



Tennessee State Parks

Park Strategic Management Planning Response to Comments

Montgomery Bell 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 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 Montgomery Bell State Park Visitor Center on December 15th, 2025, at 5:30pm.

Summary of Public Comments

Respondents expressed a wide range of views, with recurring themes related to equestrian access, trail conditions, recreation amenities, historic concerns, facility improvements, and user experience.

Key themes included:

- **Equestrian Access & Trail Use** – A significant number of respondents requested horseback riding access, expanded equestrian trails, or a return of equestrian use to the park. Many expressed that Middle Tennessee has limited riding options and noted willingness to pay user fees or assist with trail maintenance.
- **Mountain Bike Trail Conditions** – Several respondents noted that mountain bike trails need maintenance, improved routing, and greater connectivity. Some expressed interest in professional trail assessment or more volunteer involvement, while others emphasized that existing MTB trails are underappreciated or isolated from the rest of the park.
- **Lake Access & Water Recreation** – Users expressed interest in improved access to the lakes, including kayak launches, expanded fishing opportunities, and concerns about weed overgrowth in Acorn, Woodhaven, and Creech Hollow. One respondent requested open-water swimming for triathlon training.



- **Campground & Visitor Amenities** – Requests included upgrading the campground, expanding campsite utilities, improving the camp store, allowing campers access to the hotel pool, and adding or improving playgrounds.
- **Facility & Landscape Maintenance** – Some respondents raised concerns about fallen trees, storm damage, and the condition of the golf course, hotel, and dining amenities. Others emphasized the need for more robust maintenance schedules.
- **Historical & Social Concerns** – Two respondents expressed concern about past events hosted at the park involving extremist groups, requesting the park prevent similar gatherings in the future.
- **Programming & Events** – Suggestions included offering more annual events, expanding popular programs (such as the “Werewolf Springs” tour), and increasing family-friendly recreational opportunities.

Department Response

The Department appreciates the wide range of thoughtful public input on the future of Montgomery Bell State Park. All comments were reviewed by Tennessee State Parks leadership in relation to the park’s mission, existing site conditions, operational capacity, and the goals outlined in the draft Strategic Management Plan.

Equestrian Access & Trail Use: The strong interest in equestrian access is noted. Requests for new or restored horseback riding opportunities will be evaluated as part of broader recreational use planning, considering environmental protection, trail sustainability, user conflicts, and staffing needs. The Department recognizes the local and regional importance of equestrian recreation and will carefully consider these recommendations.

Mountain Bike Trail Conditions: Comments regarding mountain bike trail maintenance and improvements highlight important user needs. The Department will continue assessing trail conditions, storm impacts, and opportunities to incorporate volunteer support or professional trail planning where appropriate to ensure sustainable, safe, and enjoyable trail experiences.

Lake Access & Water Recreation: Feedback related to lake access, kayak launches, fishing conditions, and aquatic vegetation management will be incorporated into ongoing



water resource assessments. The Department will continue to balance recreational use with ecological health and shoreline protection.

Campground & Visitor Amenities: Suggestions to enhance the campground, camp store, playgrounds, and visitor amenities will be reviewed alongside capital planning priorities and available resources. The Department values the strong community support for improving family-friendly facilities.

Facility & Landscape Maintenance: Concerns about facility upkeep, including storm cleanup, golf course conditions, and hotel maintenance, will be considered as part of facility management planning and budget allocation for repairs and improvements.

Historical & Social Concerns: Comments related to event policies and the hosting of outside groups are acknowledged. Tennessee State Parks does not endorse hateful ideology in any form. Tennessee State Parks provides facilities to individuals or groups, regardless of their viewpoints, in accordance with state and federal law, the Tennessee and United States Constitutions, and park policies. Due to privacy laws, we cannot comment on specific guests' use of a park, including group rentals.

The Department values the public's continued involvement and will use these comments to inform and strengthen implementation of the Montgomery Bell State Park Strategic Management Plan over the coming decade.