



Tennessee State Parks

Park Strategic Management Planning Response to Comments

Booker T Washington State Park

The 10-year individual Park Strategic Management Plans for Tennessee State Parks are part of the overall planning processes within the department and are developed to guide the management and direction of each park. These plans steer continued success of each park and influence long term innovation by the park staff. Building on Tennessee State Parks' strong foundation they seek to address the various challenges anticipated for each park. The Strategic Management Plans present a strategic and actionable strategy for the next 10 years.

This response to comments document is shared publicly as a record of comments that were made at a public information meeting as well as an online survey. The public information meeting was held at the Booker T. Washington Group Camp Assembly Hall on November 13th, 2025, at 5:30pm.

Summary of Public Comments and Department Responses

The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation received **22 public comments** specific to the draft Strategic Management Plan for Booker T. Washington State Park. Respondents expressed deep appreciation for the park's natural beauty, historical significance, and family-friendly atmosphere, along with numerous suggestions for facility upgrades, recreation improvements, and trail system resilience.

Key themes included:

- **Trail Bridges, Erosion & Safety** – Numerous respondents highlighted urgent concerns about aging wooden trail bridges, shoreline erosion beneath bridge structures, and trail segments along the lake that are being undermined. Many urged the park to replace deteriorating bridges and address shoreline washout before conditions worsen.
- **Mountain Biking & Multi-Use Trails** – Respondents requested improvements to existing mountain bike trails, additional user-specific trail design, and consideration of a pump track or MTB-optimized features. Several noted that current grades make riding difficult for children and beginners.



- **Playground Improvements** – Multiple individuals noted that the park’s playgrounds are outdated or unsafe, urging the park to invest in modern equipment, accessible surfaces, and improved play areas for nearby families.
- **Park Cleanliness & Amenities** – Respondents praised the park’s general cleanliness but requested improvements to bathroom facilities and noted persistent issues with visitors failing to clean up after pets, asking for more signage or enforcement.
- **Water Access, Fishing & Boating** – Several respondents described heavy community use of the shoreline and non-motorized boat launch area, requesting improved paddle craft access, updated docks, and better facilities for kayak fishing. Others noted that the park has limited connections to the water despite being located on Chickamauga Lake.
- **Historical & Cultural Significance** – Respondents stressed the importance of preserving and interpreting the legacy of Booker T. Washington and the site’s historical relevance as Tennessee’s only former African-American state park. Some expressed interest in restoring or reimagining the historic pool, noting its cultural symbolism and potential value for youth water-safety programs.
- **Picnic, Birding & Viewpoint Enhancements** – Respondents praised the bird-watching platform and recommended additional viewing sites or land agreements with TVA to enhance wildlife observation and access to underutilized lakefront areas.
- **Community Partnerships** – Organizations such as SORBA Chattanooga expressed willingness to partner on trail maintenance, bridge replacement, and long-term stewardship of multi-use trail systems.

Department Response

The Department appreciates the extensive and heartfelt feedback submitted for Booker T. Washington State Park. The park’s role as a community gathering space, outdoor recreation hub, and site of historical significance was strongly reflected in the comments received. All input has been reviewed by Tennessee State Parks leadership in alignment with the park’s mission, resource stewardship needs, operational capacity, and the goals outlined in the draft Strategic Management Plan.

The Department recognizes the urgent need to address trail bridge deterioration and shoreline erosion. These issues will be evaluated as part of capital improvement planning,



with attention to sustainable engineering approaches that protect the shoreline and ensure long-term visitor safety.

Requests for enhancements to mountain bike trails and multi-use corridors will be reviewed as part of the park's recreation planning. The Department appreciates the willingness of community organizations to support trail stewardship and may explore partnership opportunities where feasible.

Concerns regarding the condition of playgrounds are noted, and the Department will take feedback into account when prioritizing future facility upgrades.

Comments about paddle craft access, docks, and shoreline engagement will inform planning related to lakefront improvements. The Department will continue balancing recreational access with ecological health and shoreline stability.

The Department acknowledges the importance of historic interpretation, including the cultural legacy of Booker T. Washington and the park's former swimming pool. Opportunities to expand interpretive programming, cultural storytelling, and meaningful site recognition will be explored.

Feedback related to park cleanliness, restroom conditions, and pet waste, along with suggestions for enhanced signage and public education, will be incorporated into ongoing operations planning.

The Department is grateful for the strong community investment in Booker T. Washington State Park and will continue to use public input to refine and implement the Strategic Management Plan over the coming decade.