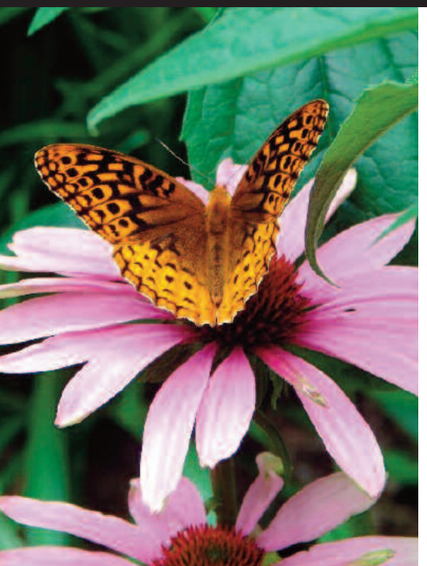
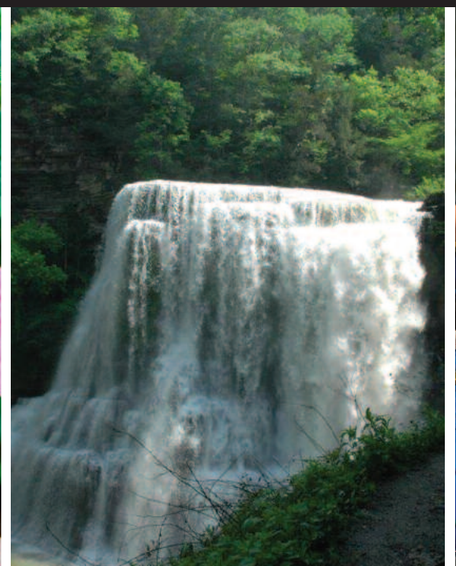
TENNESSEE 2020

Vision for Parks, People & Landscapes





Tennessee 2020
Vision for Parks, People and Landscapes
Status Review and Update
2015-2020

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Remembered for making Tennessee a better place....
Thank you, Edwin, for your guidance and vision.

Edwin S. Gardner

1945-2010

BILL HASLAM
GOVERNOR
STATE OF TENNESSEE

May 5, 2016

Dear Tennesseans:

I am pleased to introduce this update to our state's outdoor recreation plan, *Tennessee 2020 – Vision for Parks, People and Landscapes*. Throughout this planning update, I trust that you will see how our state departments and non-governmental agencies are working together to support many of this administration's priorities from the past five years—from innovative partnerships to promoting healthier, more active lifestyles.

I commend the dedicated team within the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation for promoting and providing safe, enjoyable outdoor recreation activities and facilities for our citizens. Their collaborative work with an array of individuals and organizations across Tennessee has produced this thoughtful document which adds greater detail to a positive path forward for outdoor recreation and citizen engagement in our state.

I am proud to present an update to *Tennessee 2020* that will not only carry us through the next five years, but also will set the stage for an even brighter future across the decades for outdoor recreation in Tennessee.

Sincerely,

Bill Haslam

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STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243-0435

ROBERT J. MARTINEAU, JR.
COMMISSIONER

BILL HASLAM
GOVERNOR

May 5, 2016

RE: Update to *Tennessee 2020 – Vision for Parks, People and Landscapes*

Dear Citizens of Tennessee:

I am pleased to present the 2015-2020 update of our state's comprehensive recreation planning document, *Tennessee 2020 – Vision for Parks, People and Landscapes*. This document outlines the current status of our first 10-year state recreation plan and provides updates on our vision and goals for parks, recreation and conservation in Tennessee through 2020.

Tennessee is a growing, thriving, and diverse place. Our natural heritage is rich, our landscapes are varied, and our communities are interested in making meaningful recreational resources available to all of our citizens. I am proud of our state's ability to meet the needs and interests of cities and counties - rural, urban and suburban - through our Local Parks and Recreation Fund (LPRF), while addressing the outdoor recreation and land use demands of our state parks through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The compelling future direction you will see in this document is based on the priority goal to help improve the quality of life we enjoy across Tennessee by planning for all Tennesseans and improving our recreational assets throughout the state.

As the updated *Tennessee 2020* plan continues to unfold, the action plans we have proposed for the next five years will support successful partnerships, meaningful investment in infrastructure, and effective outreach and engagement that ensure an outstanding system of outdoor recreation for Tennesseans.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Martineau, Jr.

Commissioner Robert J. Martineau - State Liaison Officer
Gerald Parish, RES Director - Alternate State Liaison Officer

The development and printing of this report were financed in part through a planning grant from the National Park Service, Department of Interior, under provisions of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (Public Law 88-578 as amended).

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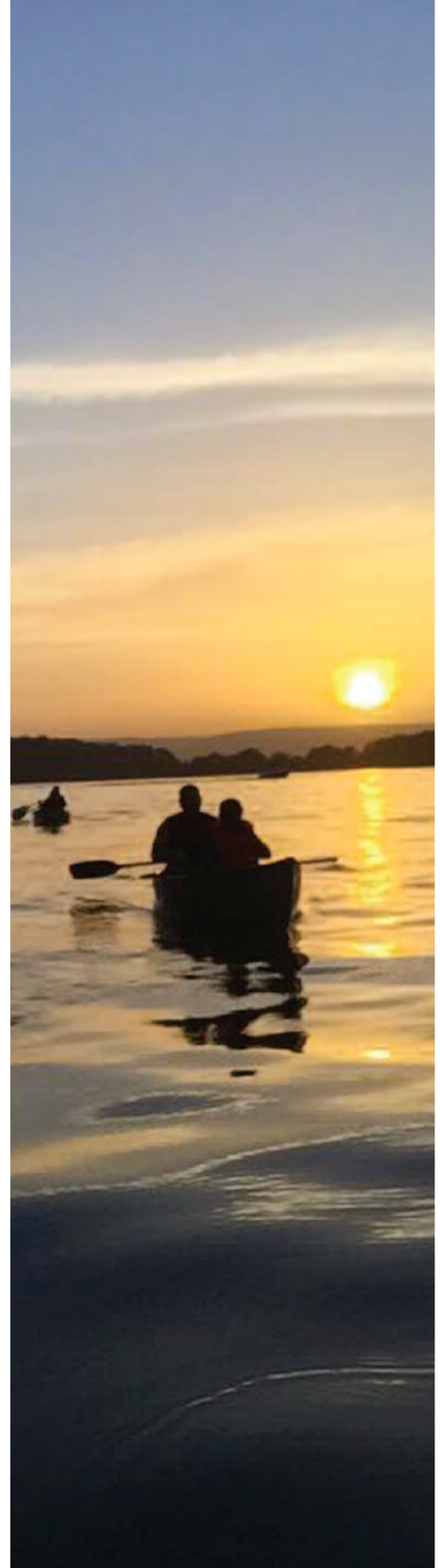
Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, Authorization No. 327075, 1,400 copies. This public document was promulgated at a cost of $ 2.95 per copy. July 2016.



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Introduction

The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) has prepared a state recreation plan every five years since 1965. In that year the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act established a mandate for each state to develop a set of priorities for federal grants to state and local parks and other recreation projects.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is intended to create and maintain a nationwide legacy of high quality recreation areas and facilities and to stimulate non-federal investments in the protection and maintenance of recreation resources across the United States. Initially authorized for a 25-year period, the LWCF was extended for another 25 years and expired September 30, 2015. The fund was temporarily extended for 3 years in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016, and will expire September 30, 2018.

The LWCF program can be divided into the "**State side**"-- that is grants to State and local governments, and the "**Federal side**" -- the Federal portion of the LWCF that is used to acquire lands, waters, and interests therein necessary to achieve the natural, cultural, wildlife, and recreation management objectives of the NPS and other federal land management agencies. LWCF **Civil War Battlefield Acquisition Grants** are also provided to help States and local communities acquire and preserve threatened Civil War battlefield land.

On the State side, Tennessee has received on average $1 Million per year during the past five years. Since this amount is small in comparison to the state's Local Parks and Recreation Fund (LPRF), the Commissioner of Environment and Conservation has chosen to allocate the LWCF annual apportionment to state park projects during the past 5+ years. The LPRF funds local government projects and the distribution averages approximately $9 Million every two year cycle.

Following the report of the Tennesseans Outdoors Commission in 1985, which addressed a broad range of issues relating to resource conservation and recreation over a 20-year timeframe, TDEC began to expand the scope of its recreation planning beyond the confines of supply-and-demand metrics. In the last 20 years, Tennessee has increasingly leveraged the federally funded SCORP process to consider recreation and conservation in the broadest sense as a determinant of Tennesseans' quality of life. The 2015-2020 Review and Update is truly that...a status report on what has been accomplished in the first five years of our inaugural ten-year plan, and to develop new or revised goals that can be incorporated into the next five year action plan.

This Tennessee 2020 Plan expands the scope of the process to a more ambitious level. Since we have adopted the ten-year perspective to help maintain continuity of quality in the state's parks and recreation infrastructure, we have been more successful in integrating a set of multi-level strategies for complex, critical issues facing parks and recreation and resource conservation in Tennessee -- both regionally and statewide.

TDEC began this planning process with five primary objectives in mind and these continue to be the focus for the 2015-2020 Update:

• To review the implementation status of the Tennessee 2020 Plan and recommend modifications as needed.

• To identify high-priority issues and trends that will affect recreation and conservation in Tennessee in the next five to ten years and discover new opportunities to address them.

• To develop an issues-oriented vision to serve as a consistent compass for the state's conservation and recreation agenda in the next five to fifteen years.

• To develop an implementation-oriented action program to move the state toward achieving this vision in the next five years.

• To satisfy the National Park Service's SCORP plan priorities and qualify the state for continued federal grants from the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Sources of Input

The planning process made use of several sources of input to gain understanding of the issues, concerns and priorities relating to recreation and conservation in Tennessee.

• Three public meetings were held in the three grand divisions of Tennessee

• 56 Online Public Surveys for State Parks. The opportunity to participate in an online survey was emailed to parks users/visitors and conservation and recreation-related organizations.

• Online Public Survey. The opportunity to participate in an online survey was widely advertised among conservation and recreation related organizations. The respondents were self-selected, making this a useful but unscientific survey.

• 2009 Tennessee Recreation Attitudes and Behavior Survey (TRAB). This was a scientific survey usingrandomly selected respondents to represent Tennessee's adult population as a whole.

• Recreation Provider Survey. This survey was circulated to all local parks and recreation departments in Tennessee and to all State Parks.

• Tennessee Recreation Advisory Committee (TRAC). This Committee provided expert input and guidance for the Plan.

• TRAC Working Groups. Three special-focus groups re-convened and worked on specific issue areas and developed most of the updates and new initiatives in this Plan.

- People - Outreach and Engagement (Public Health, Children in Nature, Environmental Education)
- Landscapes - Regional Perspectives (Quality Growth, Recreational Waters, Rural Economies)
- Parks - Recreation Infrastructure (Advocacy & Funding, State Parks Management, Local Parks and Recreation)

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

While Tennessee's population growth this decade has been slower than anticipated, UT's Center for Business and Economic Research projects the state's population to reach 8.5 million by 2040.

Over the next 25 years, Tennessee's demographic profile is expected to follow national trends as the population continues to age and become more racially and ethnically diverse as well as more urbanized.

CBER–a research center within UT's Haslam College of Business–projects that the largest changes in county population will occur primarily in metropolitan counties.

Highlights from the updated county-level projections report released include the following:

- Middle Tennessee is expected to lead the state in population growth. Five of the 10 counties with the highest projected growth rates through 2040–Williamson, Rutherford, Wilson, Robertson, and Sumner–are in the Nashville-Davidson-Murfreesboro-Franklin Metropolitan Statistical Area.
- Among counties with populations greater than 25,000, Fayette, Montgomery, Sevier, Loudon, and Cumberland Counties are also in the top ten for projected growth rates.
- Approximately 69 percent of the population growth in Tennessee from 2010 to 2040 is expected to occur in Rutherford, Davidson, Williamson, Knox, Shelby, Montgomery, Wilson, Hamilton, Sumner, and Sevier Counties.
- By 2040, the Hispanic/Latino populations will more than double to 11.2 percent, compared to 4.5 percent in 2010.
- The proportion of the population characterized as "non-white, non-black, non-Hispanic" is expected to increase to 7.9 percent by 2040, compared to 3.2 percent in 2010.
- Tennessee's population is expected to be 17.2 percent black non-Hispanic by 2040, compared to 16.3 percent in 2010.
- The proportion of senior citizens and elderly is expected to increase in Tennessee, due to both the aging of the baby boomer generation and increased life expectancy. As of the 2010 census, there were 99,917 individuals aged 85 and older in Tennessee. That number is expected to triple to more than 330,000 by 2040. (http://tntoday.utk.edu/2015/08/27/study-tennessee-track-steady-population-growth/

Structure of the Plan

This plan's initiatives are organized under three domains - Parks, People, and Landscapes - each with its own set of stakeholders and its own set of critical issues. The nine initiatives in the plan are defined in terms of nine statements of need:

Parks

1. The need of decision-makers for accurate information about the value of funding for parks, recreation, and conservation.
2. The need of the State Parks for a comprehensive system approach to strategic management.

People:

3. The need of the public for more accessible information about recreation opportunities and better ways to participate in advocacy and planning.
4. The need of the public to avoid preventable diseases through increased physical activity.
5. The need of children to interact with nature as a necessary part of their healthy development.
6. The need of students to understand the natural world they will inherit in a time of daunting environmental challenges.

Landscapes

7. The need of rural regions for help in managing growth and preserving their quality of life.
8. The need of communities for more opportunities to enjoy and protect their local rivers, streams, and creeks.
9. The need of rural regions for help in making their recreation assets generate economic development.

To address each of these nine needs, the plan proposes a new initiative composed of a Vision statement for 2020 and an Action Plan to be implemented by 2020. Since all of the critical issues addressed in this plan are interrelated in various ways, each proposed initiative contains Coordination Links to others. This plan is not a laundry list; it is a systematic, integrated approach.

Acronyms Used in this Plan

ECO - Every Child Outdoors Coalition
CCC -Civilian Conservation Corps
CRT - Cumberland Region Tomorrow
DOH - Department of Health
LWCF - Land and Water Conservation Fund
NPS - National Park Service
NSRE - National Survey of Recreation and the Environment
ORRG - Outdoor Recreation Review Group
RES - Recreation Educational Services
TDEC - Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation
TDOT - Tennessee Department of Transportation
TEEA - Tennessee Environmental Education Association
TRAB - Tennessee Recreation Attitudes and Behavior Survey
TRAC - Tennessee Recreation Advisory Group
TRPA - Tennessee Recreation and Parks Association
TSP - Tennessee State Parks
TVA - Tennessee Valley Authority
TWRA - Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency

Input / Collaboration

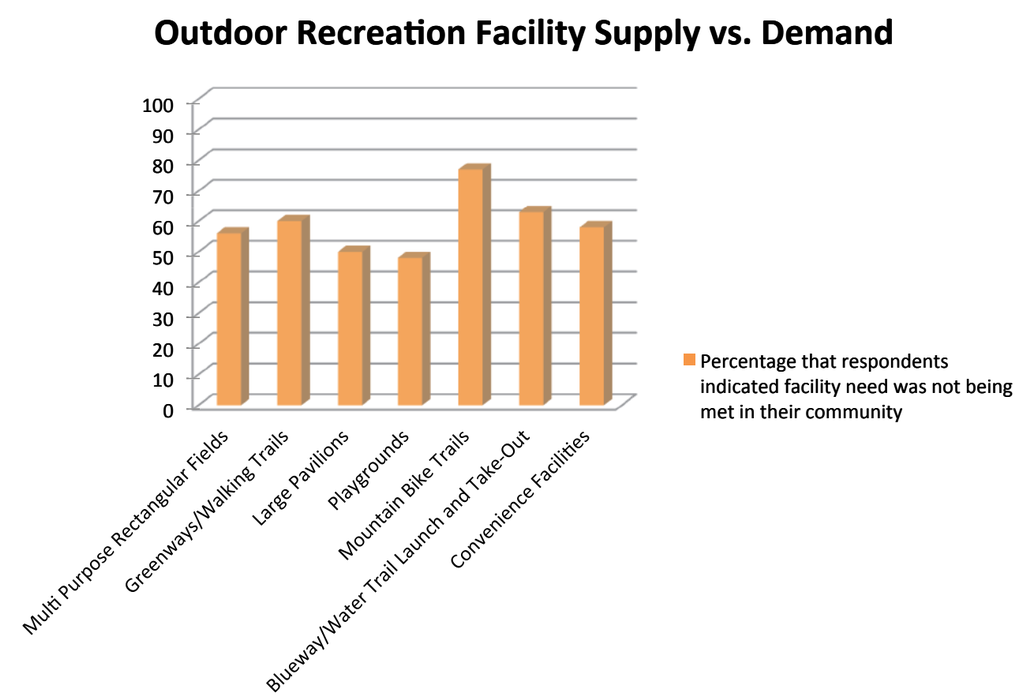
Evaluating Supply and Demand

Current state and local government outdoor recreation providers were given multiple avenues to provide information and discuss their current outdoor recreation system and the opportunities they provide. While Tennessee's public outdoor recreation providers have tried to focus on taking care of what they have by maintaining and updating current facilities, it is evident with our research and input that tremendous needs are still not being met. There are several reasons for this, including:

- Inadequate funding
- Lack of formal Parks and Recreation Departments
- Maintenance back-log on current facilities
- Availability of land

Tennessee has identified the following outdoor recreation facility needs as the highest priority needs not being met:

- Multi-purpose recreation fields
- Greenways/walking trails
- Large pavilions
- Playgrounds
- Mountain bike trails
- Blueway/water trail launch and take-out areas
- Convenience facilities



Public Participation

A core element in developing and/or updating Tennessee's state recreation planning documents is public participation. Public participation sets the path for successful development of recreation resources and recreation planners are able to produce documents that reflect the public interest more than documents that reflect the governmental bureaucracies. This also gives the public a sense of direct ownership of the recreation resources that they use and enjoy. This sense of ownership leads the public to be more vocal concerning those resources and their future. It also leads to valuable insight into the recreational functions of the largest stakeholders in a state recreation plan. In turn, these recreational functions direct the future development and focus of the recreational resources for all citizens and visitors to a state. The state is able to create a course of action for not only the state parks system, but also for local parks and recreation services and programs.

Surveys

To ensure that the Tennessee 2020 Plan update would be based on a foundation of input from a wide range of sources, the planning team used several different approaches for updating the information that was gathered through suggestions and comments and gauging the recreation issues of concern to Tennesseans. Each of these methodologies looked at the recreation landscape from a different angle, and each provided valuable updates to the information gained in the creation of the Tennessee 2020 Plan.

- 56 individual Tennessee State Park Visitor's Surveys during 2013-2015
- 56 Tennessee State Park public hearings in each park during 2013-2015
- Three public meetings evaluated the Tennessee 2020 Plan update and provided valuable insight in guiding the future of recreation in Tennessee
- The Local Recreation Providers Survey emailed to parks and recreation departments featuring a savable format with the addition of the provided information from the survey collected for the Tennessee 2020 Plan to allow updates vs. completion of a blank document
- The TRAC's three Working Groups to pull in expertise in specific focused areas and update corresponding group action items from the Tennessee

2020 Plan

Taken altogether, these activities resulted in a deeper range of inputs for this plan than has been the case in the past. The findings from each of these input sources are reported below.

Public Meetings

The planning team held a total of three public meetings during 2015 to receive public input for this update. The format of each of these meetings was an initial presentation of the scope and purpose of the SCORP planning process and a review of Tennessee's 2015 accomplishments, followed by public input which was facilitated by a paper questionnaire. This instrument was designed to elicit open-ended responses about recreation needs and issues of concern to the participants. Public notice of these meetings was provided by several means:

- Advertisements in the state's metropolitan daily papers
- Press releases to the state's media list
- Email notices to the membership of the Tennessee Parks and Recreation Association (TRPA) and the Green List of 120 organizations relating to conservation, recreation activities, and environmental regulation.

A total of 30 individuals attended these three meetings, a level of public input that the planning team considered inadequate. Low participation was, however, not surprising. The public meetings for the 2003 plan attracted an average of only 10 participants per meeting, and SCORP planners in other states have reported similar findings. Another Tennessee state agency that held a round of public meetings in early 2009 had reported disappointing turnouts as well.

State Park Visitor Users Survey

A questionnaire was developed for each of our 56 state parks and put into the online Survey Monkey service and emailed through EMMA to all visitors/users that stayed at a state park – whether it was lodging (camping, staying at an inn or cabin, etc.) or participation at a program or activity. Approximately 29,000 surveys were returned, in total, for the park system. A summary of findings of each of the 56 surveys and the overall park system summary can be found on the resource CD.

It should be stressed that this kind of survey does not provide a statistically valid sampling of the opinions of Tennesseans as a whole because the respondents are self-selected. It can be, however, a worthwhile form of public input because it reflects the concerns of particular interest groups in the population who consider themselves active stakeholders in the outcome of the recreation planning process.

Tennessee 2020 Initiatives

Tennessee 2020 Plan proposed 10 strategic initiatives to address each of these critical needs. Each initiative was composed of a 2020 Vision to define overarching goals, and a 2015 Action Plan that was to be implemented by 2015, with a 2020 Update to be presented to the National Park Service during 2015-2016.

Because the needs to be addressed are interrelated in many ways, the Plan specifies measures to coordinate these initiatives into an integrated set of strategies. The 10 Tennessee 2020 Initiatives are:

1. Advocacy and Funding

2020 Vision

Decision makers at the state and local levels will be fully informed about the economic impacts of parks and recreation in Tennessee, will recognize the value of public investments in this sector, and will be empowered to make sound economic decisions related to parks and recreation.

2020 Action Plan

TDEC is exploring options for a dedicated funding mechanism for state parks - roads and bridges. The Department has made this objective/goal a part of the annual Customer Focused Goals that are approved by the Governor's office each fall.

As TDEC manages the state park system more like a business, the funding mechanisms and appropriate public-private partnerships will continue to be pursued.

TDEC should add a legislative amendment during the 2016 legislative session that would add support facilities/amenities to the eligible items funded through the State Lands Acquisition Fund.

Expand advocacy and outreach initiatives by creating MOA's/Resolutions with related groups, such as – tourism, development districts, economic and community development agencies, local parks and recreation departments, etc.

TDEC/State Parks/RES should combine resources and marketing strategies with the National Park Service to develop "Find Your Park" centennial celebration initiatives and programs. Focus should be on state parks and local parks programs and partnerships.

2. State Parks Management

2020 Vision

Tennessee's State Parks will be a national model of a modernized, strategic park management process characterized by a dynamic, systems-oriented approach that ensures high standards of professionalism and consistency, eliminates wasteful spending, provides superior protection for park resources, and delivers a quality visitor experience.

Most Tennesseans now have a state park within an hour's drive and in most cases more than one type of park to visit, representing a healthy state park system of diverse experiences and opportunities.

Tennessee's state parks deliver a rich fabric of natural landscapes, wild places, preserved ecologies, outdoor recreational opportunities and protected historic scenes and resources – together representing the heritage of Tennessee in the landscape.

2020 Action Plan

As resources shift, Tennessee will remain focused on our state parks mission and the most compelling priorities that make our park system unique. Tennessee has been ranked as the best place in the country to retire and we want that to continue. Governor Haslam is committed to keeping taxes low and TSP is committed to making our state parks affordable to all.

- Continue to implement a business approach to park system administration and operation that increases revenues across the system and within hospitality operations while reducing operating costs. Increasing revenue generated across the system and within particular hospitality operations at state parks will allow the entire park system to function sustainably and continue affordable and available access to state parks.
- Continue to plan and implement the Park Management Technical Institute, and other training, development and leadership programs that TDEC offers – to show the commitment of the department to its employees and to enhance professionalism of our commissioned officers in the field.

Park Management Direction Statements for each park were first developed in 2005, and were updated in 2012-13, include vision and mission statements against which all priority strategies are compared for consistency. This provided a framework in 2014/2015 for each of the 56 state parks to create a **Business and Management Plan** -- a document that reflects a much clearer picture of what will be needed to succeed, financially, and highlights the park's overall goals and objectives for the next five years. This one facet of our planning, along with the added ability of each park manager to administer their own budget, has improved management decision-making capability immensely. These plans shall be fluid and updated annually in August.

- Increase visitation to state's parks and historic areas, by continuing Tennessee's capital Investment in the state park system. The state will implement Governor Haslam's major projects investment of $54,000,000 over the next three - five years.

3. Local Parks and Recreation

2020 Vision

All Tennesseans, regardless of where they live, will have access to consistent recreation services and close-to-home opportunities to enjoy recreation, exercise, and interaction with nature.

2020 Action Plan

Recreation Summit

TDEC will convene a recurring series of Recreation Summits on Parks, People, and Landscapes beginning in 2016 as a means to encourage ongoing implementation of this Tennessee 2020 plan. The first of these summits should focus on issues relating to local parks and recreation departments as a way to implement and create awareness of this initiative and develop other strategies to expand and improve the state's local recreation delivery system. The summits should also follow the National Recreation and Park Association's three pillars of Conservation, Health & Wellness and Social Equity. It is our hope that the ideas and goals that come out of these annual summits will also be the foundation for the next 10-year plan.

4. Recreation One-Stop

2020 Vision

Tennessee will pioneer the creative use of emerging Internet and geospatial technology to encourage greater public participation in all aspects of recreation. All Tennesseans will have access to a user-friendly source of information about the entire spectrum of the state's recreation opportunities. A vibrant, online community will enable the public to share recreation experiences with others, receive training for new activities, find partners for outings, encourage others to become more active, and get more directly involved in advocacy for parks, recreation and natural resource conservation.

2020 Action Plan

TDEC will establish a public/private partnership to develop a Tennessee Recreation One-Stop website with a user-friendly database of all federal, state, and local recreation resources and programs in the state, organized on a geospatial platform.

This website will include robust search functions, an information-rich page for each site, social networking functions, links to recreation-and conservation-related organizations, user-generated content, and online surveys.

5. Public Health

2020 Vision

TDEC, the Tennessee Department of Health (DOH), and the state's network of local parks and recreation departments will be active partners in encouraging the population to increase their levels of activity and exercise. The state will achieve a measurable decrease in levels of inactivity and obesity through a well-coordinated set of intervention strategies on many fronts.

2020 Action Plan

TDEC-State Parks, the Tennessee Department of Health, and the state's network of local parks and recreation departments will be active partners in encouraging the population to increase their levels of activity and exercise. The state will achieve a measurable decrease in levels of inactivity and obesity through a well-coordinated set of strategies on many fronts.

TDEC-State Parks and TDEC-RES will create, maintain, and leverage cross-sector partnerships and coalitions that implement effective strategies to promote physical activity. Partnerships should also include representatives from public health; health care; education; transportation, urban design and community planning, business and industry, volunteer and non-profit organizations–Friends' Groups, and organizations serving historically underserved and understudied populations.

- Encourage our state parks and local parks and recreation departments to both educate and learn from partners in order to strengthen the effectiveness of the partnership and the efforts of each member.
- Examine successful cross-sector partnerships to identify and incorporate key elements of success.
- Connect with "non-traditional" partners to increase TDEC's outreach activities and encourage social capital.
- Partner with DOH to provide sustained resources to local parks' departments, state parks and the environmental community to provide leadership for strategic partnerships.

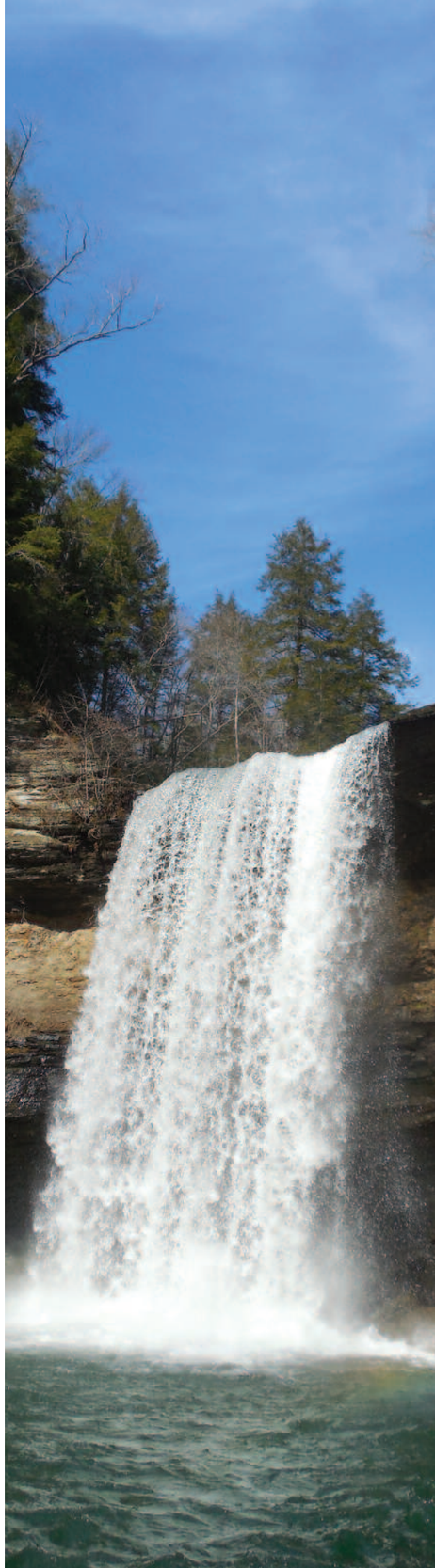
6. Every Child Outdoors

2020 Vision

Tennessee's children will have high-quality, close-to-home opportunities for unstructured play in nature; families will become more engaged in nature and the outdoors; and school children will learn to appreciate the natural world and the need for environmental stewardship.

2020 Action Plan

- Coordination of a steering committee which will include representatives from the Tennessee Department of Education (DOE), DOH, and multiple state universities.
- Implement plans to provide high quality teacher training workshops at Tennessee state parks.
- Correlate state park interpretive programming to Tennessee's K-12 Academic Standards
- Continue collaboration with formal and non-formal educators to provide high quality learning opportunities related to the environment and STEM subjects.



7. Environmental Education

2020 Vision

Tennessee's schools will achieve measurable improvements in student performance by using the interaction of local natural and human systems as an integrating concept in all subjects and all grades, with the assistance of a well-organized, statewide network of professional interpretive specialists and a comprehensive, online information delivery system.

2020 Action Plan

Tennessee's schools will be a national model for using the interaction of local natural and human systems as an integrating concept in all subjects and all grades, with the assistance of a well-organized statewide network of professional interpretive specialists and a comprehensive online information delivery system. This well-integrated program will increase student engagement and achieve measurable improvements in performance. The Tennessee Department of Education will recognize Environmental Literacy as certifiable area of teaching and/or an area for which an add-on endorsement can be granted.

Tennessee Departments of Education and Environment and Conservation need to recognize the importance of environmental education and collaborate to create an environmental literacy coordinator position to direct the implementation of the environmental literacy plan. This coordinator will work with partners to further align the Tennessee Pre K-12 State Standards of Curriculum with the NAAEE Pre K-12 Guidelines for Learning.

8 Quality Growth

2020 Vision

Every Tennessee county will incorporate Quality Growth tools and principles in its land use planning and development permitting, so that each county's valuable natural infrastructure - parklands, greenways, streams and buffers, wildlife habitat, and conservation landscapes - will be protected as part of a systematic growth management process. These tools will include greenways and buffers to preserve the integrity of streams and protect state and local parks from impacts of adjacent development.

2020 Action Plan

TDOT, TDEC, and Cumberland Region Tomorrow should form a partnership to work with existing regional organizations and efforts and support the establishment of new ones to implement recommendations of regional visioning, planning and implementation initiatives the contain CRT Quality Growth methodologies.

9 Recreational Waters

2020 Vision

Tennessee's rivers, streams, and creeks will be the centerpiece of a coordinated approach to water quality regulation, quality growth planning, public stewardship of the environment, and environmental education.

2020 Action Plan

Tennessee's rivers, streams, and creeks will be the centerpiece of a coordinated approach to water quality control, quality growth planning, public stewardship of the environment, and environmental education. These resources will be recognized as significant public recreation assets, with ready access provided along greenways and at road crossings, giving the public widespread, close-to-home opportunities to enjoy them. Tennesseans will be proud of their local watersheds and aware of their personal responsibilities to help protect water quality through their everyday actions.

10. Rural Economies

2020 Vision

Tennessee's rural regions will gain significant economic benefits from their rich heritage of natural, historic, and cultural resources, will value them as significant assets, and will take steps to preserve and protect them.

2020 Update

TDEC will complete development of the Tennessee State Heritage Areas program and introduce legislation to have the designation formally established.

TDEC, TWRA, the Department of Agriculture, and non-profit organizations will partner to develop a framework for a State Recreation Areas designation and seek legislation to establish the designation. The newly acquired North Cumberland Plateau lands of the Sundquist, Royal Blue, Emory River and Brimstone tracts should be designated as a pilot project under this program.

TDOT will proceed immediately with development of the Tennessee State Scenic Byways Plan.

Parks

1. ADVOCACY AND FUNDING

THE NEED of decision-makers for accurate information about the value of funding for parks, recreation, and conservation.

Additional spending for recreation projects or acquisition of conservation lands has been important to the leaders in the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation during the past 5 years. Decision makers at the state and local levels are maintaining or increasing funding for parks, recreation and conservation because they have seen hard evidence that such funding yields a high rate of return on investment. Visitor spending on trips to state and federal parks bolsters the local economies of many rural counties. Spending on equipment for sports, hunting and fishing, boating, hiking, camping, birding, and other recreational activities contributes substantially to state and local sales tax revenues. Case studies in corporate citing decisions suggest that Tennessee's outstanding recreation amenities play an important role in attracting new jobs and talent to the state. In addition, recreation providers are on the front lines in addressing costly public health issues that severely threaten the state's economy. These factors make investments in the recreation infrastructure critically important to the state's economy, as much so as those in roads and schools.

2015 Action Plan Status:

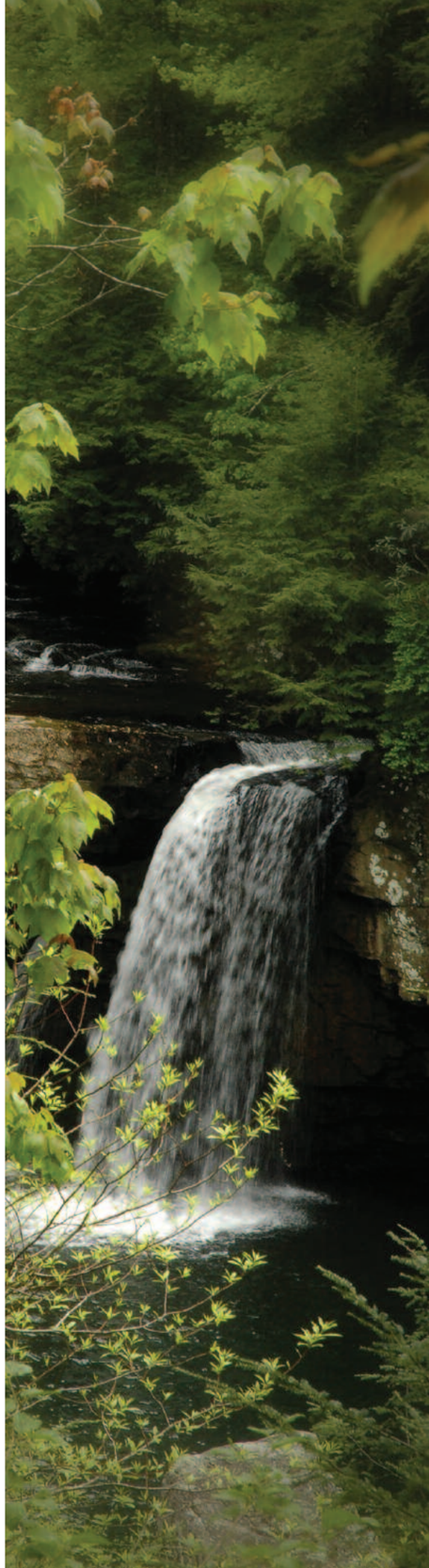
1. For greater efficiency, TDEC consolidated the Heritage Conservation Trust Fund Board and the Conservation Commission in 2012 for the purposes of funding conservation projects and as well as being involved in advocacy Issues, research, etc.

2. The General Assembly restored permanent funding to the Heritage Conservation Trust, the Local Parks and Recreation Fund (LPRF) and the State Lands Acquisition Fund (SLAF).

3. The Tennessee State Parks Friends Program has grown from 28 to 40 groups over the past five years. Two new groups are on the horizon and our goal is to have a viable Friends Group partnership in each of our 56 state parks by December, 2018.

   a. On average, $250,000 is expended annually at state parks by our Friends' organizations. In years that Friends are involved with land acquisition, those figures increase to well over $1 million.

   b. They contribute over 50,000 volunteer hours in various park projects and over $900,000 of direct funding for the state park system as a whole. Our park staff appreciates the value of the Friends movement and the opportunity it provides for us to be a better parks system overall.



4. The Friends of Tennessee State Parks Coalition was officially created as an organization in the summer of 2011. The Coalition was authorized by the general membership of the collective Friends of Tennessee State Parks to form a group to represent all the individual Friends Groups for State Parks and State Natural Areas--for the purpose of presenting a collective voice in matters pertaining to State Parks and Friends Groups. Their main accomplishment:

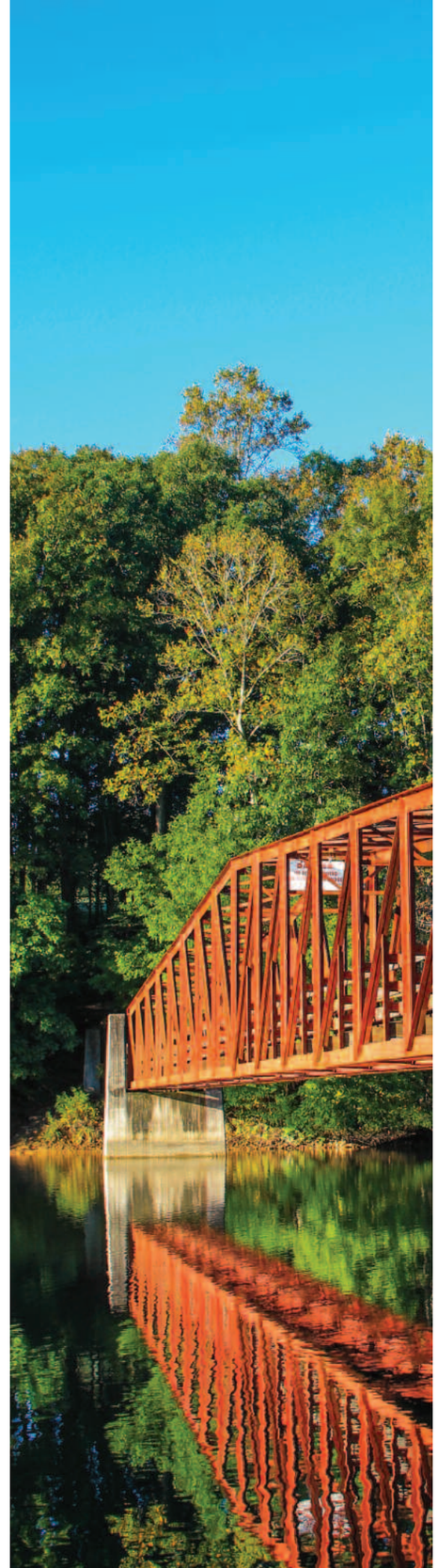
- Annual Friends Day on the Hill allowed citizen advocates to bring attention to the Friends Groups and the work they are doing to enhance and promote Tennessee State Parks. The group was able to speak for 20 minutes before both the House and Senate Committees that are responsible for state parks.

5. Corporate Volunteer Partnerships include Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS) of Tennessee Work Days, where BCBS regional offices across the state held five volunteer work days during the month of October 2011. Services provided: Invasive plant removal, clearing and removing overgrowth at an old CCC Camp, assisted in construction of a canoe access along the Harpeth River, seed collection, trail construction and trail maintenance. Each of our parks and/or natural area sites received $10,000 from the BCBS Foundation and Trust. Also, Southwest Airlines and Student Conservation Association volunteers teamed up with Tennessee State Parks employees to help refurbish trails, pick up debris and remove barbed wire from multiple sites at Long Hunter State Park in October of 2010.

6. Tennessee Promise Saturday in July 2015, enabled over 500 students to fulfill their community service requirements while assisting Tennessee State Parks with necessary projects. Student volunteers built trails, cleared paths, installed bird houses, pulled privet, cleaned up streams and beautified shorelines at state parks across Tennessee.

7. TDEC has also added three new state parks to its system. These significant events, our first parks in over a decade, have provided an opportunity for us to discover anew the impact a state park has on the locality and region of the park's placement. Driven by grass roots efforts, these parks are highly valued by their nearby communities. As incubators of new thinking regarding park development, we have learned firsthand that many citizen groups and recreation enthusiasts will come to our aid in providing labor and capital for a new park. Sustainability of this effort will be our challenge, but our brand image is clearly strong and capable of attracting new devotees. This incremental and measured allocation of state resources, working in tandem with other public and private entities, will provide a guide for future efforts at existing park locations. As a strategy to measure the value a park has to its host community, it could provide a compass to new park development.

The concept of preservation and protection of the scenic value of a park's natural resource now provides the opportunity to private sector and local economic development entities to promote the resource to tourists and business prospects. The recreation opportunities, both passive and active, will be such that private sector sponsors will want to provide funding for select park facilities and programming.



2020 Update

Decision makers at the state and local levels will be fully informed about the economic impacts of parks and recreation in Tennessee, will recognize the value of public investments in this sector, and will be empowered to make sound economic decisions related to parks and recreation.

- TDEC is exploring options for a dedicated funding mechanism for state parks - roads and bridges. The Department has made this objective/goal a part of the annual Customer Focused Goals that is approved by the Governor's office each Fall. The Parks and Conservation Bureau within TDEC, working with TDEC's legislative team, will propose a solution to the General Assembly by 2018.

- Funding sought for this initiative will most likely come from a portion of the gas tax, administered by the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT). Tennessee's business community and private foundations with an interest in recreation and public health will advocate for this funding level.

- TDEC-Parks and Conservation hired a Partnership/Development Director, in March 2016. This position will revitalize the State Parks Foundation -- a mechanism similar to the National Parks Foundation. This person's role will also be to increase corporate partners and build stronger Friends' groups to allow increased revenue generating opportunities.

- TDEC will engage in additional studies regarding the value of public investments in parks and recreation.

- As TDEC manages the state park system more like a business, the funding mechanisms and appropriate public-private partnerships will continue to be pursued. TDEC should add a legislative amendment during the 2016 legislative session that would add support facilities/amenities to the eligible items funded through the State Lands Acquisition Fund.

- Expand advocacy and outreach initiatives by creating a Coalition of related groups, such as – tourism, development districts, economic and community development agencies, etc. (designate an outreach advocate).

- TDEC/State Parks/RES should combine resources and marketing strategies with the National Park Service to develop "Find Your Park" centennial celebration initiatives and programs. Focus should be on state parks and local parks programs and partnerships.

Coordination Links

Local Parks and Recreation: Local decision-makers are more likely to fund parks and recreation adequately when they understand the value to the community.

Public Health: State and local decision-makers will have information about how investing in public recreation can help to decrease the massive burden of health care costs.

Quality Growth: The findings of this research project will reinforce local governments' understanding that preserving open space for recreation benefits the local economy.

2. STATE PARKS MANAGEMENT

THE NEED of the Tennessee State Parks for a comprehensive systems approach to strategic management.

2015 Action Plan Status:

On May 21, 2015, 23 Tennessee State Park Rangers and Managers graduated from the first-ever Park Manager Technical Institute (PMTI). A goal of this program is to equip park managers and future park managers with tools they need to succeed in running their parks and managing their teams.

This annual PMTI was created by state parks leadership and TDEC's Office of Talent Management to create development opportunities for emerging talent in Tennessee State Parks that would enhance their management skills. Participants attend workshops over an eight-month period on topics such as:

- DETERMINING PARKS MISSION, VISION AND PURPOSE
- LONG-TERM PLANNING
- FINANCIAL ASPECTS, INCLUDING ALL STEPS OF PAYROLL AND BUDGET PROCESS
- HOW TO MANAGE RESOURCES, AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT STEPS
- HIRING AND STAFFING PROCESS
- MANAGING OTHERS AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT
- LEVERAGING OUTSIDE RESOURCES
- EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS AND PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

This program, along with many other training, development and leadership programs that TDEC offers, shows the commitment of the Department to its employees:

1. ***Tennessee's Stewardship Vision*** - From its beginning in 1937, Tennessee State Parks were established to protect and promote the unique natural, cultural and historic resources of Tennessee. The public interest has also been served by a variety of benefits for citizens and communities produced by our state park system. Many of these benefits complement Governor Haslam's priorities, including creating jobs, economic development and improving health and welfare. Tennessee State Parks contribute to stronger communities and healthier citizens across the state through diverse resource-based recreation while conserving the natural environment for today and tomorrow – preserving authentic Tennessee places and spaces for future generations to enjoy. As stewards of the resources in our parks, we seek to manage Tennessee's state parks in order to preserve and protect valued resources and to provide a balance of services and benefits for the enjoyment of the people:

a. Funds from sales of the Tennessee State Park "Iris" license plate help pay for a variety of native plant and exotic removal projects, including, landscaping around buildings, entrances and signs and working with the UT Beneficial Insects Laboratory in producing new biological controls to combat the Hemlock Wooly Adelgid. A new companion license plate is being revealed in 2016.

b. On May 12, 2015, Pickett State Park and Pogue Creek Canyon State Natural Area were named a Silver-tier International Dark Sky Park for their commitment to preserving the natural beauty of the night sky. The combined property will be known as Pickett-Pogue International Dark Sky Park.

c. Frozen Head State Park hosted a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) reunion on July 31, 2010. The event honored the CCC's contributions to the state of Tennessee's parks and natural areas. The CCC was instrumental in the development of a number of Tennessee State Parks, and we make a point still today, to showcase and interpret the results of their efforts at many of our state park areas, including:

- Norris Dam Rustic Cabins --The park has 19 historic CCC cabins. All are located in quiet, wooded settings and are completely equipped with electrical appliances, cooking/eating utensils and linens. The rustic cabins were originally constructed in the 1930's by the Civilian Conservation Corps and are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

- At Cumberland Mountain State Park, the 1930's CCC-built bathhouse was renovated into ADA-compliant restrooms, along with a new interpretive center. The interpretive center displays exhibits fn the early days of Cumberland Mountain State Park. The original stone from the bathhouse was used in the renovations, along with some of the original wood.

- Chickasaw will have eight cabins renovated in 2016-17. The vacation cabins at Chickasaw were built in the mid-1930's by the CCC and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) as part of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal Program. The cabins are now 80 years old and represent a significant time in national history. The protection and preservation of the historical attributes of the cabins will be the prime directive of the renovation effort. Nevertheless, the Depression-Era cabins have suffered a long time from deferred maintenance and will be renovated to provide modern amenities.

- Chickasaw Bridge Replacement -- The 700 ft. pedestrian bridge across Lake Placid at Chickasaw State Park will be replaced with a new bridge that will be ADA compliant. The bridge is the only direct pedestrian route between the northern and southern sides of Chickasaw State Park, and is a key attraction for visitors.

2. TDEC-TSP has identified the essential direction needed to assure that state parks are properly protected and managed for the use and enjoyment of Tennesseans and visitors for many years to come. The professional management of the state park system has a guiding direction; taking care of what we have; focusing on natural and cultural resource development; acquisition of special places, including conservation priorities and acreage to provide additional buffer for and corridors between existing public lands; encouraging volunteers; marketing park authenticity; hospitality services – a valued investment; greener parks; making the most of state parks as classrooms; improving and maintaining exhibits and signage; expanding use of GIS and GPS technology; park management plans; and public involvement and building confidence.

3. Park Management Direction Statements for each park were first developed in 2005, and were updated in 2012-13, include vision and mission statements against which all priority strategies are compared for consistency. This provided a framework in 2014/2015 for each of the 56 state parks to create a Business and Management Plan -- a document that reflects a much clearer picture of what will be needed to succeed, financially, and highlights the park's overall goals and objectives for the next five years. This one facet of our planning, along with the added ability of each park manager to administer their own budget, has improved management decision-making capability immensely. (on cd/appendix)

- **Extensive citizen input utilizing public meetings and user surveys helped set the direction of these planning documents, and in turn, the organizational changes over the past five years. (See Appendix CD)**

4. Each park has also developed an Interpretive Action Plan to direct and give focus to interpretive efforts and site presentation. The purpose of the action plan is to examine the interpretive purpose of each park so it can develop an interpretive mission statement that is consistent with that park's overall vision and mission. The interpretive action plan includes an inventory of interpretive facilities, programs and special events, interpretive staff, outside personnel, resource materials, equipment and live animal facilities available at each park as well as goals to be accomplished over the next four years.

5. Tennessee's Newest State Parks

- Tennessee State Parks opened its first new state park in over fourteen years in May 2012. Cummins Falls State Park, located along the Blackburn Fork Scenic River, provides for safe trail access into the falls gorge and the multi-tier swimming holes at its base. The effort was a partnership with the City of Cookeville, Putman County, Jackson County, and the Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation. Significant funding for the purchase was raised locally, almost one-third. A Friends of Cummins Falls State Park organization has been formed, and they recently raised over $16,000 at a park based marathon event.

- In October of 2012, Governor Bill Haslam and United States Senator Lamar Alexander announced Tennessee's 55th State Park, located in a very rural area of east Tennessee, Unicoi County. Rocky Fork State Park contains over 2,000 acres of mountainous terrain and sixteen miles of trout filled streams. Located adjacent to the Appalachian Trail, the park officially opened in May 2015, for hiking, mountain biking, wildlife viewing, fishing and for all types of nature enthusiasts to enjoy this pristine land. As development plans take shape, the goal is to provide low impact amenities such as a primitive campground for thru hikers as well as other visitors. Area outdoor recreation enthusiasts and clubs representing mountain biking, hiking, and horseback riding have volunteered their services to assist in development of additional trails.

- The lands comprising the Seven Islands State Birding Park were acquired in 2002 as a wildlife refuge through a cooperative effort of the Seven Islands Foundation, a non-profit land conservancy, and the Knox County Parks and Recreation Department. The vision, goals and objectives of the Seven Island Foundation included preservation of this property as a wildlife sanctuary and refuge. A grand opening was held on July 1, 2014. The state of Tennessee will continue to manage this as a state park for native flora and fauna and low impact, non-consumptive, outdoor activities for enjoyment of the wildlife diversity and natural beauty of Seven Islands. Seven Islands became the 56th Tennessee State Park in September 2013.

2020 Update

Tennessee's State Parks will continue to be a national model for a modernized strategic park management process characterized by a dynamic, systems-oriented approach that ensures high standards of professionalism and consistency, eliminates wasteful spending, provides superior protection for park resources, and delivers a quality visitor experience.

Tennessee has the 3rd lowest overall tax burden in the nation. As a state, it is our job to provide services in a customer-focused, efficient and effective way and we believe in keeping the cost of providing those services low. Tennessee has been successful in responding to challenges and trends by identifying partners that have the same goals and quickly determining how we can combine our unique strengths/resources in the right direction. As resources shift, we have to remain focused on our state parks mission and the most compelling priorities that make our park system unique. Tennessee has been ranked as the best place in the country to retire and we want that to continue. Governor Haslam is committed to keeping taxes low and TSP is committed to making our state parks affordable to all.

- Individual state park resource management plans will be developed by September, 30, 2016

- MOU's with each state park and their regional tourism and economic development agencies, non-governmental organizations, and local governments will be in place by December 2016.

- A dedicated funding source will continue to be pursued with the Tennessee Department of Transportation for state park roads and bridges, and the hope is to have something in place by 2018.

- Continue to implement a business approach to park system administration and operation that increases revenues across the system and within hospitality operations while reducing operating costs. Funds generated from park revenues can be reallocated to updating and maintaining existing park infrastructure and developing programs and services for park system visitors. Lower operating costs can allow financial resources to be allocated to other needs, such as park infrastructure, programs and other visitor services. Increasing revenue generated across the system and within particular hospitality operations at state parks will allow the entire park system to function sustainably and continue affordable and available access to state parks.

o Key Performance Indicators (KPI):

- Increase park system revenue generated by 3% compared to YTD performance from prior year (ongoing annually).

- $1,000,000 variance in net dollar gain/loss of park hospitality operations compared to YTD performance of prior year.

- Lower non-personnel operating expenses by 3.5% compared to YTD performance of prior year.

- Increase visitation to the state's parks and historic areas, by continuing Tennessee's capital Investment in the state park system. The state will implement Governor Haslam's major projects over the next three-five years. The $54,000,000+ investment Includes:

    - $16,750,000 in deferred maintenance at state parks - to take care of what we have. This includes $6,800,000 for Warriors' Path State Park in east TN, for upgrades to recreation vehicle campgrounds, electrical and utility systems, waste water systems, marina facilities, boat slips, maintenance facilities, visitor center, and offices.
    - Cummins Falls State Park New Visitor Center $2,950,000
    - Fall Creek Falls State Park Village Green Visitor Center $3,000,000.
    - State Parks Hospitality Operations $30,397,000 -- for the enhancement of state park hospitality operations at Fall Creek Falls and Montgomery Bell State Parks. Funds support the demolition of older facilities, the construction of a new inn, cabin and villa renovations, restaurant renovations, and golf course pro shop maintenance at Fall Creek Falls State Park. Additionally, funds support renovations to the inn, restaurant, and golf course pro shop maintenance at Montgomery Bell State Park.
    - State Parks Small Projects $500,000 -- for various projects to support public recreation including, but not limited to, the construction of equipment sheds, picnic shelters, restrooms, and park exhibits.
    - Davy Crockett State Park Exhibits and Facilities Upgrades $350,000

Most Tennesseans now have a state park within an hour's drive and in most cases more than one type of park to visit, representing a healthy state park system of diverse experiences and opportunities. While providing a wide range of outdoor recreational opportunities, Tennessee State Parks represent the state's heritage in the landscape – reflecting not only the diversity of Tennessee's geologic and ecological regions, but also the diverse stories that span over 200 years of state history and the region's incredible pre-historical presence. Tennessee's state parks deliver a rich fabric of natural landscapes, wild places, preserved ecologies, outdoor recreational opportunities and protected historic scenes and resources – together representing the heritage of Tennessee in the landscape.

Coordination Links

Tennessee Recreation One-Stop. Includes a mechanism for park user comments, which can provide feedback for park managers. Possible assistance from user-generated GPS data uploaded to the site.

Quality Growth. Tennessee Regions' Roundtable Network accomplishments include publication of a NADO Best Practice Case Study publication http://www.nado.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/TN_FINAL.pdf, a new resource and funding sharing website, and an upcoming Downtown Economic Development Strategies Toolbox to aid in economic development efforts that can support open space and state parks objectives.

Local Parks and Recreation. To ensure that the scope of outdoor recreation, tourism and economic and community development are woven throughout collaborative management approaches.

3. LOCAL PARKS AND RECREATION

THE NEED of Tennessee's cities and counties to provide diverse, close-to-home recreation opportunities for all their residents.

2015 Action Plan Status:
The regional entities involved in this plan's Quality Growth initiative have made an effort over the past five years to:

- Encourage counties to include a representative of the local parks and recreation department on the county planning commission;

- Define recreation resources as community facilities in their comprehensive plans;

- Propose the use of parkland acquisition fees as an alternative to and set-asides for new developments;

- Stress the value of creating interconnected networks of greenways, bicycle lanes, and sidewalks; and

- Encourage counties and communities to conserve open space for future recreation needs.

In addition, RES has encouraged the high growth counties that lack a county-wide department to form one. The highest priority has been given to Fayette County in West TN; Sullivan, Washington, Carter, and Greene Counties in Northeast TN; and Sumner County in Middle TN. TDEC/RES will consider adding a grant priority for high-growth counties that establish county-wide recreation delivery systems in the Open Project Selection Process (OPSP). (see attached CD).

PARTAS will continue to assist cities and counties in developing school-parks agreements and should develop a model incentive program for local agencies to use in encouraging school principals to enter into such agreements.

TDEC/RES will consider adding a grant priority for joint use projects undertaken through such partnerships in the OPSP.

TDEC/RES has been extremely successful in encouraging the creation of local greenways through its technical assistance services and grant priorities, placing an emphasis on connectivity of greenways, bicycle lanes, and sidewalks into local or regional networks. The Tennessee Greenways and Trails Plan is a companion plan to Tennessee 2020 and will be completed in 2016.

Multi-County Partnerships

For counties that currently lack recreation delivery systems, RES should develop a multi-county partnership template and encourage recreation professionals in counties with established parks and recreation departments to enter into mentoring relationships with neighboring counties. TDEC/RES should establish a special priority in the grants program for counties that enter into such relationships. The four counties in this class which will experience relatively high growth in the next decade - DeKalb, Moore, Smith, and Union - should receive special attention.

2020 Update

All Tennesseans, regardless of where they live, will have access to consistent recreation services and close-to-home opportunities to enjoy recreation, exercise, and interaction with nature.

The regional Quality Growth entities should encourage counties to define school recreation facilities and grounds as community amenities in their comprehensive plans. In addition, more municipal/county parks and recreation departments should implement the Quality Growth Toolbox and include "best practices" on their web sites that reflects joint-use agreement solutions.

- TDEC-RES should work with Department of Health and the Coordinated School Health coordinators as advocates for joint-use agreements.
- School campuses should be designed to be school parks during the day and recreation facilities after school. TDEC-RES should work towards broadening the scope for Local Parks and Recreation Fund and Recreation Trails Program funding – and include school districts that have joint projects with parks departments.
- Partnering with the Dept. of Health for access to walking, farmers markets, community gardens and more.
- TDEC-State Parks should also initiate regional MOA's in the areas around state park units - that would include the local government, the Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors' Bureau, Health Council.
- The Tennessee Department of Education should establish a mandate for schools to enter into joint use agreements with local parks and recreation departments.

More than 750 greenways in Tennessee provide access for people of all ages to get outdoors and enjoy our abundant natural beauty. Greenways connect communities, increase property values and promote public safety. The east Tennessee region (Knoxville and south) hosts over half of greenways in the state, many located in and around rapidly developing neighborhoods.

- TDOT should continue to fund TDEC's Greenways Coordinator position as a means of encouraging the growth of alternative transportation and should cooperate with local governments in providing sidewalks and bicycle lanes.
- The Great Smoky Mountains Regional Greenway Council brings together representatives of local governments and agencies in the region to share information about greenway projects, promote regional greenway linkages, and encourage greenway use. Current members are: the City of Alcoa, Blount County, Cocke County, the City of Gatlinburg, the Town of Farragut, the City of Knoxville, Knox County, the City of Louisville, the City of Maryville, the City of Pigeon Forge, the City of Sevierville, and the Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization. www.smokymountainsgreenways.org. TDEC-RES through their Greenways and Trails Council should encourage this model/concept be replicated statewide so that other regions can come together to pool resources, jointly fund studies and plans and develop fee-based memberships.
- Recognizing the citizens' needs and interests for walkability and bike-ability, TDOT should continue funding for Multi-Modal Transportation and consider lowering project amounts and funding smaller projects in the next phase.
- Showcase successful Safe Routes To Schools projects that tie into greenways. Potential case study would be the City of Cleveland, TN.
- Open space acquisition and preservation of green space planning needs to be emphasized in TDEC's 2016 Greenways and Trails Plan and in the scoring mechanism for grant programs in order to plan for future growth.

One-quarter of Tennessee's counties are not served by an organized parks and recreation department. Key action steps include:

- TDEC-RES should include new incentives for comprehensive planning in grant funding that will encourage planning in smaller communities and prepare them for vital recreation grant projects/facilities.
- Local governments should pursue potential funding sources/partnerships through business and industry to improve community health and wellness, conservation efforts, etc. (Example: the City of Murfreesboro placed historical signs along their greenway in partnership with a sponsor.)
- Encourage peer/mentor communities through the development districts and TRPA to help navigate funding mechanisms and successful grant writing tips.
- TRPA should continue to update their Parks Database, including a planning tool that would help identify "park desert".
- TDEC-RES should adopt the new Tennessee Greenways and Trails Plan as a companion document to the Tennessee 2020 Plan – due to be complete in 2016. Focus should be on sharing successful case studies of grass roots greenways efforts, connectivity and other modes of alternative transportation.
- TDEC-RES and TRPA should encourage local governments to seek Brownfields funding for parks and recreation development projects in cities and counties and regional park areas.
- TDEC-RES should showcase successful community marketing plans that advertise P&R and quality of life on their web site.
- TRPA should continue advocating for community health as a major priority through its community garden grants and workshops. The local parks and recreation department should be seen as a leader in the community for health and wellness.

We have always known that local and regional public parks add significant value and benefits to their communities in terms of Conservation, Health & Wellness and Social Equity. Beyond that, local and regional park agencies are also engines of economic activity in their communities. www.nrpa.org. The Economic Impacts of Local Parks -- An Examination of the Economic Impacts of Operations and Capital Spending on the United States Economy was conducted by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) in 2013. America's local and regional public park agencies generated nearly $140 billion in economic activity and supported almost 1 million jobs from their operations and capital spending alone in 2013. When the spending at local and regional parks is combined with that of national and state parks, public parks are responsible for more than $200 billion in annual economic activity. These are the key findings of research conducted by the Center for Regional Analysis at George Mason University and led by Dr. Terry Clower. www.nrpa.org.

Operations and capital spending at local and regional parks in Tennessee created $1,690,819,194 in economic activity in 2013 and supported 14,577 jobs in the state. (The Economic Impacts of Local Parks -- An Examination of the Economic Impacts of Operations and Capital Spending on the United States Economy)

- In the City of Murfreesboro, the local Chamber has recognized the economic impact of parks and recreation in the city. They have the goal of becoming the "Sports Center of TN" – with 68 soccer tournaments creating a $27 million economic impact they are well on their way.
- TDEC will convene a recurring series of Recreation Summits on Parks, People, and Landscapes beginning in 2017, as a means to encourage ongoing implementation of this Tennessee 2020 plan and to prepare for the next ten-year state recreation planning process. The first of these summits should focus on issues relating to local parks and recreation departments that define them as an economic driver and develop other strategies to expand and improve the state's local recreation delivery system.

Coordination Links

Advocacy and Funding. Research findings on the economic impacts of parks and recreation will give local decision-makers information to help them appreciate why parks and recreation departments should be fully funded.

Tennessee Recreation One-Stop. The statewide recreation resource database to be built for this initiative will provide a detailed geospatial inventory of all municipal and county parks, facilities, greenways, sports fields, and recreation programming. This data will allow TDEC to identify locations where gaps exist in the state's recreation delivery system.

Public Health. Closing the gaps in the state's recreation delivery system will allow more Tennessee residents to have access to exercise and fitness opportunities.

Children in Nature. This initiative will help local parks and recreation departments serve the needs of children and families for opportunities to interact with nature.

Environmental Education. This initiative can encourage school/parks agreements by establishing education-related partnerships between schools and local parks and recreation departments.

Quality Growth. The Quality Growth initiative will give local parks and recreation departments a voice in the process of land-use planning and permitting.

Recreational Waters. Increasing access to publicly owned waterways, both through stream and creek access and through the creation of Blueways, will allow local parks to provide more diverse opportunities without having to acquire new park lands.

PEOPLE

4. RECREATION ONE-STOP

THE NEED of the public for more accessible information about recreation opportunities and better ways to participate in advocacy and planning.

2015 Action Plan Status

The recommendation that TDEC should recruit a private partner to develop a Tennessee Recreation One-Stop website did not come to fruition due to the complexity of the vision and different initiatives being undertaken by each agency. The comprehensive concept and development of the structure will be a priority of the 2020 Update, in order to accomplish the vision laid out by the Recreation One-Stop goal. Accomplishments of the agency over the past five years have included some pretty impressive achievements, and have enabled TDEC to upgrade its online presence; which in turn has provided more customer-focused services.

1. TDEC's original Park Finder provided the comprehensive search functions that were outlined in the 2015 Action Plan. TDEC began a redevelopment of the department's website and state parks' website in 2014 and 2015, which put the Park Finder's progress on hold until 2016.

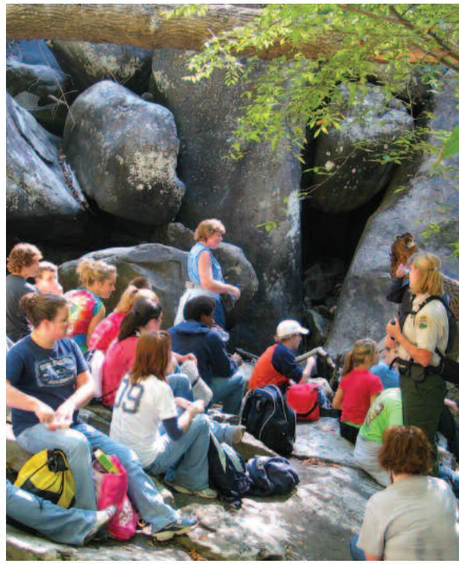
2. Social networking. TDEC-State Parks has aggressively developed the use of social media as an integral part of our ongoing marketing effort. The Tennessee State Parks' Facebook page has over 100,000 "Likes" and several of the individual parks have more than 20,000 "Likes." Through TDEC's increased and successful use of social media for state parks and natural areas, the online user has become more aware of organized groups that provide outings or instruction in areas of interest and learn about opportunities for targeted citizen action. RES has also utilized social media to some degree, but TRPA has taken the lead with local parks and recreation agencies over the past five years.

3. Online surveys. TDEC's online customer survey mechanism captures data about the behavior, preferences, and unmet needs of resource users, giving resource managers and decision-makers an ongoing stream of information that can inform policy and management decisions. This also includes park visitor surveys for each of our 56 state parks.

4. Tennessee State Parks 75th Anniversary Micro-site was launched in May 2012, in commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of Tennessee State Parks. Features on the site (www.tnstateparks75.com) included: Plan Your Visit, A Timeline through the history of Tennessee State Parks, Share Your Memories Contest, and a Junior Ranger Game.

5. TSP collaborated with the Parks by Nature Network to launch PocketRanger, a free iPhone and Android app. A Ranger Communication Portal (RCP) - Tennessee State Parks converted internal written communication to a digital format allowing staff to view program details-dates, descriptions, program attendance-quicker than ever before. The portal also allows interpretive rangers to collaborate with one another by allowing them to view what other park programs are being provided at different state parks.

6. Tennessee State Parks' new "brand identity" was unveiled in 2014 to bring a more modern look and feel to the Tennessee State Park system. The new logo/brand allows the agency to maintain a consistent look and feel while emphasizing the particular strengths and uniqueness of each individual park. Included in this re-branding effort, TSP also launched a new dynamic website (www.tnstateparks.com), created new print marketing material and digital media templates for all parks.



7. In 2013, TDEC-State Parks launched an online reservation system for all of our campsites. This has maximized our occupancy rates and given our system a profitable revenue stream.

8. TRPA has developed the Parks Database:
- 65-70% of parks loaded into the TRPA site – city, county, state, federal
- Designated as active, passive, mixed use, facilities, nature, historical/cultural
- They are taking the lead in seeking funding to enable user content, social networking, etc.

2020 Update

Tennessee will be the national model in the creative use of emerging Internet and geospatial technology to encourage greater public participation. All Tennesseans will have access to a user-friendly source of information about the whole spectrum of the state's recreation opportunities. A vibrant, online community will enable the public to share recreation experiences with others, receive training for new activities, find partners for outings, and become more directly involved in advocacy for parks, recreation and natural resources.

1. Comprehensive recreation database. Initially, all state and federal recreation resources in Tennessee, using currently available data shared through existing interagency partnerships. Local and private resource information will be added as it becomes available through existing networks of local and regional partners.

2. Geospatial platform. TDEC should pursue Google Maps or Google Earth platform, as well as other platforms, with latitude/longitude coordinates attached to each site in the resource database.

3. TDEC-Land Management should develop and implement an interactive mapping application that would allow for digital interactive maps and land management processes. Online mapping (interactive maps) has topo base maps within them, or at least the capability of having them in the application. By adding a print function, pre-printing a supply of hard copy maps is a thing of the past.

4. User profiles. New visitors to the site define their personal recreation activity preferences with a questionnaire, creating a user profile that allows them to receive individually tailored information.

5. Robust search functions. Users request searches based on a comprehensive list of activities or resource types. The search can be limited to a given area or a specified radius from a starting point.

6. Information-rich site pages. For each site, a page containing a general description, recreation opportunities, unique or interesting features, a site map, link to United States Geographical Survey (USGS) topo maps, visitor information about hours and regulations, photos, guidebook information (nature and history), GPS data, trail descriptions if applicable, and events descriptions if applicable.

7. Organization links. The site encourages active grassroots involvement by displaying links to non-profit advocacy organizations that focus on the resource types preferred by the user.

8. User-generated content. The user can contribute content to the pages of sites visited, allowing the website to grow richer over time, giving resource managers input about user impressions, and giving the public a greater sense of ownership and participation. Uploadable content includes: photos, comments, GPS data (to help park managers collect geographic data about their resources), and suggestions for related outings ("Users who liked this destination also recommended...")

9. Online surveys. An online survey mechanism captures data about the behavior, preferences, and unmet needs of resource users, giving resource managers and decision-makers an ongoing stream of information that can inform policy and management decisions. This may include park visitor spending data to help measure economic impacts.

10. TDEC should also work with TWRA to complete an update of the 2008 Recreation Atlas map (hard copy – poster). TWRA has grant funding available that would allow them to collect the boundary data of protected lands in the state. This should include federal, state and local.
- Integrate TDEC-State Parks' Trails and Vista Initiative – to include state park trails, local greenways and trails, and blueways.

Development Stages

The goal is for this website to be online and operational by 2019.
The following sequence of actions is designed to achieve that:

1. TDEC will recruit a private partner for this project, and negotiate a formal public/private partnership agreement.

2. TDEC will convene a Parks and Recreation Summit in 2016 of all state and federal agencies that manage recreation resources in Tennessee to solicit ideas and suggestions for the website content and to develop agreements for data sharing.

3. TDEC will convene a forum of all recreation-related non-profit organizations in Tennessee to solicit ideas and suggestions for the website content and functions.

4. The private partner will seek federal R&D funding to develop the technical components and design of the website.

5. During the R&D period, the State partners will provide GIS resource data for the site.

6. The site will undergo beta testing.

7. The site will go live, accompanied by high-profile public announcements from the Governor and from the partnering agencies to build widespread public awareness.

Coordination Links

Advocacy and Funding. The website will make the findings of economic impact research available at the grassroots level, giving citizen activists and organizations the tools to make their efforts more effective.

State Parks Management. Online comments and surveys will establish an ongoing dialogue between resource managers and the public they serve.

Public Health. The website will ensure that information about programming and places for fitness activities is readily accessible and that users will be able to find close-to-home opportunities with ease.

Every Child Outdoors. The website will contain information about local parks and stream sites where families can take children for unstructured play in nature.

Environmental Education. The website will give teachers access to information about local creeks and stream sites that can serve as outdoor classrooms to help them meet curriculum requirements and improve student outcomes, as well as information about interpretive specialists and environmental educators in their area.

Rural Economic Development. For the many rural counties that contain most of the state's large parks, protected lands, and historic sites, the website will make the public more aware of what they have to offer, attracting increased visitation and contributing to the local economy.

Recreation Areas, and State Scenic Byways will become more viable with this higher level of exposure.

Recreational Waters. The website will provide information about Blueways and opportunities to interact with nature in local creeks and streams.

5. PUBLIC HEALTH

THE NEED of the public to avoid preventable diseases through increased physical activity.

2015 Action Plan Status

A TDEC representative has served, and continues to serve as an active partner on the Tennessee Obesity Task Force. Specific strategies for integrating the efforts of local parks into the State Obesity Plan and the Tennessee State Health Plan have been achieved:

- In assessing how Tennessee State Parks (TSP) could lead an effort to introduce young people/adults to the great outdoors and become more active, the state pursued a partnership with another state agency, the Tennessee Department of Health, to provide Jr. Ranger programs at state parks in 2010-15. Through nature-based science, active recreation activities and education on healthy eating habits, TDEC has influenced Tennesseans' ability to make healthy choices by implementing over 400 Jr. Ranger camps/programs, attracting nearly 10,000 participants.

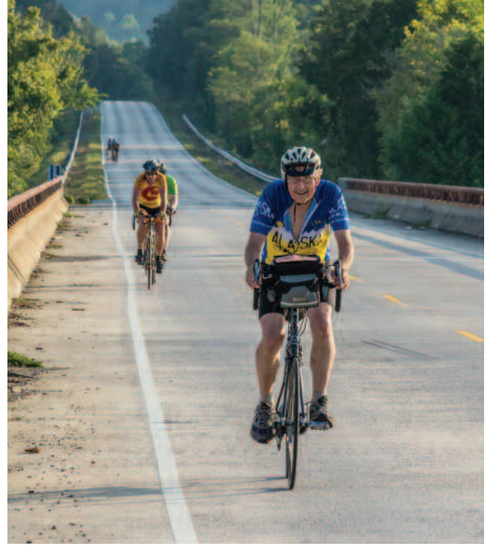
- In 2014, the TDEC Grant OPSP was revised to give priority points for applicants with effective outreach programs, especially those targeted to high-risk populations.

- Technical assistance and training in overcoming barriers to participation through park design, programming, and community outreach is offered through workshops and publications through the Division of Recreation Educational Services (RES).

- In 2011, TSP brought in another partner-Tennessee Titans football and the NFL Play60 program-encouraging young people to play outdoors 60 minutes each day. Titans' players and coaches appeared via simulated live remotes to over 55,000 K-8 students at over 80 elementary schools, to encourage participation in outdoor recreation at Tennessee State Parks. In addition, TSP toured with the annual Tennessee Titans Caravan, creating further exposure and promotion of state parks and healthy lifestyles at 50 locations including schools and public stops. The NFL Play60 program has elevated Tennessee State Parks' image throughout the state and beyond. One attendee at a Titans Caravan stop in Alabama signed up for a Jr. Ranger program in Tennessee! According to the NFL, Tennessee is the only state parks system participating in the NFL Play60 program.

- The Tennessee Recreation and Parks Association (TRPA) has been providing mini-grants for the past two years, in partnership with the Department of Health's Project Diabetes, to government agencies and NGO's for community gardens.

- In June, 2012, Tennessee State Parks' eight restaurants began posting calorie content information, allowing visitors and staff members to make informed decisions about their food choices. This partnership initiative of TDEC and DOH spurred ongoing efforts to encourage personal fitness among Tennessee residents and visitors. Tennessee State Parks have introduced a Healthy Park–Healthy Person program, encouraging park visitors to combine a good diet with physical activity. Henry Horton State Park launched the state award-winning program in 2015 and other parks are replicating this effort.



2020 Update

TDEC, the Tennessee Department of Health, and the state's network of local parks and recreation departments will be active partners in encouraging the population to increase their levels of activity and exercise. The state will achieve a measurable decrease in levels of inactivity and obesity through a well-coordinated set of strategies on many fronts.

- Follow-up research to the 2009 TRAB Survey, to gain deeper insight into the participation constraints identified in the survey. Such research could be funded through a private foundation grant to TRPA.

- Focus intergovernmental collaboration efforts on groups of targeted high-risk populations (African-Americans, Hispanics, senior citizens, teens) to identify specific participation constraints and develop strategies for addressing them. Do this by working closely with local Health Councils.

- Addressing the information barrier by facilitating the collection of geospatial information about parklands, facilities and programming from local parks, for incorporation in the Tennessee Recreation One-Stop website.

- Analysis of the GIS inventory of local parks to identify critical local gaps in the recreation delivery system, coupled with TDEC technical assistance and grants to help local entities to help fill those gaps.

- TDEC and DOH should seek programming funding to distribute to state and local communities

Coordination Links

Tennessee Recreation One-Stop. The website will ensure that information about parks and recreation is readily accessible and that users will be able to find close-to-home opportunities with ease.

State Parks Management. To ensure partnership stability and the implementation of statewide programs and Initiatives.

6. CHILDREN IN NATURE

THE NEED of children to interact with nature as a necessary part of their healthy development.

2015 Action Plan Status

TDEC, through its PARTAS service, has provided local parks and recreation departments with technical assistance and research-based guidelines for designing new parks and playgrounds or retrofitting existing ones to incorporate opportunities for unstructured play in nature. Guidelines have included best uses of native plants to provide viable habitats. PARTAS partnered with Tennessee State Parks' Division of Interpretive Programming and Education and the state parks' Iris Fund in this effort.

TDEC has also placed a priority in its local park grants program on projects that integrate natural micro-habitat areas in close proximity with other park and playground features.

TDEC, TWRA, the Tennessee Wildlife Federation, and other members of the ECO-Tennessee Coalition were successful in working with the 2010 General Assembly on passage of the Tennessee Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights and a Governor's Proclamation. Various youth, conservation and recreation agencies throughout Tennessee utilize the Bill of Rights as a foundation for their respective outdoor recreation programs, activities and initiatives.

- Every Child Outdoors – Tennessee (ECO-TN) is a coalition of more than 100 supporting organizations including local, state and national organizations and agencies, governments, non-profits and businesses representing health, natural resource, education, hunting and fishing, recreation and youth stakeholders.

- With recent concerns about youth detachment from the outdoors, lack of physical exercise and increased health risks, ECO-TN has adopted The Tennessee Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights (TCOBOR). TCOBOR is a list of experiences from which every child in Tennessee would benefit. Studies document that children who engage in these activities are healthier, perform better in school, have better social skills and self-image, and lead more fulfilled lives.

- The Tennessee Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights state that every child, before entering high school, should have the opportunity to: Walk in the woods; Play outside; Explore nature; Watch wildlife; Grow a garden; Splash in the water; Camp under the stars; Learn to swim; Climb a tree; Go fishing; Fly a kite; Visit a farm.

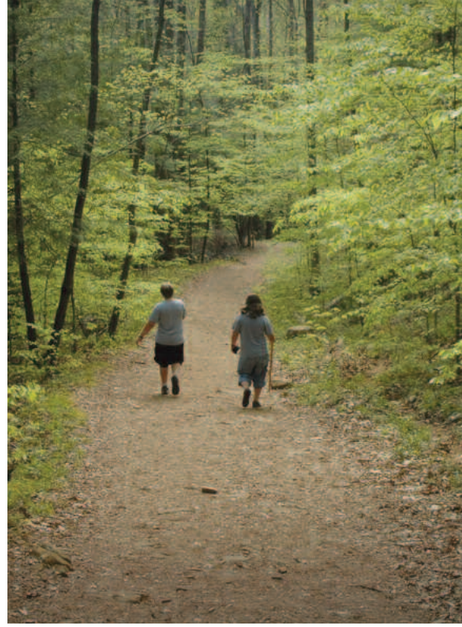
The Jr. Ranger Program and the Play60 partnership with the Titans NFL organization, implemented by the Division of Interpretive Programming and Education, leads Tennessee's efforts to establish outreach programs with schools, inner city neighborhoods and community centers to re-connect more children and families with the natural world.

- One of Tennessee's favorite projects over the past two years is the "Find a Better Outlet, Plug into Parks! Family Challenge." This program provided a fun and active way to connect youth and families to the outdoors and encouraged families to GO, SEE, and DO the many great things Tennessee State Parks has to offer.

- The Parks Passport, the active part of the Family Challenge, encouraged visitors to visit all 56 State Parks utilizing a passport book and park specific stamps. The booklet provides space for the participants to document their adventures at each state park.

- The "Challenge" consisted of a list of simple, fun and safe activities participants could complete in any state park to earn points, which they then used to win rewards redeemable at any state park! To earn points, participants had to post photos to Facebook of each challenge. The challenge ended December 31st and three families were awarded prizes varying from a free one night stay in one of our campgrounds to a fully furnished weekend in any state park, including meals, programming, and lodging.

- Over 30 families participated in the challenge, with over 140 individuals. The next generation of the Family Challenge will reach a whole new audience utilizing our new Pocket Ranger App.



2020 Update

TDEC and the Department of Agriculture should establish a partnership to encourage increased use of native plants by parks and communities and greater availability and competitiveness of native plant nurseries in Tennessee, following the Missouri Grow Wild! model. This effort should include outreach to urban foresters to encourage the use of appropriate native street trees.

TDEC-RES should encourage a renewed effort to develop and utilize joint-use agreements with schools for access to playgrounds, fields, etc. State Parks could also be a part of these agreements for use as outdoor classrooms and to increase participation in Jr. Ranger programs.

TDEC-State Parks should continue to capitalize on its relationship and partnership with REI–for camping programs, hiking programs, etc.

TDEC will continue the 50,000 Tree Planting Day with the Tennessee Environmental Council to encourage Friends' Groups and families to get outdoors and plant trees during the last week of February.

TDEC will continue its focus on the positive impacts of social media interaction and apps as an effective tool for communication

- Encourage local communities to use apps for mapping, plants and events/programs

TRPA should continue its successful role in facilitating Community Gardening programs and workshops. There have been over 30 funded to date across Tennessee.

- Partnerships with local parks and recreation, Farmers Markets, Master Gardeners, CSA and Ag Extension for local community garden education and access to seeds, etc.
- Harvesting, cooking healthy vegetables
- Address the growth of Agri-Tourism (Pick TN program), Eco-Tourism and Adventure Tourism. This should be a new vision and goal area for the next state recreation plan.

TDEC and TRPA should play an important advocacy role for interpretation and programming in college recreation programs to meet demand in anticipation of retirements and next generation of recreation professionals.

- Better communication of intrinsic benefits of state parks to legislature. Calculation of quality of life, property values and other indicators that support the need for parks.

2020 Update

Tennessee's children will have high-quality, close-to-home opportunities for unstructured play in nature; families will become more engaged in nature and the outdoors; and school children will learn to appreciate the natural world and the need for environmental stewardship.

Coordination Links

Tennessee Recreation One-Stop. The website will provide easily accessible information on local opportunities for families to expose their children to interaction with nature, including naturalized playgrounds and parks, local greenways, and stream and creek play places. It will also contain social networking links to organizations that provide nature-based outdoor recreation and training for adults and families

Quality Growth. The Quality Growth Toolbox will include guidelines for incorporating wildlife habitat corridors into community design through the use of native plants in parks and street trees. The Toolbox will also encourage communities to provide public access to streams and creeks, making additional opportunities for play in nature available.

Recreational Waters. Providing greater public access to local streams and creeks will make more opportunities available for meaningful, close-to-home interactions with nature.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

THE NEED of students to understand the natural world they will inherit in a time of daunting environmental challenges.

2015 Action Plan Status

TDEC, TWRA, TDOE and the TEEA should form a partnership to develop a State Environmental Literacy Plan designed to:

- Use Tennessee's environment as an integrating concept for all academic disciplines at all grade levels.
- Provide hands-on experiential learning at outdoor classroom sites on each school's nearby streams and creeks and at nearby parks and nature centers.
- Use each school's local watershed and the interdependence of human and natural systems within it as the framework for a Tennessee place-based curriculum.

The TEEA, TWRA and TDEC should organize Tennessee's professional interpretive specialists into a well-organized network with a consistent, statewide program specifically designed to meet the needs of teachers in implementing the state's Environmental Literacy Plan. (ELP)

Despite the immense need, integrating environmental education into school curriculum in Tennessee has been challenging. For example, as a result of the No Child Left Behind Act, teachers have been limited in the amount of time spent on environmental education and science in order to focus more on the testing standards required for math and language arts. Other barriers to integration include the limited amount of professional development opportunities for teachers, and reduced time and resources for field trips and outdoor activities.

The No Child Left Inside Act would amend No Child Left Behind to include environmental education as a graduation requirement and would provide new funding to develop rigorous standards, train teachers and support implementation of state environmental literacy plans. Should this legislation be passed, Tennessee is positioned to receive additional funding because we have an ELP in place.

The Tennessee Environmental Education Association (TEEA) continues to be the primary provider of environmental education related professional development for formal and non-formal educators. Yet these efforts serve only 100-200 professionals per year, leaving vast numbers of professional educators with no environment related professional development opportunities. Within the Tennessee Departments of Education, Environment and Conservation, and the Wildlife Resources Agency there are limited resources available to support TEEA's professional development initiatives. The most significant lack of accomplishment from the Tennessee Environmental Literacy Plan was the recommendation that the Tennessee Departments of Education, and Environment and Conservation join resources to fund a position to coordinate environmental education efforts state-wide. Without funding for this position, it is hard to imagine how the state's well intentioned efforts can be accomplished.

- The Tennessee Environmental Literacy Plan was completed July 23, 2012 but has not been adopted by the Tennessee Board of Education. The purpose of this plan is to advance national education goals by creating and implementing plans to enrich the curriculum with environmental education, thus giving teachers and students new opportunities to take learning outside. Part of the No Child Left Inside initiative, the plan lays out a roadmap to achieving environmental literacy in our state.

2020 Update

Tennessee's schools will be a national model for using the interaction of local natural and human systems as an integrating concept in all subjects and all grades, with the assistance of a well-organized statewide network of professional interpretive specialists and a comprehensive online information delivery system. This well-integrated program will increase student engagement and achieve measurable improvements in performance. The Tennessee Department of Education will recognize Environmental Literacy as certifiable area of teaching and/or an area for which an add-on endorsement can be granted.

Tennessee Departments of Education, and Environment and Conservation need to recognize the importance of environmental education and collaborate to create an environmental literacy coordinator position to direct the implementation of the environmental literacy plan. This coordinator will work with partners to further align the Tennessee PreK-12 State Standards of Curriculum with the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) PreK-12 Guidelines for Learning.

Tennessee Departments of Education, and Environment and Conservation will work with TEEA to expand EEinTN website's database of environmental education opportunities for each region, e.g. field trip options, speakers.

Tennessee Departments of Education, and Environment and Conservation will continue to support the Green Schools program which is designed to identify, recognize and provide incentives for schools to include education for environmental literacy as an integral part of the curriculum.

The Tennessee Department of Education will recognize Tennessee's network of parks, forests, wildlife management areas and other EE Centers as places to find EE resources, professional development, professional environmental educators, school programs, and outdoor experiences for students.

Tennessee State Parks, Metro Nashville Parks, Environmental Education Centers, and other non-formal providers, such as "Ag in the Classroom," will correlate their environmental education programming to the Tennessee PreK–12 State Standards of Curriculum.

Coordination Links

Every Child Outdoors. Naturalizing local parks playgrounds, and school grounds with native plants to provide wildlife micro-habitats will increase the availability of outdoor classrooms and give students more opportunities to interact with nature on a regular basis.

Tennessee Recreation One-Stop. The website will include information on Tennessee's organized network of environmental education providers and resources, consolidated on a geospatial platform to enable schools to find nearby providers and outdoor classroom locations.

Quality Growth. Communities will be encouraged to pursue connectivity of greenways and trails, which will facilitate the ability of teachers and students to walk to local outdoor classroom sites.

Recreational Waters. Improved access to creeks and streams at local greenways and bridge crossings will provide outdoor classrooms for hands-on study of local watersheds.

LANDSCAPES

Regional Perspectives

8. QUALITY GROWTH

THE NEED of rural regions for help in managing growth and preserving their quality of life.

2015 Action Plan Status:

• Through Surdna Foundation grant funding, CRT has created the Tennessee Regions' Roundtable Network that connects five regional efforts that are focusing on Open Space and Landscape Conservation, Greenways and Parks, Active Living, and Rural Economic Development.

• Five Tennessee Regions' Roundtable partner regions have current initiatives underway that support Quality Growth and Landscape Conservation goals and objectives, specifically, the Memphis region has a successful regional green print project that is currently being implemented; the Knoxville region has completed PlanET that includes both a regional greenways and regional food shed component; the Chattanooga region is completing Thrive 2055 that contains a Natural Treasures regional open space initiative, the Jackson region is working on regional economic development with agriculture sectors; and the Nashville region is working on regional transportation and transit planning and a regional open space conservation and rural economic development objective that will create the framework for a regional landscape conservation development strategy, rural economic development and eco system study, and sustainable tourism toolkit. The Tennessee Regions' Roundtable Network can be used as a framework to add additional Tennessee regions for capacity building and implementation assistance in support of TDEC and other state agency initiatives and objectives, such as Landscape Conservation goals contained in the plan.

• Four of these five regions have created and are using GIS Greenprint databases and resources in support of their regional efforts. Twelve stage departments and universities comprise a State Agency Advisory Committee for the Tennessee Regions' Roundtable Network with TDOT and TDEC Deputy Commissioners serving as Co-Chairs.

• Tennessee Regions' Roundtable Network accomplishments include publication of a National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Best Practice Case Study publication http://www.nado.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/TN_FINAL.pdf , a new resource and funding sharing website, and an upcoming Downtown Economic Development Strategies Toolbox to aid in economic development efforts that can support open space and state parks objectives.

• Tennessee Rivers and Mississippi River Trails projects funded through TDOT Scenic Byways funding.

• Main Street and Tennessee Downtown revitalization projects supported through TECD

• Sustainable Practices Natural Infrastructure strategies to assist with water and sewer infrastructure and maximizing the use and upgrade of current infrastructure

• TDOT Office of Community Transportation Planning Grants providing land use and transportation planning and implementation resources to rural communities that include greenways and trails facilities.

• Clifton Tennessee riverfront project incorporating quality growth planning and creating access to community retail and services.

- UT Knoxville has launched their Smart Communities initiative similar to Oregon's program and a new T-Scape program through their Landscape Architecture program that can provide landscape and open space conservation expertise and graduate assistance opportunities to small communities.

- Tennessee State University provides extension and technical assistance to smaller communities across Middle Tennessee.

- TVA Sustainable Communities initiative is currently advancing Sustainable Practices Tennessee Scenic Byways program working toward TDEC, TDOT, and Tourism coordination in support of design and build out of future byways.

- Tourism Tennessee Trails program focused on driving business to the smaller communities

- New Rural Development Task Force being led by Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development is organizing resources and funding programs for rural communities.

- State Parks' Bicycle Ride Across Tennessee (BRAT) program success and expansion across the state.

- SETDD Natural Infrastructure Toolkit supported by TDEC funding is supporting successful sustainable practices across that region. TDEC/State Parks and RES Greenways Initiatives:

- Funding for local and regional Greenways and Trails Networks

- Tennessee State Parks trails and vista assessment

2020 Update

TDOT, TDEC, and CRT should form a partnership to work with existing regional organizations and efforts and support the establishment of new ones to implement recommendations of regional visioning, planning and implementation initiatives the contain CRT Quality Growth methodologies.

This initiative should include supporting coalitions in the Memphis/West Tennessee, Jackson/Southwest Tennessee, Nashville/Middle Tennessee, Chattanooga/Southeast Tennessee, and Knoxville/East Tennessee regions of the state, along with regional Development Districts, TDOT's Rural Planning Organizations and other state led regional programming efforts, regional chapters of non-profit and professional organizations relating to Quality Growth, open space conservation, rural economic development, health and active living, planning, and private sector partners.

The potential partners should assist existing and new Quality Growth regional entities in building and utilizing region-specific GIS GreenPrint geospatial databases of natural infrastructure, including parklands, greenways, streams and buffers, and critical conservation areas in support of regional initiatives.

The partners should also assist these entities in utilizing existing region-specific training and technical assistance tools such as the CRT Quality Growth Toolbox, SETDD Natural Infrastructure Toolbox, TWRA State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), and other resources available through leading regional organizations, state government departments, universities, and non-profit organizations with technical assistance expertise and resources.

The partners should help train the staff of these organizations in the use of the Quality Growth Toolbox, GIS GreenPrint database information, Collaborative Leadership strategies, and other pertinent training, and technical assistance for county decision-makers and provide access to implementation resources.

Implementation of this initiative should begin with active pilot projects in strategic locations in each identified region to demonstrate successful application of the CRT resources and methods, along with other pertinent available resources.

Coordination Links

Advocacy and Funding. CRT's approach stresses that preserving the natural infrastructure and critical conservation areas ultimately benefits the community and residents in terms of better quality of life, a stronger local economy, and higher local real estate values. The wise use of natural resources is stated as the central value statement of these efforts.

State Parks Management. Having a GIS GreenPrint database in place for use by local planners, and requiring buffers to protect these resources from adjacent development will help ensure that the resource protection needs of State Park managers will be considered and respected as part of the local land use planning process.

Local Parks and Recreation. The Quality Growth process encourages communities to value their current parks and potential future ones as critical community amenities and to consider the impacts on these amenities in all land use planning decisions.

Tennessee Recreation One-Stop. The GIS data acquired from state and federal agencies and local parks and recreation departments for the Recreation One-Stop website will provide recreation resource information for Quality Growth GreenPrint databases.

Rural Economies. Entities that promote Quality Growth strategies will help build local buy-in to the principle that regional cooperation to conserve natural and historic resources is a good way to improve quality of life and strengthen the local economy. This understanding will maintain current and build future support for initiatives to develop heritage areas, scenic byways, and support Landscape Preservation goals and priorities.

9. RECREATIONAL WATERS

THE NEED of communities for more opportunities to enjoy and protect their local rivers, streams, and creeks.

Tennessee's 60,417 miles of rivers, streams, and creeks are the largest and most widely available class of publicly owned recreation resources in the state. The Tennessee Water Quality Control Act defines these waters as "property of the state ... held in public trust for the use of the people of the state." The act also gives the people of Tennessee the right to waters that are clean enough to support uses which include aquatic and fish life and recreation.

Tennesseans apparently care a great deal about these resources. The 2009 TRAB Survey found that protecting water quality is the public's highest conservation priority, with 90% rating it as extremely important.

Flowing water is a uniquely appealing feature of any landscape, one which tends to draw people to it. Yet most of the state's waterways have never been managed or even recognized as public recreation resources per se, and for that reason they are significantly underutilized. Developing these publicly owned assets is a highly cost-effective way to provide more diverse recreation opportunities for Tennesseans. Rivers, streams, and creeks can provide the public with widespread, close-to-home opportunities to enjoy interaction with nature and active physical exercise. More than thirty rivers are currently designated and publicly managed as recreational waters, either as National Wild and Scenic Rivers, State Scenic Rivers, or Blueways. These rivers represent only a tiny fraction of the state's recreational waters. This planning process has explored innovative strategies to help Tennessee maximize the value and benefits of being a state that is laced with waterways. These strategies include:

- Blueways
- Access to Creeks and Streams
- Watershed Management
- Protection of Wetlands

2015 Action Plan Status

Blueways

"There is nothing – absolutely nothing - half so worthwhile as simply messing about in boats."
-The Wind in the Willows

As the Greenway concept has become firmly established nationally and communities have realized surprising benefits from it, the next step has been to consider the undeveloped potential of rivers as recreation resources. Since rivers are already publicly owned resources, a Blueway or water trail is a far less expensive and difficult proposition than a Greenway.

The ORRG 2009 report cites Blueways as "a new concept in the arsenal of tools for land and water conservation," pointing out significant benefits to be gained:

"Blueways can help communities realize a range of benefits, from improved water quality and close to home recreation, to waterfront revitalization and promotion. They can reduce costs for stormwater management and flood control. And they can connect flyways and migration corridors to benefit wildlife; indeed they can connect rural areas and the towns or urban settings through which the waterways flow. The Blueway approach mirrors what land conservation groups have learned to do effectively: identify and map resources, consult widely across the community, mobilize public support, enlist partners, engage adjacent land owners, blend funding sources and land protection strategies."

Tennessee's landmark State Scenic Rivers program in effect created the nation's first system of Blueways in 1968. TVA has also been a leader in Blueway development, having assisted many communities with the development of public access areas and other Blueway amenities for many years. Chattanooga, recognized as a national model for natural infrastructure development, has a very popular Blueway on the Tennessee River. As a sign that the Blueway concept has now arrived in Tennessee, the first-ever Southeastern Water Trails Forum was held in 2009 in Chattanooga, sponsored by the Southeast Watershed Forum, the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, the National Park Service and the River Management Society. This event convened organizations working on Blueways or water trails throughout the region.

Tennessee's Park and Float program, a partnership of TDOT and TWRA, is another example of the Blueways concept beginning to take root. These agencies are identifying key boat launch sites at state highway bridges and making improvements to facilitate the use of those sites. Developing new Blueways in Tennessee will require increased river access of this kind.

Tennessee's new Statewide Interactive Paddling Map and River Database, the "Tennessee Blueway Explorer", is the first comprehensive Blueway website linked to the National Rivers Recreation Database (NRRD) in the country. The site maximizes opportunities for the public to enjoy Tennessee's flat water and white water recreational river corridors. Residents and non-residents can plan float trips accordingly using the information available on the website.

The ORRG report proposed that "the Secretary of the Interior should establish a new nationwide network of Blueways and water trails along rivers and coastal waterways." On February 29, 2012, The National Water Trails System was established by the Secretary of the Interior as a class of National Recreation Trails under the National Trails System Act of 1968. The new national network of exemplary water trails will increase access to water-based outdoor recreation, encourage community stewardship of local waterways, and promote tourism that fuels local economies across America. With over twenty Blueways in our state network and more being developed, now is an appropriate time for Tennessee to begin developing a network of National Water Trails to be designated by the Secretary for inclusion in the National Trails System. Since Blueways are generally developed and maintained as part of a regional strategy, the most effective way to create such a network might be through this plan's proposed Quality Growth initiative.

2020 Update

Tennessee's rivers, streams, and creeks will be the centerpiece of a coordinated approach to water quality control, quality growth planning, public stewardship of the environment, and environmental education. These resources will be recognized as significant public recreation assets, with ready access provided along greenways and bridge crossings, giving the public widespread, close-to-home opportunities to enjoy them. The Park and Float Program will continue to be an important factor in increasing public boat launch access to waterways and in continuing development of Blueways and National Water Trails. Including Blueways in quality growth plans, will help to ensure that best management practices are used in developing a coordinated network of trails throughout the state. The Tennessee Blueway Explorer will help promote Blueways, National Water Trails and other public access points and features along Tennessee's lakes, rivers, streams, and creeks and link to the National Rivers Recreation Database to provide residents and non-residents with even greater opportunities to enjoy Tennessee's waterways.

Coordination Links

State Parks Management. The new online watershed GIS will give State Park managers a much better ability to spot water quality issues outside the boundaries that could affect a park's stream quality, giving them the opportunity to work in partnership with the local government and watershed association to develop measures to mitigate damage before it occurs.

Tennessee Recreation One-Stop. The website will be able to include a "Discover Your Watershed" component based on the watershed GIS. It will help families find safe opportunities for children to enjoy water play; help link the public to non-profit organizations, such as watershed associations, that are active in working to improve water quality; and provide information about Blueways and public access to streams and creeks.

Children in Nature. Greater local access to creeks and streams will give families excellent close-to-home opportunities for children to interact with nature.

Environmental Education. The proposed state environmental curriculum uses local watersheds as a framework for integrating nature into place-based education and local creeks and streams as outdoor classrooms.

Quality Growth. The Quality Growth focus on the impacts of land conversion and development on public recreation resources bears directly on issues of water quality in our rivers, streams, and creeks. TDEC's online watershed GIS can be incorporated into the Quality Growth GreenPrint GIS to give local planners the tools they need to recognize how individual decisions can cumulatively affect regional water quality.

10. RURAL ECONOMIES

THE NEED of rural regions for help in harnessing their recreation assets for economic development.

2015 Action Plan Status

TDEC completed development of program guidelines for the Tennessee State Heritage Areas program, but legislation has not been introduced to have the designation formally established. This concept does not have the steam it once had five years ago and it would take a renewed, formal partnership with many non-profits and Middle Tennessee State University to push the effort forward.

TDEC, TWRA, ECD, the Department of Agriculture, have not met to develop a framework for a State Recreation Areas designation; however, this is something that TDEC is still interested in pursuing and it will remain as a 2020 action item.

In March 2010, the State of Tennessee began participating in the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices Policy Academy on Shaping a New Approach to Transportation and Land Use Planning. As a result of this program, Tennessee's project management team, which consisted of TDOT, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC), and the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development (ECD), developed objectives that would be best accomplished by exploring and advancing the concept of Corridor Management Agreements (CMA). CMAs would better coordinate transportation and land-use decisions along the state's highway corridors.

- TDOT State Scenic Highways Plan created but no movement, last funding cycle in 2012. TDOT's Multimodal Access Grant is a state-funded program created to support the transportation needs of transit users, pedestrians and bicyclists through infrastructure projects that address existing gaps along state routes. Multimodal facilities play an important role in providing transportation choices for people across Tennessee. With half of all trips in the United States being three miles or less, good walking, biking and transit facilities are essential to the continued growth and success of our towns and cities. Multimodal Access projects are state-funded at 95 percent with a 5 percent local match. Total project costs must not exceed $1 million.

2020 Update

Tennessee's rural regions will gain significant economic benefits from their rich heritage of natural, historic, and cultural resources; will view them as valuable assets; and will take steps to preserve and protect them.

• TDEC-State Parks and RES should continue the vital intergovernmental partnership with our state agencies of Economic and Community Development (ECD) and Tourist Development to harness their recreation assets for economic development. Collaborating on multi-faceted projects by utilizing a variety of funding sources can turn a depressed, rural economy into a vibrant, quality community.

- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds are available to communities across the state that do not get funding directly from HUD. The funds are awarded based on applications submitted each year in February and are typically awarded in the fall. Funds are available for sewer systems and lines, water systems and lines, housing rehabilitation and health and safety projects.

- The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) works with TECD each year to award grants in the 52 counties in the ARC region (in East and Middle Tennessee). Funds can be used for community and economic development projects that meet an ARC priority.

- Pursue an expansion of the State Heritage Area concept to include partnerships with local governments and private cultural entities.

• TDEC, TWRA, ECD, the Department of Agriculture, and non-profit organizations should partner to develop a frame work for a State Recreation Areas designation and seek legislation to establish the designation. Several large recreation areas on the Cumberland Plateau could be identified as a State Recreation Area pilot project under this program -- specifically the North Cumberlands/Frozen Head State Park; Bridgestone's Centennial Wilderness/Fall Creek Falls and the upper East TN area around Rocky Fork State Park and the Appalachian Trail.

• TDEC and ECD should identify abandoned railroads for future greenways and "Trail Towns" in rural communities. Case studies: Creeper Trail in VA, Cheatham County, TN – Bicentennial Walking Trail. Pursue Erwin and Unicoi County, TN – with creation of Rocky Fork State, the AT and the Town of Unicoi's Pinnacle Mountain Trail.

• TDEC and UT Knoxville should conduct the second Economic Impact Study for Tennessee State Parks, paying particular attention to the rural economic benefits that state parks bring to small communities and the state as a whole.

Coordination Links

Recreation One-Stop: This website can help heritage areas, State Recreation Areas, and scenic byways reach a wider visitor market, making them more effective as economic development strategies.

Quality Growth: The Quality Growth regional partnership model shares many of the same conservation and economic development perspectives.

Recreational Waters: Development of regional Blueways can turn neglected rivers into attractive destinations, adding to a region's portfolio of economically productive recreation assets.

Conclusion

***This plan has boiled down a large volume of input from surveys, public meetings, expert advisors, special-focus working groups, and issues research to arrive at ten Statements of Need. These need statements express the most critical issues facing conservation and the recreation infrastructure in the next five years in Tennessee. They fall into three domains: Parks, People, and Landscapes*.**

PARKS

1. The need of decision-makers for accurate information about the value of funding for parks, recreation, and conservation.

Parks have been underfunded in Tennessee for many years, yet the state's population continues to grow, and with it demand for more parks and recreation. Tennessee's State Parks produce $37 in economic impacts for every dollar the state invests in running them, yet at current funding levels, they will be challenged to maintain their high standards of excellence in the future. No source of dedicated funding for parks and recreation exists in the state, leaving the recreation infrastructure vulnerable to further budget cuts in the future. The need to make a stronger case for the value of public investments in parks and recreation was the highest priority issue to emerge in this planning process.

2. The need of the State Parks for a comprehensive systems approach to strategic management.

Tennessee's State Park system, cited as the best in the nation in 2007, is facing a more complex array of management issues than ever before. Some types of facilities are an economic drain on the system and may need to be eliminated. Many others are growing old, creating a significant maintenance backlog. The need to implement sustainable practices calls for a sophisticated understanding of emerging solutions. Invasive plants and pest insects are attacking the parks' biodiversity. New development can threaten the integrity of park boundaries and impair water quality in the park. To address new challenges effectively, park managers need a systems-oriented approach to strategic management. New technologies make such an approach possible for the first time.

3. The need of Tennessee's cities and counties to provide diverse, close-to-home recreation opportunities for all their residents.

Access to nearby parks and recreation centers is essential to the well-being of every Tennessee resident. Only local parks departments can deliver critically important opportunities to work recreation into daily life, where it is most needed. An effective recreation delivery system requires a statewide network of professional parks and recreation departments that is able to give all Tennesseans access to the recreation they need, regardless of where they live. The local recreation infrastructure as it currently exists in Tennessee contains wide disparities in the levels of recreation opportunities available to residents of the 95 counties, and all local providers are continually challenged to keep pace with growing demand. Local recreation providers can close gaps in service and expand recreation opportunities economically by using cooperative agreements to leverage existing resources and program.

PEOPLE

4. The need of the public for more accessible information about recreation opportunities and better ways to participate in advocacy and planning.

Surveys of public participation in recreation activities have consistently identified lack of information as a significant barrier. Information about recreation opportunities is currently fragmented in Tennessee among many different federal, state, and local agencies. Likewise, information about recreation planning, resource conservation, and related legislation is difficult to locate, hindering the public's ability to participate in important decisions. Most of the other needs addressed in this plan also involve a need for a better information delivery system.

5. The need of the public to avoid preventable diseases through increased physical activity.

Nearly two-thirds of Tennesseans are not getting enough exercise to sustain good health, and a sizeable percentage take no exercise at all. Obesity is increasing at an alarming rate in Tennessee, and our state has the nation's highest incidence of diabetes. If the trend of the last 10 years continues in the next decade, the burden of preventable healthcare costs in the state could skyrocket. Increasing levels of regular exercise is now a goal of the highest priority for the entire recreation community.

6. The need of children to interact with nature as a necessary part of their healthy development.

Teenagers are turning away from nature and the out-of-doors in favor of television and computers, and younger children have far less unstructured outdoor play than previous generations. Unstructured play in nature is essential for a child's healthy physical and emotional development, and the lack of it is reflected in the rising incidence of a host of disorders in the young: ADD/ADHA, teen depression and suicide, and obesity.

7. The need of students to understand the natural world they will inherit in a time of daunting environmental challenges.

The environment is not something most of Tennessee's students are learning about in school; and that, coupled with the decline in outdoor play in nature, is giving them little reason to care. They should be learning now what they will need as adults to make difficult decisions in the face of climate change and other environmental issues. At the same time, integrating environmental content into the curriculum has been shown to increase student engagement in all subjects and produce measurable improvements in test scores.

LANDSCAPES

8. The need of rural regions for help in managing growth and preserving their quality of life.

Our state's population has grown rapidly in the last 20 years, but the land consumed by development has grown twice as fast. Water quality, wildlife habitats, and future opportunities for recreation are threatened by rapid conversion of farm and forest land. The burden of runaway growth is falling most heavily on rural counties that adjoin metropolitan areas. Tennessee cannot preserve its cultural heritage, natural environment, and quality of life unless the counties have better ways to deal with growth issues.

9. The need of communities for more opportunities to enjoy and protect their local rivers, streams, and creeks.

There are 60,417 miles of rivers, streams, and creeks in Tennessee, with at least one within half a mile of every community, home and school. All surface waters of the state are property of the state, making them the largest and most widely available class of publicly owned recreation resources in Tennessee. Most of these waterways are not fulfilling their potential for recreational use because they have not been made accessible to the public. Tennesseans can become better stewards of water quality if they have opportunities to enjoy and appreciate these important assets.

10. The need of rural regions for help in harnessing their recreation assets for economic development.

Many of Tennessee's rural counties have lagging economies with high rates of joblessness and poverty. Yet these tend to be the same counties that are richest in recreation assets. Some of these assets - recently acquired conservation lands, State Forests, and Wildlife Management Areas - are not being managed to maximize their value as resources for public recreation. The challenge is to turn these recreation resources into drivers of local economic development.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Tennessee Recreation One-Stop website, whose features are described throughout this plan, will provide an opportunity to radically increase public involvement in recreation planning and advocacy. As envisioned, the website will accomplish this goal in two ways. This will be the foundation for Tennessee's next Ten Year Plan.

- Email notification. The process of developing this website as a comprehensive information clearinghouse will require building and maintaining a database of email addresses for the whole spectrum of recreation-related organizations in Tennessee. This database can be made available for public notifications as needed.
- Online surveys. The website's objective of serving the entire range of the recreation user market will make it an ideal place to reach a broad cross-section of that market with online surveys. While self-selected surveys cannot be considered statistically valid, if the sample size is sufficiently large, the results take on greater weight. In addition, the website's user profiling function will enable it to target surveys about specific resources or activities to individual market segments.

TDEC should retain the size of the TRAC convened for this plan and its focus-area working group format in future state recreation planning processes. A new TRAC committee will be appointed in the fall of 2016.

TDEC should conduct follow-up surveys to the 2009 TRAB Survey as needed to assist in implementation of this plan, specifically in the areas of public health and economic impacts of recreation. Economic impact study will launch winter 2017.

The National Park Service should consider discontinuing the public meeting format as a part of future state recreation plans. Instead, future state recreation planning teams should supplement widely advertised online surveys with focus groups of specific population segments, such as urban minorities and Hispanics, to provide in-depth understanding of factors underlying high-priority issues.

2020 Vision Continues...

Tennessee's recreation supply chain will stay closely in touch with its diverse customer market. Online information, targeted surveys, focus groups, and email notifications will enable an ongoing, back-and-forth dialogue between state and local providers and the public they serve. Through insight gained from these active channels of communication, the state's professionals in recreation planning and resource management will be able to adapt swiftly and effectively as the recreation landscape continues to evolve in Tennessee.