

Hiwassee Ocoee State Scenic River Strategic Management Plan

2023 – 2033



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Park Purpose, History and Description

The primary purpose of this park is to facilitate conservation and recreation on the Hiwassee and Ocoee Scenic Rivers. Designated a scenic river in 1968, the Hiwassee is Tennessee's first scenic river. As for the Ocoee, the site of the whitewater events in the 1996 Olympics, it is our duty to ensure the safety and compliance of the commercially operated outfitter and private paddlers that use this river. Our park also provides educational opportunities with historical sites, interpretive trails and camping. All of this is accomplished through co-operative agreement with federal, state and local agencies.

The purpose of Hiwassee/Ocoee State Park is to preserve and protect the natural beauty and cultural heritage of the Hiwassee and Ocoee River valleys. By providing a space for outdoor recreation, education, and interpretation, the park aims to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation for the region's unique ecosystem, geological features, and historical significance. Through responsible management and conservation efforts, the park seeks to ensure the long-term sustainability of its resources and promote environmental stewardship among visitors and local communities.

Furthermore, Hiwassee/Ocoee State Park strives to serve as a hub for outdoor enthusiasts, offering a wide range of recreational activities and amenities. From hiking and camping to fishing and whitewater rafting, the park aims to provide opportunities for individuals and families to connect with nature, engage in physical activity, and create lasting memories. By maintaining well-maintained trails, picnic areas, and visitor facilities, the park aspires to provide a welcoming and accessible environment for people of all ages and abilities. Ultimately, Hiwassee/Ocoee State Park endeavors to be a place of inspiration, relaxation, and adventure, where visitors can immerse themselves in the natural wonders and rich history of the Hiwassee and Ocoee River valleys.

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:

- Hiwassee and Ocoee Scenic Rivers State Park is currently partnering with the Ocoee Outfitters through the ORRED Board with the goal of increasing awareness of the area by creating an advertising campaign that will draw more guests to the Ocoee corridor as well as the surrounding areas. This is a 3-year project with a nearly 1-million-dollar budget.
- There should be an ongoing effort to truly capture the history of whitewater rafting, kayaking and canoeing in order to better preserve this bit of Tennessee Culture and history. To tell the history of this river and to personalize it in a relatable manner will create more internal and external stewards.

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

Action Plan:

- Hiwassee and Ocoee Scenic Rivers State Park has identified an endangered species of plant that only exists within the bounds of the park itself. Ruth's Golden Aster only exists within the confines of the Hiwassee and Ocoee Rivers. We have teamed up with TVA for a research project and have designed a patch that will be sold out of our office and all revenue generated will be dedicated to identifying and providing the resources necessary to allow this little flower to thrive.
- The Hiwassee and Ocoee Rivers are always needing improvement in getting management practices and public buy in for improving these two resources. This is done on the Ocoee through the ever-changing lawbook designed to cover the commercial and private rafting on its waters. The Hiwassee, it has been identified, falls under the Scenic Rivers act, but there are no clear laws or laid out enforcements. This needs to be changed. We believe that more education as to watersheds and the endangered flora and fauna would greatly benefit our ability to preserve our park.

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

Action Plan:

- Hiwassee/Ocoee State Park has been updating its traffic counters and monitoring the Ocoee River's usage more and more accurately over the past 30 years.
- We are active in social media, which allows us to have an interactive relationship with our guests. We respond to customer satisfaction surveys and constantly seek to build our strengths and improve on our weaknesses.

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:

- Hiwassee/Ocoee State Park has recently opened an outdoor classroom for smaller groups. We hope to add a roof to cover our Amphitheater at some point in the future in order to provide a better learning environment.
- We are also in the process of getting one of our rangers swiftwater instructor certified in order to offer more quality whitewater education. We also need to make a larger push for more digital swiftwater and area education.
- We are also hoping that a larger, multiagency project will come to fruition that will add some trails and more access to the Cherokee National Forest through one of our access areas.

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

Action Plan: Hiwassee/Ocoee State Park is finally beginning to find its true purpose as a recreational park. Our mission is to help inspire our guests to enjoy our rivers and the surrounding areas and increase their ability to do so.

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

Action Plan:

- Hiwassee/Ocoee State Park has begun offering more guided trips on our rivers.
- We have started with SUP Board trips and hope to expand to funyaks and kayaks in the future.
- We also plan to have a race series this summer using some of our lesser appreciated sections of the river.

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:

- Our maintenance staff is one of our main strengths.
- They are hardworking, knowledgeable and tend to have a high working moral.
- Create orientation videos to better train our seasonal staff .

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

Action Plan:

- More accessible playground for those with limited physical capacities. Most of our areas are frequented by groups with vastly different physical capabilities and age ranges.

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

Action Plan:

- Our park could definitely use an updated restroom facility. We are over capacity during busy times and it generates complaints. We need a gathering place of some sort.
- A roof over our Amphitheater would likely be the most cost effective and wisest expense.
- Our boat ramps at Nancy Ward are a safety concern and Gee Creek could definitely use a restructuring to reduce erosion.

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:

- Hiwassee and Ocoee Scenic River State Park believes in training and employee buy in. This occurs when our workforce is able to operate from their strengths. At Hiwassee/Ocoee State Park, we plan to continue to inspire our coworkers to educate themselves and pursue their career interests.
- The manager's office door is always open for discourse, monthly staff meetings allow our staff to exchange ideas and work through challenges.
- All of our staff are given individual spheres of responsibility in order to give them some autonomy and allow one's work to be a reflection of one's values.
- Good work is rewarded by group emails, group texts, and the occasional purchase of lunch. We are reminded of our mission often and we base our decisions on how our behaviors and actions reflect that mission.

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

Action Plan:

- Hiwassee/Ocoee State Parks strives to be frugal.
- Maximize the public's investment in our park and provide the greatest value to promoting and preserving our resource.
- Our budget on the Ocoee is reviewed in a public board meeting every September. This holds us accountable to the public and the Ocoee Outfitters for every dollar spent.

Park Overview

Site Fact Sheet

Park Name	Hiwassee and Ocoee Scenic Rivers State Park
Site Manager	Angelo Giansante
Area Manager	Kim Moore
Park acreage	286
Total number of visitors (FY 2022)	2,509,529
Total expenses before CO (FY 2022)	Hiwassee 756,412 Ocoee 402,270 Total 1,158,682
Total revenues (FY 2022)	Hiwassee 167,732 Ocoee 740,689 Total 908,421
Retail cost recovery % ¹	130%
Park cost recovery %	78%
Average expense per visitor (FY 2022)	.46
Average revenue per visitor (FY 2022)	.36
Gross profit or loss	250,261
Total full-time available positions / filled	14/13
Total part-time available positions / filled	7/7
Primary feeder markets	Chattanooga, Atlanta Metro, Knoxville, Northwest North Carolina, Nashville
Primary reasons people visit	Camping, Ocoee and Hiwassee River, Whitewater Rafting/Kayaking
Opportunities for improvement	As a park, we really need to embrace our role as a resource for water education and recreation. We have a vast and untapped opportunity to enhance the preservation of life's most valuable resource.

Key Attractions

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

- Ocoee and Hiwassee River Whitewater Rafting and kayaking;
- Camping at Gee Creek.
- Picnicking and gatherings at Sugarloaf Day Use Area.
- Tubing or boating from Sugarloaf to Nancy Ward Grave Site.
- Visitor's Center for directions and advice on area attractions and events with our Rangers.
- Cultural significance of Nancy Ward, Fort Marr, and our fish weir.

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 Hiwassee and Ocoee Scenic Rivers 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.
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Facility Inventory and Assessment

The table below is an inventory of facilities and amenities at Hiwassee/Ocoee State Park, and provides the assessed condition of each as reviewed in May, 2023.

Site Asset / Amenity	Quantity	Condition
Visitor Center/ Park Office	1	Excellent
Maintenance Shop	1	Good
Pole Shed	1	Good
Fort Marr	1	Fair
Gee Creek Bath House	1	Fair/ Good
Reliance Bathrooms/Boat Ramp	1	Good
Gee Creek Boat Ramp	1	Good
Gee Creek Campground	1	Good
Sugarloaf Boat Ramp/	1	Good
Nancy Ward Graveyard	1	Excellent
Nancy Ward Boat Ramp	1	Poor
Playgrounds	2	Good
Outdoor Exercise Sugarloaf	1	Good
Big Creek Takeout/ Restroom	1	Good
Caney Creek Takeout/ Boat	1	Good/ Fair
Roger Branch/restrooms/Boat	1	Good x 3
Upper Boat Ramp/Restrooms	1	Good/ Fair
Ranger Residence	1	Good

Trail Inventory and Assessment

Trail Name	Total	Condition
Gee Creek Campground Trail	1.18	Good
Storybook Trail	0.15	Good
Grand Total	1.33	

1 mile trail. Serviceable condition.

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
Bathhouse at Gee Creek	We need a new bathhouse at Gee Creek

Prioritized Facility Needs

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

Prioritized Facility Needs	Description
Bathhouse at Gee Creek	We need to renovate current bathhouse at Gee Creek
Roof Over Amphitheater	There are no sheltered gathering areas at our park.
Caney Creek Ramp	Needs to have wooden steps removed and a ramp paved there.
Nancy Ward Ramp	Needs to be structured so that it can be used more safely.
Gee Creek Ramp	Needs a retaining wall for erosion.
Roof Over Fort Marr	Last remaining original wood blockhouse in the United States. Needs more protection from the weather.

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 Hiwassee/ Ocoee State Park have been identified as **core services**:

- Patrol and Supervise Commercial Rafting on the Ocoee River.
- Patrol and Provide Search and Rescue Services on the Hiwassee/River.
- Maintain the integrity of the Nancy Ward Gravesite.
- Support the mission of Tennessee State Parks which is “To preserve, protect, and share Tennessee’s natural and cultural resources while providing safe, quality outdoor experiences.”
- Provide for public access to the park, the facilities and the grounds.
- Provide for public safety for visitors and protection of natural and cultural resources.
- Provide for maintenance of grounds, facilities and infrastructure.
- Maintain facilities developed through the LWCF program to required ADA standards.

- Provide for basic, non-staff supported day-use activities such as trails, informational signage, picnic tables, trash cans and restroom facilities.
- Maintain Park drinking water and wastewater programs to state standards.

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 Hiwassee/Ocoee State Park have been identified as **important services**:

- Programming and interpretation for Polk County and surrounding area schools
- Provide facilities for gatherings and events at our park locations
- Provide education and interpretation on site for waterways and swiftwater recreation
- Programming and interpretation for our guests
- Animal and Reptile Interpretation
- Guided river float tours
- Offer Park specific information at park Visitor Center

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 Hiwassee/Ocoee State Park have been identified as **visitor supported services**:

- Fee Based Programs
- Gift Shop
- Camping

Personnel / Staffing Review

Personnel and staffing at Hiwassee/Ocoee represent the largest area of budgetary expense at an average of 79% of the total operating budget each year for the last three complete years, which is greater 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 Manger 2	1	*
Park Ranger 3	1	*
Park Ranger 2	5	*
Admin Secretary	1	\$42,504
Clerk 3	1	\$30,504
Facilities Supervisor	1	\$60,300
Conservation Worker 2	1	\$33,900
TOTAL	11	\$666,996

**Law enforcement compensation confidential by TN law.*

Part Time Employees

Position / Title	Quantity	Compensation Total
12 Month JS Laborer	2	\$54,990
3.5 Month Laborer	6	\$48,116
Lifeguard 2 JS	1	\$12,500
TOTAL		\$115,606

Labor Support

Labor Support	Annual Hours
Volunteers	1000 hours.
Community Service Workers	
Engineering and Construction Crews	
Resource Management Crews	
Other: _____	
TOTAL	1000

Total Labor Compensation Expense

Labor Type	Labor Expense
Full Time Equivalent Employees	\$666,996
Part Time Employees	\$115,606
TOTAL Annual Labor Expense	\$782,602

Additional Future Positions Needed

Position / Title	Quantity	FTE or PT	Year Needed	Justification
Conservation Worker 2	2	FTE	2025	If the Ocoee Whitewater Center becomes State Managed.
Clerk	1	FTE	2025	If the Ocoee Whitewater Center
Administrative Assistant	1	FTE	2025	If the Ocoee Whitewater Center
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	Gee Creek Campground Rev Per Unit
2019	3.73
2020	4.61
2021	5.63
2022	5.34

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	Gee Creek Campground Rev Per Unit
2023	5.5
2024	5.66
2025	5.99
2026	6.16

Customer Service

Platform / Site	Year	Customer Satisfaction Level
Net Promoter Score	2023	97
Google	2023	4.7/5
Facebook	2023	4.6/5

Professional Development and Training

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

- EMT School for the 2 Rangers who have not yet attained that
- Leadership Courses
- CPR for staff
- Swiftwater Instructor
- General management, administrative, and 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. Caney Creek Ramp Improvement is already funded and will begin in October
- b. Continue to maintain high cleaning schedule during busy times at Gee Creek.

2. Operations and Staffing

- a. Evaluate pay rates for secretary clerk and conservation worker.

3. Customer Service / Visitor Experience

- a. More water-based education and programming options.
- b. Park based work orientation videos.

Mid Term Recommendations (2-5 years)

1. Site and Facilities

- a. Repair Nancy Ward Boat Ramp
- b. Install new bath house @ Gee Creek
- c. Repair Gee Creek Boat Ramp
- d. Install Roof at Amphitheater

2. Operations and Staffing

- a. Staffing is good, but need to evaluate pay rates

3. Customer Service / Visitor Experience

- a. More events and water-based education.
- b. More uniform approach to training.

Long Term Recommendations (5+ years)

1. Site and Facilities

- a. Roof over Fort Marr.
- b. Ocoee site overhaul.

2. Operations and Staffing

- a. Review staffing regarding potential new management responsibilities.
- b. Hopefully we will still have the excellent full-time group that we have.

3. Customer Service / Visitor Experience

- a. We should be the leaders in swiftwater education and have a bigger role in state training.
- b. Hopefully we will be building the Ocoee Whitewater Center as a State Park Facility.

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.

Hiwassee/Ocoee State Park is committed to safeguarding the park's natural resources and cultural assets for future generations. The park recognizes the importance of preserving the diverse flora and fauna, scenic landscapes, and geological formations that make it a unique and ecologically significant area. Through active conservation and sustainable management practices, the park aims to maintain the integrity of its ecosystems, ensuring the survival of native species, and protecting critical habitats.

Additionally, Hiwassee/Ocoee State Park is dedicated to preserving its cultural heritage and historical sites. The park acknowledges the value of the region's rich human history, including the indigenous communities and the legacy of early settlers. By conducting research, documentation, and preservation efforts, the park seeks to safeguard archaeological sites, historic structures, and artifacts, promoting a deeper understanding and appreciation of the area's past. By integrating resource protection into all aspects of planning and decision-making, Hiwassee/Ocoee State Park strives to ensure that its natural and cultural resources remain intact and resilient, providing enduring benefits to both the environment and the community.

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. Work with the Ocoee Outfitters to provide a guide education program that will enable our river guides to better interpret our guest’s Ocoee experience.
- B. Need to update the law book on the Hiwassee for a more uniform management practice between the two rivers.
- C. Have a race series on the Hiwassee and Ocoee that will serve to raise awareness of the park’s resources.
- D. Continue more research on Ruth’s Golden Aster with TVA and USFS Partnership.
- E. Grow Hiwassee Blueways and Hiwassee Ocoee Friend’s Group.

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
Hiwassee River	20 miles	Excellent	This River is Beautiful and in excellent condition.
Ocoee River	10 miles	Excellent	This River is one America’s most popular whitewater destinations.
Fort Marr	1	Fair	Last remaining original wood blockhouse in America. Could use some support.
Nancy Ward Gravesite	10 Acres	Good	Always improving, but the boat ramp is a safety concern.
Gee Creek Trail	1 mile	Good	Nothing special, a nice little 1-mile trail.

Storybook trail	¼ mile	Good	New story is missing pages...have yet to be repaired.
Fish Weir	1	Good	2000 years old Native American structure
Endangered Species/Ruths Golden Aster and Hellbender	2	Critical	Ruth Golden Aster can only be found in the Hiwassee and Ocoee River. Nowhere else in the world. The Hellbender has a decent population in this river.

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
Hiwassee River	<p>Public Use: <i>Managed access with infrastructure and regulation – access limited to existing boat ramps with usage policies and regulations.</i></p> <p>General Management: Hiwassee River is managed according to the Scenic River Act. Partnership with TVA and USFS in order to maintain a pristine and safe river.</p>	High
Ocoee River	<p>Public Use: <i>Managed access with infrastructure and regulation – access limited to limited number of commercial rafters with usage policies and regulations.</i></p> <p>General Management: The Ocoee River is managed with the goal of preserving the resource while sharing it with as many of our guests as possible. Work in Partnership with TVA and USFS.</p>	High
Nancy Ward Gravesite	<p>Public Use: <i>Managed access with infrastructure and regulation – access limited to walkways with usage policies and regulations.</i></p> <p>General Management: Nancy Ward Gravesite is a culturally sensitive area. We work with the Eastern band of the Cherokee, DAR and SAR in order to ensure that her story is told and preserved in the best possible manner.</p>	High

Fort Marr	<p>Public Use: Public access limited to interpretive tours due to the rarity and shape of the resource.</p> <p>General Management: This site is managed in order to share the significance of its existence and interpreted as a way to tell the story of the Trail of Tears, life as a soldier, and the story of the American Chestnut.</p>	Moderate
Gee Creek Trail	<p>Public Use: <i>Managed access with infrastructure and regulation – access limited to trail with usage policies and regulations.</i></p> <p>General Management: Trail is patrolled multiple times per week to ensure its use and safety. We have multiple workdays per year to reduce and combat invasive species.</p>	Low
Storybook Trail	<p>Public Use: <i>Managed access with infrastructure and regulation – access limited to trails with usage policies and regulations.</i></p> <p>General Management: This trail is managed with the primary goal of being an easily accessible area for families with young children who are learning to read.</p>	Low
Fish Weir	<p>Public Use: <i>Managed access with infrastructure and regulation-access not limited but movement of the rocks forming the weir or manipulation of the weir is forbidden.</i></p> <p>General Management: We have an informational kiosk just in front of the weir. It is used in programming and rangers check in on it daily to ascertain that it is still intact.</p>	Moderate
Endangered Species	<p>Public Use: None</p> <p>General Management: We work with the TVA botanist on a project to help monitor and protect Ruth’s Golden Aster. We have designed a pamphlet and patch that we sell in order to provide information and possible future funding.</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
We hope to have the Ocoee Whitewater Center turned over to us for management.	1-3 years
We hope to have Lost Corral Campground turned over to us as well.	1-3 years.

Supplemental Information

Both of these areas are currently managed by the USFS, but the Park's operations could improve the use of the resource and it's protection if turned over to the park.

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.

The mission of Hiwassee State Scenic River & Ocoee River Recreation Area is to protect and serve the many visitors that come to enjoy the park's scenic beauty. It is our duty to ensure the safety compliance of the commercially operated outfitter and private paddlers that use these rivers. The area provides educational opportunities with historical sites, interpretive trails, and camping. All this is accomplished through cooperative agreement with federal, state, and local agencies.

The park's primary significance is the conservation and recreation of the 2 scenic rivers that are its namesake. The Hiwassee River was designated as a class III scenic river in 1968 by the "The Tennessee State Scenic Rivers Act of 1968". It was the first scenic river designated by the state of Tennessee. The Ocoee River is home to the 1996 Olympics and has earned the reputation of the most popular whitewater destination in the United States of America.

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: Preserve the history of the Ocoee River through interviewing the original guides and founders of the whitewater rafting industry in this area.

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: Sharing the stories of these guides and outfitters in such a way that empowers our guests to continue to enjoy and protect this natural resource.

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: Provide more guided tours of the rivers. This will be fee based but a nominal cost. This will allow more hesitant guests to experience the joy of whitewater.

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: Teach more classes in order to enable our guests to have their own adventures.

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.

FINANICAL 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
Hiwassee	22.17%	19.31%	15.37%	15.43%	15.46%	15.49%
Ocoee	0.00%	55.38%	51.51%	52.02%	52.54%	53.06%

