

Rock Island State Park Strategic Management Plan

2023 – 2033



Table of Contents

Park Purpose, History and Description	3
Goals, Objectives and Action Plans	3
THE RESOURCES: Exemplary Natural and Cultural Stewardship	3
THE VISITOR: Welcoming and Inviting to All	3
THE AMENITIES: Well-Maintained Facilities and Amenities.....	4
THE OPERATIONS: Operational Excellence.....	5
Park Overview	6
Site Fact Sheet.....	6
Key Attractions	6
Site and Operations Assessment	7
Site and Facility Assessment.....	7
Operational Assessment.....	11
Summary of Key Recommendations	15
Resource Management Plan	18
Resource Management Objectives	18
Resource Inventory and Assessment	19
Management Strategies	20
Land Management Strategies	23
Supplemental Information	23
Interpretive Programming and Education Plan.....	24
Interpretation, Programming and Education Goals	24
Strategic Programs and Services	24
Financial Performance Goals.....	28

Park Purpose, History and Description

The scenic beauty of this wooded park is dominated by the Great Falls of the Caney Fork River - an imposing limestone gorge (called a gulf in southern culture). It provides scenic overlooks, waterfalls and deep pools for fishing, rock-hopping and exploring. Located at the confluence of the Collins and Caney Fork Rivers, this 883-acre park has a natural sand beach on Center Hill Reservoir. Historic features of the park include a 19th century textile mill and one of Tennessee's early hydroelectric plants. The area has always been a recreation destination, but park development only occurred in the late 1960's and early 1970's.

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: Increase quality conservation education and outreach opportunities by reviewing program and event schedules. Due to time constraints of staff, reduce activities that do not have a conservation message. Also make sure conservation steward content is given in all park programs or public events including recreational activity.

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

Action Plan: Stabilize & interpret historic structures with emphasis on national register mill site and Collins peninsula. Update annual RTE species list by our counties and target resource work to benefit RTE flora/fauna. *May require TVA and/or USACE approvals or permits for mill site.

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

Action Plan: Allot more shift time or add staffing for research of resource data/biotic trends on park lands. Partner with TWRA/USFWS to obtain fishery and wildlife data (i.e. creel surveys, etc.) to incorporate into management actives and programs. Utilize Inaturalist or similar data applications for fauna/flora patterning or threats.

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: Continue efforts to reach out directly to underserved communities and audiences to include soci-economically disadvantaged and minority groups. Continue program efforts with Kids in the Community and local schools to target those youth who have limited outdoor exposure or appreciation.

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

Action Plan: Review all programs for resource and conservation content in our education objective themes. Identify more uses for the park as it relates to health improvement/fitness as an asset to the community. Promote use of Area #2 to utilize the outdoor fitness station and recreation fields for overall community health.

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

Action Plan: Continue to focus on and promote resource recreation in our kayak, pontoon, rock hops, & other natural world experience activities. Continue to scale back on focused recreational content activities where possible without a negative effect to visitor demand or revenue returns.

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: Ensure facilities are functional to meet changing desire of visitor base. Add staffing to handle increased workload post Covid and allow for more attention to detail in routine cleaning and maintenance. Consider additional camp hosts to assist labor staff.

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

Action Plan: Add ADA access points including the Great Falls overlook and TVA Great Falls dam pedestrian walkway within the next 3 years. Provide less strenuous hiking/walking opportunities that are spread out to lower use areas. Provide paved bike/walk paths or low or moderate intensity hike/walk paths as an alternative to the strenuous gorge. *May require TVA/USACE approvals or permits.

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

Action Plan: Provide more connectivity among all park areas to include walk paths, sidewalks, trails with focus on foot/bike connections. Continue to focus on campground site improvements to include railings, sewer connections, gravel, erosion timbers, etc. May require TVA/USACE approvals or permits.

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: Increase staffing to allow more work life balance for employees working a 24/7-365 operation. Provide career path planning counseling sessions with all full-time employees once per year. Plan to provide more empowerment and autonomy to Ranger and other staff. Utilize an experienced Park Ranger 3/Park Manager 1 to help oversee LE, SAR, & medical operations.

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

Action Plan: Allow all staff to provide input of ideas to increase revenue streams and/or reduce expenses during quarterly meetings.

Park Overview

Site Fact Sheet

Park Name	Rock Island
Site Manager	Damon Graham
Area Manager	Kenneth Gragg
Park acreage	2000+ (883 proper)
Total number of visitors (FY 2022)	639,379 * high traffic areas uncounted prior to 2023
Total expenses before CO (FY 2022)	\$1,515,120.00
Total revenues (FY 2022)	\$1,035,980.00
Retail cost recovery % ¹	169% (not including retail personnel costs)
Park cost recovery %	68%
Average expense per visitor (FY 2022)	2.36
Average revenue per visitor (FY 2022)	1.62
Gross profit or loss	-479,140.00 (including appropriations)
Total full-time available positions / filled	13/11
Total part-time available positions / filled	5/4
Primary feeder markets	Nashville, Murfreesboro, Chattanooga, Cookeville
Primary reasons people visit	Waterfalls, fishing, hiking, kayaking, cabins, camping
Opportunities for improvement	Connectivity: more space to reduce overcrowding

Key Attractions

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

- Waterfalls
- Cabins with full modern furnishings
- Campsites with modern 50 amp service and sewer connections
- Hiking Trails
- Rock Hopping
- Campgrounds
- Fishing/Kayak access sites

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 Rock Island 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 Rock Island State Park, and provides the assessed condition of each as reviewed in April, 2023.

Site Asset / Amenity	Quantity	Condition
Cabins	10	good
Campgrounds (main)	50	Fair-good
Campgrounds (tent only)	10	fair
Shelters	3	fair
Visitor Center	1	fair
Picnic Areas	5	fair
Launch ramps	3	Fair-poor
Swim beach	1	Fair-poor
Hiking Trails	9	fair
Parking lots	10	poor
Historic Structures	5	Fair-poor
Residences	3	Good
Maintenance Facility	1	Fair
Linen Facility	1	poor
Maintenance Storage Sheds	5	Fair-poor

Trail Inventory and Assessment

Trail	Type	Distance	Status	Comments
Moonshine	Woodland/interpretive (hike only)	0.35	fair	Erosion; needs interp panels
Blue Hole	Wetland/woodland (hike only)	0.15	poor	Critical erosion, staircase failures
Eagle	Woodland/shoreline (hike only)	0.75 (out)	poor	erosion
Collins Pollinator Prairie	Woodland/shoreline (hike/bike)	2.65	fair	erosion; reroutes
Downstream	Shoreline/woodland (hike only)	1.55	fair	erosion; overuse; invasive groundcover
Cunningham Connector	Woodland/historic (hike/bike)	0.80	fair	erosion; reroutes
Cunningham Cemetery	Historic/woodland (hike/bike)	0.15	Fair	Erosion; erosion
Bluff Trail	Woodland (hike/bike)	1.95	poor	Erosion; slope work needed

Upstream Trail	Shoreline (hike only)	0.20	fair	Upper section reroute; overuse impact
Old Mill Trail	Shoreline/wetland (hike only)	0.10	poor	Erosion; some stone step failure; ponding water; handrail
Overflow Trail	Woodland (hike only)	0.30	poor	Erosion; overuse impact

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
Renovated Historic Mill	20,000 sq. ft. 19 th century textile mill national register site
New Visitor Center/offices	Could potentially be included in mill building
New laundry facility	Laundry service is currently in a deteriorated residence
Dam Pedestrian Walkway	Allows connection by foot to both (sides) counties of the
Blue Hole Cable Trail Bridge	Allows connection by foot of lower sections of park
Walk path/sidewalk to connect all	Could make for a fully car free visit after arrival

Prioritized Facility Needs

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

Priority Projects	Category (Sub-Category)	Maintenance/ Renovations Priority (L/M/H)
Roadways		
Beach parking lots	Parking Lots (Paved)	High
Erosion/drainage/shoulders	Ancillary Roads (Paved)	Medium
Tent camping access road	Ancillary Roads (Paved)	Medium
Park Office/VC parking and flow	Parking Lots (Paved)	Medium
Mill parking flow/space	Parking Lots (Paved)	High
Main camp resurfacing	Ancillary Roads (Paved)	Medium
Shoulder/sidewalks	Scenic Drives	Low

Signage		
5 mile SR70S signs	Navigational	Medium
Main entry "shield" signs	Wayfinding	Low
various wooden wayfinding	Wayfinding	Low
interp panel beach	Interpretive	Low
interp panel spring castle	Interpretive	Low
interp panel(s) mill area	[select category]	Low
Infrastructure		
Service of sewer holding tanks	Sewers	Medium
Upgrade more sewer sites	Sewers	Medium
Jet clean and upgarde culverts	Storm Drainage	Low
Trail staircase blue hole	Lakes	High
Public Structures		
Hisotric Mill site	Museum	High
TVA Dam walkway	Interpretive	High
Nature/interp center	Interpretive	Medium
overlook-great falls	Interpretive	High
Recreation Facilities		
resurfaced play courts	Courts	High
upgraded playgrounds	Playgrounds	Medium
paved walking/bike trail (s)	Paved Trails	Medium
paddle in backcountry sites	Camping (Back Country)	Low
Dam pedestrian walkway	Bridges	High
Indoor program/meet space	Other	High
Blue Hole cable trail bridge	Bridges	Low
Development of Dove Rd trail tract	Unpaved Trails	Low
Environmental		
sedmient control swim beach	Erosion	Medium
Collins bridge paint abatement	Other	High
Demo old sewer plant	Other	High
Pollinator Prairie maintenance	Habitat	Medium
Non-Public Structures		
linen facility/maint warehouse	Maintenance	High
Staff office space	Offices	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 Rock Island State Park have been identified as **core services**:

- Providing public access to natural & historical resource features in a reduced risk environment
- Protection of resources (natural, historical, community/cultural)
- Protection of visitor safety & sense of security
- Accessibility to Lake/river for public access for recreation

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 Rock Island State Park have been identified as **important services**:

- Hiking trails
- Camping opportunities
- Day Use/Shelter Areas
- Picnic Areas/Public Restrooms

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 Rock Island State Park have been identified as **visitor supported services**:

- Cabin Villas
- Park Programs (i.e. kayak tours, pontoon tours, etc.)
- Guided hikes/experiences
- Community or Public Events
- Camps (Jr. Ranger, etc.)
- Concessionaires (food trucks, training events, etc.)

Personnel / Staffing Review

Personnel and staffing at Rock Island State Park represent the largest area of budgetary expense at an average of 38% of the total operating budget each year for the last three complete years, which is 27% 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 2	1	*
Park Ranger 1	2	*
Park Ranger 2	2	*
Administrative Assistant 1	1	38,000
Clerk 2	1	27,500
Facilities Supervisor	1	60,000
Building Maint Worker 2	1	38,000
Conservation Wkr 2	2	68,500
Conservation Wkr 1	2	60,000
TOTAL		586,000

**Law enforcement compensation confidential by TN law.*

Part Time Employees

Position / Title	Quantity	Compensation Total
Laborer	2	14,000
Conservation wkr 1 job share	1	55,000
SIR	2	15,000
TOTAL		84,000

Labor Support

Labor Support	Annual Hours
Volunteers	250
Community Service Workers	25
Engineering and Construction Crews	100
Resource Management Crews	10
Other: _____	
TOTAL	385

Total Labor Compensation Expense

Labor Type	Labor Expense
Full Time Equivalent Employees	586,000
Part Time Employees	84,000
TOTAL Annual Labor Expense	670,000

Additional Future Positions Needed

Position / Title	Quantity	FTE or PT	Year Needed	Justification
PM1 Asst. Park Manager	1	FT	2024	TVA & USACE sections need management assistance
Conservation Wkr 2	1	FT	2025	Grounds and cabin upkeep
Clerk 2	1	FT	2025	Allow for vacation and time off of other 2 FT clerical staff
Seasonal LE Ranger(s)	1	PT	2023	High liability; LE and SAR response and preventative efforts
Hospitality Custodial Manager	1	FT	2023	Managing high turnover cabin ops
Park Ranger 1	1	FT	2026	Compared to similar complexity parks we need more LE staffing
TOTAL	6			

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	Cabins Rev Per Unit	Campground Rev Per Unit	Day Use Rev Per Unit
2019	81.21	11.19	2.7
2020	77.09	11.97	2.31
2021	110.71	19.04	3.24
2022	116.22	18.59	3.23

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	Cabins Rev Per Unit	Campground Rev Per Unit	Day Use Rev Per Unit
2023	116.22	18.59	3.23
2024	117.0	19.0	3.5
2025	117.25	20.0	3.75
2026	117.25	20.0	3.75

Customer Service

NPS Score 67

Platform / Site	Year	Customer Satisfaction Level
Facebook	2023	4.8
Google	2023	4.8
Yelp	2023	5.0
Tripadvisor	2023	4.5

Top Sources Google Tripadvisor Yelp 94% 4% 2% Reviews by Sentiment Positive Negative Neutral 98% 0%2% Rock Island State Park - Rock Island, TN 38581 5-13-2023

Professional Development and Training

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

- Chainsaw and hazardous equipment operations advanced training
- PMTI (park administrative management)
- SFST Instructor/ (law enforcement)
- Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)
- Green Leadership (energy conservation)
- Hazardous chemicals/Right to Know/Bloodborne pathogens
- HVAC maintenance certification
- 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

- Continue improvements to individual campsites with timbers and safety railings
- Continue improvements/remodel to picnic areas and restrooms
- Begin paving repairs to lake lots and swim beach area once funded

2. Operations and Staffing

- Source an experienced seasonal law enforcement ranger who meets the job requirements to offset patrol and incident reporting overtime labor costs
- Add preventative search & rescue seasonals (PSAR) to help do safety education for the TVA gorge areas; Utilize SIRs to help with PSAR
- Select staff to be willing to be available for after hours or holiday issues

3. Customer Service / Visitor Experience

- a. Stabilize and improve the Blue Hole trail routes
- b. Continue with landscaping improvements at major entry points and at other parkwide locations with native plants
- c. Better communicate TVA gorge closures, water releases, & safety information by utilizing various channels/methods
- d. Reroute Collins Trail for new SR287 bypass road construction; communicate construction notices when available from TDOT
- e. After finalized TVA & county approvals, begin improvements to support the historic pedestrian walkway over TVA Great Falls Dam to connect both sides of the park
- f. Begin consideration of implementation of whitewater river gorge access permit system to reduce risk during TVA spill discharges while supporting the whitewater community
- g. Begin consideration of implementation of gorge access permits similar to Cummins Falls State Park to improve the visitor experience & reduce risks

Mid Term Recommendations (2-5 years)

1. Site and Facilities

- a. Complete phase I restoration of the historic Mill site to include museum/interpretive space, reservable meeting space, catering kitchen, small outdoor venue space, parking, sidewalks, small outdoor venue space, & office space. (Complete SR287 TDOT bypass around the congested mill site.)
- a. Add additional sewer connections in the main campground sites 1-16.
- b. Renovate the nature center to include a classroom useable space/meeting space.
- c. Complete repaving of Sandbar parking lots and sea wall at swim beach to help with flooding

2. Operations and Staffing

- a. Add assistant park manager position to help oversee TVA, USACE and 2 satellite sites in addition to TDEC main park areas.
- b. Add conservation worker 2
- c. Add hospitality manager to oversee cabin & other hospitality operations

3. Customer Service / Visitor Experience

- a. Provide more opportunities to spread out overcrowding to lesser-known areas; reduce overuse ecological impacts
- b. Complete the pedestrian lane project on TVA Great Falls Dam to connect both sides of the park by foot; include foot trail access down to the Twin Falls site; consider fee access to offset capital costs of this bridge project
- c. Add paved biking/hiking path opportunities to connect more park areas with each other
- d. Replace carpet in cabins
- e. Implement whitewater gorge fee permit system for reduced risk access during TVA water release periods.
- f. Implement gorge access fee permits with proper staffing to improve safety and the visitor experience.

Long Term Recommendations (5+ years)

2. Site and Facilities

- a. Completion of cable trail suspension bridge on Lower Blue Hole to Downstream Trail section. *May require TVA/USACE permitting. Consider fee access to offset costs.
- b. Complete 100% connectivity of all park sites, areas, & trails by foot/bike path or sidewalk. With proper capital funding, this goal can be realistic due to our small footprint geographically.
- c. Consider further repurposing of the historic Cotton Mill to include a phase II development of upper floors for park use or expanded museum/meeting space
- d. Redesign maintenance and linen facilities with new modern structure for efficiency and sanitization.
- e. Repurpose visitor center space at 82 Beach Road once the historic Mill offices are complete.

3. Operations and Staffing

- a. Add full time interpreter position to satisfy visitation/demand increases
- b. Add additional dedicated law enforcement ranger position to satisfy visitation/demand increases 24/7 365 need.
- c. Add additional clerk position to satisfy visitation/demand increases
- d. Add additional maintenance position to satisfy visitation/demand increases

4. Customer Service / Visitor Experience

- a. Complete a historic walking path of the entire Collins Peninsula outlining all homeplaces, cemeteries, etc. with interpretive and/or interactive signage telling the story of Fall City village and families who resided nearby.
- b. Incorporate the renovated Mill building site seamlessly into the Collins peninsula cultural historic representation of appropriate time periods.
- c. Add a daily use visitor limit or general access permitting to avoid overcrowding, ecological impacts, cultural impacts, negative user experience and continued insufficient parking;

Resource Management Plan

RESOURCE PROTECTION PURPOSE STATEMENT:

Our mission must be inseparable from the health of the biotic community of Rock Island State Park and the surrounding region. The ecological functioning of the park depends primarily on the amount and distribution of food, cover, water, and space for its wildlife inhabitants. If any one of these elements is missing, inadequate or inaccessible, ecological functioning will diminish. This plan attempts to consider all species life-history needs and manage for a biologically diverse and functioning ecosystem.

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. Utilize volunteers to reach invasive species removal goal of 10% incidence park wide, measured during point count/ quadrat surveys. Involving motivated volunteers and introducing conservation topics to the general public will cultivate stewards.
- B. Increase overall abundance of xeric species in upland sites, reduce mesophytic species (e.g., *Fagus grandifolia*, *Ulmus* spp., *Acer* spp.) causing mesophication and restore historic oak-savannah eco-types to protect rare and endemic species, as well as declining Northern Bobwhite and Eastern Wild Turkey brood habitat (managed for as an umbrella species). To be accomplished with viewshed protective thinning via forestry mulcher, maintenance of aesthetic corridors with 60 to 80 sqft/ac basal area pine-oak-hickory uplands burned on a 2-to-10-year burn interval.
- C. Protect northern aspect slopes with incidence of Eastern Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) and manage according to their life history requirements as an umbrella species.

- D. Employ citizen science platforms, interns, volunteers, and staff surveys to monitor treatment response through empirical measurements of abundance, diversity, cover, and ecological functioning indices. Maintain a detailed record of measurements to establish trends and inform future management. Facilitate understanding and communication via ESRI suite products, R Studio analysis, and related software.
- E. Expand partnerships with sister agencies to utilize ecological data such as creel surveys, bat surveys, cave surveys, electrofishing data/measurement, etc. to better monitor overall health and trends of flora/fauna/habitat on park managed lands. (i.e. TWRA, USFWS, USACE, TVA, etc.)
- F. Continue land acquisition for buffer space to include bluff line along Center Hill Lake, Caney Fork River, Collins River, & other threatened areas related to the park proper or satellite areas.

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
Historic Cotton Mill	1	CRITICAL	Stabilization and road reroute in planning.
TVA Great Falls Dam	1	FAIR	Fencing and opening to pedestrians needed. Replacement of walkway boards needed.
TVA Powerhouse		FAIR	Actively managed by TVA
Viewshed over Beach	157 acres	GOOD	Numerous parcels could be sold and developed so viewshed is threatened.
Upland communities	602 acres	GOOD	Invasive species and mesophication threats.

Riparian and Mesophytic Communities	282 acre	GOOD	Invasive species threats
Transmission Powerline Corridors	45	FAIR	Invasive species threats, difficulty maneuvering mechanical disturbance equipment.
Caney Fork River	127	GOOD	Pollution. Healthy fishery.
Collins River	200	GOOD	Pollution. Healthy fishery.
Center Hill Lake		FAIR	Pollution. Black bass advisory. Healthy fishery.
Collins Peninsula related historic structures	Multiple	POOR	Sites need identified and further researched.
Big Bone Cave		FAIR	Cave is gated for resource protection; annual surveys monitor WNS in bat health; looting/trespassing monitored by camera

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
Historic Cotton Mill	<p>Public Use: <i>Continued closure until road reroute is complete and structure is prepared for construction. Funding, design, engineered drawings, and rehabilitation needed.</i></p> <p>General Management: <i>Continued efforts to secure and weatherize the building this year and next year are needed.</i></p>	High
TVA Great Falls Dam	<p>Public Use: <i>Continued closure until wood decking and fencing is installed on the top of the Dam. TVA is making a concerted effort to complete this within the next few years.</i></p> <p>General Management: <i>Fencing and related materials are staged at the Rock Island State Park Maintenance Facility for construction.</i></p>	High



TVA Powerhouse	<p>Public Use: <i>Currently not open to the public except through TVA tours.</i></p> <p>General Management: <i>Coordinate with TVA on the protection of this historic structure.</i></p>	Moderate
Viewshed over Sandbar Beach	<p>Public Use: <i>The viewshed at the Sandbar Beach is viewed by hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. The protection of the area along the Caney Fork River in White County will benefit all visitors in maintaining the beauty of this scenic area, a desirable location for homeowners and developers.</i></p> <p>General Management: <i>Monthly monitoring of real estate listings around the park, especially along the river corridor is necessary. Working with 501 C3 organizations, land trusts, and other State and Federal partners is needed.</i></p>	High
Upland Communities	<p>Public Use: <i>Most of the park includes upland communities and is often the areas most utilized by park guests and day visitors. The upland communities host trails, campsites, and other park infrastructure that the public interacts with daily.</i></p> <p>General Management: <i>Reducing the abundance of even-aged shortleaf pine that poses a risk to people, private property, and park property is of primary concern. The shortleaf pine (<i>Pinus echinata</i>) in these areas often lodge in windstorms and block access for emergency personnel. A reduction of invasive species and opening these areas via mechanical disturbance with prescribed fire will reduce wildfire risk, promote biodiversity, and enhance public safety.</i></p>	High
Riparian and Mesophytic Communities	<p>Public Use: <i>A significant portion of the park includes riparian and mesophytic dominated plant communities. These areas are often on steep slope, northern aspect, and are some of the most scenic areas of Rock Island State Park. These communities also host endemic or obligate mesophytic species living in the microclimates created by the riparian corridor.</i></p> <p>General Management: <i>Snag retention, downed woody debris retention, soil stabilization and ephemeral stream protection is important in these areas of the park. Removal of invasive plants, protection of Eastern Hemlock (<i>Tsuga canadensis</i>), and minimizing disturbance in this area is our objective. We manage with Worm-eating Warbler, Wood Thrush, Ovenbird, and amphibians as umbrella species for these areas.</i></p>	Moderate

<p>Transmission Powerline Corridors</p>	<p>Public Use: Powerline corridors crisscross the park from one end to the other. They offer opportunities for early successional plant communities to thrive and allow for feathering into oak savannah ecotypes promoting biodiversity. Powerline corridors are crossed, hiked, and are aesthetically important for overlooks and viewsheds. They offer educational opportunities on native warm season grasses and related ecological programming.</p> <p>General Management: Powerline corridors are mulched with a forestry mulcher approximately every 8-10 years by TVA. In 2021, most of the rights-of-way were mechanically treated in this way. Park staff now mow these rights-of way (as much as can be safely mowed) annually in February. A mosaic mowing method is in place to protect 1–3-year cover for pollinators and ground nesting birds. Prescribed fire can be problematic due to overhead transmission lines and risks associated with smoke management. Continued mowing, trail maintenance, invasive plant removal, light disking, and occasional seedings will conserve these unique features.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>
<p>Caney Fork River</p>	<p>Public Use: The Caney Fork River serves as a major attraction to the area and is critical for boating, fishing, swimming, and other recreational activities.</p> <p>General Management: Trash clean ups and mitigation of pollution helps to protect this watershed. Several river clean ups occur annually and facilitate watershed awareness.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>
<p>Collins River</p>	<p>Public Use: The Collins River serves as a major attraction to the area and is critical for boating, fishing, swimming, and other recreational activities.</p> <p>General Management: Trash clean ups and mitigation of pollution helps to protect this watershed. Several river clean ups occur annually and facilitate watershed awareness.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>
<p>Center Hill Lake</p>	<p>Public Use: The Collins River serves as a major attraction to the area and is critical for boating, fishing, swimming, and other recreational activities.</p> <p>General Management: Trash clean ups and mitigation of pollution helps to protect this watershed. Several river clean ups occur annually and facilitate watershed awareness.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>



Collins Peninsula and related cultural sites	<p>Public Use: <i>The Collins River peninsula encompasses Fall City Village which was the location of many homesites and town structures. Hiking trail meanders through the site.</i></p> <p>General Management: <i>Trash clean ups, trail maintenance, vegetation management, exotic removal, pollinator habitat work, etc.</i></p>	Moderate
Big Bone Cave	<p>Public Use: <i>Cave is gated for protection. Some limited guided trips are taken during the year.</i></p> <p>General Management: <i>Trash clean ups and preservation of artifacts. Vegetation management on property. Hikes and tours given sporadically as staffing and resource allows.</i></p>	Moderate

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
Acquire viewshed threats along Center Hill Lake, Caney Fork River, Collins River, & other sensitive areas (Sandbar beach emphasis)	1-5 years
Reduce overall incidence of TIPC listed invasive plants in Rock Island State Park to a maintenance level of 10%.	Short Term
Decrease basal area of upland sites and edge ecotones to benefit upland dependent species. Increased sunlight and disturbance will spark biodiverse assemblages.	Mid Term
Acquire or protect additional parcels via federal or state easement, fee simple purchase, or agreement to ensure viewsheds, cultural resources, and natural resources are conserved for all Tennesseans.	Short Term to Long Term
Work with internal and external partners to ensure adequate funding and preservation of historically significant & historically significant features.	Short Term to Long Term

Supplemental Information

Letters mailed to all viewshed landowners

Interpretive Programming and Education Plan

Attached to this plan are the Interpretive Program Templates in fillable PDF forms.

To provide varied opportunities for enjoyable, educational, inspirational, and safe experiences that encourage the preservation, protection, and exploration of the Caney Fork River Gorge Ecosystem while fostering an appreciation for the site's unique history to include indigenous peoples, early white settlement, 1900s water-powered industrial development, and the establishment of large-scale river control and power generation.

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: Incorporate full stories of mill worker life including diverse perspectives potentially from women, the poor, and/or minorities as part of our broader history programming efforts around the Great Falls Mill site.

Strategy – Interpretative Media: Connecting people to the resources of Tennessee State Parks with technology in ways that complement and expand interpretation within and beyond the park, giving everyone access to becoming a park steward.

Action Plan: Continue to utilize virtual visits through google view mapping more trails and park areas.

- In March of 2016 Rock Island utilized the google backpack program to digitize all our trails and overlooks (this is viewable through google street view). This allows all people regardless of ability or location to virtually enjoy the scenic beauty of our park. We will explore options to update this as it is seven years out of date and adding a summer view would assist in building stewardship. Additionally, Rock Island is working with the social media team to develop a video to be played at the Park Office and Old Mill Overlook assisting park guests. Hopefully when complete, this will provide a framework for further interpretive opportunity.

Strategy – Develop and maintain a portfolio of programs across multiple types of experiences:

- Interpretation of natural, historic, and cultural resources
- 3-5 unique experiences for all audiences
- Varying intensity from self-guided to immersive experiences
- Partnership opportunities for program delivery
- Varying costs to the user from “free to fee” based on value of the benefit to the participant.

Action Plan:

- Add more wayside self-guided interpretation
- Consider 3-dimensional persona exhibits for the mill site and Collins Peninsula
 - Including sight and sound experience
- Increase staffing to allow for more first-person interpretation
- Continue to partner with camp hosts to offer nature center programming to reach more of an audience
- Continue with kid’s camp programs such as Jr. Ranger and also tailor some younger age groups

Strategy – Develop and maintain diverse and varied resourced-based outdoor recreation opportunities across multiple types of experiences:

- Managing recreational use with the stewardship needs of the resource
- Varying intensity from self-guided to guided experiences
- Partnership opportunities for program delivery
- 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: Reduce impact to ecosystem from overcrowding over the last 5 years by offering other avenues of low impact experiences to include the historic Dam walkway. Increase self guided interpretive signage and trails of lesser know areas of the park including Dove Road tract.

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 proving 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.

Interpretive Themes

Primary Interpretive Theme:

Rock Island State Park allows the visitor to be awed by experiencing some of the most scenic waterfalls & river gorge topography of the Eastern Highland Rim while telling the story of early water-powered industrial entrepreneurship.

Secondary Interpretive Themes:

The Primary interpretive theme topics relate to the primary theme statement above. These theme topics along with subsequent secondary themes will educate visitors about the historical events that shaped the people and land of Rock Island as well as interpret natural features of the site. These primary and secondary theme topics are outlined below:

Primary History Theme Topics:

1. Native Peoples of Middle Tennessee:

Secondary Themes:

- a. Archaic-Mississippian
- b. Coalition of Hunting Tribes (tribes that slumber)
- c. Cherokee

2. First establishment of white settlement

Secondary Themes:

- a. Battle of Rock Island
- b. Stage Coach Route- Acquisition of land, travel, and life of 1st Settlers
- c. Town of Rock Island/ Boom of the 1920's
- d. Cunningham Family & Frontier Life

3. Establishment of Water Power

Secondary Themes:

- a. Great Falls Textile Mill
- b. Falls City Town

4. Establishment of large scale river control and power

Secondary Themes:

- a. Great Falls Dam
- b. TN Electric Power Co
- c. Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)

Primary Natural Themes:

1. Geological Features

Secondary Themes:

- a. Karst topography: Limestone & Shale
- b. Fossils

2. Ecology of River systems:

Secondary Themes:

- a. Caney Fork River
- b. Caney Fork River Gorge

3. Forest & creatures of Upper Cumberland Plateau

Secondary Themes:

- a. Mixed Mesophitic Forest
- b. Wetland seeps
- c. Wildlife Inhabitants: Amphibians, reptiles, mammals

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. *Some limited time funding streams may be discontinued in the coming 1-5 years, thus affecting cost recovery data such as TVA project accounts.

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
Park Overall	68%*	59.88%	60%	60%	59%	59%

