



Tennessee State Parks

Park Strategic Management Planning Response to Comments

Lamar Alexander Rocky Fork 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 Erwin Town Hall on November 18th, 2025, at 5:30 pm

Summary of Public Comments

The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation received **3 public comments** specific to the draft Strategic Management Plan for Lamar Alexander Rocky Fork State Park. Overall, commenters expressed deep appreciation for the park's natural beauty and offered recommendations focused on interpretive improvements, resource protection, trail clarity, and expanded recreation.

Key themes included:

- **Trail Marking & Wayfinding** – Commenters requested the addition of mileage markers on park trails and improvements to map legibility, noting that current maps are small and difficult to read.
- **Mountain Biking Opportunities** – One commenter expressed a desire to see backcountry-style mountain biking trails added to Rocky Fork, noting the park's landscape would be well suited for this type of recreation.



- **Historical Interpretation** – A commenter highlighted the lack of interpretive information at a significant historic site where Creek and Cherokee individuals, as well as settlers, lost their lives. They expressed disappointment that an interpretive panel prepared years ago was never installed and urged the Department to prioritize high-quality interpretation.

- **Resource Management & Maintenance Needs** – The same commenter emphasized the need for appropriate equipment (such as a tractor) to maintain park roads and former logging routes, noting they cannot be sustainably managed using hand tools alone. Concerns were also raised about creek bank degradation, user-created social trails, swimmers creating rock dams, and the removal of natural wood debris that previously benefited habitat. Commenters urged the park to prioritize preservation over recreation when managing sensitive waterways such as Rocky Fork Creek.

Department Response

The Department appreciates the thoughtful and detailed feedback submitted regarding Rocky Fork State Park. All comments were reviewed by Tennessee State Parks leadership in relation to the park's mission, natural resource stewardship responsibilities, operational capacity, and the goals outlined in the draft Strategic Management Plan.

Suggestions for improved trail wayfinding, including mileage markers and more legible trail maps, align with ongoing efforts to enhance visitor orientation and safety. These improvements will be considered during future trail signage assessments.

Requests for mountain biking opportunities will be evaluated as part of long-term recreation planning. Any such proposals must be carefully assessed to ensure compatibility with the park's sensitive natural resources, steep terrain, and backcountry character.

The Department greatly values the importance of cultural and historical interpretation and acknowledges the need to appropriately recognize and interpret the significant historic events associated with the park. Opportunities to enhance interpretive signage and educational materials will be considered as part of future cultural resource planning.

Comments regarding maintenance equipment, trail conditions, and resource protection will be incorporated into operational reviews. The Department will continue to assess infrastructure, staffing, and equipment needs to support effective land stewardship.



Concerns about creek impacts, social trails, and visitor behavior will be addressed through a combination of education, resource management strategies, and site planning to balance recreation with ecosystem protection.

The Department appreciates the strong support for Rocky Fork State Park and will continue to incorporate public input as the Strategic Management Plan is refined and implemented over the next decade.