

Chickasaw State Park Strategic Management Plan

2023 – 2033



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Park Purpose, History and Description

Chickasaw State Park was named for the Chickasaw Tribe who once inhabited West Tennessee and North Mississippi. The 14,000 acres of land located in West Tennessee along the border of Hardeman and Chester Counties was one of Tennessee's 20 New Deal-era state parks. The park is situated on some of the highest terrain in west Tennessee. Of the area's 14,384 acres of timberland, 1,435 acres are used for recreation. Chickasaw State Park offers various activities for visitors to embark on.

The origins of the park began in 1934 with the Chickasaw Land Use Area Project. This project had three major objectives. To give the people that were farming poor lands the opportunity to reestablish themselves in a more favorable environment. The second was to put this land to better use. Lastly was to create a wildlife preserve and recreation area.

Much of the work done to create the park was done by the Civilian Conservation Corps or CCC and the Works Progress Administration or WPA. Most of the men involved were between 18 and 25. These young men were responsible for reclaiming much of the nation's natural resources. Their results can be seen all throughout the country. At Chickasaw there are several magnificent examples of the work done by the CCC and WPA. Sagamore Lodge is a stone and wood structure completed in 1937. Most of the building materials were obtained from the immediate area around the lodge within the boundaries of the park. Several vacation cabins were also built by the CCC and WPA. These cabins are still rented out and are the most popular vacation cabins at the park today. Two lakes were also created within the boundaries of Chickasaw, Lake Placid and Lake LaJoie. The concrete roller used to pack the soil of the earth dams for both lakes is on display along the shoreline of Lake Placid.

The Park consists of several recreational activities located around two lakes, approximately 50 acres each in size. Most amenities are located around Lake Placid except for the group camp located at Lake LaJoie.

There are three campgrounds located at the park. The tent campground contains 29 campsites with picnic tables and water at the sites, a central bathhouse, and playground. The wrangler campground is designed for campers to bring horses with them and contains 32 campsites all equipped with picnic tables, water, and electricity, a central bathhouse, and playground. The RV campground contains 53 campsites with tables, water, electricity, and 26 with sewer: two bathhouses, and a playground.

There are 13 vacation cabins. Each cabin is set up to sleep either 4 or 6 people. They are fully furnished. Each cabin contains a full size, equipped kitchen, bathroom, living area, and bedrooms. There is also a patio area outside each cabin.

Sagamore Lodge is an original building to the park. It is an assembly hall with a seating capacity of 100. The group lodge is a barrack style bunk house that can accommodate 36 people and is equipped with a kitchen and dining area.

Recreation areas include the swim beach, rental boat dock, basketball court, sand volleyball court, playgrounds, tennis court, ball field, archery range, and recreational field.

The group camp located at Lake LaJoie consists of a central dining hall surrounded by 16 bunk house cabins and two bathhouses. This area also has a basketball court, ball field, volleyball court, and swimming area. There are two leased operations located at the park. The horseback riding stables and golf course.

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:

- Develop equitable distribution of mission-based interpretation, education, and outreach across the system so that everyone can become a steward.
 - When possible, programs should include at least two types of resources, i.e., Cultural resource-based programs should include an element of natural or historic resources, if not both.
 - Utilize multiple avenues to impart the park story to others such as in person events, videos, interactive inter-active panels, and other means that can engage different learning styles as well as different human senses.
- Increase impact beyond state park boundaries by building better stewards through increased interpretive and educational programming that engages and supports our local community. Those include:
 - Chester County Schools
 - Hardeman County Schools
 - Student Clubs at Freed Hardeman University, specifically the Biology Club
 - Chester County Chamber of Commerce

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

Action Plan:

- Ensuring stewardship is prominent in the park by hiring well educated personnel and prioritizing resource management best practices through additional training and job plans.
- Utilizing our fiscal resources to prioritize resource management.
- Manage recreational opportunities that provide visitors with a greater sense of appreciation for the resource.
- Identify one new organization each in the areas of natural resource management and cultural resource management that can be partnered with to create additional knowledge of best practices

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

Action Plan:

- Utilize the GIS team to inventory of existing assets by developing and intuitive data-driven catalog of assets that exist on state park and state forest lands.
- Utilize the GIS team to be proactive in cataloging future assets of unprotected natural and cultural assets that should be protected and sharing data to outside conservation planners, decision makers, researchers, and regulatory agencies through intentional coordination of technology platforms.

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:

- Telling full stories to identify and replicate best practices while establishing new methods of representing diverse, equitable, inclusive and just dialogues and connecting people to the resources of Tennessee State Parks.
- Utilize technology in ways that compliment and expand interpretation within and beyond the park, giving everyone access to becoming a better park steward. Such as QR codes, virtual reality, and utilize a minimum of two sensory types of information at all interpretative signage.

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

Action Plan:

- Develop and maintain a portfolio of programs across multiple types of experiences by including interpretation of natural, historic, and cultural resources.
- Offering 3-5 experiences for all audiences, varying intensity from self-guided to immersive experiences.
- Utilize Friends of Chickasaw, FHU Biology Club, and/or other organizations to create partnership opportunities for program delivery and additional interpreters.
- Ensure that a variety of programs exist from free, to low cost, and high value-high cost programs based on value of the benefit to the participant.

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

Action Plan:

- Develop and maintain diverse and varied resource-based outdoor recreation opportunities across multiple types of experiences by managing recreational use with the stewardship needs of the resource.
- Maintain current resource-based activities such as hiking, swimming, boating, and fishing. Ensure that these are maintained and improved to a superior level before additional activities are offered.
- Continue to promote and grow current natural resource-based programs currently being offered at the park.
- Identify and develop 2-3 additional cultural resource based interpretative opportunities that can be added to existing program 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:

- Complete deferred maintenance projects in order of priority and leverage bulk purchasing and efficiencies gained through lump-sum funding for deferred maintenance,
- Establish preventive maintenance plans for each operation, structure, and resource and utilize HIPPO management system for implementation.
- Design future facilities that are flexible and that can meet current and future needs.
- Be proactive in the maintenance and repairs of all facilities to ensure that we do not create a future deferred maintenance backlog.

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

Action Plan:

- Implement future plans for visitor use of ATV wheelchairs.
- Construct a fully interactive nature center that is ADA accessible to ensure all visitors can experience most of the natural resources of the park.
- Develop and share adequate information and materials about accessibility features across Tennessee State Parks and aid trip-planning for people with disabilities, design the website to meet or exceed the accessibility feature needs for park visitors.

- Utilize multiple human senses at all the park’s interpretative panels and information.
- Identify additional areas that can be made to be ADA friendly.
- Create ADA compliant trail on western half of Lake Loop Trail.

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

Action Plan:

- Update wayfinding and information signage for organized, effective, and welcoming appearance throughout the park
- As soon as it is available, procure and install adequate broadband services for public and operational demands.
- Maintain existing EV infrastructure and look for additional opportunities to provide these services for the growing demand for EV’s including our guests that use them to travel to our parks and our staff that use them to serve our park.
- Transition of additional department vehicles to EV units.

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:

- Strive to create a stronger and more diverse workforce that better reflects the demographics of our citizens.
- Identify and provide training and professional development opportunities to all personnel to further advance the competency in their positions and career growth and enhance career pathways where every employee has the opportunity for growth and a fulfilling career as a park and recreation professional.
- Maintain and grow the personal relationships between park staff to further promote a positive work environment.
- Empower all staff to make customer service decisions with minimal prior approval from managers to streamline the customer service for our visitors.

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

Action Plan:

- Chickasaw State Park will become a model of compliance and accountability, confidently meeting legal and regulatory standards.
- Chickasaw State Parks will seek to be the model of environmentally and sustainable park operations. This will be measured by increasing our GO Green score each year.

- leverage public and private partnerships to enhance our outcomes and be entrepreneurial in its operational strategy to optimize cost control measures in balance with earned revenues opportunities and resources stewardship requirements.
- Utilize rental and lease programs for equipment rather than purchase
- Create partnerships with other area parks to utilize skills that their park employees have and share our staff knowledge with other parks to reduce the reliance on contractors.
- Continue to transition additional vehicles to EV units.

Park Overview

Site Fact Sheet

Park Name	Chickasaw State Park
Site Manager	Ronald Elder
Area Manager	Zach Tinkle
Park acreage	1,435 Acres
Total number of visitors (FY 2022)	496,246
Total expenses before CO (FY 2022)	\$1,536,646
Total revenues (FY 2022)	\$870,352
Retail cost recovery % ¹	147%
Park cost recovery %	56.7%
Average expense per visitor (FY 2022)	\$3.10
Average revenue per visitor (FY 2022)	\$1.75
Gross profit or loss	(\$666,294)
Total full-time available positions / filled	17/15
Total part-time available positions / filled	10/10
Primary feeder markets	Jackson, Memphis, Nashville, North Mississippi
Primary reasons people visit	Camping, hiking, horseback riding, fishing
Opportunities for improvement	Improve interpretative opportunities, additional emphasis on natural resources.

Key Attractions

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

- Lake Placid and Lake LaJoie
- RV Campground, Wrangler Campground, and Tent Campground- 114 Sites total
- 13 Vacation Cabins
- Sagamore Lodge
- Recreation Areas- Boat Dock, Swim Beach, playgrounds, tennis court, ball field, archery range
- Lake LaJoie Group Camp - 123 capacity
- Group Lodge – 36 capacity
- Leased Operations including horseback riding stables and golf course

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 Chickasaw State Park. The findings and observations are not intended to be an exhaustive review of all issues present but provide a basic understanding of the predominant issues that contribute to the site’s current operating conditions. The assessment includes the following:

1. Site and Facilities Assessment
2. Operational Assessment
3. Financial Assessment

Site and Facility Assessment

Methodology

Facility and asset conditions are rated using a differential scale of excellent, good, fair, or poor. Descriptions of conditions that are attributed to each of these findings are also provided.

Scale of Conditions	
Rating	General Description
Excellent	Facilities/amenities are in ‘excellent’ condition when they show little or no maintenance or repair problems. Facilities do not feature any major design or operational issues or flaws that contribute to diminished use or increased maintenance or upkeep. Facilities are easy to clean and maintain in order to place them back into public use and the users perceive them to be in excellent shape.
Good	Facilities/amenities are in ‘good’ condition when they show only minor maintenance or repair problems. Most maintenance issues with these facilities typically appear to be the result of age and/or heavy use. Facilities may only feature minor design or operational issues that contribute to diminished use or increased maintenance or upkeep. Facilities are moderately easy to clean and maintain in order to place them back into service and the users perceive them to be adequate for their use, but probably not in excellent shape.
Fair	Facilities/amenities are in ‘fair’ condition when they show significant maintenance or repair problems. Facilities generally exhibit ongoing maintenance issues that appear to be the result of age, heavy use, or design or operational flaws. Some maintenance and repair needs may compound their fair condition by being deferred because of budget and/or resource limitations. Facilities require more effort to clean and maintain before placing them back into service and the users may perceive them as being less than adequate for their use and in a state of deterioration. The facility or structure may need of major repair or replacement.

Poor	Facilities/amenities are in 'poor' condition when they show significant, on-going maintenance or repair problems that ultimately may result in suspended use for repair/replacement. Maintenance and repair issues are possibly the result of poor maintenance and clearly the result of age, heavy use, or design or operational flaws. Problems with the facilities are often compounded over time due to consistently deferred maintenance and repair because of budget and/or resource limitations. Facilities may feature major design or operational issues that contribute to diminished use or increased maintenance or upkeep. Facilities require excessive effort to clean and maintain before placing them back into service and the users often perceive them as being inadequate for their use and in a state of serious deterioration. The facility or structure may need of major repair or replacement.
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Facility Inventory and Assessment

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

Site Asset / Amenity	Quantity	Condition
Cabins	13	Excellent
Sagamore Lodge	1	Good
RV Campground	53 sites	Excellent
Wrangler Campground	32 sites	Good
Tent Campground	29 sites	Fair
Group Camp	1	Good
Group Lodge	1	Good/Fair
Shelters	7	Good
Restroom Facilities	4	Good
Office/visitor center	1	Good
Restaurant	1	Poor
Park Residences	3	Good
Maintenance Shop	1	Fair

Trail Inventory and Assessment

Trail Name	Mileage	Condition
Fern Creek Trail	0.98	Good condition
Forked Pine Trail	0.89	Good condition
Friends Trail	1.19	Good condition, some steep areas to possibly reroute
Lake LaJoie Paddle Trail	1.22	Good condition
Lake LaJoie Trail	1.94	Fair condition, need improvement to trail corridor and routing due to natural elements.
Lake Placid Water Trail	1.35	Good condition
Lake Shore Trail	1.96	Good condition

Owens Spring Trail	0.79	Good condition
Tent Loop Trail	0.35	Good condition
Grand Total	10.67	

All trails are constructed in a sustainable manner. The only major trail that needs improvement is Lake LaJoie trail. While not in bad shape there is improvement to be made in the corridor. All other trails are in above average shape and issues are noted and repaired during monthly formal trail inspections.

New Assets Needed

None

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 Chickasaw 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 for public access to the park, the facilities, and the grounds.
- Maintain park drinking water and wastewater programs to state standards.
- Provide for public safety for visitors and protection of natural and cultural resources.
- Provide for maintenance of grounds facilities and infrastructure.
- Provide for basic, non-staff supported day-use activities with informational signage, trash cans and restroom facilities.

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 Chickasaw State Park have been identified as **important services**:

- Provide for basic, non-staff supported day-use activities (such as hiking and picnicking) with trails and picnic tables.
- Provide a full range of environmental, cultural and recreational programs.
- Offer park-specific information at the Visitor Center and Nature Center.
- Provide educational programs for schools and organized groups.

CATEGORY 3 – VISITOR SUPPORTED SERVICES *[Almost exclusively supported by earned revenue]*

Visitor supported programs, services and facilities are those discretionary services that the agency may provide when additional funding or revenue exists to offset the cost of providing those services. Category 3 services provide added value above and beyond what is required or expected. The criteria for programs or services to be classified as visitor supported are:

- The services expand, enhance or support Core Services, Important Services and the quality of life of the visitors, community or stakeholders.
- The services are supported, valued and well utilized and provide an appropriate and valuable public benefit.
- The services generate income or funding from sponsorships, grants, user fees or other sources that offset some or all of their cost and/or provide 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 Chickasaw State Park have been identified as **visitor supported services**:

- Operate facilities for business meetings, weddings, etc.
- Operate and provide retail support services for the gift shop.
- Provide support services for 13 rental cabins.
- Provide support services for 114 Tent/ RV/ Wrangler campsites.
- Provide support services for picnic shelters, group camp, and group lodge.

Personnel / Staffing Review

Personnel and staffing at Chickasaw State Park represent the largest area of budgetary expense at an average of 66.2% of the total operating budget each year for the last three complete years, which is \$19,680 more than the target of labor costs not exceeding 65% of total operating expenditures. The tables below and on the following page provide a basic review of the current staffing at the site.

Full Time Equivalent Employees

Position / Title	Quantity (FTE)	Compensation Total
Park Manager 2	1	*
Park Ranger 3	1	*
Park Ranger 2	2	*
Account Clerk	1	\$37,152
Admin Asst 1	1	\$42,924
Clerk 2	1	\$27,780
Building Maintenance Worker3	1	\$42,924
Building Maintenance Worker 2	4	\$152,352
Building Maintenance Worker 1	2	\$68,472
Custodial Worker Supervisor 1	1	\$33,900
Custodial Worker 2	1	\$30,264
Conservation Worker 1	1	\$30,504
TOTAL	17	\$706,884

**Law enforcement compensation confidential by TN law.*

Part Time Employees

Position / Title	Quantity	Compensation Total
Laborer	3	\$82,485
TOTAL		\$82,485

Labor Support

Labor Support	Annual Hours
Volunteers	615
Community Service Workers	60
Engineering and Construction Crews	
Resource Management Crews	
Other: _____	
TOTAL	675

Total Labor Compensation Expense

Labor Type	Labor Expense
Full Time Equivalent Employees	\$706,884
Part Time Employees	\$82,485
TOTAL Annual Labor Expense	\$789,369

Additional Future Positions Needed

Position / Title	Quantity	FTE or PT	Year Needed	Justification
Park Ranger 2	2	FTE	2024	Likely assuming primary enforcement role on the adjacent State Forest
Clerk 3	1	FTE	2029	Anticipation of new office/visitor center
TOTAL	3			

Financial Performance

Revenue per available unit (**Rev Per Unit**) for the last four years in park facilities is detailed in the table below.

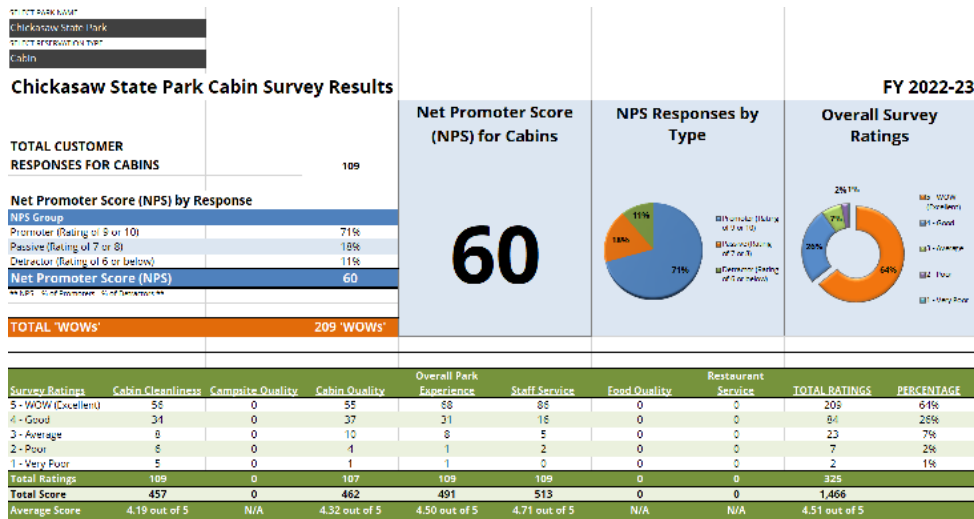
Current Rev Per Unit

Fiscal Year	Cabins Rev Per Unit	Group Camp/ Lodging Rev Per Unit	Campsites Rev Per Unit	Day Use Rev Per Unit
2019	44.15	53.58	4.55	6.17
2020	45.63	37.08	5.43	5.05
2021	75.48	33.5	8	6.55
2022	74.21	63.74	8.38	6.45

Projected Rev Per Unit - Based on current Rev Per Unit trends at the park and any known developments over the next four years.

Fiscal Year	Cabins Rev Per Unit	Group Camp/Lodge Rev Per Unit	Campsites Rev Per Unit	Day Use Rev Per Unit
2023	75.00	62.00	8.50	6.50
2024	75.00	63.00	10.50	6.90
2025	76.00	63.50	11.00	7.30
2026	77.00	64.00	11.50	8.60

Customer Service



Platform / Site	Year	Customer Satisfaction Level
Google	2023	4.6/5
Yelp	2023	4.5/5
Facebook	2023	4.6/5
TripAdvisor	2023	4/5

Professional Development and Training

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

- One staff member ACA Kayak Instructor Certification
- Park Ranger 3 obtaining training certification for LE
- Certified Interpretative Guide for all staff involved in Education
- Certified Interpretative Host for all staff and campground hosts
- Routine management and skill 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

- Replace all park signs with Facility Design Standard signs
- Full renovation of Tent and Wrangler Campgrounds (Funded Capital Project)

- c. Interior renovation of Group lodge.

2. Operations and Staffing

- a. Reclassify park positions to park specific position titles
- b. Two Park Ranger 2 positions to fulfil duties of state forest becoming primary jurisdiction.
- c. Additional three acres of native plantings to further reduce mowing.

3. Customer Service / Visitor Experience

- a. Changing ISP as soon as Aeneas Gig internet is available
- b. Complete museum/nature center
- c. Ensure all current trails are compliant with ADA trail wheelchair

Mid Term Recommendations (2–5 years)

1. Site and Facilities

- a. Water Distribution Lines replacement

2. Operations and Staffing

- a. Ensure that part-time/job share staffing is utilized in a way that best supports customer needs and the mission of the park.
- b. Make sure all position titles reflect the nature of the work done by the employees in those positions.

3. Customer Service / Visitor Experience

- a. Determine and implement a plan to repurpose the restaurant building. Due to demand for assembly hall/venue space this will likely be the optimal repurposing of the building.
- b. Convert West half of Lakeshore Trail to ADA accessible.

Long Term Recommendations (5+ years)

1. Site and Facilities

- a. Utilize preventative maintenance schedules and no longer deferring maintenance to ensure all recently renovated facilities remain in optimum condition
- b. Office/visitor center replacement

2. Operations and Staffing

- a. Additional administration staff to allow longer office hours each day at office/visitor center

3. Customer Service / Visitor Experience

- a. Work with cellular providers to adequately provide service within the park or addition of mini repeaters throughout the park to provide coverage.

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 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, and providing a variety of quality outdoor recreational experiences. Chickasaw intends to preserve and protect, in perpetuity, unique examples of natural, cultural, and scenic areas and provide a variety of safe, quality outdoor experiences through a well-planned and professionally managed system of state parks and to provide memorable and educational experience for all the visitors of Chickasaw State Park. Chickasaw will forever be managed to protect, preserve, and enhance the natural, cultural, and recreational features of the park for future generations to use and enjoy.

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. The rangers of Chickasaw will provide educational and interpretive programming to the public on the resources of the park. These programs will be targeted to promoting the parks natural

- value. These values include recreational, aesthetic, and ecological services provided by the conservation and preservation of the state park
- B. Create an inventory of plants, animals and ecological communities within the park in order to improve management of the parks natural resources.
 - C. Develop and implement a management strategy to manage or eradicate invasive and exotic pest from the park.
 - D. The park staff will ensure that all repairs to current historic buildings are done in a way that will preserve the historic integrity of the structure. National Park historic preservation guidelines will be utilized.
 - E. Submit WPA cabins and Sagamore Lodge for National Register recognition.
 - F. Interpretative Panels will be used to inform the public of recreational activities of the park and responsible ways to recreate. These or additional panels will discuss the natural resources and history of Chickasaw State Park. Panels will also serve as a way to inform the public of the rules and regulation of the park as well as how to be a responsible steward and user of the resource, both cultural and natural.
 - G. Continue to identify natural areas of the park that are currently actively being maintained, i.e. mowed fields, that can be converted to native plantings to provide both habitat, food sources, and pollination areas while not impacting visitor uses or expectations.

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
Mixed Hardwood/Loblolly Pine Forest	1000 acres	Good	Good forest health with minimal invasive species. Highly erodible soil.
Lake Placid and Lake LaJoie	56 and 54 Acres	Excellent	The Lakes are in good condition with some erosion and abundance of aquatic life.
Sagamore Lodge	1	Good	Historical and very popular venue on the park. From an historical view this building retains almost all of its historical value.

Group Camp WPA Cabins	2	Fair	From a structural standpoint the buildings are in good condition. From an historical stand point, due to previous repairs and renovations these buildings have lost their historical value
Lake Placid WPA Cabins (1-7)	7	Excellent	Cabins 1-7 have undergone major historical restoration. All original materials were salvaged in the restoration. All modern materials were removed. All new materials are historically accurate or are actually historic materials. (the poplar siding was replaced where needed with 100 year old material)
Cabin 13 (WPA – Original Superintendent Residence)	1	Good	Building is a log cabin. During recent remodeling work, it was determined that the original logs were structurally sound however deterioration and damage from previous renovations was uncovered when T1-11 siding was removed. Unable to historically repair the building and the decision was made to make it match the 1948 cabins in appearance. This was done with no additional damage to the logs so that future historical restoration is a possibility.
Spring House	1	Good	WPA structure. Original water source for the park until 1948
Fields-Brewer Cabin	1	Good	1876 Log Cabin originally built in Jacks Creek approximately 15 miles from the park. Was moved to the present site in 1998.

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
Mixed Hardwood/Loblolly Pine Forest	<p>Public Use: All facilities are within or adjacent to this forest. Main access is horse trails and hiking trails</p> <p>General Management: Overall the health of the forest is good. Management should include removal of invasive species as well as removal of Pines affected by Pine Bark Beetles to reduce spread. Erosion in all areas should be monitored.</p>	High
Lake Placid and Lake Lajoie	<p>Public Use: Swim Beach at both parks as well as a hiking trail that follows the entire shoreline.</p> <p>General Management: Manage to mitigate shoreline erosion and sediment runoff due to erosion in the watershed. Ensure herbicide applications near lake are appropriate for use near water.</p>	High
Sagamore Lodge	<p>Public Use: Reservation and Fee access only</p> <p>General Management: Monitor as all other buildings for building envelope, pest, and mechanical issues. All repairs need to be done in a way that maintains the historical integrity of the building</p>	High
Group Camp WPA Cabins	<p>Public Use: Reservation and Fee access only as part of the Group Camp</p> <p>General Management: Monitor as all other buildings for building envelope, pest, and mechanical issues. All repairs need to be done in a way that does not further degrade the historical integrity or value of the building.</p>	Moderate
Lake Placid WPA Cabins (1-7)	<p>Public Use: Reservation and Fee access only</p> <p>General Management: Monitor as all other buildings for building envelope, pest, and mechanical issues. All repairs need to be done in a way that maintains the historical integrity of the building</p>	High
Cabin 13 (WPA – Original Superintendent Residence)	<p>Public Use: Reservation and Fee access only</p> <p>General Management: Monitor as all other buildings for building envelope, pest, and mechanical issues. All repairs need to be done in a way that does not further degrade the historical integrity or value of the building. Pursue capital funding to restore the building to historical accuracy.</p>	Moderate

Spring House	<p>Public Use: Adjacent to the Lakeshore Trail. Full public access.</p> <p>General Management: Monitor the building for building envelope and pest issues. Monitor runoff and erosion around building to ensure debris does not accumulate against building. Ensure building is regularly monitored for vandalism and that damage is removed immediately to reduce “broken window theory”.</p>	High
Fields-Brewer Cabin	<p>Public Use: Only open to the public during interpretative programs. Exterior is full public access.</p> <p>General Management: Monitor the building for building envelope and pest issues. Ensure building is regularly monitored for vandalism and that damage is removed immediately to reduce “broken window theory”.</p>	High

Land Management Strategies

In some cases, strategic land acquisitions or divestitures are necessary to meet the overall resource management goals and objectives of the park. This can include opportunities to address buffers, watersheds, viewsheds, inholdings, and adjacent properties. The table below details **general strategies** for land management. Timelines refer to Short Term (1-3 years), Mid Term (4-6 years), and Long Term (7-10 years).

Land Management Strategy	Timeline
Transfer watershed for Lake LaJoie and Lake Placid from TDF to TSP	Long Term

Supplemental Information

Natural Resource Assessment

Chickasaw State Park is a 1,280-acre resort park found in Chester and Hardeman counties within the Coastal Plain region of Tennessee. The park is noted as having some of the highest elevations in West Tennessee. Currently the park is characterized by a landscape of rolling sandy hills with mixed deciduous forest and loblolly pine.

Because much of Chickasaw State Parks land was cleared for farming, prior to the establishment of the park, much of the trees on the park are augmented populations. Loblolly pine was introduced to the park as it is a fast-growing tree that would anchor the sandy soil of the park. However, with time many hardwood species including white oak, red maple, sweetgum, sassafras, flowering dogwood, redbud, and tulip poplar have recolonized much of the park. However, because of the history of the area, many exotic and evasive species have moved into the area. Some commonly observed species include Chinese privet, Japanese honeysuckle, kudzu, mimosa, and Asian stilt grass.

Many of the trails in the park are in very good condition but if left unattended could become a risk for park visitors. To continue to provide a safe trail system the park staff visit the trails on a regular basis to correct any small issue that might arise before they can become a bigger hazard.

Biological studies of the park are severally outdated, and we need species counts for the park. To rectify the rangers have begun documenting species found, so that we can begin to compile list of species found on the park and surrounding areas. We are also planning to involve local universities to help with community organized events to document the wildlife found in the park.

Though an inventory of species in the park is still needed many invasive or exotic plants have been identified in Chickasaw State Park. Eight currently identified species on Chickasaw State Park are ranked as either a “severe threat” or a “significant threat” according to the Tennessee Exotic Pest Plant Council (TNEPPC) (Table 1 below).

Table 1. Invasive Exotic Plants Identified in Chickasaw State Park that Rank as Severe or Significant Threats by TNEPPC.

Species Name	Common Name	TN EPPC Threat Rank	Population Size in Park
<i>Allium vineale</i>	Wild Garlic	Significant	Infrequent
<i>Broussonetia papyrifera</i>	Paper Mulberry	Severe	Widespread
<i>Ligustrum sinense</i>	Chinese Privet	Severe	Widespread
<i>Lonicera japonica</i>	Japanese honeysuckle	Severe	Common
<i>Microstegium vimineum</i>	Japanese Stiltgrass	Severe	Common
<i>Pueraria montana</i>	Kudzu	Severe	Common
<i>Rosa multiflora</i>	Multiflora Rose	Severe	Infrequent
<i>Sorghum halepense</i>	Johnson Grass	Severe	Infrequent

The park staff is looking into ways of controlling the spread or eradication of these plant populations. Understanding the threats of these plants and the possible ecological damage they can cause will be considered along with the potential damage caused by eradication. Possible control/eradication technics could include, controlled burn, chemical treatment (herbicide), and mechanical treatments (mowing or cutting).

Forest health issues such as thousand cankers disease gypsy moths, and emerald ash borer are known to occur within the state. The park actively controls the introduction of these pest by monitoring firewood importation and, in cooperation with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, set out traps for invasive pest to see if they are in the area.

Cultural Resource Assessment

Chickasaw State Park is home to many beautiful examples of the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) work. The original cabins on the park (cabins 1-7 and cabin 13 which was originally a ranger residence), the group

lodge (originally the swim bath house), Sagamore lodge (National Historic Register eligible building), two group camp cabins, and the LaJoie Ranger Residence were all constructed by the CCC. The CCC was also responsible for building the two lakes that are on the park along with state highway 100 which allows access to the park.

The park is home to an 1870's style cabin that was donated to the park by a local family. The cabin is used as a living history exhibit and is the focal piece of our "frontier days festival".

The major threats to the cultural resources of Chickasaw State Park are maintenance issues associated with the use of the resources and vandalism. To combat these threats, the park staff monitors the resources and makes repairs when needed in a way that continues the period theme of the resource.

Target Elements

Inventory work is in need at the park. No current, large-scale studies or inventory work have been conducted. We are currently reaching out to biologists to get current inventories of species found of the park.

1. Communities

In order to determine ecological system within Chickasaw State Park, Chester and Hardeman counties Landuse/Landcover data from the United States Geological Service (USGS), Biological Resources Division, National Wetlands Research Center were referenced. Community names and descriptions are based on ecological systems described by NatureServe. The CES numbers provided are from NatureServe databases.

a) East Gulf Coastal Plain Northern Dry Upland Hardwood Forest (CES203.483.1307) - This system represents dry, upland, predominantly hardwood forests of limited portions of the East Gulf Coastal Plain of western Kentucky and Tennessee, northern Mississippi, and Alabama. The core range of this type lies within the Northern Hilly Coastal Plain (EPA Level IV Ecoregion 65e), which includes the Northern Pontotoc Ridge (222Cf), Upper Loam Hills (222Cg), and Northern Loessal Hills (222Ce) Ecomap subsections. These areas occupy the eastern margin of the Upper East Gulf Coastal Plain where elevation is greatest, and influence of loess is less than adjacent areas to the west. The vegetation has been broadly considered distinct from other coastal plain forests but has received almost no specific study. Although vastly forested when compared to the loess plains to the west, most of the vegetation is recovering from one or more forms of severe disturbance. *Quercus alba* dominates the upland forests which have been studied in a limited portion of this area, but communities have not been described to the same detail as in other ecological systems.

b) East Gulf Coastal Plain Northern Mesic Hardwood Forest (CES203.477.1325) - This system includes mesic deciduous hardwood forests of inland portions of the East Gulf Coastal Plain, including Alabama, Mississippi, western Kentucky, and western Tennessee. This system covers parts of the more mesic forests in the coastal plain portion of the Western Mesophytic Forest Region referred to as mesophytic mixed hardwoods, as well as mesic forests in the adjacent "Oak-Pine-Hickory" region to the south. Examples of this system occur on slopes and ravines between dry

uplands and stream bottoms. Mesic forests of the loess bluffs are treated in separate ecological systems, being confined to that landform of steep bluffs and ravines on deep loess. The most characteristic feature of the vegetation in some examples may be *Fagus grandifolia*, but a variety of other hardwood species may also be found in the overstory, and *Fagus grandifolia* may not always be present. Some stands may be dominated by *Fagus grandifolia* and *Quercus alba*, others by *Quercus alba* or *Quercus pagoda* with other mesic hardwoods. In addition, *Pinus taeda* may be common in some examples in the southern portion of the range and, depending on previous disturbance and site conditions, may be locally dominant [see CEGLO04763]. To the south this system is replaced by Southern Coastal Plain Mesic Slope Forest (CES203.476), which is within the range of *Pinus glabra* and *Magnolia grandiflora*.

- c) East Gulf Coastal Plain Small Stream and River Floodplain Forest (CES203.559) - This is a predominantly forested system of the East Gulf Coastal Plain associated with small brown water rivers and creeks. In contrast to East Gulf Coastal Plain Large River Floodplain Forest (CES203.489), it has fewer major geomorphic floodplain features typically associated with large river floodplains. Those features that are present tend to be smaller and more closely intermixed with one another, resulting in less obvious vegetational zonation. Bottomland hardwood tree species are typically important and diagnostic, although mesic hardwood species are also present in areas with less inundation, such as upper terraces and possibly second bottoms. Flooding occurs annually, but the water table usually is well below the soil surface throughout most of the growing season. Areas impacted by beaver impoundments are also included in this system.

2. State and Federally Listed Animals and Plants

There is one listed animal species, *Noturus gladiator* or Piebald Madtom (Near Threatened and has been petitioned for federal protection) known from the tailwaters of the two impoundments on Chickasaw State Park. Grays Creek and Piney Creek are both historic localities on for the Piebald Madtom. The species is threatened due to changes in flow regimes and water quality. Future work with this species is underway with assistance from Austin Peay State University (Dr. Rebecca Johansen) and the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science (Matt Wagner).

There is one listed plant species, *Listera australis* or Southern Twayblade (State Endangered) found on Chickasaw State Park. Threats to the species are still being identified but suitable habitat appears to be the limiting factor. The staff at Chickasaw State Park will continue to monitor the population and avoid possible damage to the area as well as preserving the runoff area that leads to this small population of plants.

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.

To manage and protect the natural, cultural, and scenic areas that are Chickasaw State Park, and to provide a safe, meaningful, and memorable educational experience for the visitors of the park. We hope to convey the whole story of the native Americans, early settlers and how the land became a state park involving the Civilian Conservation Corps. Along with these ideas we would also like to be able to interpret what natural resources we have available and why Chickasaw has such a diverse environment.

Interpretation, Programming and Education Goals

Goal: Tennessee State Parks will be the most accessible, welcoming, and inviting system of parks that enriches Tennesseans and visitors through excellent interpretation, education, and resource-based recreation.

Objective: *accessible, welcoming, and inviting to all:* create quality and varied programs of interpretation, recreation, and outreach so that all audiences feel welcome and invited.

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

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

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

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

Strategic Programs and Services

The strategies detailed below with corresponding action plans are aligned with the Comprehensive Strategic Plan of Tennessee State Parks.

Strategy – Telling Full Stories: to identify and replicate best practices while establishing new methods for representing diverse, equitable, inclusive, and just dialogues.

Action Plan:

- Ensure that all full-time staff presenting interpretive programming at Chickasaw completed the Telling Full Stories Training conducted by IP&E and has access to best

resources to be able to tell full stories past or present to the best of their ability to make sure park guests have a retaining enjoyable educational experience.

- Every effort should be made for part time employees to complete Telling Full Stories Training.
- All historical programming should include multivocality and focus on providing visitors opportunities to reflect on what the history means to them and how the events and impacts resonate through today.

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

Action Plan:

- When better internet and improved cellular connections are available, QR and other ways to link information should be included in interpretative programs and panels. This will make it easier for the park visitor to learn more about the topic presented than can be covered by a single panel.
- Utilize virtual reality to allow a more immersive experience for the park visitor. Initially this is being done at the state level for historical interpretation, there are park specific instances at Chickasaw that would provide a unique way to show land use changes over time and be able to tie ecological communities that have been at the park with the different land use from the Middle Woodland period through today.
- Increase the use of distance learning for potential park users and current users to experience the park more frequently. These could include Facebook live, YouTube videos, and interactive sessions such as could be done via Zoom. The Zoom interpretation could be an additional option for fee-based programming.

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

Action Plan:

- Develop the park portfolio using the latest technology from the IPE.
- Utilize digital means to expand programming offerings.
- When possible programs should include at least two types of resources, i.e. Cultural resource based programs should include an element of natural or historic resources, if not both.
- All programs developed should be analyzed for the amount of time and monetary resources necessary to research and present the program. The cost and/or value of the program should be passed to the visitor. There will always be high quality free programs available alongside fee-based programs. Fee based programs value should also be reflected in the pricing. A simple nature-based craft should not cost \$20 per person and a guided float should not cost the same or less than the price for the public to rent the boat for the same amount of time.

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

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

Action Plan:

- The appropriate management of resources will be accounted for prior to developing any programming opportunities. This may limit the physical area the program may take place in, the size of group, the frequency of the program, and other ways to limit damage to the resource.
- Three self-directed/guided interpretative experiences will be developed in 2023 for the park visitors. Each year following one additional self-directed interpretative experience will be developed to either complement or replace one of the original.
- Work with community groups, clubs, or professional organizations to invite to provide interpretative opportunities within the park. These could include birding clubs, photography clubs, University student organizations, astronomy organizations, and other entities that align with the park mission and story.
- Identify a group within West Tennessee or North Mississippi that we could partner with to assist in providing programming opportunities for park visitors with various disabilities to experience the park and the park story through interpretative opportunities.

HELPFUL DEFINITIONS:

- Nonpersonal Interpretation: Interpretive media that do not require a person to deliver a message (i.e. exhibits, waysides, brochures, signs, magazines, books, etc.).
- Personal Interpretation: One person or persons providing interpretation to another person or persons.
- Interpretive Program: Activities, presentations, publications, audio-visual media, signs, and exhibits that convey key heritage resource messages to audiences. (Adapted from US Fish & Wildlife Service)
- Interpretation: a purposeful approach to communication that facilitates meaningful, relevant, and inclusive experiences that deepen understanding, broaden perspectives, and inspire engagement with the world around us.

Financial Performance Goals

Financial performance goals are a critical performance management tool of the Tennessee State Park System. While the financial performance of parks are managed more intently at the system level, individual parks are expected to recover a portion of their operating costs through the generation of earned revenues where appropriate and to contribute to the system goals. The majority of earned revenues at state parks are generated through facility usage (campsites, cabins, lodge rooms, rentable pavilions, etc.), the delivery of fee-based programs and services, equipment rental and usage, and retail sales. Other forms of revenue generation come from golf courses and restaurants where those amenities are present. That said, not all parks have the same ability to generate earned revenues because the availability of facilities or programs vary widely from one park to the next. The “recovery” of operational costs by earned revenues is referred to as “cost recovery”. Operating costs beyond those supported by earned revenues represents the extent to which state funding support operations at each park.

The table below represents the overall park cost recovery for this specific park for the most recent fiscal year and forecast estimates for the upcoming five years. These estimates are based on projection estimates for known and foreseeable costs and recovery figures.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE GOALS						
	Current Cost Recovery (2022)	Target Cost Recovery: FY 2023	Target Cost Recovery: FY 2024	Target Cost Recovery: FY: 2025	Target Cost Recovery: FY 2026	Target Cost Recovery: FY 2027
Park Overall	56.7%	53.9%	50.0%	58.0%	58.0%	60.0%

