

Lamar Alexander Rocky Fork State Park Strategic Management Plan

2023 – 2033

Updated in 2025



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Park Purpose, History and Description

Established -2012 Staffed -2015

Lamar Alexander Rocky Fork State Park, or Rocky Fork State Park, has been in a “design and construction” phase for nearly 8 years now. We were first staffed in 2015 and assigned to maintain 2076 acres. We jumped in headfirst with trail construction, parking lot improvements, intensive resource mgmt. projects and interpretive programs. With no facilities at the park, we rented a small room for our office and storage.

2018-Gov Bill Haslam allocated 4.8 million for V.C., maintenance building and picnic pavilions

2023 update- we now have a 1700 sq ft ranger station and very recently acquired the property to build our visitors center. We are awaiting mitigation credits to expand our 17-car trailhead parking and build permanent restroom facilities.

Park Vision: Professionally maintain all natural and cultural assets in Rocky Fork State Park. Through resource management, research, planning, education, and partnerships; Rocky Fork will stimulate the public’s appreciation and understanding of why this wild and pristine park exists.

Goals, Objectives and Action Plans

THE RESOURCES: Exemplary Natural and Cultural Stewardship

Goal: Tennessee State Parks will be nationally recognized for exemplary stewardship of natural and cultural resources.

Objective - *More and better stewards:* Increase internal and external stewards who share Tennessee State Parks core values and can contribute to the State Parks mission to preserve, protect, and share Tennessee’s natural and cultural resources.

Action Plan:

- Present bi-annual update to County Commission
- Target interpretive programs for specific volunteer groups (ie. Sierra Club,)
- Engage local outdoor-rec businesses
- Partner with the Friends Group for operational, volunteer, and financial support as well as community outreach.

Objective - *Better resource management practices:* Identify, manage, and restore unique natural and cultural resources for generations to come.

Action Plan:

- Engage local universities/colleges to conduct research and bio-blitz type events on park
- Collaborate with government agencies with similar goals (ie. USFS, TWRA)
- Provide high quality training opportunities for staff

Objective: *Better data and technology:* Leverage data and technology to help inform and guide decisions on natural and cultural resources stewardship.

Action Plan:

- Utilize existing GIS tech to record data
- Use recorded data to guide and prioritize management decisions

THE VISITOR: Welcoming and Inviting to All

Goal: Tennessee State Parks will be the most accessible, welcoming, and inviting system of parks that enriches Tennesseans and visitors through excellent interpretation, education, and resource-based recreation.

Objective: *accessible, welcoming, and inviting to all:* create quality and varied programs of interpretation, recreation, and outreach so that all audiences feel welcome and invited.

Action Plan:

- Create varied interpretive programs for all abilities.
- Advertise interpretive programs in locations that would encourage special needs visitors
- Advertise accessibility options at RFSP such as low-grade trails and all terrain wheelchair rental

Objective: *high quality programming:* develop and support mission-based and resource-relevant programs to engage visitors, empower staff, and develop community wellbeing.

Action Plan:

- Develop new interpretive programs that align with the interpretive themes of RFSP
- Dissect and rework current, successful interpretation programs to align with societal needs

Objective: *resource-based outdoor recreation:* provide resource-based outdoor recreation opportunities that ensure representation of Tennessee's natural, scenic, and cultural resources.

Action Plan:

- Work alongside our active outdoor rec groups to fulfill regional needs. Example- International Mountain Bikers Association, Carolina Climbers Coalition, Appalachian Paddling Enthusiasts

THE AMENITIES: Well-Maintained Facilities and Amenities

Goal: Tennessee State Parks will be well maintained with facilities and amenities that delight visitors and make Tennesseans proud.

Objective: *Improve maintenance:* Improve overall maintenance and upkeep of all park facilities and amenities that contribute to meaningful visitor experiences.

Action Plan:

- Engage local groups to advocate volunteerism
- Advocate for preventative maintenance and low/no maintenance designs

Objective: *Better park accessibility:* ensure all visitors have opportunities for meaningful experiences in every Tennessee State Park.

Action Plan:

- Permanent Interpretive exhibits are easy to navigate.
- Focused advertising low grade trail, wheelchair options at RFSP as well as “high-adventure” activities

Objective: *Quality and welcoming facilities and amenities:* provide high-quality and well-planned facilities and amenities that enrich the visitor experience.

Action Plan:

- Ensure all new facility aesthetics align our communities historical and natural surroundings
- Advocate for Dark Sky and low energy consumption utilities

THE OPERATIONS: Operational Excellence

Goal: Tennessee State Parks will be a national model for operational excellence in a state park system.

Objective: *Support and empower our people:* support and empower our workforce by creating a caring environment that encourages professional growth and great customer service.

Action Plan:

- Nurture a culture of acceptance and tolerance
- Direct focus to park visitor and their respective experience to guide staffing decisions

Objective: *Efficient and effective operations:* provide efficient, effective, and fiscally responsible service to Tennesseans and our visitors.

Action Plan:

- Utilize Commercial Use Permits to meet operational needs. Ex: Nolichucky Outdoor Learning Institute
- Improve the path to utilize local contractors / materials

Park Overview

Site Fact Sheet

Park Name	Lamar Alexander Rocky Fork State Park
Site Manager	Timothy Pharis
Area Manager	Veronica Greear
Park acreage	2300 acres
Total number of visitors (FY 2025)	50,466
Total expenses before CO (FY 2022)	\$400,003
Total revenues (FY 2022)	15,003
Retail cost recovery % ¹	542%
Park cost recovery %	3.75%
Average expense per visitor (FY 2022)	\$7.88
Average revenue per visitor (FY 2022)	\$.28
Gross profit or loss	
Total full-time available positions / filled	4 full time positions/ 4 filled
Total part-time available positions / filled	1/1
Primary feeder markets	Johnson City, Asheville, NC, Western North Carolina
Primary reasons people visit	Wilderness experiences in Tennessee’s Blue Ridge Mtns
Opportunities for improvement	Park Facilities (ie. Visitor Center, restrooms, parking lot)

Key Attractions

The amenities or features listed below are those that seem to be most popular for visitors.

- Overlooks
- Trails
- Trout Fishing access
- Appalachian Trail Access
- Firefly Programming
- Interpretive Programs
- Rock Climbing

¹ Based on T.C.A. 11-3-305, Cost recovery of revenue-generating facilities

Site and Operations Assessment

This site and operations assessment is a culmination of analyses and findings from a review of the condition of facilities, infrastructure, and operations at Rocky Fork. The findings and observations are not intended to be an exhaustive review of all issues present but provide a basic understanding of the predominant issues that contribute to the site’s current operating conditions. The assessment includes the following:

1. Site and Facilities Assessment
2. Operational Assessment
3. Financial Assessment

Site and Facility Assessment

Methodology

Facility and asset conditions are rated using a differential scale of excellent, good, fair, or poor. Descriptions of conditions that are attributed to each of these findings are also provided.

Scale of Conditions	
Rating	General Description
Excellent	Facilities/amenities are in ‘excellent’ condition when they show little or no maintenance or repair problems. Facilities do not feature any major design or operational issues or flaws that contribute to diminished use or increased maintenance or upkeep. Facilities are easy to clean and maintain in order to place them back into public use and the users perceive them to be in excellent shape.
Good	Facilities/amenities are in ‘good’ condition when they show only minor maintenance or repair problems. Most maintenance issues with these facilities typically appear to be the result of age and/or heavy use. Facilities may only feature minor design or operational issues that contribute to diminished use or increased maintenance or upkeep. Facilities are moderately easy to clean and maintain in order to place them back into service and the users perceive them to be adequate for their use, but probably not in excellent shape.
Fair	Facilities/amenities are in ‘fair’ condition when they show significant maintenance or repair problems. Facilities generally exhibit ongoing maintenance issues that appear to be the result of age, heavy use, or design or operational flaws. Some maintenance and repair needs may compound their fair condition by being deferred because of budget and/or resource limitations. Facilities require more effort to clean and maintain before placing them back into service and the users may perceive them as being less than adequate for their use and in a state of deterioration. The facility or structure may need of major repair or replacement.
Poor	Facilities/amenities are in ‘poor’ condition when they show significant, on-going maintenance or repair problems that ultimately may result in suspended use for repair/replacement. Maintenance and repair issues are possibly the result of poor maintenance and clearly the result of age, heavy use, or design or operational flaws. Problems with the facilities are often compounded over time due to consistently-deferred maintenance and repair because of budget and/or resource limitations. Facilities may feature major design or operational issues that contribute to diminished use or increased maintenance or upkeep. Facilities require excessive effort to clean and maintain before placing them back into service and the users often perceive them as being inadequate for their use and in a state of serious deterioration. The facility or structure may need of major repair or replacement.

Facility Inventory and Assessment

The table below is an inventory of facilities and amenities at Rocky Fork and provides the assessed condition of each as reviewed in May 2023.

Site Asset / Amenity	Quantity	Condition
Ranger Station	1	Poor
Sparks Barn	1	Good

Trail Inventory and Assessment

Trail Name	Total	Condition
Appalachian National Scenic Trail Access Route	0.35	poor
Birchfield Camp Route	1.17	fair
Birchfield Camp Trail	1.53	fair
Blockstand Creek Access Trail	0.89	fair
Blockstand Creek Route	2.38	fair
Blockstand Creek Trail	1.81	good
Flint Creek Route	0.51	good
Flint Creek Trail	1.40	good
Flint Mountain Route	2.20	good
Flint Mountain Trail	2.71	fair
Headwaters Trail	1.00	fair
Rocky Fork Trail	0.68	good
White Oak Flats Trail	1.33	fair
Whitehouse Cliffs Route		Decommissioned
Whitehouse Cliffs Trail	1.2	good
Grand Total	19.16	

Whitehouse Cliffs Trail-1.2 Miles- Whitehouse cliffs is a new trail (2020) that is steep and challenging. This well-built trail utilizes over 150 stone and timber steps to climb nearly 900. At the top (3400 ft) is a stunning 300-degree view of the Blue Ridge. This is also the access for Rock Climbers and the cliff face.

Rocky Fork Trail- .7 miles. Most of the Rocky Fork Watershed and the AT is accessible from this trail. Its short distance, beautiful scenery and parking proximity make it the most used trail.

AT Access-.35 miles. Links trail system to the AT. Will be rerouted in the coming years due to it steep rutted trail tread.

Birchfield Camp 2.7 miles. Birchfield Camp starts in the park and leads into USFS property. This trail leads to the lake, Buzzards Roost, Ball Ground and eventually the A.T. Birchfield Camp has some water mitigation needs. Grading by Forest Service has helped some.

Blockstand Creek- 4.2 miles Blockstand Creek weaves in and out of State boundary/USFS boundary. It contains one of our three backcountry sites. Water mitigation work is needed at creek crossings (Blown culverts)

Blockstand Access- .9 miles. Steep (600 ft/mile) trail links Flint Creek to Blockstand. Stable trail, yet it gets overgrown in stinging nettles quickly. Its distant location makes upkeep difficult.

Flint Creek-2.05 miles. This trail is a highlight of the park. It contains a historic battlesite and 1 of 3 backcountry campsites. It is a gradual climb that follows Flint Creek. It is also known for a phenomenal spring wildflower display. This trail contains 9 wooden bridges. All bridges are currently stable but a replacement is forecasted for 2030.

White Oak Flats Trail 1.3 miles. This trail climbs from Rocky Fork Creek to the headwaters of Rocky Fork, bypassing the steep, dangerous gorge. It is the location of White Oak Flats Vista.

Headwaters 1 mile. Popular with fly fishers, Headwaters follows the upper portion of Rocky Fork Creek and provides access to of the top wild brook trout fisheries in the State of TN.

New Assets Needed

List new assets and amenities that would fall under capital expenditures that are needed to improve visitor experience and operational efficiency.

New Asset & Amenities	Description
Visitor Center	New Visitors Center
Picnic Pavilions	Pavilion Style facility for park visitors
Restroom Facilities	Permanent facilities to replace rented portable toilets
Maintenance Building	Equipment Storage and workspace

Prioritized Facility Needs

Based on the facility inventory and assessment, these prioritized needs have been identified.

Facility Needs	Description
Ranger Station	General maintenance and improvement
Sparks Barn	Needs complete renovation and structural improvement
Trailhead Parking Lot	Improvements needed to current trailhead parking lot
Bridge to Ranger Station	Replacement of bridge to ranger station in progress

Operational Assessment

The Operational Assessment includes:

1. An inventory and classification of programs and services being provided at the site,
2. A review of staffing at the site,
3. A review of concessionaires and partners operating at the site,
4. Visitation and customer satisfaction, and
5. Professional development and training.

Inventory and Classification of Programs and Services

Programs and services are classified into one of three major categories:

- 1) Core or Essential Services;
- 2) Important Services; and
- 3) Value added or Visitor Supported Services.

Lamar Alexander Rocky Fork State Park Strategic Management Plan

Functions of the site are classified into these categories based in part on the mission and public mandates for both the site and the agency. For the programs and services in each of these categories, there are financial performance expectations that will define how services are funded and evaluated.

CATEGORY 1 – CORE SERVICES *[Largely supported by public subsidies]*

Core programs, services and facilities are those the agency must provide and/or are essential in order to capably govern and meet statutory requirements. The failure of the agency to provide Category 1 services at adequate levels could result in significant negative consequences for the public and the resources under protection. The criteria for programs or services to be classified as core or essential are:

- The services are mandated by the agency’s law or charter or are contractually obligated by agreement to provide the services.
- The services are essential to protecting and supporting the public’s health and safety.
- The services protect and maintain valuable assets and infrastructure.
- The services would generally and reasonably be expected and supported by residents, businesses, customers and partners.
- The services are those that cannot or should not be provided by the private sector.
- The services provide a sound investment of public funds.

The following programs and services offered at Rocky Fork SP have been identified as **core services**:

- Law Enforcement and Visitor Safety
- Medical
- Search and Rescue Operations
- Safe access to trails, campsites, amenities, recreational opportunities

CATEGORY 2 – IMPORTANT SERVICES *[Supported by a balance of revenues and public subsidy]*

Important programs, services and facilities are those the agency should provide, and are important to governing and effectively serving residents, businesses, customers and partners. Providing Category 2 services expands or enhances the agency’s ability to provide and sustain its core services. The criteria for programs or services to be classified as important are:

- The services expand, enhance or support identified core services.
- The services are broadly supported and utilized by the community, and are considered an appropriate, important, and valuable public good. Public support may be conditional upon the manner by which the services are paid for or funded.
- The services generate income or revenue that offsets some or all of the operating cost and/or are deemed to provide economic, social or environmental outcomes or results.

The following programs and services offered at Rocky Fork have been identified as **important services**:

- Invasive Species Management
- Trail maintenance and construction
- Historic Structure Preservation
- Provide a full range of environmental, cultural, and recreational programs.
- Park-specific and regional information at the Ranger Station.
- Hiking

CATEGORY 3 – VISITOR SUPPORTED SERVICES *[Almost exclusively supported by earned revenue]*

Visitor supported programs, services and facilities are those discretionary services that the agency may provide when additional funding or revenue exists to offset the cost of providing those services. Category 3 services provide added value above and beyond what is required or expected. The criteria for programs or services to be classified as visitor supported are:

- The services expand, enhance or support Core Services, Important Services and the quality of life of the visitors, community or stakeholders.
- The services are supported, valued and well utilized and provide an appropriate and valuable public benefit.
- The services generate income or funding from sponsorships, grants, user fees or other sources that offset some or all of their cost and/or provides a meaningful return on investment.
- The Services can possibly be provided through outsourcing or use of concessionaires, providing opportunities for community enterprise or services that may not otherwise be provided by the agency.

The following programs and services offered at Rocky Fork have been identified as **visitor supported services**:

- Operational support to outdoor recreation amenities including fishing, hiking, nature photography, and rock climbing.
- Backcountry Camping
- Gift shop/ park focused retail

Personnel / Staffing Review

Personnel and staffing at Rocky Fork represent the largest area of budgetary expense at an average of 62% of the total operating budget each year for the last three complete years, which is 3% less than the target of labor costs not exceeding 65% of total operating expenditures. The tables below and on the following page provide a basic review of the current staffing at the site.

Full Time Equivalent Employees

Position / Title	Quantity (FTE)	Compensation Total
Ranger 2	2	*
Park Manager 1	1	*
Administrative Assistant 1	1	41343
TOTAL	3	177,828

Part Time Employees

Position / Title	Quantity	Compensation Total
SIR	1	\$6240
TSP Operations Work – Job Share	1	XXX
TOTAL		\$14,880

**Law enforcement compensation confidential by TN law.*

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Labor Support

Labor Support	Annual Hours
Volunteers	407
Community Service Workers	
Engineering and Construction Crews	
Resource Management Crews	
Other: _____	
TOTAL	407

Total Labor Compensation Expense

Labor Type	Labor Expense
Full Time Equivalent Employees	263904
Part Time Employees	
TOTAL Annual Labor Expense	263904

Additional Future Positions Needed

Position / Title	Quantity	FTE or PT	Year Needed	Justification
Clerk 3	2	FT	2026	Visitor Center Staffing
TSP Maintenance Lead	2	FT	2026	General upkeep of
TSP Operations Worker	2	FT	2026/27	General upkeep of
TOTAL	4			

Financial Performance

Revenue per available unit (**Rev Per Unit**) for the last four years in park facilities is detailed in the table below.

Current Rev Per Unit

Fiscal Year	Backcountry Camp Rev Per Unit
2022	1.11
2023	1.11
2024	1.08
2025	1.98

Projected Rev Per Unit - Based on current Rev Per Unit trends at the park and any known developments over the next four years.

Fiscal Year	Backcountry Camping Rev Per Unit
2026	1.95
2027	1.99
2028	2.25
2029	2.5

Customer Service

Platform / Site	Year	Customer Satisfaction Level
Net Promoter Score	FY25	100
Google	2025	4.5
Yelp	2025	4.5
TripAdvisor	2025	4.4
Facebook	2025	96%

Professional Development and Training

The following professional development and training opportunities are being explored and planned for the staff and volunteers at this park:

- Chainsaw Training
- Trail Adopter Training
- CIG
- Master Trail Building
- PMTI
- General administrative and management training
- Routine law enforcement and safety training
- Routine management training

Summary of Key Recommendations

Please provide short-term, mid-term, and long-term recommendations for addressing operational issues at the park and improving overall park performance.

Short-Term Recommendations (Less than 1 year)

1. Site and Facilities

- a. Complete construction of Visitor Center
- b. Complete construction of Maintenance Building
- c. Improvements to Ranger Station
- d. Addition of ADA Backcountry Campsite

2. Operations and Staffing

- a. Addition of two Clerk 3 positions for Visitor Center operations

3. Customer Service / Visitor Experience

- a. Expand interpretive programming
- b. Improve accessibility

Mid-Term Recommendations (2-5 years)

1. Site and Facilities

- a. Complete parking upgrades and restrooms for trailhead parking
- b. Improve roadway to access Sparks Barn
- c. Make improvements to Sparks Barn tobacco field
- d. Identify location and begin construction on trailhead parking lot

2. Operations and Staffing

- a. Complete addition of support staff to cover Visitor Center operation
- b. Addition of two TSP Operations workers
- c. Addition of two TSP Maintenance workers
- d. Work with local business to expand programming

3. Customer Service / Visitor Experience

- a. Targeted programming for interest groups
- b. Develop Interpretive programming for historic battle site

Long Term Recommendations (5+ years)

1. Site and Facilities

- a. Land acquisition to acquire all inholdings and access points

2. Operations and Staffing

- a. Add maintenance staff

3. Customer Service / Visitor Experience

- a. Targeted programming
- b. Preservation of rustic Appalachian Wilderness experience

Resource Management Plan

A resource management plan is a specific statement of the objectives you have for your land and natural resources, as well as any significant cultural and historic resources stewarded by the state park. This includes a defined series of priorities and activities that will take place in order to meet those objectives. This can include future potential land acquisitions or divestitures that are necessary to meet the park's resource management goals and objectives.

Rocky Fork State Park shall professionally maintain the many natural and cultural assets in Rocky Fork State Park. Through resource management, research, planning, education, and partnerships; Rocky Fork will stimulate the public's appreciation and understanding of why this wild and pristine park holds an important place in Tennessee's past, present and future.

The contents of this resource management plan are as follows:

1. Resource Management Objectives
2. Resource Inventory and Assessment
3. Management Strategies
4. Priority Actions
5. Supplemental Information

Resource Management Objectives

Goal: Tennessee State Parks will be nationally recognized for exemplary stewardship of natural and cultural resources.

Objective - *More and better stewards:* Increase internal and external stewards who share Tennessee State Parks core values and can contribute to the State Parks mission to steward Tennessee's natural and cultural resources.

Objective - *Better resource management practices:* Identify, manage, and restore unique natural and cultural resources for generations to come.

Objective: *Better data and technology:* Leverage data and technology to help inform and guide decisions on natural and cultural resources stewardship.

Aligned with these objectives are specific strategies to achieve the desired outcomes for the natural, cultural, and historic resources of this park.

Strategies

Natural Resources:

- A. Use biocontrol when possible, to alleviate labor costs/confines
- B. Partner/contract with commercial operations that are current on best practices
- C. Utilize GIS technology to identify and maintain "at risk" natural resources
- D. Partner with USFS/NFS for consultation and best practices on shared resources (Appalachian Trail Access, Shared USFS/RFSP trails)

Cultural Resources:

- E. Utilize GIS technology to identify and maintain historic structures and their condition
- F. Partner with National Park Service / United States Forest Service for consultation and best practices on historic structure maintenance

- G. Improve on Cultural interpretation programs to boost appreciation and protect of cultural resources
- H. Launch the community-based cultural documentation project focused on the living folkways, gathering oral histories about skills, stories, beliefs, and seasonal traditions, that continue to shape daily life in and around Rocky Fork State Park and neighboring Unicoi County.

Resource Inventory and Assessment

The significant natural, cultural and historic resources of the park requiring management are detailed below including a condition assessment rating for each. Condition assessments are selected from the following options based on what most describes the current condition of the resource:

1. **Excellent** – resource is in excellent condition; all potential threats to the integrity of the resource are currently managed and effectively mitigated.
2. **Good** – resource is generally in good condition and stable; threats to the integrity of the resource require regular management in order to mitigate.
3. **Fair** – resource is in stable condition but difficult to mitigate ongoing threats; additional management support is required.
4. **Poor** – resource is generally in poor condition with management support required to both improve existing conditions and address threats.
5. **Critical** – resource is highly threatened or deteriorated and requires immediate management prioritization.

Significant Park Resources	Quantity	Current Conditions	Notes
Hardwood Cove Forest	1500 acres	Excellent	2 nd successional growth forest, minimal invasive-exotics
Riparian Corridor	8 miles	Excellent	Low invasive-exotic counts, no agriculture or residential runoff
Hemlock Forest	400 acres	Fair	Heavy Hemlock Woolly Adelgid infestation
Freestone Creeks	8 miles	Excellent	High water quality and prolific trout hatchery

Management Strategies

The management strategies outlined below are directly correlated to the resources identified previously in the *Resource Inventory and Assessment* section immediately above. These are general and overall management recommendations for each resource from which priority actions will be determined. Each resource has both a “Public Use” management strategy (which could include limited or no public access, or managed access with infrastructure and regulation) and a “General Management” strategy.

The priority assignments reflect the highest resource management priorities of the park over the next 1-5 years (High Priority) and 6-10 years (Moderate Priority)

Resource	Management Recommendations	Priority
Hardwood Cove Forest	<p>Public Use: Limited access- Access limited to trails</p> <p>General Management: The majority of forest management is dedicated to observation and inventory. Currently, no management practices are prescribed or necessary.</p>	Low
Riparian Corridor	<p>Public Use: Access for fishing-All streams are open to trout fishing access under TWRA's "wild trout stream" special regulations</p> <p>General Management: Riparian corridors are protected in the park via use of mandatory silt screens, no chemical use with 25 feet (HWA imidacloprid). Clean waders are advised to limit invasive plants/animals.</p>	Medium
Hemlock Forest	<p>Public Use: Limited access- Access limited to trail corridors.</p> <p>General Management: Due to a long and heavy infestation of Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, hemlock health is a high importance. Chemical application is based on tree health, location, cost of removal. Biocontrol is currently being pursued for long-term stand health.</p>	High
Freestone Stream	<p>Public Use: Management for fishing Access. Allow for TWRA "wild trout stream" special regulations.</p> <p>General Management: Partner with TWRA and Trout Unlimited to monitor hatchery health. Educate current and potential anglers on best practices including litter removal, invasive management/clean waders, and leave no trace.</p>	High

Land Management Strategies

In some cases, strategic land acquisitions or divestitures are necessary to meet the overall resource management goals and objectives of the park. This can include opportunities to address buffers, watersheds, viewsheds, inholdings, and adjacent properties. The table below details **general strategies** for land management. Timelines refer to Short Term (1-3 years), Mid Term (4-6 years), and Long Term (7-10 years).

Land Management Strategy	Timeline
Acquisitions to connect Visitor Center to current trail system	Short-term
Watershed- Around 95% of Rocky Fork Creek is protected by public land. Acquisition of the remaining tracts will protect this clean, wild trout stream and its path downstream into the Nolichucky River	Mid-Term
Potential acquisition of property for viewshed protection	Long-term

Interpretive Programming and Education Plan

The Interpretation, Programming, and Education planning is currently going through a planning process to further build out the process. This section only represents the very basic framework. As TSP moves forward with the future of Interpretive programming and education this section will likely be changed to accommodate those modifications.

Attached to this plan are the Interpretive Program Templates in fillable PDF forms.

Primary Interpretive Theme:

To interpret the natural beauty of Southern Appalachia and inspire our visitors to preserve and protect this fragile ecosystem.

Secondary Interpretive Themes: To interpret the cultural histories of the regions early settlers. It is through their traditional crafts, arts and livelihoods that we can further appreciate Rocky Fork State Park.

Interpretation, Programming and Education Goals

Goal: Tennessee State Parks will be the most accessible, welcoming, and inviting system of parks that enriches Tennesseans and visitors through excellent interpretation, education, and resource-based recreation.

Objective: *accessible, welcoming, and inviting to all:* create quality and varied programs of interpretation, recreation, and outreach so that all audiences feel welcome and invited.

Objective: *high quality programming:* develop and support mission-based and resource-relevant programs to engage visitors, empower staff, and develop community wellbeing.

Objective: *resource-based outdoor recreation:* provide resource-based outdoor recreation opportunities that ensure representation of Tennessee's natural, scenic, and cultural resources.

Within these objectives are the following desired outcomes:

- Building stewards
- Ensuring Equity
- Provide the Highest Value
- Develop Resource Based Programming
- Support Staff

Strategic Programs and Services

The strategies detailed below with corresponding action plans are aligned with the Comprehensive Strategic Plan of Tennessee State Parks.

Strategy – Telling Full Stories: to identify and replicate best practices while establishing new methods for representing diverse, equitable, inclusive, and just dialogues.

Action Plan: Include under-represented ethnic and religious groups in program planning and preparation.

Strategy – Interpretative Media: Connecting people to the resources of Tennessee State Parks with technology in ways that compliment and expand interpretation within and beyond the park, giving everyone access to becoming a park steward.

Action Plan: Follow Interpretive Programs and Education guidelines to ensure access

Strategy – Develop and maintain a portfolio of programs across multiple types of experiences:

- A. Interpretation of natural, historic, and cultural resources
- B. 3-5 unique experiences for all audiences
- C. Varying intensity from self-guided to immersive experiences
- D. Partnership opportunities for program delivery
- E. Varying costs to the user from “free to fee” based on value of the benefit to the participant.

Action Plan: Continued Focus on Cherokee and early Appalachian settlers interpretive programming range for campfire talks to immersive “folk school” programs.

Strategy – Develop and maintain diverse and varied resourced-based outdoor recreation opportunities across multiple types of experiences:

- A. Managing recreational use with the stewardship needs of the resource
- B. Varying intensity from self-guided to guided experiences
- C. Partnership opportunities for program delivery
- D. Varying costs to the user from “free to fee” based on value of the benefit to the participant and impact to the resource.

Action Plan: Identify and inventory outdoor recreation opportunities. Work alongside nonprofits and local business to maintain, advertise, and utilize existing recreation opportunities.

HELPFUL DEFINITIONS:

- Nonpersonal Interpretation: Interpretive media that do not require a person to deliver a message (i.e. exhibits, waysides, brochures, signs, magazines, books, etc.).
- Personal Interpretation: One person or persons proving interpretation to another person or persons.
- Interpretive Program: Activities, presentations, publications, audio-visual media, signs, and exhibits that convey key heritage resource messages to audiences. (Adapted from US Fish & Wildlife Service)
- Interpretation: a purposeful approach to communication that facilitates meaningful, relevant, and inclusive experiences that deepen understanding, broaden perspectives, and inspire engagement with the world around us.

Financial Performance Goals

Financial performance goals are a critical performance management tool of the Tennessee State Park System. While the financial performance of parks are managed more intently at the system level, individual parks are expected to recover a portion of their operating costs through the generation of earned revenues where appropriate and to contribute to the system goals. The majority of earned revenues at state parks are generated through facility usage (campsites, cabins, lodge rooms, rentable pavilions, etc.), the delivery of fee-based programs and services, equipment rental and usage, and retail sales. Other forms of revenue generation come from golf courses and restaurants where those amenities are present. That said, not all parks have the same ability to generate earned revenues because the availability of facilities or programs vary widely from one park to the next. The “recovery” of operational costs by earned revenues is referred to as “cost recovery”. Operating costs beyond those supported by earned revenues represents the extent to which state funding support operations at each park.

The table below represents the overall park cost recovery for this specific park for the most recent fiscal year and forecast estimates for the upcoming five years. These estimates are based on projection estimates for known and foreseeable costs and recovery figures.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE GOALS						
	Current Cost Recovery (2025)	Target Cost Recovery: FY 2026	Target Cost Recovery: FY 2027	Target Cost Recovery: FY 2028	Target Cost Recovery: FY 2029	Target Cost Recovery: FY 2030
Park Overall	3.75%	3.25%	3.5%	4%	4.25%	4.5%

