

DRAFT Priorities and Goals Summary for Public Comment

The following draft priorities and goals have been developed by the Tennessee Recreation Advisory Committee (TRAC). This ad hoc advisory committee is appointed by the Commissioner of Environment and Conservation and is made up of stakeholders that develop recommendations for the SCORP, encourage participation among involved agencies and monitors progress of implementation of the final plan.

ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION:

Vision: Allow citizens to understand, appreciate, and have access to the recreation resources available in Tennessee. Provide exposure to the benefits of outdoor recreation and tools to create sustained healthy habits and responsible enjoyment of the outdoors.

Goal #1 – Identify or create relevant educational resources to share statewide

- Need for statewide outdoor ethics campaign that is embraced across organizations and shared. Existing efforts and references to build upon include:
 - Boys Scouts Outdoor Code, for reference:
<https://www.scouting.org/outdoorprograms/outdoor-ethics/outdoor-code/>
 - Don't Move Firewood education campaign
<https://www.dontmovefirewood.org/map/tennessee/>
 - #RecreateResponsibly, <https://www.recreatoresponsibly.org/>
 - Leave No Trace
- Physical and mental health education
 - Increased awareness of health benefits of being outdoors
- General outdoor education
 - Outdoor basics, beginning basics

Goal #2 – Advocate for physical connectivity and access (*Access to parks, trails, greenways*)

- Connecting people to outdoor recreation spaces
 - Joint-Use agreements with schools for neighborhood playground/yard use
- Greenway corridors as transportation
 - Tennessee Department of Transportation: Transportation Alternatives and Multimodal Access Grants funding
- Mapping and databases
 - Tennessee Department of Health initiatives – coordination with John Vick
 - Identify physical park space connectivity opportunities across the state and potential funding mechanisms for connectivity implementation

Goal #3 – Partnerships for distributing educational resources and education: *How to get information into the communities – identifying needs, partners, and avenues*

- Identify a consistent communication method with partners
- New immigrant organizations and groups
 - Conexion Americas and others
- Colleges/Universities
- Chambers, civic clubs, etc.
 - Jody Sliger with TN Dept of Economic & Community Development has a Monthly community groups communication newsletter
 - Jody has a list of assets for 70/95 counties – could use intern or TN promise students to expand this database
 - Retire TN
- Collaborate with TN Recreation and Parks Association (TRPA)
- State Park Friends Groups
- Working with school districts
 - Coordinated School Health
 - Monthly communication for child health and a weekly communication that goes to coordinators – coordinate with TN Department of Education (Heather Piergies)
 - TN Promise students
- County Health Councils – most hold monthly meetings
- Community events
- Rural Health Association of TN
- Library Systems
 - Governor's Books from Birth
- Discover TN Trails and Byways
 - Add inventory pieces (include local parks/greenways)
 - Add outdoor educational pieces
- Bloggers/Influencers
 - Identify people already in this space and create toolkits/messaging for them to share

Connect to the Tennessee 2020 Plan:

- (IDEAA Subcommittee) Recreation One Stop - THE NEED of the public for more accessible information about recreation opportunities and better ways to participate in advocacy and planning:
 - Create “Parks Experience Packages” in 1-hour zones around major cities/towns

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS FOR ECONOMIC SUCCESS:

Vision: Build strategic coalitions to maximize the economic impacts of outdoor recreation and parks in Tennessee.

Goal #1 – Mapping and Inventory of recreational facilities

- Inventory and mapping of federal/state/regional/county/city/neighborhood assets to develop coordinated planning for outdoor recreation
 - Work with local Parks Departments to gather inventory data on recreational facilities within their programs.
 - Work with County Governments to gather inventory data on recreational facilities offered by the county within their programs. (County Rec Programs, NGO's and non-profits).
 - Work with State Government to gather inventory data on recreational facilities offered by their programs. (Tennessee State Parks, Division of Forestry, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency)
 - Work with Federal Government agencies to gather inventory of data on recreational facilities offered by their programs. (National Parks, U.S. Forest Services, U.S. Wildlife and Fisheries, Army Corps of Engineers, and TVA).
 - Develop a statewide Outdoor Recreation GIS Dashboard that provides shared information from local, state, and Federal agencies. (to develop criteria and standards for GIS mapping requirement efforts)
 - Outreach with local university and colleges for GIS mapping efforts – engaging younger population in park
 - Development Districts partnership development for GIS
- Marketing, fundraising and lobbying for resources
 - Work with Department of Tourist Development to develop a marketing strategy for the recreational opportunities within the state.
 - Work with NGO's to lobby for and promote the benefits of outdoor recreation opportunities within the state.
- Encourage local governments to engage in park planning/development
 - Development of State Outdoor Recreation Planning Office.
 - Develop Regional Networks of Local, State, and Federal programs to improve the sharing of information.
 - Develop Regional Planning groups around Outdoor Recreations development.
 - Engage citizens regionally in planning efforts to make sure outdoor recreational opportunities are meeting the needs of our citizens.
 - Outreach to outdoor recreational industry across the state for involvement (boat manufacturers, kayak, clothing, etc.)

Goal #2 – Economic Impact Model / Formula Development

- Identify current revenue streams and potential success stories to duplicate statewide
 - What works? Where are there success stories currently in action?
 - Develop an online communication resource/database for local city, county, regional and state park related economic impact info

- Develop additional public / private partnerships (Grants, Foundations, local civic groups)
 - Develop a partner's advocate group solely for the purpose of advocating for the annual budget and legislation that sustains and/or increases funding for parks.
 - Encourage park partners to work and do more within the parks. Partners will help to create mechanisms that increase and maintain access to state parks.
 - Work to develop an actual Tennessee State Park Foundation. Identify those individuals that are and have been advocates for state parks and create a working group to make this a reality. Through the Foundation the ability to better solicit private funding streams will be developed on a continual and long-term basis. In addition, offer membership to the foundation that will have to fund and support the Foundation's operation.

- Coordination of state/county/city funding to reduce duplication of services.
 - Develop a regional task force made of state/regional/county and city park stakeholders to collaborate on planning.

- Develop and implement communication for economic impact of parks, including health indicators on regional, county and city level.
 - Impact study model – UT – for parks economic impact. should be released soon
 - Develop a communication piece with park / recreation economic info along with the TDTD economic model to show the larger impact of tourism

Goal #3 – Partnership Development

- Identification of and enhanced collaboration with current and future partners for collective impact.
 - Inventory current partnerships across state to identify local gaps and opportunities
 - Identify best practices for modeling
 - Develop stories to increase local volunteer / civic organization benefit to parks. These stories should include not only economic impact, but also health, educational and other focused themes for publication.
 - Local parks and rec / local government
 - Non-profits and Foundations – local, regional, and national (diabetes foundations, arts, think outside the box)
 - Friends Groups – how can they engage additional partners (seniors, youth, industry)
 - Chambers and Tourism organizations – are we connecting with everyone?
 - Economic and Community Development organizations – businesses want to locate in an area that has opportunities for an educated workforce, safe location, recreational

outlets, and vibrant community involvement. How can we tell the park story to engage companies?

- Healthy outcome groups and organizations. All Tennessee counties have health councils (I believe) – parks provide beautiful places to improve health habits Are we communicating that as well as we could?

Goal #4 – Communication

- Identify and develop best practice models and consistent methods for sharing the story
 - Identify where strong community/park relationships exist and what makes them successful.
 - Inquire with recreation/ park departments in other states on communication success stories
 - Develop internal sharing session among parks on best practices
 - Create a plan, timeline and goals to implement a new system for communication
- Expand networking for additional private investment and engagement
 - Identify other states where recreation/ park agencies have formed private partnerships with parks and what has been successful.
 - Create a partnership program that consistently communicates identifies levels of partnerships and investment ideas.
 - Great outdoor brands – look at those for partnership opportunities ‘Made In Tennessee’ (boats, kayaks, clothing, sponsorship/partnership, etc)
 - Identify local businesses and potential stakeholders where there is alignment in goals or who invest in community programs
 - Identify state/ national brands who align with recreation investment and if there are success stories
 - Determine who is responsible for partnerships and engagement
 - Host informational sessions for community leaders and stakeholders with a consistent message of the many values of having recreation, parks and partnerships.
- Explore and Identify the benefits of marketing parks as assets in local city, county and regional promotional outlets.
 - Informational sessions noted should include marketing that TDEC invests in for state parks and the value of a partnership with community.
 - Effectively communicate the direct and indirect economic impact of state parks and recreation in an area.
 - Identify communities who actively promote state parks as tourism assets and the successes of a partnership and collaboration.

CONSERVATION:

Vision: Sustain and grow Tennessee's outdoor recreation and conservation legacy

Overarching Goal: Inspire greater conservation and outdoor recreation stewardship and resource management practices among public-private stakeholders in Tennessee, through collaborative and equitable initiatives and strategies

Issue #1: Meeting the diverse needs of all Tennesseans

Goal #1 – To ensure equity and inclusion, direct land conservation policies and strategies that address each of three focal areas to meet the diverse needs of all Tennesseans:

- The conservation of lands and waters for healthy ecosystems and communities
- Collaborative actions that enhance local tourism (eco-tourism, agri-tourism, heritage-tourism)
- Establish priorities for funding and planning that address local/community recreation and conservation needs (active and passive); identify obstacles and barriers that prevent effective park planning; create methods to engage all citizens in the process to learn about their needs/interests.

Issue #2: Quantity and Accessibility – Public Land for Conservation and Recreation

Goal #2 – Develop a land acquisition and stewardship plan that lays out strategies and actions for current and future public lands for outdoor recreation.

- Conduct a statewide gap analysis to identify underserved communities/areas of the state and accessibility issues that need addressed in the plan.
- Improve inventory/data of critical natural areas to guide acquisition or protection of high biodiversity areas and those habitats that will provide resilience to climate change
- Improve collaboration between State agencies, local governments, and land conservancies to identify and achieve mutual conservation goals by holding an annual conservation roundtable meeting/forum. The forum or roundtable meetings will help assess successes, identify opportunities, and raise awareness to problem areas or obstacles that need attention.
- Increase acreage of public lands available for public outdoor recreation by improving the processes for a sustainable, comprehensive inventory/data of existing lands. (This is to be done through a collaborative process with all public agencies - federal, state, and local parks, natural areas, forests, etc.)

Issue #3: Quantity and Accessibility – Private Lands for Conservation and Recreation

Goal #3 – Develop a land acquisition and stewardship plan that lays out strategies, actions and opportunities for improved access and use of private lands for outdoor recreation.

- Resolve landowner liability issues associated with public access
- Develop resource management tools that will provide landowners with best practices, guidance, and training (easements, etc.)

- By creating Conservation and/or Recreation Areas – public/private partnerships are created and will drive local tourism as well as provide unique recreational opportunities
 - Improve collaboration between State agencies, local governments, and land conservancies to identify and achieve mutual conservation goals by holding an annual conservation roundtable meeting/forum. The forum or roundtable meetings will help assess successes, identify opportunities, and raise awareness to problem areas or obstacles that need attention.

Issue #4: Funding

Goal #4 - Increase funding for land acquisition and resource management

- Secure permanent and dedicated funding for acquisition and resource management of public lands and permanent protection (conservation easements) of private lands
 - Investigate the re-invigoration of the existing Heritage Conservation Trust Fund and increased funding to that Board
 - Investigate the options available for increasing the amount of funding through existing sources (e.g. State Lands Acquisition Fund, Local Parks and Recreation Fund, and other state programs)
 - investigate all options available for potential matching funds and foundations that can leverage existing government funding for recreation and conservation
 - Establish new permanent and dedicated funding sources

Issue #5: Resource Management and Protection

Goal #5 - Improve long-term capacity and effectiveness of resource management efforts and programs in all public and private conservation agencies

- Public land managing agencies (state) should create and implement policies that balance multi-use with resource protection
- The development of resource management plans should be a priority for each state agency. These plans shall include, but not be limited to:
 - Resource management/protection directives that can be incorporated into operational plans
 - Management initiatives that focus on improving and conserving forest health and exotic and invasive species – how we deal with this long term across all agencies (habitats, visitor management, infrastructure – waterways, etc.)
 - Effective resource management tools for local governments
 - State agencies shall provide professional guidance and technical support to landowners to support effective resource management on private lands
 - Attention should also be given to staffing and positions within each agency so that resource management plans and initiatives can be carried out effectively across the state

What short-term actions should be included in the 2025 Action Plan to be implemented within the next five years?

Goal 1:

- Establish priorities for funding and planning that address local/community recreation and conservation needs (active and passive); identify obstacles and barriers that prevent effective park planning; create methods to engage all citizens in the process to learn about their needs/interests.
 - The Recreation Services Division will review and update their Open Project Selection Process (OPSP) criteria to ensure these priorities are scored appropriately for TDEC administered grants.

Goal 2 & 3:

- Develop a land acquisition and stewardship plan that lays out strategies and actions for current and future public and private lands for outdoor recreation.
 - Conduct a statewide gap analysis to identify underserved communities/areas of the state and accessibility issues that need addressed in the plan.
 - Improve inventory/data of critical natural areas to guide acquisition or protection of high biodiversity areas and those habitats that will provide resilience to climate change
 - Establishment of an interagency Lands Committee – with a governance document that outlines their procedures/processes; meetings shall be quarterly
- Resolve landowner liability issues associated with public access

Goal 4:

- Develop surveys and/or white papers, collect good data, etc. to support the need for permanent funding and then develop recommendations on the direction we should go. Real data to tell our story and sell our initiatives. Use:
 - UT survey – needs and interests
 - UT economic impact work
 - TNC conservation funding coming to TN

Goal 5:

- Assess and blend all of our resource management plans and operational plans into one overall effective planning document; also review inter-agency planning documents for opportunities for collaboration and sharing of GIS resources and data.

INCLUSIVITY, DIVERSITY, EQUITY, ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY (IDEAA):

Issue #1: Facilities & Visitation - Some communities and people of color do not perceive the outdoors as a sanctuary, but instead a place of trauma.

Goal #1 - All parks will be places where all communities can engage with nature in positive ways.

- Research and develop a report on the issues that limit access to parks for anyone, including people of color, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender, age, mobility, and economic status, and prepare an Action Plan to address them.
- Develop model outdoor education programming to be executed statewide to introduce all people to the outdoors in a safe and healing way.
- Ensure that marketing and media images reflect people of diverse race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender, age, mobility, and economic status.
 - Develop a DEI media toolkit for State and local parks that includes stock images, brochures, posters and model communication tools.
 - Create incentives for state and local parks to use the DEI media toolkit in local marketing.
 - Require photographic images of people posted at park facilities and on marketing materials reflect racial, gender, age and mobility diversity.
- Create incentives for State Parks and local governments to change or expand programming to address DEI, such as including DEI outdoor education programming as an element in State grant scoring.

Issue #2: Outreach - We need existing community organizations and groups to be supported and new ones encouraged by state-level leadership in order to seek greater involvement from all populations in public recreation and park services.

Goal #2 - State should encourage the creation of and support for groups promoting outdoor recreation with demographic groups currently underrepresented in park use.

- Grow the existing recreation network by building an equity ecosystem
 - Compile list of existing recreation organizations/clubs (initiatives) that are representative of and serve diverse communities.
 - i. Leverage TVA's ecosystem mapping exercise.
 - Compile list of state and federal resources available to support existing initiatives as well as the creation of new initiatives and communicate those statewide.
 - i. Leverage state website as a recreation support resource clearinghouse.
 - Connect existing initiatives with existing state programs and services.
 - ii. Hire an education and outreach coordinator or contract with a consultant to lead communication among equity ecosystem partners.
 - iii. Create means to connect equity ecosystem partners with state leadership, including organizing networking events.

- Provide organizations/clubs serving diverse communities with training, equipment or connections with state, federal resources as well as cross-sector collaboration opportunities
 - i. Reimburse costs associated with training through Leave No Trace, TN Naturalist certification, CPR/Basic First Aid, others as identified as needs.
 - ii. Reimburse costs associated with equipment (such as kayak rentals, etc.) for recreational programming supporting diverse communities.
 - iii. Conduct statewide gear cache inventory for loan or rent to increase access diverse communities have to recreation equipment already in public domain.
 - iv. Invite organizations to state planning meetings and communicate opportunities to be involved in other networking events through membership-based organizations.

- Provide technical assistance and support to newly formed organizations, clubs that seek to bring more diversity into the outdoors.
 - i. Leverage relationships with existing organizations/clubs to model success and share best practices with new initiatives.
 - ii. Ask leaders statewide to identify and encourage people representative of diverse communities to serve as ambassadors for outdoor recreation within their own communities.

- Create an ambassador program, Next Generation Advisory Council, or a leadership framework (a table) that can be emulated within each city, county or community throughout state:
 - Committee identifies young leaders that are representative of diverse communities
 - Committee provides training, stipend, supplies and list of expectations
 - Leaders facilitate community-based inquiry and listening sessions
 - Leaders identify barriers to entry, based on inquiries/sessions
 - Leaders design and execute equitable programming to reduce barriers
 - Leaders support communities statewide in implementation of programming

Issue #3: Leadership - Representation from diverse communities among leadership throughout parks and recreation in Tennessee should be strengthened.

Goal #3 - Leadership in all levels of public parks and recreation agencies will represent the diversity of Tennessee.

- Create a DEI Awareness Campaign for parks and recreation industry in Tennessee.
- Research DEI programs/opportunities.
 - Develop contacts with diversity implementation experts who can provide training to local communities.
 - Research and recommend DEI Certification programs and encourage participation in local communities.

- Provide annual DEI training session/event for parks and recreation directors in Tennessee that includes:
 - Defining the full scope of DEI.

- Understanding unconscious bias.
- Building supportive workplaces.
- Reviewing hiring practices, wording in recruitment documents and where job postings are advertised.
- Include DEI as an element in the TDEC grant applications and review process.

Issue #4: Research, Accountability, and Sustainability

- **Lack of statewide inventory to determine the equity gaps in Tennessee. (Research)**
- **Lack of tracking tool to measure progress across the state. (Accountability)**
- **Lack of plan to encourage the ability to maintain equity at a certain level. (Sustainability)**

Goal #4 - Develop a statewide equity (DEAI) performance measure scale for use across the state as an evaluation tool to understand performance on the issue of equity. This scale will be used to assist agencies in setting goals and providing guidance in planning for sustaining a focus on equity performance.

- Create a tool to analyze equity in available park inventory, agencies, and programming.
 - Develop a set of stated assumptions about what equity is and how it manifests in parks.
 - Review existing tools being used for this purpose and determine their relevance to the task, based on the assumptions.
 - Develop and test a draft tool, identify its weaknesses, and improve.
 - Roll-out the tool in phases, constantly seeking critique and ideas for improvement.
 - Evaluate the tool at regular intervals and change as needed.