

South Cumberland State Park Strategic Management Plan

2023 – 2033



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Park Purpose, History and Description

Governor Dunn dedicated South Cumberland State Recreation Area on July 1, 1978. The park began its humble beginnings with five natural areas Hawkins Cove, Natural Bridge, Carter, Grundy Forest, and Savage Gulf State Natural Areas. Officially recognized and designated by the Tennessee General Assembly and subject to the intent and limitations in the Natural Areas Preservation Act of 1971, resulting in the protection of the very grounds on which historical and cultural events happened, and natural wonders occur. Between the years of 1971 until the creation of South Cumberland Recreation Area, there was considerable effort expended by citizens from all the local communities of Grundy, Marion, Franklin, and Sequatchie, as well as citizens from across the State of Tennessee to prepare a realistic plan for the development of a public recreation area.

The roles that South Cumberland now plays in the community are as diverse as the many areas that comprise this vast park system. With the separation of stand-a-lone prominent Savage Gulf, the Fiery Gizzard areas offer wilderness recreation, primarily camping, backpacking, hiking, and rock climbing. In contrast, Grundy Lakes and South Cumberland Visitor Center offer community recreation, swimming, fishing, hiking, picnicking, and opportunities to play tennis, basketball, and children's playgrounds. Hawkins Cove, Carter Natural Area, and Natural Bridge's smaller areas only offer trails for hiking and cave exploration within Lost Cove Cave. Additionally, managing the TVA Foster Falls/Small Wilds and new area Denny Cove adds new opportunities for sport climbing, swimming, camping, hiking, and picnicking. The new area of Sherwood offers hunting and hiking, with even more options and possibilities. All these areas, traditionally classified as eight separate areas in three different counties (Grundy, Marion, and Franklin), comprise the 12,326 acres of South Cumberland State Park.

All these areas provide a rich and unique historical, natural, and cultural value that demands protection and preservation since its conception with the Natural Areas Preservation Act of 1971.

Fiery Gizzard Wilderness Area

(Includes – The Visitor Center Area, Grundy Lakes, Grundy Forest (North Fiery Gizzard), Foster Falls/Small Wilds (South Fiery Gizzard, and Denny Cove) Five separate areas within Grundy and Marion Counties encompass a total of 7,828 acres, a size larger than 50 of Tennessee's 57 state parks.

The Visitor Center Area is 146 acres and offers a multitude of natural and recreational activities. The park created the Meadow Trail from a nine-hole golf course that offers visitors an enjoyable short 3-mile hike around a pond to observe butterflies, birds, flora, and fauna within a native wildflower meadow setting. Two parking lots allow visitors access to a ball field, two tennis courts, a basketball court, volleyball court, bocce ball court, two playgrounds, a picnic shelter, two picnic areas, a public restroom, and a natural play area, community garden, and the park museum/gift shop. The museum facility also houses uniform staff offices and a dorm room/kitchen for the park's Seasonal Interpretive Park Ranger residence. Non-accessible to the general public is the park manager residence and maintenance compound for the south end of South Cumberland State Park.

Grundy Lakes is 143 acres, registered as a National Historic Area for the 130 coke ovens built-in 1883 by the Tennessee Coal, Iron, and Railway Company. Also remaining is the foundation of the old stockade that housed the convicts that worked the mines. Today, the area includes multiple parking lots and picnic areas, a swim beach, playground, restroom facility, boat dock, fishing areas (TWRA stocks the lake every year), a ball court and fitness area, and 3 miles of a hiking trail to allow visitors to view the history of this area. The Planning and Partnership Division of State Parks and Rec Services should actively work

with Tracy City to manage this area for a city/county park. The amenities and visitation of this area are more in line with a city/county park than a state park.

Grundy Forest trailhead, Fiery Gizzard, which began as 212 acres in 1971, has grown to 6,040 acres consisting of the Fiery Gizzard gorge. This area offers many waterfalls, including Blue Hole, Hanes, Sycamore, Yellow Pine, and Anderson falls. The Fiery Gizzard is one of the most bio-diverse regions in North America, with over 600 types of vascular plants, including hundreds of other living things. Numerous naturally occurring rock formations in the gorge, such as the "chimneys." The most important history is that Company 1475 of the Civilian Conservation Corps was organized in 1933 in Palmer. On June 29, 1935, Camp P-67 was constructed in Tracy City, known as Grundy State Forest. The camp was closed in 1938. The camp foundations still exist, and the park has revived this fantastic historical place with a trail and interpretive panels that share the story of this CCC Company. Another interesting historical fact of this area, hikers can view the historic Dog Hole Mine that still exists along the trail. Some trails allow hikers to observe a Woodland Period Native American rock shelter and many moonshine remnants along the creeks. This area consists of over 10 miles of trail, Grundy Forest campground (5 sites and 1 group site) and Little Cove campground (5 sites and 1 group site), a picnic shelter, two picnic areas, a parking lot, a restroom facility, and ranger residence (constructed & gifted to the park by the Friends group in 1998).

Foster Falls/Small Wilds trailhead, Fiery Gizzard is 448 acres, acquired from TVA, offers the Foster Falls and more protected wilderness and property to help adjoin the Fiery Gizzard trail system. The area provides two backcountry campgrounds, the Small Wilds (6 sites and 1 group site) and Father Adamz (8 sites and 1 group site) and one vehicle campground, Foster Falls, of 25 sites (no electric or water, but does provide a centralized bathhouse). At the trailhead is a picnic area, large pavilion, restroom facility adjacent to the parking lot, campground host site near gate entrance, and ADA compliant boardwalk to the top of the waterfall, over 8 miles of trail offering over 150 climbing routes and is world-renowned for its sport climbing, drawing visitors from not only across the United States, but documented countries like Spain, Canada, France, and many others.

The Foster Falls/Small Wilds area combined with the Grundy Forest makes a park area of 6,848 acres.

Denny Cove is a 691-acre satellite park to the Fiery Gizzard system. Denny Cove has 150 climbing routes and has doubled the park's sport climbing at Foster Falls. There are 3 miles of trail giving access to climbing routes and Denny waterfall, along with a parking lot, an entrance road with trailhead kiosk, comprise the park operations of this area.

Lost Cove Wilderness Area

(Includes - Sherwood Forest, Carter, Sewanee Natural Bridge, and Hawkins Cove State Natural Areas)
Four separate areas encompassing 4,281 acres, all within Franklin County. Size is larger than 48 of Tennessee's 57 state parks.

Carter Natural Area (Lost Cove West)/Sherwood Forest (Lost Cove East) is 4,004 acres. Within the 1200-acre, Carter SNA is a 2-mile trail, parking lot, and trailhead leading to Lost Cove Cave. This cave has Tennessee's largest cave opening and provided in the 1800s salt-peter mining and has documented pictographs and remnants of archeological dig that have determined early Woodland period Native Americans once lived in the cave. There are also 20 listed known rock house sites with rare petroglyphs and pictographs along the cliff line from Buggytop Cave to Sherwood Forest within state property. Natural aspects of the cave encompass threatened species such as eastern big-eared bat and diverse

cave life, such as the Tennessee Cave Salamander and cave crawfish. Sherwood's additional natural area encompasses over 2,000 acres home to state-endangered Cumberland Rosinweed and Morefield flower, rare Prairie Dark and Leafcup, and the federally listed endangered Land Snail. As per the Federal Fish and Wildlife grant agreement, this area provides a new recreation for our park to offer and manage, hunting. Sherwood access provides another parking lot, trailhead, and a 3-mile loop trail highlighting another natural bridge and overlooks. Adjacent to this area is the Sherwood log home, providing a temporary office, bunkhouse, and maintenance shop for the Lost Cove area.

Sewanee Natural Bridge is a 1.5-acre tract, contains the impressive 30' natural occurring stone bridge formation, along with a natural spring near the base of the escarpment. There are a small parking lot and a 200-yard trail to the natural bridge feature.

Hawkins Cove is a 276-acre natural area that protects a large population of Cumberland Rosinweed. There are no trails, but hunting has been traditionally allowed since 1988, with access from the power line that runs through the property. Park rangers lead some botany enthusiasts yearly to observe and monitor this rare plant. The abandoned Mountain Goat rail bed line runs adjacent and along the southeast boundary. The Mountain Goat Rails to Trails Alliance is developing this area and Tennessee State Parks will take over management. That would add two more trailheads, in Sewanee and Cowan, and 8 miles of paved trail in-between to oversee. MGTA estimated timeframe for completion is Summer 2024.

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 impact beyond boundaries by engaging and supporting community and department initiatives in school outreach and tourism.

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

Action Plan: Prioritize resource stewardship collaborating with internal and external shareholders and agencies.

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

Action Plan: Continue collecting data and sharing information and open communication with collaborative efforts with internal and external shareholders and agencies.

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: Developing programming and accessibility to all levels of ability and experience, following directives and guidance of the Division of Interpretation and Programming.

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

Action Plan: Developing varied offerings and abilities to engage the public providing accessibility to all levels of ability and experience, following directives and guidance of the Division of Interpretation and Programming.

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

Action Plan: Managing recreational use with resource stewardship needs and accessibility to all levels of ability and experience, following directives and guidance of the Division of Interpretation and Programming.

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: Implementation of ADA compliant facilities and accessibility upgrades to all levels of ability and experience, following directives and guidance of the Division of Facilities Management.

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

Action Plan: Implementation of trail assessment improvements and more accessibility to all levels of ability and experience, following directives and guidance of the Division of Facilities Management and TSP Trail Management Policies and Procedures.

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

Action Plan: Implementation to improve connectivity, infrastructure, and accessibility to all levels of ability and experience, following directives and guidance of the Division of Facilities Management.

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: Implementation of more professional development by having staff engage the Division of Personnel Organizational Development and support external rewarding career workshops and other learning opportunities.

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

Action Plan: Implementation to leverage public and private partnerships through collaboration to enhance Tennessee State Park Goals and outcomes to support operational directives and fulfill the TSP Mission.

Park Overview

Site Fact Sheet

Park Name	South Cumberland State Park
Site Manager	George Shinn
Area Manager	Jacob Young
Park acreage	12,326
Total number of visitors (FY 2022)	757,398
Total expenses before CO (FY 2022)	\$1,150,300
Total revenues (FY 2022)	\$160,930
Retail cost recovery % ¹	52%
Park cost recovery %	13%
Average expense per visitor (FY 2022)	\$1.52
Average revenue per visitor (FY 2022)	.21
Gross profit or loss	(\$989,370)
Total full-time available positions / filled	13
Total part-time available positions / filled	0
Primary feeder markets	Chattanooga, Nashville, Huntsville, and Greater Atlanta, GA areas
Primary reasons people visit	Hiking, Backpacking, Climbing, and Caving
Opportunities for improvement	Improved and New Trails, Climbing Routes, and Backcountry Campgrounds

{Data Possibly Change in the Future Due to Savage Gulf & South Cumberland State Park Split}

Key Attractions

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

- Iconic Fiery Gizzard Trail with its Numerous Waterfalls and Natural Scenic Areas
- Historical Grundy Lakes Coke Ovens, CCC Site, Prehistoric Rock Shelters, and Dog Hole Mine
- Foster Falls and Denny Cove Sport Rock Climbing
- Caving at Buggytop and Peter Caves
- Natural Bridge

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 South Cumberland 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 South Cumberland SP and provides the assessed condition of each as reviewed in May 2023.

Site Asset / Amenity	Quantity	Condition
Park Boundaries	30 miles	Fair
Trail	29.27mi	Fair
Backcountry Campgrounds	4	Good
Vehicle Campground	1	Fair
Restrooms/Bathhouse	5	Fair/Poor
Park Roads	10 miles	Poor
Rescue Access Roads	10 miles	Fair
Trail Structures/Bridges	28	Poor
Trailhead Parking lots/kiosks	9	Poor/Fair
Picnic Pavilions	3	Fair
Visitor Center	1	Poor
Ranger Residences	2	Good
Maintenance Facility	2	Good
Playgrounds	3	Fair
Ball Courts	3	Poor
Picnic Areas	5	Fair

Trail Inventory and Assessment

Trail Name	Mileage	Condition
Buggytop Trail	2.14	Poor
Climbers Loop	2.21	Fair
Denny Cove East Trail	0.78	Good
Denny Cove Trail	0.52	Good
Denny Cove West Trail	0.27	Good
Dog Hole Trail	2.96	Fair
Father Adamz Campground Trail	0.22	Fair
Fiery Gizzard Trail	10.02	Poor
Grundy Day Loop Trail	2.24	Fair
Grundy Lakes Trail	2.06	Fair
Meadow Trail	1.49	Fair

Peter Cave Trail	0.14	Poor
Ravens Point Trail	0.36	Fair
Sherwood Day Loop Trail	2.70	Good
Storybook Meadow Trail	0.17	Fair
Waterfall Trail	1.00	Fair
Grand Total	29.27	

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
Denny Cove	Road, Parking Lot, Restroom Facility
Welcome Center	Visitor Center with offices, conference room, gift shop, museum space, and seasonal quarters

Prioritized Facility Needs

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

Facility Need	Priority Assignment
30+ Miles of Boundaries re-surveyed/re-marked/re-signed	High
2017 Trail Assessment itemizes 660 trail deficiencies or failure	High
Welcome Center	Medium
4 Backcountry Campgrounds	Low
1 vehicle Campground & Bathhouse	High
4 Trailhead Restrooms	High
20 Miles of Park Roads repaving/restriping/Rescue Access Roads	High
9 Park Parking Lots repaving/restriping	High
In-Park Signage & Kiosks	Low
Three Picnic Pavilions and 5 Picnic Areas	Medium
2 Playgrounds	Low

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 South Cumberland SP have been identified as **core services**:

- Provide Safe Outdoor Experiences
- Preserve and Protect Natural, Cultural, and Scenic areas

CATEGORY 2 – IMPORTANT SERVICES *[Supported by a balance of revenues and public subsidy]*

Important programs, services and facilities are those the agency should provide, and are important to governing and effectively serving residents, businesses, customers and partners. Providing Category 2 services expands or enhances the agency’s ability to provide and sustain its core services. The criteria for programs or services to be classified as important are:

- The services expand, enhance or support identified core services.
- The services are broadly supported and utilized by the community, and are considered an appropriate, important, and valuable public good. Public support may be conditional upon the manner by which the services are paid for or funded.
- The services generate income or revenue that offsets some or all of the operating cost and/or are deemed to provide economic, social or environmental outcomes or results.

The following programs and services offered at South Cumberland SP have been identified as **important services**:

- Provide Safe Outdoor Experiences
- Provide Quality Interpretive Programming
- Preserve and Protect Natural, Cultural, and Scenic areas

- Professionally Managed Park Operations
- Professionally Managed Park Operations
- Provide Quality Interpretive Programming

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 South Cumberland SP have been identified as **visitor supported services**:

- Provide Safe and Quality Outdoor Experiences
- Camping
- Rock Climbing
- Hunting/Fishing
- Trail Running
- Hiking
- Birding
- Swimming
- Boating
- Caving/Spelunking

Personnel / Staffing Review

Personnel and staffing at South Cumberland SP represent the largest area of budgetary expense at an average of 80% of the total operating budget each year for the last three complete years, which is 296,000 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 Manager 1	1	*
Park Ranger 2	4	*
Admin Assistant 1	1	42,924
Clerk 2	1	27,780
Facility Supervisor	1	60,300
Conservation Worker 3	1	40,344
Conservation Worker 2	3	106,692
TOTAL	13	666,744

**Law enforcement compensation confidential by TN law.*

Part Time Employees

Labor Support

Labor Support	Annual Hours
Volunteers	40,000
Community Service Workers	
Engineering and Construction Crews	30,000
Resource Management Crews	20,000
Other: NGO Lands & University Research	20,000
TOTAL	110,000

Total Labor Compensation Expense

Labor Type	Labor Expense
Full Time Equivalent Employees	666,744
Part Time Employees	
TOTAL Annual Labor Expense	666,744

Additional Future Positions Needed

Position / Title	Quantity	FTE or PT	Year Needed	Justification
Lost Cove, Park Manager 1	1	FT	2024	Manage Lost Cove Areas
Lost Cove, Park Ranger 2	2	FT	2024	Preserve and Protect Lost Cove
Interpretive Ranger	1	FT	2026	Support Interpretation of South Cumberland SP
Lost Cove, Conservation Worker 3	1	FT	2026	Lead and Supervise Maintain Lost Cove
Lost Cove, Conservation Worker2	2	FT	2026	Maintain Lost Cove
Lost Cove, Administrative Assistant 1	1	FT	2025	Manage Admin duties Lost Cove
SC, Clerk 2	1	FT	2024	Off-set Visitor Center Needs
SC, Con2	1	FT	2024	Support daily maintenance needs
TOTAL	9			

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	Campsites Rev Per Unit	Shelters Rev Per Unit
2019	3.99	2.25
2020	3.28	1.31
2021	6.28	1.72
2022	5.53	1.63

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	Campsites Rev Per Unit	Shelters Rev Per Unit
2023	6.5	1.6
2024	7.5	1.8
2025	8.5	2.0
2026	10	2.3

Customer Service

Platform / Site	Year	Customer Satisfaction Level
NPS 79	FY20	4.52
NPS 78	FY21	4.49
NPS 80	FY22	4.57

Professional Development and Training

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

- Forestry Sawyer Training
- Basic First Aid CPR/AED
- Master Trail Building
- Wildland FF (Prescribe Burns)
- Routine management training
- Routine law enforcement training

Summary of Key Recommendations

Please provide short-term, mid-term, and long-term recommendations for addressing operational issues at the park and improving overall park performance.

Short Term Recommendations (Less than 1 year)

1. **Site and Facilities**
 - a. Accomplish Deferred Maintenance Projects
2. **Operations and Staffing**
 - a. Cross Train Employees
3. **Customer Service / Visitor Experience**
 - a. Customer Service Based Experiential Training/Learning
 - b. Acquire Additional Clerk

Mid Term Recommendations (2–5 years)

1. **Site and Facilities**
 - a. Complete Deferred Maintenance
 - b. Amenities ADA Complaint
 - c. Separation of Lost Cove into stand alone park
2. **Operations and Staffing**
 - a. Additional Lost Cove Staffing Established
 - b. Additional Lost Cove Resources Established
3. **Customer Service / Visitor Experience**
 - a. Enhanced Outdoor Recreational Activities
 - b. Expansion Quality Outdoor Programming

Long Term Recommendations (5+ years)

1. **Site and Facilities**
 - a. Capital Projects Accomplished
 - b. Land Acquisition of Fiery Gizzard Viewshed/Watershed Protection
2. **Operations and Staffing**
 - a. Lost Cove Established Stand-a-lone State Wilderness Park if not accomplished previously
 - b. Lone Rock Stockade and Coke Ovens “Grundy Lakes” Established Stand-a-lone State Historic Park
3. **Customer Service / Visitor Experience**
 - a. Expansion of Outdoor Experiences with additional Climbing Routes, Hiking Trails, and Backcountry Campgrounds
 - b. Expansion of Commercial Use Agreements Offering a Variety of Quality Outdoor Experiences and Supporting 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.

Guiding Principles

The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation exists to enhance the quality of life for citizens of Tennessee and to be stewards of our natural environment by: Protecting and improving the quality of Tennessee's air, land, and water through a responsible regulatory system; Protecting and promoting human health and safety; Conserving and promoting natural, cultural and historic resources; Providing a variety of quality outdoor recreational experiences.

The mission of Tennessee State Parks is to preserve, protect, and share Tennessee's natural and cultural resources while providing safe, quality outdoor experiences.

Our vision:

The South Cumberland State Recreation Area was established through a grass roots effort of numerous conservation minded people to protect as many of the most significant natural, cultural, and recreational areas in the southern Cumberland Plateau. We aim to ensure the perpetual protection of the wild, scenic, and historic values of each park and natural area within the South Cumberland region.

Our mission:

Provide professional, effective management, and 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 positive economic impact to the area surrounding the park.

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. Collaboration with external and internal stakeholders to accomplish the goals and outcomes of the State Parks Mission.
- B. Collaboration with external and internal stakeholders in effective stewardship according to the direction and guidance of the Division of Natural Areas
- C. Collaboration with external and internal stakeholders in effective research according to the direction and guidance of the Division of Natural Areas and Archaeology for the betterment of the parks’ natural and cultural resource preservation and stewardship,

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
Hawkins Cove SNA	276 acres	Good	The forests are healthy but have a growing presence of invasive plant and animal species and negative impacts from heavy visitation.
Grundy Forest SNA/Fiery Gizzard Areas	6,797 acres	Good	The forests are healthy but have a growing presence of invasive plant and animal species and negative impacts from heavy visitation.
Denny Cove	694 acres	Good	The forests are healthy but have a growing presence of invasive plant and animal species and negative impacts from heavy visitation.
Grundy Lakes	174 acres Lakes: 19 acres	Fair	Lakes are in poor condition, with minor erosion on segments of the lake shore and the growing presence of invasive plant and animal species. The forests are healthy but have a growing presence of invasive plant and animal species and negative impacts from heavy visitation. Historical structures in fair condition with remediation needed.
Park Headquarters	146 acres	Good	The forests are healthy but have a growing presence of invasive plant and animal species and negative impacts from heavy visitation.
Natural Bridge SNA	1 acre	Fair	The forests are healthy but have a growing presence of invasive plant and animal species and negative impacts from heavy visitation.
Carter Lee SNA	929 acres	Good	The forests are healthy but have a growing presence of invasive plant and animal species and negative impacts from heavy visitation.
Sherwood Forest SNA	3,115 acres	Good	The forests are healthy but have a growing presence of invasive plant and animal species and negative impacts from heavy visitation.

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
Hawkins Cove	<p>Public Use: Managed with DNA and TWRA regulations – access limited</p> <p>General Management: The hardwood-dominant Mesophytic Forest is managed for the improvement of overall forest health, which includes ongoing invasive species management, erosion mitigation in areas of steep topography, and understory management. Pursue collaboration with the TN Division of Forestry and Division of Natural Areas to assist with overall forest management, TWRA with wildlife management, and Division of Archeology with cultural site management.</p>	Moderate
Grundy Forest SNA/Fiery Gizzard Areas	<p>Public Use: Managed access with infrastructure and regulation – access limited to trails and backcountry campsites with usage policies and regulations. Climbing allowed at Foster Falls following rules and regulations.</p> <p>General Management: The hardwood dominant Mesophytic Forest is managed for the improvement of overall forest health, which includes ongoing invasive species management, erosion mitigation in areas of steep topography, and understory management. Pursue collaboration with the TN Division of Forestry and Division of Natural Areas to assist with overall forest management, TWRA with wildlife management, and Division of Archeology with cultural site management. The Tennessee Valley Authority concerning areas of Foster Falls and Small Wilds of the Fiery Gizzard.</p>	High
Denny Cove	<p>Public Use: Managed access with infrastructure and regulation – access limited to trails and climbing with usage policies and regulations.</p> <p>General Management: The hardwood dominant Mesophytic Forest is managed for the improvement of overall forest health, which includes ongoing invasive species management, erosion mitigation in areas of steep topography, and understory management. Pursue collaboration with the TN Division of Forestry and Division of Natural Areas to assist with overall forest management, TWRA with wildlife management, and Division of Archeology with cultural site management.</p>	Moderate

<p>Grundy Lakes</p>	<p>Public Use: Managed access with infrastructure and regulation – access limited to trails and fishing/boating with usage policies and regulations.</p> <p>General Management: The hardwood dominant Mesophytic Forest is managed for the improvement of overall forest health, which includes ongoing invasive species management, erosion mitigation in areas of steep topography, and understory management. Pursue collaboration with the TN Division of Forestry and Division of Natural Areas to assist with overall forest management, TWRA with wildlife management, and Division of Archeology with cultural site management.</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>Park Headquarters</p>	<p>Public Use: Managed access with infrastructure and regulation – access limited to trails with usage policies and regulations</p> <p>General Management: The hardwood dominant Mesophytic Forest is managed for the improvement of overall forest health, which includes ongoing invasive species management, erosion mitigation in areas of steep topography, and understory management. Pursue collaboration with the TN Division of Forestry and Division of Natural Areas to assist with overall forest management, TWRA with wildlife management, and Division of Archeology with cultural site management.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>
<p>Natural Bridge SNA</p>	<p>Public Use: Managed access with infrastructure and regulation – access limited to trail with usage policies and regulations</p> <p>General Management: The hardwood dominant Mesophytic Forest is managed for the improvement of overall forest health, which includes ongoing invasive species management, erosion mitigation in areas of steep topography, and understory management. Pursue collaboration with the TN Division of Forestry and Division of Natural Areas to assist with overall forest management, TWRA with wildlife management, and Division of Archeology with cultural site management.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>

<p>Carter Lee SNA</p>	<p>Public Use: Managed access with infrastructure and regulation – access limited to trails and caving with usage policies and regulations</p> <p>General Management: The hardwood dominant Mesophytic Forest is managed for the improvement of overall forest health, which includes ongoing invasive species management, erosion mitigation in areas of steep topography, and understory management. Pursue collaboration with the TN Division of Forestry and Division of Natural Areas to assist with overall forest management, TWRA with wildlife management, and Division of Archeology with cultural site management.</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>Sherwood Forest SNA</p>	<p>Public Use: Managed access with infrastructure and regulation – access limited to trails and seasonal hunting with usage policies and regulations</p> <p>General Management: The hardwood dominant Mesophytic Forest is managed for the improvement of overall forest health, which includes ongoing invasive species management, erosion mitigation in areas of steep topography, and understory management. Pursue collaboration with the TN Division of Forestry and Division of Natural Areas to assist with overall forest management, TWRA with wildlife management, and Division of Archeology with cultural site management.</p>	<p>High</p>

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
In-Holdings	Long Term
Viewshed and Watershed	Long Term
Infrastructure (trail protection)	Mid Term
Boundary Inspection	Short Term

Please refer to the Department of Environment and Conservation, The Tennessee Bureau of Conservation Division of Tennessee State Parks, Division of State Natural Areas and the Division of Archeology, The Department of Tennessee Wildlife and Resource Management, The Department of Agriculture, Tennessee Division of Forestry, and The Tennessee Valley Authority websites for more specific resource management plans, rules and regulations, and policies and procedures related to all areas managed and operated within South Cumberland State Park.

Interpretive Programming and Education Plan

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

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

Interpretive Mission Statement:

The unique character of South Cumberland State Park represents an equally unique mission for interpretation. With such an expansive park, the interpretive mission is to provide frequent, quality programs of varying natures to urge visitors to discover the world around them. Educating visitors about the extraordinary natural and cultural wonders through engaging guided hikes, stimulating presentations, and adventurous activities will foster a new generation of visitors with a meaningful, lasting attachment to South Cumberland.

Primary Interpretive Theme:

At the heart of South Cumberland State Park's vast system of hiking trails, deeply rooted history, and indicate, rare beauties is *discovery*. A chance to discover the over 600 vascular plants of the Fiery Gizzard, to immerse yourself in the turbulent history of the Grundy Lakes prison mine, to explore the mysterious depths of the Lost Cove cave, the historic CCC Camp P-97, how Natural Bridge helped lead to the Natural Area Preservation Act of 1973, the many enticing natural wonders, and the list goes on and on!

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 South Cumberland 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	13%	12%	14%	16%	18%	20%

