearly 6,800 residents per picnic shelter or more people sharing fewer shelters.



**Figure 3.5 County Residents per Picnic Shelter**

**Residents per Softball Field:** Residents per softball field in North Carolina counties range from a low 2,500 residents per softball field in Perquimans, Scotland and Stanly counties to a high of about 50,000 in Hertford and Edgecombe counties. The state’s median is about 10,000 residents per softball field in three counties (Harnett, Warren and Jackson). Counties with fewer residents per softball field have a greater availability for each resident and counties with more residents per softball field have a lower availability for each resident.

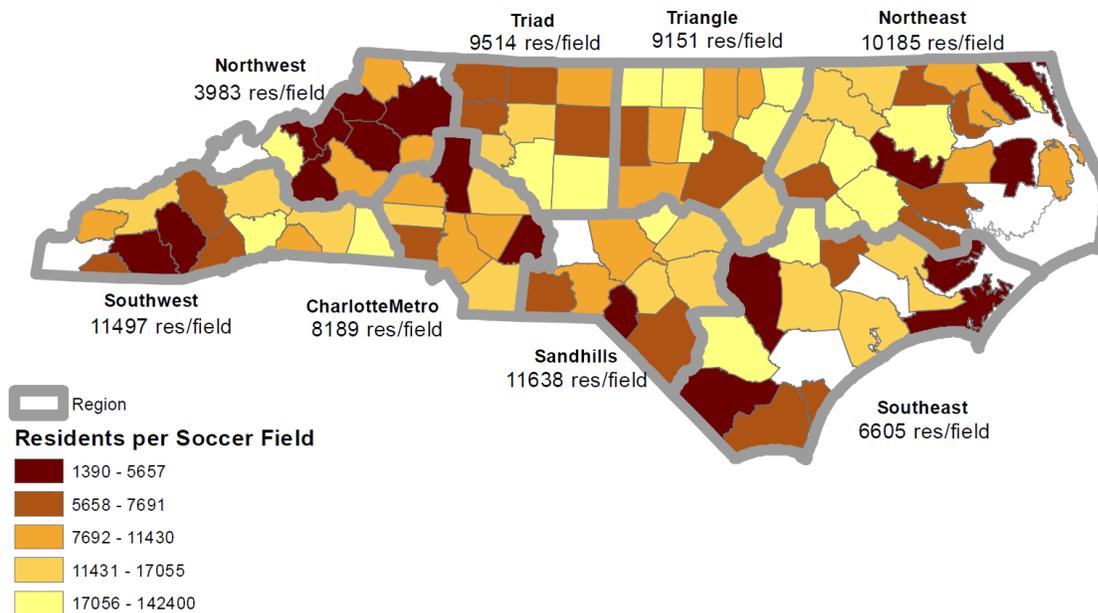


**Figure 3.6 County Residents per Softball Field**

The Sandhills region of the state has more softball fields for their residents. The region has about 6,500 residents per field. The Charlotte Metro and Southwest regions represents the mid-point with about 9,500 residents per field. The Triangle region has about 13,000 residents per field or more people sharing fewer fields.

**Residents per Soccer Field:** Residents per soccer field in North Carolina counties range from a low of less than 2,000 residents per soccer field in Watauga and Carteret counties to a high of about 50,000 in Cleveland and Randolph counties. The state median is about 9,500 residents per soccer field in Burke and Perquimans counties. Counties with fewer residents per soccer field more access to fields for each resident and counties with more residents per soccer field have less access for each resident.

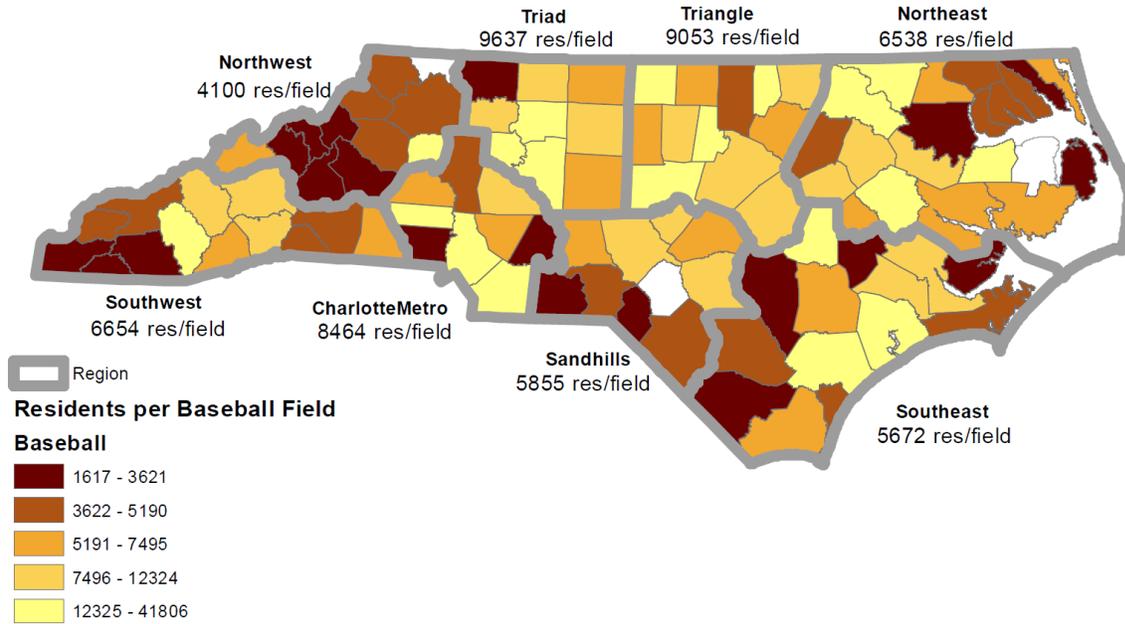
The Northwest region of the state has more soccer fields for their residents with about 4,000 residents per field. The Triangle and Triad regions are at the mid-point about 9,500 residents per field. The Sandhills and Southwest regions have about 11,500 residents per field or more people sharing fewer fields.



**Figure 3.7 County Residents per Soccer Field**

**Residents per Baseball Field:** Residents per baseball field in North Carolina counties range from a low of less than 2,000 in Anson, and Scotland counties to a high of more than 35,000 in Onslow and Davie counties. The state median is about 6,000 residents per baseball field in Person and Catawba counties. Counties with fewer residents per baseball field have greater access for each resident and counties with more residents per baseball field have less access.

The Northwest region of the state has more soccer fields for their residents. The region has about 4,000 residents per field. The Northeast and Southwest regions represent the mid-point with about 6,500 residents per field. The Triad and Triangle regions have more than 9,000 residents per field or more people sharing fewer fields.



**Figure 3.8 County Residents per Baseball Field**

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