

Savage Gulf State Park Strategic Management Plan

2023 – 2033



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Park Purpose, History and Description

The mission of Savage Gulf State Park is to provide professional, effective management, stewardship of the park and all its resources, present compelling interpretation of the park's story and resources, provide opportunities for safe, enjoyable outdoor and recreational experiences to all park visitors, provide a safe and inspiring workplace for park employees and volunteers, manage all park operations to be as efficient and cost-effective as possible, and to partner with local community leaders to bring a positive economic impact to the area surrounding the park.

Savage Gulf was designated as a Class II Scientific Natural Area in 1974. It was managed under South Cumberland State Park until October 1, 2022, when Savage Gulf State Park was officially established. The park is located in Grundy and Sequatchie counties. It is the newest state park in Tennessee, bringing the total of Tennessee's state parks to 57.

The park, featuring one of Tennessee's most scenic wilderness areas, includes the 15,500-acre Savage Gulf State Natural Area. The park offers approximately 60 miles of hiking to remarkable vistas, waterfalls, and historical locations. Savage Gulf has nine backcountry campgrounds that can be reserved online and four trailhead parking lots.

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: Continue to partner with The Friends of South Cumberland State Parks and other outside groups to raise the public awareness of the importance of protecting Savage Gulf State Park and other public lands in the area. Reach out and engage with additional groups such as SORBA, TN Trails, and other non-profit groups. Expand recreational opportunities to include different user groups such as fishing, paddling, and mountain biking.

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

Action Plan: Continue to partner with Division of Natural Areas, Division of Archeology, Division of Forestry, Historical Commission, as well as others to identify and manage significant unique natural and cultural resources. Continue to allow permitted research by experts in their field within the natural area.

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

Action Plan: Utilize GIS technology to map natural and cultural resources and to track management goals and outcomes. Continue to utilize and add QR codes that direct visitors to online park resources.

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: Work with State Parks Facility Management to construct an ADA accessible boat dock with kayak launch and an ADA accessible trail around the newly acquired Three Forks Lake. Connect this trail to the current ADA trail that takes visitors to the Laurel Gulf Overlook.

Work with State Parks Facility Management to construct an ADA accessible restroom at the Savage Gulf East entrance near the ranger station.

Develop a series of virtual programs that can be accessed online.

Establish an annual Junior Ranger Program to inspire youth to learn about and protect the natural resource.

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

Action Plan: Carefully research local, regional, and state-wide histories to better tell “Full Stories” of the indigenous peoples who have shaped the local and regional landscapes. Carefully research local, regional, and state-wide histories to tell the stories of women who have shaped local, regional, and state histories and legacies.

Develop site specific program outlines for all historical areas that are age specific and can be used by all staff members.

Continue and expand our annual Grundy County 5th grade hikes to also include a high school grade level.

Ensure that all programming staff maintain CIG Certification and are well educated in the natural and cultural history of the area.

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

Action Plan: Create a core set of new recreation-based programs that promote the mission of Tennessee State Parks while at the same providing fun and educational experiences within Savage Gulf State Park.

Develop a monthly ranger guided paddling program on Three Forks Lake to educate attendees about water quality and management concerns regarding the Collins River’s ecosystem.

Develop an semi-annual fee based overnight backpacking program to expand upon current recreational opportunities.

THE AMENITIES: Well-Maintained Facilities and Amenities

Goal: Tennessee State Parks will be well maintained with facilities and amenities that delight visitors and make Tennesseans proud.

Objective: *Improve maintenance:* Improve overall maintenance and upkeep of all park facilities and amenities that contribute to meaningful visitor experiences.

Action Plan: Increase training of maintenance staff to increase the quality of work and reduce the use of outside contractual maintenance work. Encourage quality candidates for open maintenance positions and improve employee retention and engagement. Draft, maintain, and commit to a deferred maintenance schedule for all park facilities utilizing the HIPPO facility management.

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

Action Plan: Plan, fund, and install a three-mile paved ADA accessible trail around the Three Forks Lake that is located within the Stone Door Annex Property. Connect that trail to the current paved Laurel Overlook trail to allow movement between the two areas.

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

Action Plan: Continue to design the currently funded visitor's Center, RV Campground, and other amenities in a manner to ensure that all visitors feel welcome and informed.
Continue to keep all park signage updated and organized.
Fund and construct new ADA restroom facilities at the Savage Gulf East, South, and West Entrances.

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: Thoughtful, specific, and measurable performance plans for all employees. Increase training opportunities, recognizing, and awarding stellar performance, commitment, and loyalty through employee reward and appreciation efforts as permitted by state policies. Encourage staff to attend and allow time for trainings that will further their professional growth and goals.
Work with state park leadership to increase staffing levels in response to anticipated increased visitation and new facilities.

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

Action Plan: Work with marketing to increase occupancy and revenues and bring the park closer to cost recovery by the promotion of the current revenue generating operations located within the park.

Park Overview

Site Fact Sheet

Park Name	Savage Gulf State Park*
Site Manager	Aaron Reid
Area Manager	Jacob Young
Park acreage	18,462
Total number of visitors (FY 2022)	168,757
Total expenses (FY2023 Spending Plan)	\$797,900
Total revenues	\$110,000 (budgeted)
Retail cost recovery % ¹	Not determined at this time
Park cost recovery %	14% (target)
Average expense per visitor (FY 2022)	\$4.73
Average revenue per visitor (FY 2022)	\$0.65
Gross profit or loss	\$687,900
Total full-time available positions / filled	12 / 11
Total part-time available positions / filled	0 / 0
Primary feeder markets	Surrounding Counties, Nashville, Chattanooga, Murfreesboro, Huntsville, Atlanta
Primary reasons people visit	Hiking, camping, swimming
Opportunities for improvement	Add ADA restroom facilities to Savage Gulf West, South, and East Trailheads. Enlarge parking area at Savage Gulf South Trailhead. Expand hiking trails to newly acquired vistas and waterfalls. Add backcountry campgrounds within newly acquired properties. Add ADA trail around Three Forks Lake.

* Savage Gulf State Park is a newly designated park as of October 2022. Current financials are reflective of an anticipated spending plan and not yet backed by actuals.

¹ Based on T.C.A. 11-3-305, Cost recovery of revenue-generating facilities

Key Attractions

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

- Hiking Trails
- Backcountry Campgrounds
- Stone Door Trail and Overlook
- Greeter Falls
- Savage Day Loop
- Savage Falls
- Suter Falls
- Hobbs Cabin
- Three Forks Lake

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 Savage Gulf 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 Savage Gulf State Park and provides the assessed condition of each as reviewed in May 2023.

Site Asset / Amenity	Quantity	Condition
Backcountry Campsite	62	Fair
Group Campsite	8	Fair
SG Ranger Residence	1	Good
SD Ranger Residence	1	Excellent
SG Ranger Station	1	Fair
SD Ranger Station	1	Excellent
Maintenance Building	3	Fair
Picnic Shelter	1	Excellent
Parking Lot	4	Fair

Trail Inventory and Assessment

Trail Name	Mileage	Condition
Big Creek Gulf Trail	4.01	Poor
Big Creek Rim Trail	3.36	Fair
Blue Hole Trail	0.43	Fair
Collins Gulf Trail	4.61	Poor
Collins Rim Trail	6.15	Fair
Connector Trail	6.63	Poor
Greeter Falls Loop Trail	0.97	Poor
Greeter Trail	0.95	Fair

Laurel Falls Loop Trail	0.27	Poor
Laurel Trail	2.94	Fair
Mountain Oak Trail	0.81	Good
North Plateau Trail	7.38	Fair
North Rim Trail	6.23	Fair
Ranger Falls Trail	0.41	Fair
Savage Day Loop Trail	3.41	Poor
South Rim Trail	6.30	Fair
Stagecoach Road Trail	1.57	Poor
Stone Door Trail	1.54	Poor
Grand Total	57.98	

Most of the trail system within Savage Gulf State Park was built in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This was before more modern and sustainable trail building techniques were developed. Because of this and an increase in usage, the trail system has seriously degraded over time. During the statewide trail assessment in 2018 there were a total of 333 issues found within the Savage Gulf trail system. According to the trail assessment data collected in 2018 it would cost \$112,869 and 5,530 hours of labor to resolve all the issues within the trail system at Savage Gulf State Park. In my opinion this is a gross underestimate of the funding and labor needed.

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
Public Restrooms	New public ADA restrooms needed at Savage Gulf West, South, and East Trailheads.
Bridges	Swinging bridges to allow hiker access during high water. One near Suter Falls, one across Fall Creek, one across Collins River, and one across Big Creek to allow access to Ranger Falls.
Backcountry Campgrounds	Add backcountry campgrounds along the Plateau Trail near Meadow Creek, near Schoolhouse Creek along planned new trail, and near Reeve's Falls along planned new trail.
Hiking Trails	Expand trail system to newly acquired vistas and waterfalls. New trails to the west of Hobbs Cabin across Coppinger Creek and along the gorge rim. New trail to newly acquired Reeve's Falls along Fall Creek and continuing along the rim above Collins River and Big Creek.

Gates	6 new gates on park access roads to help stop illegal trespassing.
Expand Parking Lot	Expand the Savage Gulf South Parking lot from 19 spaces to 45 spaces.
Fiber Optics	Install fiber optics to the Stone Door residence, maintenance shop, and ranger station.
Visitor Center	New visitor center to include interpretive area, gift shop, and administrative space
RV Campground	60-site campground with water and electric, and dump station (Phase 1)
Campground Expansion	Expansion of campground to include primitive to tent camping options (Phase 2)
Boat Dock	Boat dock on Three Forks Lake with possible rental facility
Trail around Three Forks Lake	ADA trail with four boardwalks and fishing piers.

Prioritized Facility Needs

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

Facility Need	Priority Assignment
Savage Gulf Ranger Station Renovation	High
Re-roof Stone Door Maintenance Shop	High
Re-stain two residences and two maintenance shops	High
Sealcoat Savage Gulf North, West, and East Parking Lots	High
Access Road repair throughout the park	Medium
Replace wooden trail structures throughout the park	Medium
Replace all swinging bridges throughout the park	Medium
Backcountry Campground Renovations	Medium
Replace all backcountry pit toilets	High
Re-pave trail to Laurel Gulf Overlook	High
Rehab the Stone Door Trail	High
Renovate the green barn into Maintenance Shop	High
Survey and re-mark park boundaries (+/- 60 miles)	High
Address deficiencies from 2017 trail assessment (300+)	High

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 Savage Gulf State Park have been identified as **core services**:

- 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 a kiosk at each trailhead to orient visitors and give them more information on the site.
- Provide for public access to the park, the facilities, and 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 standards.
- Provide for basic, non-staff supported day-use activities with informational signage, 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.
- Provide for basic, non-staff supported day-use activities (such as hiking and picnicking) with trails and picnic tables.

The following programs and services offered at Savage Gulf State Park have been identified as **important services**:

- Provide a full range of environmental, cultural, and recreational programs.
- Provide educational programs for schools and other organized groups.
- Provide support to the Friends of South Cumberland State Parks.
- Operate and maintain picnic shelter for public rental and use.

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 Savage Gulf State Park have been identified as **visitor supported services**:

- Operate a gift shop at the Stone Door Ranger Station that offers park specific merchandise for sale to the public.
- Operate the Savage Gulf Marathon for public participation.
- Lead hikes and programs for the annual Trails and Trilliums festival hosted by the Friends of South Cumberland State Parks.
- Provide a variety of camping opportunities.

- Boating, fishing, and other resource-based recreational activities.
- Gear and equipment rental.

Personnel / Staffing Review

Personnel and staffing at Savage Gulf State Park represent the largest area of budgetary expense. 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 3	1	*
Park Ranger 2	3	*
Administrative Assistant 1	1	\$42,504
Facilities Supervisor	1	\$59,700
Conservation Worker 3	1	\$37,800
Conservation Worker 2	2	\$68,136
Conservation Worker 1	1	\$30,504
Clerk 3	1	\$30,204
TOTAL	12	\$564,864

**Law enforcement compensation confidential by TN law.*

Part Time Employees

Position / Title	Quantity	Compensation Total
None at this time		
TOTAL	0	\$0.00

Labor Support

Labor Support	Annual Hours
Volunteers	2,000+
Community Service Workers	0
Engineering and Construction Crews	300+
Resource Management Crews	300+
Community – Local Rescue Squads	500+
Supporting State Agencies	500+
TOTAL	3,600+

Total Labor Compensation Expense

Labor Type	Labor Expense
Full Time Equivalent Employees	\$564,864
Part Time Employees	\$0.00
TOTAL Annual Labor Expense	\$564,864

Additional Future Positions Needed

Position / Title	Quantity	FTE or PT	Year Needed	Justification
Park Ranger 2	1	FTE	2026	Phase 1 Development Completion
Conservation Worker 2	1	FTE	2026	Phase 1 Development Completion
Conservation Worker 1	1	FTE	2026	Phase 1 Development Completion
Clerk 2	2	FTE	2026	Phase 1 Development Completion
Seasonal Interpretive Ranger	1	PT	2026	Phase 1 Development Completion
Park Ranger 2	1	FTE	2028	Phase 2 Development Completion
Conservation Worker 3	1	FTE	2028	Phase 2 Development Completion
Conservation Worker 2	1	FTE	2028	Phase 2 Development Completion
Clerk 2	1	FTE	2028	Phase 2 Development Completion
Seasonal Laborer	2	PT	2024-26	Park operational support and Phase 2 Development Completion
TOTAL	12			

*Future staffing needs will be reassessed as we add amenities.

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 (Data is from South Cumberland State Park)

Fiscal Year	Campground Rev Per Unit
2019	3.99
2020	3.28
2021	6.28
2022	5.53

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	Campground Rev Per Unit
2023	4.77
2024	4.95
2025	5.25
2026	5.50

Customer Service

Platform / Site	Year	Customer Satisfaction Level
Google	2023	5 Stars
AllTrails	2023	4.5 Stars
TripAdvisor	2023	5 Stars

Professional Development and Training

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

- FTO and Instructor Development training for Park Ranger 3
- Procurement and Project Management training for Facilities Supervisor
- Procurement and HR training for Administrative Assistant
- PMTI Training for interested ranger staff
- Routine management training
- Routine law enforcement training
- Trail Master Certification for all conservation workers and any new ranger staff
- EMR Certification for all current and future rangers
- Wildland Firefighters Type 2 for all current and future rangers and any interested maintenance staff

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. Complete renovation of the public restrooms at the Savage Gulf North Entrance.
- b. Complete renovation of office area at the Green Barn in Beersheba Springs.
- c. Re-paint all public buildings and ranger residences.
- d. Re-seal all asphalt public parking areas.
- e. Renovate the Savage Gulf Ranger Station.
- f. Rehabilitate the emergency access roads within Savage Gulf to minimize the wear and tear on state vehicles.

2. Operations and Staffing

- a. Fill all new open positions within the park.
- b. Fully train all new staff to perform their job duties effectively and efficiently.
- c. Discuss and implement new schedule and patrol priorities for park rangers that includes one additional officer.
- d. Acquire funding for and purchase additional equipment (tractor, skid-steer, dump truck, etc.) for the ongoing maintenance of park facilities.

3. Customer Service / Visitor Experience

- a. Complete the installation of new park signage to better inform the public that Savage Gulf is now a separate park and no longer affiliated with South Cumberland State Park.
- b. Complete new park map brochure and make it available for purchase in the gift shop.
- c. Improve landscaping around park entrances by using the IRIS Fund to purchase and install native plants.

Mid Term Recommendations (2-5 years)

1. Site and Facilities

- a. Complete Phase 1 of the Stone Door Annex Development to include a new Visitor's Center, RV Campground, and new entrance to the Stone Door Parking Area and open it to the public.
- b. Work with TDOT to request a turning lane addition on Highway 56 near the park entrance.
- c. Work with TDOT to request the improvement of a turn on Highway 56 in Altamont for large campers.
- d. Construct new ADA compliant public restrooms at Savage Gulf East, South, and West Trailheads.
- e. Build a trail to the newly acquired Reeve's Falls with a primitive campground nearby.
- f. Acquire all land designated as high priority by park management.
- g. Renovate the Savage Gulf Ranger Residence.
- h. Work with the local community to meet the requirements of a dark sky park.

2. Operations and Staffing

- a. Determine and implement optimal hours of operation for the new Visitor's Center.
- b. Determine and implement optimal season and hours of operation for the new boat rental facility.
- c. Fund additional full/part time positions as recommended above.

3. Customer Service / Visitor Experience

- a. Design and install site specific and high-quality interpretive exhibits within the new Visitor's Center with the help of IPE.
- b. Replace all update all trail wayfinding signage deemed inadequate within the parkwide signage survey.

Long Term Recommendations (5+ years)

1. Site and Facilities

- a. Complete Phase 2 of the Stone Door Annex Development and open it to the public.
- b. Acquire all land designated as medium priority by park management.
- c. Develop mountain biking area in newly acquired lands south of Savage Gulf State Natural Area in Gruetli-Laager.

2. Operations and Staffing

- a. We should be fully staffed at this point with new positions needed only from the addition of extra park operations or unexpected surges in park visitation.

3. Customer Service / Visitor Experience

- a. Expansion of quality outdoor experiences with additional ADA accessible areas, rock-climbing locations, hiking trails, and backcountry campgrounds.
- b. Expansion of Commercial Use Agreements offering a variety of quality outdoor experiences and supporting local small businesses and community tourism efforts.

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.

The goals of this resource management plan are to:

- Drive the development of the Stone Door Annex property while maintaining the sites values as a Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation Class II Natural-Scientific Natural Area.
- Protect, restore, and maintain ecological integrity of the natural area at a landscape scale with the larger context of the Southern Cumberland Plateau while recognizing its function and importance as a Tennessee State Park.
- Provide and maintain reasonable, safe public access to the natural area for passive day-use recreation, backcountry camping, and educational opportunities.

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. Provide Administrative Oversight Responsibilities

- a. Conduct regular site visits throughout the year (DNA & TSP).
- b. Conduct site visits when deemed necessary in response to reports of illegal activities, resource issues, and other public concerns (DNA & TSP). TSP has primary responsibility for enforcement.
- c. Enter detailed site visit reports into the DNA's natural areas database (DNA).

B. Address Maintenance and Operational Needs

- a. Periodically inspect boundary markers to ensure that the boundary is clearly marked and that there have not been any illegal encroachments on the property (DNA & TSP).
 - i. Re-sign and/or repaint the boundary (DNA & TSP)
 - ii. Respond to illegal encroachments, such as vehicles entering the property or unapproved trails, as soon as possible. Block an illegal entrance, add signs as needed, and initiate law enforcement if needed (TSP)
- b. Conduct routine trash pick-ups in the natural area. Conduct routine maintenance of trails and make improvements as necessary (DNA & TSP).
- c. Conduct maintenance and trash collection of parking areas and ranger stations as needed. Monitor for vandalism. Repair and replace any damaged items (TSP).
- d. Address non-authorized trail activity, e.g., cover social trails with brush, post signage as needed, gate, etc. (TSP)
- e. Provide and maintain reasonable, safe public access to the natural area for passive intermittent recreation, backcountry camping (backpacking), semi-supervised day-use educational opportunities, and ecological forays.
- f. Maintain public access as related to maintenance and operational needs (TSP).
- g. Update interpretive materials when necessary.
 - i. Make appropriate edits and/or additions to the TDEC's web page as needed. Update kiosk display with trail maps, site specific information, and interpretive information as necessary.
- h. Increase public awareness and knowledge of the natural area (DNA & TSP).
 - i. Conduct hikes and other special events to increase public awareness, enjoyment, and knowledge of the natural area (DNA & TSP)
 - ii. Provide opportunities for research in the natural area.
 - iii. Ensure that all researchers are appropriately permitted by TDEC's Division of Natural Areas and other necessary departments or agencies before research begins.
 - iv. Require that research results, e.g., reports, scientific papers, floras, etc., be provided to the division for inclusion into the natural areas management and/or rare species databases as appropriate.

C. Manage the ecological and natural resources of the natural area for restoration, maintenance, and ecological improvement.

- a. Develop and implement management strategies to control or eradicate invasive exotic pest plants (DNA).
 - i. Document invasive species treatment methods and enter reports into the natural area database.
 - ii. Determine appropriate herbicide treatments and rates and document all actions in natural areas database. Restrict herbicide use to invasive species treatment unless specified elsewhere in the management plan.
 - iii. Survey and record occurrences and infestation levels of invasive species.
 - iv. Prioritize invasive species strategies based on current data, updated information, infestation levels, and threat assessments.
- b. Implement woody vegetation control (DNA).

- i. Conduct timber stand improvement in areas of greatest ecological value (rarity) to promote target species recruitment.
- c. Implement a prescribed burning program (DNA & TSP).
 - i. Delineate burn units; utilize existing fire lines (trails and access roads) for fire breaks where possible.

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
Chattanooga-McMinnville Stagecoach Road	1	Fair	Most of the road is in good condition with a section near the top that is showing signs of significant erosion. Two interpretive panels are located along the route.
Decatur-Savage Cabin	1	Fair	Dates to the early 1820's. The cabin itself is in fair condition, but it is in a very hard to access area. The access road needs significant repairs. Two interpretive panels are located at the site.
Greeter Homeplace Site	1	Fair	Only the foundation and root cellar remain. The area is starting to grow up and should be cleared to maintain its integrity. There is one interpretive panel at the site.
Historic Cemeteries	3	Poor	Only one of these cemeteries has any marked graves. The other two have a few stones but are becoming increasing hard to locate.

Savage Gulf Schoolhouse Site	1	Good	Only the foundation remains. There is an historical marker at the location. Site needs to be cleared to maintain its integrity.
Dinky Line (Narrow Gauge) Railroad Bed	1	Fair	This was used to haul timber out of the area before the park was designated. There is one interpretive panel along the route.
Historic Homesites within the Gulf	10-20	Poor	These homesites have been mapped but are becoming increasingly hard to find.
Historic Mill (Saw or Grist)	6	Fair	These sites vary in size, but only foundations remain.
Historic Moonshine Still Sites	Unknown	Fair	These sites are located along almost every creek within Savage Gulf. They vary in condition.
Rock Shelters	93+	Fair	Survey conducted by state archeology in 1983. 18 shelters were found to contain visible cultural material.
Old Growth Mixed-Mesophytic Cove Forest	550 acres	Good	The forest is in overall good health with a few invasives present (HWA, Paulownia, spiraea)
Dry-Mesic Shortleaf Pine-Oak Forest	10,000 acres	Good	The forest is in overall good health. A burn plan and targeted understory thinning has been developed with DNA to promote the regeneration of the shortleaf pine.
Southern Appalachian Seepage Wetland	500 acres	Good	Burn plans have been developed for selected areas as well as targeted understory thinning.
White Fringeless Orchid Sites	100 acres	Good	One of the largest occurrences in the world is along an acidic seep near Meadow Creek. Over 1500 flowering plants are documented each year.
Three Forks Lake	45 acres	Good	The lake is in overall good condition with additional assessments to be completed.

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
Chattanooga-McMinnville Stagecoach Road	<p>Public Use: Part of the hiking trail system</p> <p>General Management: Park Staff routinely cuts trees that fall on the trail and maintain wayfinding signage along the route. Two interpretive signs are installed and maintained.</p>	High
Decatur-Savage Cabin	<p>Public Use: Cabin is located on a spur trail along the Connector Trail within the bottom of Savage Gulf. Public access is allowed. Visitors are not allowed to enter the structure.</p> <p>General Management: Cabin is minimally maintained to preserve the historical significance of the structure. Two interpretive signs are installed and maintained.</p>	High
Greeter Homeplace Site	<p>Public Use: Site is located on a spur trail along the Greeter Falls Trail near the Savage Gulf West Trailhead. Public access is allowed.</p> <p>General Management: Site is minimally maintained by the clearing of trees and brush. Two interpretive signs are installed and maintained.</p>	Moderate
Historic Cemeteries	<p>Public Use: Sites are generally closed to the public. Access is provided upon request.</p> <p>General Management: Site is minimally maintained by the clearing of trees and brush. Graves have been mapped and cataloged.</p>	Moderate
Savage Gulf Schoolhouse Site	<p>Public Use: No Public Access</p> <p>General Management: Site is minimally maintained by clearing of trees and brush. Access is provided upon request.</p>	Moderate
Dinky Line (Narrow Gauge) Railroad Bed	<p>Public Use: Hiking trail follows the route for approximately 1 mile.</p>	Moderate

	<p>General Management: Railroad bed is minimally maintained by cutting trees off the trail. One interpretive sign is installed and maintained.</p>	
Historic Homesites within the Gulf	<p>Public Use: No Public Access</p> <p>General Management: Sites have been mapped and cataloged. No management from park staff currently.</p>	Moderate
Historic Mill (Saw or Grist)	<p>Public Use: Public access to the Longs Mill (Greeter Falls) and the Laurel Mill sites. No public access to the other sites.</p> <p>General Management: Sites have been mapped and cataloged. Sites are minimally maintained by clearing trees and brush from publicly accessed sites.</p>	Moderate
Historic Moonshine Still Sites	<p>Public Use: Public access to several sites that are located along the trail system.</p> <p>General Management: Some sites have been mapped and cataloged. Sites that are located along the trail have signage and are minimally maintained by clearing trees and brush.</p>	Moderate
Rock Shelters	<p>Public Use: No public access unless located along hiking trail.</p> <p>General Management: Sites have been mapped and cataloged. No management from park staff currently.</p>	Moderate
Old Growth Mixed-Mesophytic Cove Forest	<p>Public Use: No Public Access</p> <p>General Management: Site visited conducted at least three times per year by park staff. Hemlocks treated for HWA by hemlock strike team on a recurring basis.</p>	High
Dry-Mesic Shortleaf Pine-Oak Forest	<p>Public Use: No public access except along trail corridors.</p> <p>General Management: Prescribed burn plan developed and implemented with the Division of Forestry and Natural Areas.</p>	High
Southern Appalachian Seepage Wetland	<p>Public Use: No public access except along trail corridors.</p> <p>General Management: Prescribed burn plan developed and implemented within very limited areas with the Division of Forestry and Natural Areas.</p>	Moderate
White Fringeless Orchid Sites	<p>Public Use: No Public Access</p> <p>General Management: Prescribed burn plan developed and implemented with the Division of Forestry and Natural Areas. Flowering plants are counted and documented each summer.</p>	High

Three Forks Lake	<p>Public Use: Currently No Public Access</p> <p>General Management: Mowing and clearing of brush around the lake by park maintenance staff. Dam is cleared of brush at least twice per year. Dam is inspected and recommended actions taken per the Safe Dams Act of 1973.</p>	High
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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
Future land acquisitions for viewshed protection and park buffering	Short-Long Term

Interpretive Programming and Education Plan

The Interpretation, Programming, and Education planning is currently going through a planning process to further build out the process. This section only represents the very basic framework. As TSP moves forward with the future of Interpretive programming and education this section will likely be changed to accommodate those modifications.

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

Savage Gulf State Park contains the largest and one of the most biologically significant natural areas in the state. Park staff should strive to provide frequent and high-quality natural, cultural, and recreational programs to urge visitors to discover the world around them. Educating the visitor in the extraordinary natural and cultural wonders through engaging guided hikes, stimulating presentations, and adventurous activities will foster a new generation of visitors who have a meaningful, lasting attachment to Savage Gulf State Park.

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: Create quality and varied programs of interpretation, recreation, and outreach so that all audiences feel welcome and invited, following guidance, training, and directives led by the Division of Interpretation Programming and Education.

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: Create high-quality programming through technology: develop and support mission-based and resource-relevant programs to engage visitors, empower staff, and develop community well-being so that all audiences feel welcome and invited, following guidance, learning, and directives led by the Division of Interpretation Programming and Education.

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: Create and provide resource-based outdoor recreation: provide resource-based outdoor recreation opportunities of all levels of ability and experiences that ensure the representation of Tennessee’s natural, scenic, and cultural resources located within Savage Gulf State Park.

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

- A. Managing recreational use with the stewardship needs of the resource
- B. Varying intensity from self-guided to guided experiences
- C. Partnership opportunities for program delivery
- D. Varying costs to the user from “free to fee” based on value of the benefit to the participant and impact to the resource.

Action Plan: Create and provide resource-based outdoor recreation and stewardship opportunities: providing resource-based outdoor recreation opportunities of all levels of ability that add value to the park visitors’ experience.

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
Park Overall	0.0% (Target)	5.5%	12%	12.5%	14%	20%

