

Harpeth State Scenic River Strategic Management Plan

2023 – 2033



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Park Purpose, History and Description

Harpeth River State Park is a Linear, Day-Use, Historical and Recreational Park located in both Cheatham and Davidson County. With 12 sites along 40 miles of the Harpeth River, the park manages a total of 532 acres, including 4 Historical sites: Mace Bluff and the Mound Bottom Complex (914 CE – 1450 CE), Montgomery Bell’s Tunnel (1820), Newsom’s Mill (1862), and Hidden Lake (1931-1940), as well as 9 river access points allowing for boating, fishing, swimming, picnicking, and hiking. Initial land acquisition began in 1971 with the State of Tennessee acquiring Mace Bluff, a 53-acre tract with a Pre-Historic Native American Petroglyph site, and Mound Bottom in 1972, thus establishing a satellite area of Montgomery Bell State Park. Tennessee State Parks established Harpeth River State Park in 2004.

The founding purpose of Harpeth River State Park is to preserve and protect, in perpetuity, the natural, archaeological, and historical areas for the benefit of the public. Harpeth River State Park exists to provide safe, quality, outdoor experiences and to conserve and steward its ecologically significant areas through education and a well-panned professionally managed operation.

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 Tennessee’s natural and cultural resources.

Action Plan:

1. Partner with local government and business entities who are willing to contribute time, effort and resources to Harpeth River State Park’s mission.
2. Create master lists of volunteers that can be utilized when help is needed. One list shall contain individuals that are willing to help the park when general labor or assistance is needed. A separate list shall contain volunteers that possess special skills such as carpentry, electrical, plumbing, etc. that would be willing to assist the park when these talents are needed.
3. Create relationships with Cheatham and Davidson County Schools to promote educational interpretive programs that highlight the park’s natural and historical features to enhance school curriculum for educators.

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

Action Plan:

1. Create individual plans to address the restoration and protection of historic structures within the park. These shall include Hidden Lake dance floor, Newsom’s Mill, Pattison Forge Tunnel, Mace Bluff Petroglyph, and Mound Bottom.
2. Provide frequent educational and volunteer-based program opportunities to address and repair erosion issues on park trails and removal of invasive exotic plant species.

3. Work to establish and post signage at all Harpeth River access points to inform and educate boaters on how to protect the river and its ecosystem while still being able to enjoy the resource recreationally.

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

Action Plan:

1. Partner with local non-profits such as Harpeth River Watershed and Harpeth Conservancy to establish a live water quality reporting system available to river users.
2. Create an online link and QR code signage for park kiosks to inform river users of current water levels to reduce search and rescue operations during high water events.
3. Establish an online interactive river map for Harpeth River State Parks website that will show distances between access points, average paddle times and photographs of the next downstream access point.
4. Work with GIS and Maps to properly survey and mark all park boundaries and address any encroachments that may have occurred.

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:

1. Work with Harpeth River State Park Friends Group to fund and construct an ADA boardwalk along the Tunnel Trail allowing access to this historic feature for all.
2. Establish outreach relationships with local senior centers in Cheatham and Davidson Counties to provide quality interpretive programs that share Harpeth River State Parks history, flora, and fauna using power point presentations and captive wildlife.
3. Pave the existing Blue Bird Trail and Story Book Trail Loop at Hidden Lake to allow for more ADA accessibility within the park.

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

Action Plan:

1. Construct wayfinding kiosks with interpretive panels at Montgomery Bell's Pattison Forge, Mound Bottom, Newsom's Mill and Hidden Lake to tell the story of these sites.
2. Develop site specific program outlines for all historical areas that are age specific and can be used by all staff members.
3. Re-establish the Junior Ranger Program at Harpeth River to inspire youth to learn about and protect the natural resource.

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

Action Plan:

1. Create a core set of new recreation-based programs that promote the mission of Tennessee State Parks while at the same providing fun and educational experiences within Harpeth River State Park.
2. Develop a monthly ranger guided paddling program to educate attendees about water quality and management concerns regarding the Harpeth River’s ecosystem.
3. Develop an annual fee based overnight boating / camping program to expand upon current recreational opportunities.

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:

1. Develop a grounds maintenance schedule to ensure all areas are routinely maintained and safe for park visitors.
2. Create digital logs to ensure all facilities and equipment are receiving preventative maintenance as required.
3. Log into the Energy Cap system weekly to monitor all utility usage, checking for and addressing any discrepancies.

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

Action Plan:

1. Work to secure capital funding for an ADA accessible pedestrian bridge over the Harpeth River from the Gossett Tract to Mound Bottom and construct a self-guided mowed trails around the mound complex.
2. Conduct monthly safety inspections of Harpeth River State Parks trail system to identify and promptly address hazards.
3. Provide ADA accessible boat ramps at all river access points.

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

Action Plan:

1. Continue to design the currently funded visitor’s Center in a manner to ensure that all visitors feel welcome and informed.
2. Update and organize all park signage so that it is informative while considering viewshed management.

3. Fund and construct restroom facilities at Newsom's Mill and Hidden Lake.
4. Fund and construct picnic pavilions at Newsom's Mill and the Gossett Tract to provide covered gathering space for park visitors and revenue generating rentals facilities for organized groups.

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:

1. Allow time for staff to attend trainings that will further benefit their professional growth and goals.
2. Increase staff moral by providing a safe and positive working environment through time management and efficient scheduling. This shall include additional opportunities for time off during the parks busiest season.
3. Support park staff by working to increase the current staffing pattern to accommodate increased visitation and new facilities.

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

Action Plan:

1. Conduct monthly reviews with all park staff to ensure the park is operating within its budget and discuss ideas to reduce wasteful spending.

Park Overview

Site Fact Sheet

Park Name	Harpeth River State Park
Site Manager	Bill Morton
Area Manager	Ryan Forbess
Park acreage	532
Total number of visitors (FY 2022)	802,042
Total expenses before CO (FY 2022)	\$516,369
Total revenues (FY 2022)	\$3,444
Retail cost recovery % ¹	N/A
Park cost recovery %	0.6%
Average expense per visitor (FY 2022)	\$0.65
Average revenue per visitor (FY 2022)	\$0.004
Gross profit or loss	(\$512,925)
Total full-time available positions / filled	4/4
Total part-time available positions / filled	1/1
Primary feeder markets	Cheatham, Davidson, Williamson, Dickson Counties
Primary reasons people visit	Paddle sports / hiking / history
Opportunities for improvement	Picnic pavilions. Pedestrian Bridge to Mound Bottom. Permanent restroom facilities. Additional Parking at Newsom's Mill. Sterns parking area paved.

Key Attractions

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

- 9 Harpeth River access points for recreational boating and fishing.
- Mound Bottom Archeological Area.
- Montgomery Bell Tunnel and Pattison Forge Site.
- Narrows of the Harpeth Bluff Trail Overlook.
- Hidden Lake.
- Newsom's Mill.

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 Harpeth River State Park. 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 Harpeth River State Park and provides the assessed condition of each as reviewed in January 2023 (month, year).

Site Asset / Amenity	Quantity	Condition
Park Office	1	Good
Maintenance Shop	1	Good
Tool Shed	1	Fair
Portable Restrooms	6	Good
Water Fountains	6	Good

Trail Inventory and Assessment

Trail Name	Mileage	Condition
Bluebird Trail	0.42	
Bluff Trail	0.24	
Connector Trail	0.07	
Harpeth River Blueway	73.04	
Harris Street Bridge Trail	0.33	
Hidden Lake Trail	0.22	
Lower Field Loop Trail	0.38	
Lower Loop Trail	0.93	
Paw Paw Trail	0.42	
Railroad Spur Trail	0.15	
Ridge Loop Trail	0.78	
Storybook Trail	0.39	
Tunnel Trail	0.20	
Upper Loop Trail	0.47	
Grand Total	78.03	

Narrows of the Harpeth

1. Bluff Trail - .25 Mile – Hillside Erosion and trail needs rerouting and a stairway.
2. Tunnel Trail - .20 Mile
3. Harris-Street Bridge Trail - .35 Mile – Erosion along bluff line that needs a boardwalk.

Gossett Tract

1. Upper Loop Trail - .55 Mile
2. Lower Loop Trail – 1.0 Mile
3. Connector Trail - .10 Mile

4. Paw Paw Trail - .40
5. Story Book Trail - .40

Hidden Lake

1. Lower Field Loop – .40 Mile
2. Blue Bird Trail – .45 Mile – Drainage issues and exposed roots.
3. Ridge Loop Trail – 1.15 Mile
4. Hidden Lake Trail – .25 Mile
5. Railroad Spur Trail - .15 Mile

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
Restroom facilities	New restrooms at Newsom’s Mill and Hidden Lake
Picnic Pavilions	Picnic shelters at Gossett Tract and Newsom’s Mill
Pedestrian Bridge	Bridge over Harpeth River at Gossett Tract into Mound Bottom
Visitor’s Center	Visitor’s center at Gossett Tract (Currently Funded)
Expanded Parking / Paving	Newsom’s Mill lot extension and Sterns graveled and paved
ADA Paved trail	Pave Hidden Lake upper loop for handicap accessibility

Prioritized Facility Needs

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

Facility Need	Priority Assignment
Visitor’s Center	High
ADA accessible boardwalk along the tunnel trail	High
Constructed stairs to the top of the Bluff Trail	High
Restroom facilities at Newsom’s Mill and Hidden Lake	Medium
Pedestrian bridge over the Harpeth River into Mound Bottom	Medium
Paved ADA Blue Bird Trail at Hidden Lake	Medium
Expanded Parking / Paving	High
Picnic Pavilions	Low
Harris-Street Bridge Trail repair (boardwalk over eroding bluff line)	High
Electric gates with timer capabilities at all park sites	Medium

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.**

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 Harpeth River have been identified as **core services**:

- Provide public access to the park, facilities and grounds.
- Provide public safety for visitors and protection of the natural and cultural resources.
- Provide maintenance of park grounds, facilities and infrastructure.
- Maintain clean and accessible drinking water fountains.

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 Harpeth River have been identified as **important services**:

- Offer a full range of environmental, cultural, and recreational programs.
- Make available park-specific information through on site public contact and informational kiosks.
- Provide on and off-site educational programs for schools and organized groups.

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 Harpeth River have been identified as **visitor supported services**:

- Provide volunteer opportunities allowing the community to have a personal stake in the park.
- Host community based special event programs such as the Harpeth Harvest Fest and Gossett Gobble 5K Race.

Personnel / Staffing Review

Personnel and staffing at Harpeth River represent the largest area of budgetary expense at an average of 51.7% of the total operating budget each year for the last three complete years, which is 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
Park Manager 1	1	*
Park Ranger 2	2	*
Park Ranger 3	1	*
TOTAL	4	\$240,249

*Law enforcement compensation confidential by TN law.

Part Time Employees

Position / Title	Quantity	Compensation Total
Job Share Laborer	1	\$27,787
TOTAL	1	\$27,787

Labor Support

Labor Support	Annual Hours
Volunteers	125
Community Service Workers	
Engineering and Construction Crews	
Resource Management Crews	
Other: _____	
TOTAL	125

Total Labor Compensation Expense

Labor Type	Labor Expense
Full Time Equivalent Employees	\$240,249
Part Time Employees	\$27,787
TOTAL Annual Labor Expense	\$268,036

Additional Future Positions Needed

Position / Title	Quantity	FTE or PT	Year Needed	Justification
Account Clerk	1	FTE	2024	Visitor's Center/Gift Shop
Clerk 3	1	FTE	2025	Visitor's Center/Operations
Conservation Worker 3	1	FTE	2024	Facilities/Equipment Maintenance
Conservation Worker 1	1	FTE	2025	Grounds/Facilities Maintenance
Park Ranger 2	2	FTE	2024/2025	Additional Facilities, Increased Visitation, More Programming, and Additional Park Coverage/Security
Seasonal Laborer	2	PT	2025	Park Support
TOTAL	8			

Customer Service

Platform / Site	Year	Customer Satisfaction Level
Google	2022	4.8
All Trails	2022	4.0
Trip Advisor	2021	5.0
Yelp	2021	4.0

Professional Development and Training

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

- Swiftwater Rescue Training.
- Trail Building.
- TWRA Boating Safety and BUI.
- Chainsaw Safety.
- Emergency Medical Responder.
- Routine management training
- Routine law enforcement 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. Establish and post signage at all Harpeth River access points to inform and educate boaters about river etiquette, float time and distances to the next access point
- b. Construct boardwalks/engineered stair case on the Bluff and Harris-Street Bridge Trails to prevent further erosion and create a safer hiking experience.
- c. Expand upon basic infrastructure at Hidden Lake, Newsom’s Mill and Highway 100 access by adding access to electricity.
- d. Demolish dilapidated buildings at Mound Bottom and Hidden Lake.

2. Operations and Staffing

- a. Work to reorganize Harpeth River State Parks Friends Group and expand membership.
- b. Expand volunteerism within the park.

3. Customer Service / Visitor Experience

- a. Blaze and clearly define all park trails.
- b. Redesign Harpeth River State Park's trail and river maps to be more informative and user friendly.
- c. Install security cameras at Hidden Lake, Newsom's Mill and Highway 100 to enhance safety and security.

Mid Term Recommendations (2-5 years)

1. Site and Facilities

- a. Construction of a visitors center at the Gossett Tract.
- b. Expand and pave parking areas at Newsom's Mill and Stern Property.
- c. Construct picnic pavilions Gossett and Newsom's Mill.
- d. Install electric gate at all park sites.

2. Operations and Staffing

- a. Obtain additional equipment to assist park staff and visitors. This is to include a side by side vehicle, 1 additional rescue boat (Mokai Kayak), bat wing bush-hogg, heavy duty trailer.
- b. Increase staffing by 1 Park Ranger 2, 1 Conservation Worker 3, and 2 Clerks, and 1 seasonal laborer to accommodate additional facilities.

3. Customer Service / Visitor Experience

- a. Pedestrian bridge over the Harpeth River into Mound Bottom allowing for additional Ranger guided and self-guided tours of the site.
- b. Conduct monthly ranger guided paddling programs to educate attendees about water quality and management concerns regarding the Harpeth River's ecosystem.
- c. Construct wayfinding kiosks with interpretive panels at Montgomery Bell's Pattison Forge, Mound Bottom, Newsom's Mill and Hidden Lake to tell the story of these sites.
- d. Replace all metal trail signage with routed wooden signs.
- e. Create a park website extension that will include links to current water levels, water quality and an interactive park river map.

Long Term Recommendations (5+ years)

1. Site and Facilities

- a. Construct an ADA accessible boardwalk along the Tunnel Trail to allow access to all park visitors.
- b. Build restroom facilities at Newsom's Mill and Hidden Lake.

2. Operations and Staffing

- a. Increase staffing by adding and additional Park Ranger 2, Conservation Worker 1, and 1 seasonal laborer.
- b. Establish relationships with corporations who are willing to support the park through larger donations and volunteerism.

3. Customer Service / Visitor Experience

- a. Daily ranger guided hikes to Mound Bottom, Hidden Lake and Pattison Forge.
- b. Pave the Blue Bird Loop trail at Hidden Lake to allow for more ADA accessibility and provide a safe and level .5 mile walking path for the community.

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.

Harpeth River State Park is approximately 532 acres and located on the Western Highland Rim consisting of Oak and Hickory hardwood stands of secondary forest with a complex ecosystem consisting of many different flora and fauna species. The park has 2 manmade lakes left over from an early 20th century rock quarry at Hidden Lake. Both lakes are spring fed and are part of the Harpeth River Watershed. The underlying bedrock of the region is chiefly Mississippian Limestone, Chert, Shale, and Sandstone with exposures of Devonian Silurian Ordovician and Cambrian limestone Chert and Shale. Plant communities are Mesosphytic. In some areas there are large colonies of Bluebells, May Apples, Trillium, and other Ephemeral species are found in the spring. As the season changes, summer wildflowers begin to bloom such as Golden Rod, Iron Weed, Comb flowers, Brown Eyed Susan found in open and meadow areas of the park.

There is a diverse selection of fauna at Harpeth River State Park. Some of the migratory birds through the spring and summer season consist of Osprey, Ruby Red Throated Hummingbirds, Yellow Belly Sap Suckers, Warblers, White Throated Sparrows, Broad wing Hawks etc. The park has a very diverse selection of woodpeckers such as Pileated and Red Headed. There have been siting's of Bald Eagles but no known nests. Large and small game animals are prominent in this area such as white tail deer, turkey, raccoon, rabbits, grey and fox squirrel, red and grey fox, and bob cats. Many reptiles call Harpeth River home with numerous species of snakes, turtles, and lizards. Amphibians such as frogs, toads and salamanders are prominent in this area.

The natural area is located within the Western Highland Rim ecoregion of Tennessee. Rolling terrain covered primarily by oak-hickory forest communities characterizes this region. Flood plains dominate the areas between the river and forests and are maintained as perineal forb and native grassland meadows. The natural area contains moderately steep bluff lines ranging in height from 80 – 150 feet. Dry oak-hickory forests dominate the ridge tops, and south and west facing slopes while Mesosphytic forests dominate lower slopes and north and east facing slopes. The Dry Oak-Hickory forests are dominated by Scarlet Oak, Southern Red Oak, Post Oak, Eastern Red Cedar, Pignut and Mockernut Hickories. The Mesosphytic forests are dominated by White Oak, American Beech, Sugar Maple, and Tulip Poplar.

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

- A. Continually maintain vegetation growth within the plaza area and the mounds at Mound Bottom.
- B. Increase public access to Mound Bottom allowing for educational opportunities on how to protect and preserve these ancient sites for future generations.
- C. Partner with archeology to perform additional research of the Mound Bottom and Mace Bluff sites.
- D. Demolish dilapidated home and remove all debris around the site.
- E. Provide enhanced security at the Mace Bluff petroglyph and Newsom's Mill.
- F. Manually (by cutting vegetation at ground level) and through the selective use of herbicides remove all non-native/non-desirable plants and hazard trees from within and on top of the walls of Newsom's Mill, 12 mounds of the Mound Bottom State Archeological Area, and from Hidden Lake's 1930's era Terrazzo dance floor.
- G. Improve native grass stands on the Upper and Lower meadows at both Hidden Lake and Gossett Tract. The preferred method for seeding will be hydroseeding with native grass seed and broadcasting native perennial forbs.
- H. Improve health of Riparian Corridors through annual inspections and rehabilitation efforts.
- I. Remove 1 mile of perimeter fencing at Hidden Lake that are remnants of the dairy farm prior to the state purchasing it.
- J. Conduct annual inventories of park artifacts and art collections.
- K. Provide opportunities for public education with emphasis to not disturb artifacts from their discovered locations.
- L. Conduct annual boundary patrols to maintain TDEC boundary and no hunting/no trespassing markers.
- M. Actively seek to encourage relationships with community and regional contacts that will develop into partnerships to support park operations and the goals of the partnering operations.
- N. Develop a 1:2 scale reproduction of Montgomery Bell's Pattison Forge.
- O. Restoring the 1930's era Terrazzo dance floor at Hidden Lake.
- P. Annually obtain at least silver level audit accreditation through the Tennessee State Parks Go Green With Us sustainability initiative.

- Q. Improve visitor education of native flora/fauna and ecosystems through well thought and professionally produced signage.
- R. Target Chinese Privet, Tree of Heaven, Jacob’s Staff, Japanese Honeysuckle, and Shiso as priority invasive/non-native plants for removal.
- S. Develop native plant/wildflower areas for the benefit of native pollinator and migratory species while reducing the acreage that requires mowing.
- T. Educate Park visitors on native plants and how invasive species impact Tennessee ecosystems. This will be accomplished through personal and nonpersonal interpretation.
- U. Raise public awareness and offer opportunities for positive action on the impacts of litter and pollution through interpretive programming efforts, partnerships with environmentally focused organizations and hosting volunteer workdays to collect litter.
- V. Improve recycling and waste reduction efforts collecting materials not commonly recycled, identifying operational efforts for waste reduction, and working with community leaders to improve public recycling opportunities.

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
Mound Bottom Complex	14 Mounds	Good	Mounds and site require continual vegetative maintenance. Sinkholes (4) are forming within the plaza.
Mace Bluff Petroglyph	1	Fair	Petroglyph is deteriorating. Outside threats of vandalism have caused damage to the patina.
Pattison Forge Site and Tunnel	1	Fair	The interior of the tunnel is collapsing.
Hidden Lake (Lake)	35,000 Square Feet	Excellent	Historic features are within the lake.

Hidden Lake Dance Floor	1	Poor	The Dance floor is deteriorating. Large holes have formed in the center and the edges are crumbling.
Hidden Lake Caretakers House	1	Poor	Exposed concrete building had vegetation growing withing and the walls are unstable.
Newsom’s Mill	1	Good	Vegetation is going within and on the structure. Stone blocks have been vandalized with spray paint and pushed from the building.

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
Mound Bottom Complex	<p>Public Use: Managed access with infrastructure and regulation. Access is currently limited with park personnel being present only.</p> <p>General Management: Site is managed by park staff mowing the plaza area and contract vendor cutting the temple mound. Outer areas are cut for hay 3 times annually. Public access to this site is a priority.</p>	High
Mace Bluff Petroglyph	<p>Public Use: Managed access with infrastructure and regulation. Access is limited by not advertising the existing trail to the petroglyph.</p> <p>General Management: Visitors seeking the site are allowed to access the petroglyph. The trail is maintained by park staff and the site is monitored for vandalism. Security cameras should be added to the site for monitoring and potential prosecution.</p>	High
Pattison Forge Site and Tunnel	<p>Public Use: Managed access/ accessible to the public.</p> <p>General Management: The tunnel is collapsing, and large debris enters during flooding events. The site is patrolled and signage to disallow entry into the structure is posted.</p>	Moderate

	Consideration should be given to researching additional methods to prevent entry into the structure.	
Hidden Lake (Lake)	Public Use: Managed access/ accessible to the public. General Management: Remove any historic structures from the lake for potential future use in exhibits.	Moderate
Hidden Lake Dance Floor	Public Use: Managed access/ accessible to the public. General Management: The dance floor is kept free from debris to reduce further damage to the concrete. Work with archeology to create a plan to protect and restore the structure.	High
Hidden Lake Caretakers House	Public Use: Managed access/ accessible to the public. General Management: This structure is a safety hazard that need to be demolished.	High
Newsom’s Mill	Public Use: Managed access with infrastructure and regulation. General Management: The mill needs additional security in the form of cameras to monitor for vandalism. All vegetation on and within the mill is sprayed with herbicide monthly. The retaining wall needs cracks in the concrete repaired and drainage issues addressed	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
Land acquisition to benefit the Narrows of the Harpeth river access by relocating the park’s river access off of the county road and into a larger and more manageable space.	Short Term
Land acquisition to allow more space for loading boats at the Park’s last river access.	Long Term
Land acquisition in partnership with TWRA to protect and conserve the riparian buffers that exist on neighboring properties.	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.

Interpretive Purpose:

Harpeth River State Park preserves, protects, and shares the stories of Kingston Springs and West Nashville, TN as well as the Mound Bottom State Archeological Area.

Interpretive Primary Theme:

The Harpeth River sustained the progress of the human experience from pre-history to now and flows through our stewardship of its story today.

Interpretive Subthemes:

From stone production to swing music venue, the story of West Nashville's Big Band Era.

Harnessing the power of water, a community sustained by Newsom's Mill.

One man's vision that left a "hole" in the story of Kingston Springs as well as a complicated history of enslavement.

The Highland Rim and its impact on the river and scenic home for our plants and wildlife.

The bluffs echo the stories of the Middle Cumberland Mississippian culture and the Mound Bottom Complex.

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.

Park Interpretation and Programs should be developed with the following desired outcomes:

- Building stewards
- Ensuring Equity
- Providing the Highest Value
- Developing Resource Based Programming
- Supporting 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:

Develop a variety of new programs that focus on telling complete stories of the peoples who settled and worked the lands along the Harpeth River and establish outreach to diverse groups to share these stories.

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:

Develop digital media based programs through PowerPoint presentation and video that tell the stories of Harpeth River State Park and are accessible to all.

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:

1. Staff guided hikes to all historic sites within Harpeth River State park. These shall include Mound Bottom, Mace Bluff, Pattison Forge site, Hidden Lake and Newsom’s Mill.
2. Ranger Guided Night Hikes, Canoe Floats.
3. Self-guided hikes into Mound Bottom when the pedestrian bridge is completed.
4. Utilizing digital media based programs, partner with local schools and senior centers to offer program opportunities for those unable to access the park directly.
5. Re-establishment of Junior Ranger camps at Harpeth River State Park.

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 the benefit to the participant, value to the park, and impact to the resource.

Action Plan:

1. Provide staff guided canoe floats that interpret the Harpeth River and the importance of protection and preservation.
2. Guided Full Moon Hikes into Mound Bottom, Hidden Lake and the Narrows of the Harpeth.

3. Partner with neighboring state parks to establish programs that expand upon the Mississippian Culture in the area.
4. Provide overnight guided canoe floats.

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 providing 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 (2022)	Target Cost Recovery: FY 2023	Target Cost Recovery: FY 2024	Target Cost Recovery: FY: 2025	Target Cost Recovery: FY 2026	Target Cost Recovery: FY 2027
Park Overall	0.6%	2.83%	1.80%	2.5%	2.65%	2.8%

