

# Thomas Oscar Fuller State Park Strategic Management Plan

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**2023 – 2033**



## Table of Contents

<b>Park Purpose, Vision, History and Description</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Goals, Objectives and Action Plans</b> .....	<b>4</b>
THE RESOURCES: Exemplary Natural and Cultural Stewardship .....	4
THE VISITOR: Welcoming and Inviting to All .....	5
THE AMENITIES: Well-Maintained Facilities and Amenities.....	7
THE OPERATIONS: Operational Excellence.....	9
<b>Park Overview</b> .....	<b>10</b>
Site Fact Sheet .....	10
Key Attractions .....	10
<b>Site and Operations Assessment</b> .....	<b>11</b>
Site and Facility Assessment.....	11
Operational Assessment.....	13
Summary of Key Recommendations .....	18
<b>Resource Management Plan</b> .....	<b>19</b>
Resource Management Objectives .....	19
Resource Inventory and Assessment .....	21
Management Strategies .....	22
Land Management Strategies .....	23
<b>Interpretive Programming and Education Plan</b> .....	<b>24</b>
Interpretation, Programming and Education Goals .....	24
Strategic Programs and Services .....	25
<b>Financial Pro Forma</b> .....	<b>28</b>

## Park Purpose, Vision, History and Description

### A. Purpose

The purpose of Thomas Oscar Fuller State Park (TO Fuller) is to open the door to safe, quality, and transformative *re-creational* adventures for visitors; to fiercely protect the wild green places, animals, and archaeological sites that we hold sacred within its acreage through responsible management, committed leadership, and enforcement; and to facilitate educational experiences that encourage our visitors to develop deeper and more meaningful stewardship through interpretation and community policing.

### B. Mission

The Mission of TO Fuller State Park is to:

- facilitate the vibrant health and wellbeing of the communities and visitors we have served historically and presently
- honor our small part of Mother Earth *with loving care* expressed through responsible stewardship, intelligent management of operations and natural and archaeological resources, fierce protection of the forests, wetlands, grasslands, swampy and ephemeral creeks the park is composed of, and
- Continue and extend Dr. Thomas Oscar Fuller’s vision for Memphians, nature, and society as expressed in his writings 90+ years ago

### C. History

TO Fuller State Park was established in 1938 as the Shelby Bluffs Negro State Park, through the purchase of the original acreage by the state from the City of Memphis. The name was changed to honor Memphian Dr. Thomas Oscar Fuller in 1942 a few weeks before his passing. Dr. Fuller was an influential Black Memphian who advocated for human rights for the formerly enslaved and their descendants during the time of great promise and peril following the end of the Reconstruction Period. It was one of the first 4 state parks in the new Tennessee State Parks system. Fuller Park operated as one of two state parks in the state set aside for Black Americans during the Jim Crow Era until the late 1960s, receiving significantly less resources, care, and planning than the “Whites Only” state parks developed at the same time until the 1980s (Bloom, 2008). While the Black Civilian Conservation Corps members—young men recruited from Memphis and surrounding areas (inadvertent archaeologists)—were excavating the bluff to construct a swimming pool, the remains of a Mississippian-era village, burial, and mound site were uncovered. The state first reached out to the University of Tennessee, then later the University of Memphis in the excavation, preservation, and management of the village site. Originally located outside of the City of Memphis, both the park as well as the neighboring historic community of Boxtown (founded by freedmen) were annexed in the late 1960s. Although the park is no longer legally segregated, it continues to provide a safe place to barbecue, walk, and swim for city residents, the Greater Memphis Area, and out of town visitors.

### D. Vision

We envision TO Fuller State Park as a beautiful example of:

- A healthy, wild place in West Tennessee where responsible and intelligent conservation and resource management allow for the various ecological areas of the park to explode and thrive with life and biodiversity.
- A welcoming, resilient, and invested community of “*stakeholding stewards*” that is a beautiful reflection of the people—past and present—that make and shape the state of Tennessee and excites a spirit of care and respect
- An easily accessible recreational space that allows the power of play to intensely engage bodies, hearts, and minds in safe, healthy, and transformative ways that draw folks from all walks of life and benefit individuals, communities, and society.

### E. Description

TO Fuller Park is over 1,200 Acres of Chickasaw Bluffs, Mississippian bottomlands, and wetlands, forest, and grassland tucked in the Southwest corner of the state. Park features and amenities include primitive and RV campgrounds; 4 shelters of various sizes available to the public through reservation and first come/first serve; the former golf club house-turned Shelby Bluff Center for event rentals; the interpretive center; the Wildlife Habitat Area and 3 ½ mile tire trail; an Olympic-sized pool accompanied by a splash pad; several miles of trails up and down the bluffs; fishing pond.

## 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: To provide multiple avenues for “friends of the park” and casual visitors to meaningfully collaborate in the life of Fuller through:

- Volunteer events
- TO Fuller Youth Conservation Corps Program
- Quarterly Community Meetings
- Special event planning and implementation with community members and TSP. Marketing, for example Memorial Walks and music festivals
  - Special events would also provide experience, training, and networking opportunities for Ranger Corps
- Annual Park-Sponsored Events and Festivals such as Fuller Fest; 5Ks
- Park-sponsored Interpretive and Recreational Programs
- Increasing accessibility for differently-abled visitors and senior citizens.

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

Action Plan: To increase the biodiversity and health of the various ecological areas of the park—Wetlands, Forest, Grasslands, waterways by:

- Developing and implementing a resource management plan for each distinct area of the park—Wetlands, Forests, Grasslands, Waterways
- Establish a pool of regular volunteers to assist in stewardship efforts
- Ensure all park staff is involved in resource management
- Education of park visitors and the public of the importance of the resource through programming and outreach.

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

Action Plan: To increase the information needed to direct decisions by:

- Soliciting community feedback through surveys and focus groups
- Researching current trends/studies in resource stewardship to see what is applicable
- Using surveys to evaluate visitor services, enforcement, and interpretation
- Using the data from traffic counters to determine monthly/seasonal enforcement priorities
- Using the crime data from RMS reports to determine enforcement priorities, LE training needs, and to request additional resources/funding as needed

## 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: To provide an easily accessible recreational space that allows the power of play to intensely engage bodies, hearts, and minds in safe, healthy, and transformative ways that draw folks from all walks of life and benefit individuals, communities, and society.

*Community Engagement/DEI Efforts*

- Working with local partners to increase on-site and off-site programming for senior citizens (example the Senior Biking Program with MPD and WIND CDC).
- Partnering with home-school associations.
- Partnering with nearby libraries for “Reading Ranger” programs.
- Partner with the MPD community liaisons and their teen groups camps and lock-ins with Ranger-led programs.
- Partnering with local schools/school system for on-site and off-site programming
- Working with local non-profits and medical professionals to provide programming for citizens recovering from trauma (example grief gardening).

- Partner with local 1st responder agencies and community organizations to evaluate address safety and security concerns for vulnerable populations (women and children, immigrant, etc) and to promote the park as a safe and transformative place for these demographics.
- Continuing Fuller Park representation on the TSP Ranger DEI committee with the planning, fundraising, and implementation of the annual DEI Camp for minority teens as well as recruiting Memphis-Area teens to participate in the annual camp free of charge.
- Partnering with the City of Memphis/MATA and private ride share business such as Lyft and Uber to increase transportation access to the park (like Bicentennial's relationship with Lyft during special events).
- Engage with Spanish-Speaking Visitors (City of Memphis Residents, Immigrants, Tourists).
- Install Spanish-language signs and print Spanish-language pamphlets to increase access and provide a welcoming environment to the large Spanish-speaking population present in the City of Memphis and surrounding areas.
- Partner with Latino Memphis and other agencies that serve local minority populations to host special events and programs.
- Provide bias and Spanish training to all staff; provide annual bias and Spanish-language training to all staff and especially the Ranger Staff.

### *Community Policing/Peacebuilding*

- Investing in crime prevention and practicing community policing as the standard for safety and security through training, staying abreast of current trends, and partnering with local LE agencies and the CRO.
- Hosting quarterly community meetings to share safety and security concerns (seasonal inclement weather emergency planning/response, crime trends, alcohol use, weather related illnesses), and to partner with community to implement solutions to challenges.
- Partner with local 1<sup>st</sup> responder agencies and community organizations to evaluate and address safety and security concerns for vulnerable populations (women and children, immigrant, etc) and to promote the park as a safe and transformative place for these populations.
- Partnering with local organizations on *peacebuilding* and restorative justice efforts for park law offenders.
- Ensure Rangers attend CIT/trauma-informed, Bias, and De-escalation training.
- Bike Enforcement training for Rangers.
- Peacebuilding training for Rangers.
- Partnering with local organizations to adequately and compassionately direct people experiencing homelessness.
- Partnering with neighboring schools to provide programs/soft mentoring opportunities for students interested in going into park law enforcement.

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

Action Plan: Facilitating educational and interpretive experiences that truthfully and respectfully share the stories of the flora, fauna, and peoples of Tennessee by:

- Carefully researching local, regional, and state-wide histories to tell "Fuller Stories" of the black, brown, and indigenous peoples who have shaped the local, regional, and state

histories and legacies but were legally locked out of 98% of state parks until desegregation.

- Carefully researching local, regional, and state-wide histories to tell the stories of women who have shaped local, regional, and state histories and legacies
- Curating an electronic and hard-copy library to be held and maintained in the Interpretive Center of the most up-to-date multidisciplinary research and interpretation.
- Partnering with communities historically associated with or descendant from what is now TO Fuller.

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

Action Plan: To provide an easily accessible recreational space that allows the power of play to intensely engage bodies, hearts, and minds in safe, healthy, and transformative ways that draw folks from all walks of life and benefit individuals, communities, and society

- Partnering with local businesses and community leaders to host and market a wide variety of recreational activities through special use permits and contracts.
  - Partner with local community groups like WIND CDC to provide community-led recreational activities (example the Senior Biking Program with MPD and WIND CDC; REI).
  - Partner with the MPD community liaisons and their teen groups camps and lock-ins with Ranger-led programs.
  - Partner with local community organizations to provide “rentable” gardening areas (like Shelby Farms Park-Shelby County/City of Memphis/State jurisdiction).
- Partner with State Natural Areas and Area 1 Interpretive Specialists to provide regular fee-based (fees to be shared between State Natural Areas and Fuller Park) interpretive programming in the Overton Forest and Ghost River State Natural Areas, as well as other State Natural Areas within 1.5 hours of Fuller Park (example Interpretive Specialist David Haggard’s semi-annual kayak tours of the Ghost River Section). These fee-based programs will promote the park/staff, Area 1, and West TN.
- Promote awareness and use of the Wildlife Habitat Area through programming, education, and outreach. Establish 2 primitive picnic shelters in the WHA that can be used through reservation or first come, first served basis

## 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:

- High Priority: Increase training and upskilling for maintenance workers to improve quality of work and to reduce outside contractual maintenance work, encourage quality applicants for vacant positions, and to improve worker retention.

- Work with the Area 1 Manager and Senior Leadership to evaluate strategies to address maintenance needs for facilities and infrastructure that are not addressed through major or capital maintenance funding sources.
- Draft, maintain, and commit to a preventative/regular maintenance schedule for all facilities, roads, grounds care.
- Track maintenance work using Hippo software so that workers get credit/acknowledgement for completed tasks, and so that challenges in work can be more easily identified and solutions developed (example solution: evaluating the number of FT maintenance positions).

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

Action Plan: Ensure that facilities and resources are accessible to all park visitors.

### *ADA/Differently-Abled Visitors*

- Evaluate current ADA challenges/non-compliance in the visitor, interpretive, and bluff centers; pool house and campground bathhouse and working with the Area 1 manager and West TN Maintenance to improve facilities/bring them back into compliance.
- Evaluate current ADA needs regarding trail access.
- Maintain the Wildlife Habitat Area (WHA) Tire Trail for differently-abled individuals
- Obtain color-blind viewers for the WHA.

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

Action Plan: Ensure that park visitors can easily navigate the park, that facilities are inviting to park visitors, and that style guidelines are followed during construction and renovation.

- Evaluate wayfinding signage to ensure that park visitors can easily find their destination within the park. Work to standardize park signage in alignment with the style guidelines.
- Ensure that facilities are open and inviting to park guests. Work to extend customer service hours in the visitor's center. Maintain clean facilities in good repair. Provide great customer service that makes park visitors feel welcomed.
- Ensure that all remodels, repairs, and new construction adhere to the TN State Parks style guidelines. This helps maintain the consistency of the park atmosphere and aesthetics wherever the visitor goes.



## 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: Investing in the personal and professional wellbeing of staff through:

- Thoughtful performance and development plans for *all staff*.
- Increasing access to upskilling opportunities, recognizing and awarding stellar performance, commitment, and loyalty through employee reward and appreciation efforts as permitted by policy.
- Increase training and upskilling for *all workers* to improve quality of work and to reduce outside contractual maintenance work, encourage quality applicants for vacant positions, and to improve worker retention (*through improved internal customer service*). This will be accomplished by working with the Area 1 Manager and Senior Leadership to evaluate opportunities to provide investment in park's staff—example training, networking and professional development opportunities (assisting other parks, conferences). *High Priority: Increase training, upskilling, and career path opportunities for maintenance workers, especially new hires*

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

Action Plan:

- Work with the Area 1 Manager and Senior Leadership to develop the park budget during the annual budget cycle by:
  - Regularly reviewing the finances of the park to ensure that allotted budgets reflect current conditions and needs surrounding personnel and operational expenditures.
  - Decrease outside sourcing of maintenance work and divert funding to training of maintenance staff with the goal of reducing reliance on outside contractors.
- Partner with Area 1 Manager, Senior Leadership, and Marketing to increase park revenue and move park further towards increased cost recovery with current facilities and amenities including:
  - Special Events
  - Campgrounds
  - Shelters
  - Gift Shop
  - Pool
  - Programming
  - Vendor Contracts

## Park Overview

### Site Fact Sheet

Park Name	Thomas Oscar Fuller State Park
Site Manager	Jessica K. Gossett
Area Manager	Edward Tinkle
Park acreage	1,200+
Total number of visitors (FY 2022)	885,887
Total expenses before CO (FY 2022)	\$867,002
Total revenues (FY 2022)	\$288,856
Retail cost recovery % <sup>1</sup>	145%
Park cost recovery %	33%
Average expense per visitor (FY 2022)	\$0.97
Average revenue per visitor (FY 2022)	\$0.32
Gross profit or loss	(\$578,146)
Total full-time available positions / filled	11 / 8
Total part-time available positions / filled	4 / 1
Primary feeder markets	City of Memphis visitors and immediate surrounding area
Primary reasons people visit	Camping; Family Gatherings/BBQs; Swimming
Opportunities for improvement	Pool

### Key Attractions

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

- Pool (neighboring communities)
- Campground (out of towners)
- Shelters (Greater Memphis Area/Tri-State Area)
- Bluff Center (Greater Memphis Area/Tri-State Area)
- Wildlife Habitat Area/Tire Trail (wildlife viewing/birders/conservationists/Tai Chi adherents/school and homeschool groups)

<sup>1</sup> 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 TO Fuller 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 T.O. Fuller State Park, and provides the assessed condition of each as reviewed in May 2023.

Site Asset / Amenity	Quantity	Condition
Visitor Center	1	Good
Interpretive Center	1	Excellent
Shelby Bluff Center	1	Good
Shelter 1	1	Poor
Shelter 2	1	Fair
Shelter 3	1	Fair
Shelter 4	1	Fair
Pool/house	1	Fair
Ranger Station	1	Fair
Boxtown Ranger House	1	Poor
Mitchell Ranger House	1	Fair
Campground Bathhouse	1	Poor
Campground	45 sites	Fair
Day Use Restroom (near sh. 3)	1	Fair
Concession Stand	1	Poor
Maintenance Shop	1	Fair

## Trail Inventory and Assessment

Trail Name	Total Miles	Condition
Accessible Trail	0.51	Fair
Chucalissa Connector Trail	0.12	Fair
Day Use Trail	0.22	Fair
Discovery Trail	3.63	Poor
Tires to Trails	2.31	Good
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6.69</b>	

## 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
Individual Primitive Campsites and water	Individual sites with fire pits
4 Treehouses/Cabins in WHA	Small cabins/treehouses due to demand
Backcountry camp sites in WHA	Individual primitive sites with fire pits
Primitive Campground Shelter	Water and electrical access/rentable

## 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 T.O. Fuller State Park have been identified as **core services**:

- Community Policing/Law Enforcement
- Grounds and Facility Maintenance
- Resource Management

### **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 T.O. Fuller State Park have been identified as **important services**:

- Interpretive and educational programming
- Trails
- Picnic areas
- General recreational opportunities
- Park specific information at the Visitor Center

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

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

- The services expand, enhance or support Core Services, Important Services and the quality of life of the visitors, community or stakeholders.
- The services are supported, valued and well utilized and provide an appropriate and valuable public benefit.
- The services generate income or funding from sponsorships, grants, user fees or other sources that offset some or all of their cost and/or provides a meaningful return on investment.
- The Services can possibly be provided through outsourcing or use of concessionaires, providing opportunities for community enterprise or services that may not otherwise be provided by the agency.

The following programs and services offered at Thomas Oscar Fuller State Park have been identified as **visitor supported services**:

- Pool
- Shelters
- Annual Junior Ranger Camp
- 5ks
- Fuller Fest
- Gift shop
- Campgrounds

## Personnel / Staffing Review

Personnel and staffing at TO Fuller State Park represent the largest area of budgetary expense at an average of 61% of the total operating budget each year for the last three complete years, which is less than the target of labor costs not exceeding 65% of total operating expenditures. The tables below and on the following page provide a basic review of the current staffing at the site.

### Full Time Equivalent Employees

Position / Title	Quantity (FTE)	Compensation Total
Park Manager 2	1	*
Park Ranger 2	2	*
Conservation Worker 3	1	\$37,800
Conservation Worker 1	3	\$91,212
Custodial Worker 2	1	\$33,120
Administrative Assistant	1	\$42,504
Clerk 2	2	\$55,296
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>\$333,132</b>

\*Law enforcement compensation confidential by TN law.

### Part Time Employees

Position / Title	Quantity	Compensation Total
Lifeguards/ 6 mos	3	\$31,063
Laborer/ 3.5 mos	1	\$8,094
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>\$39,157</b>

### Labor Support

Labor Support	Annual Hours
Volunteers	1,551
Community Service Workers	
Engineering and Construction Crews	
Resource Management Crews	
Other: _____	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,551</b>

### Total Labor Compensation Expense

Labor Type	Labor Expense
Full Time Equivalent Employees	\$333,132
Part Time Employees	\$39,157
<b>TOTAL Annual Labor Expense</b>	<b>\$372,289</b>

### Additional Future Positions Needed

## Thomas Oscar Fuller State Park Strategic Management Plan

Position / Title	Quantity	FTE or PT	Year Needed	Justification
Park Ranger 2	1	FTE	2024	More Ranger staff is needed to handle call volume and situations that frequently arise on the park. When Rangers are on leave or at training it makes covering shifts and operations difficult. Another Ranger position would increase the quality of customer service, increase visitor safety, and allow the park to increase programming and outreach efforts.
Park Ranger 3	1	FTE	2024	A ranger who specializes in safety and security would be able to train ranger staff on necessary law enforcement tactics, monitor and maintain LE and medical equipment, monitor local, regional and state crime trends, develop and maintain excellent relationships with neighboring agencies that share jurisdiction, and sufficiently document safety and security concerns and incidents, and do deeper investigations of crimes with the appropriate authorities (CRO, Environmental Investigators, Area Manager) and Park Manager.
Clerk 3	1	FTE	2024	A current park goal is to be able to open the visitor's center 7 days a week and open the nature center 4 days a week. This cannot be done with current administrative staffing. Having another administrative professional on staff would allow the park to better meet its customer service needs and allow more opportunities for interpretation in the nature center.
Conservation Worker 2	1	FTE	2024	Currently the park has 4 full time maintenance staff positions to take care of the numerous facilities and grounds. Adding an additional skilled maintenance position would allow us to better address our current challenges maintaining the park facilities and grounds. It would also allow us to perform more work with park staff and not utilize contractors as often.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>			



## 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	Campground Rev Per Unit	Day Use Rev Per Unit
2019	9.78	15.05
2020	8.61	10.6
2021	9.53	4.61
2022	13.28	12.34

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

Fiscal Year	Campground Rev Per Unit	Day Use Rev Per Unit
2023	13.94	12.96
2024	14.64	13.60
2025	15.37	14.28
2026	16.14	14.99

## Customer Service

Platform / Site	Year	Customer Satisfaction Level
Facebook	2023	4.4/5.0
TSP Survey	2023	4.1/5.0
Google	2023	4.3/5.0

## Professional Development and Training

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

- Routine management training
- Fireteam Certification Training for Rangers and Maintenance Staff
- Maintenance skills training for maintenance staff.
- Quarterly Administrative Professionals Training
- Law Enforcement Specialized 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. Renovation of Camper Check-in
  - b. Renovation of Park Office
2. **Operations and Staffing**
  - a. Fill all full-time positions
  - b. Convert 3.5 seasonal maintenance position to 12 months.
3. **Customer Service / Visitor Experience**
  - a. Open renovated bathhouse in the campground
  - b. Work with local partners to increase onsite programming and experiences.

### Mid Term Recommendations (2–5 years)

1. **Site and Facilities**
  - a. Individual Campsites established in primitive campground and water access added.
  - b. Overseeding and rotational burning of grassland area.
  - c. Research, compilation, and interpretive displays created to tell the “Fuller Stories” of the people who have shaped the local, regional, and state histories and legacies.
2. **Operations and Staffing**
  - a. Increased training, upskilling, and career path opportunities for staff.
  - b. New water spigots and electrical pedestals in the campground.
  - c. Ensure adequate staffing to meet operational, customer service, and interpretive goals.
3. **Customer Service / Visitor Experience**
  - a. Extended days of operation for Visitor’s Center and Nature Center
  - b. Parkwide ADA upgrades for better accessibility to park facilities and features.

### Long Term Recommendations (5+ years)

1. **Site and Facilities**
  - a. Needed repairs and upgrades completed to park facilities, infrastructure, and roads.
  - b. Partnerships established with universities, conservation, and civic organizations to meet resource management goals.
2. **Operations and Staffing**
  - a. Continue evaluating staffing needs to meet park goals.
  - b. Be able to show a tangible decrease in the utilization of outside maintenance contractors.
3. **Customer Service / Visitor Experience**
  - a. Backcountry Campsites.
  - b. Primitive Campground shelter.

## 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.

TO Fuller Park is over 1,200 Acres of Chickasaw Bluffs, Mississippian bottomlands and wetlands, forest, and grassland tucked in the Southwest corner of the state. Throughout this diverse habitat, the park is a haven for a wide range of animal and plant life. Lying in the heart of the Mississippi Flyway, the park attracts resident and migratory songbirds, shorebirds, wintering waterfowl, and raptors.

The land on which TO Fuller State Park is located has a long history of settlement and use. The stories, artifacts, and archeological sites associated with this history should be identified, preserved, and shared.

Though much of the park has been protected since the 1930's it still faces many challenges. The park is located within the Memphis Metropolitan area. It is surrounded by industry and a large population. Ensuring the park's resources continue to be protected is one of the biggest priorities for resource management efforts.

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. Establish a pool of regular volunteers to assist in stewardship efforts. Part of this effort would be establishing the TO Fuller Youth Conservation Corps to provide skills training and professional development to youth interested in conservation careers. This would also help bridge a gap between elementary and college for a pipeline into TSP/TDEC/hiring pool. Providing a small stipend would help with participation.
- B. Develop and implement a resource management plan for each distinct area of the park. This would include Wetlands, Forests, Grasslands, Waterways, and Historical Resources. To assist with this the park could partner with local universities and provide internships to students to:
  - Conduct a modern natural resource survey of the entire park and compare to past surveys, maps, and other methods to identify, map, and manage vulnerable plant, animal, and fungi species.
  - Research and archive relevant primary and secondary historical records.
  - Recommend preservation actions.
  - Conduct modern resource and archaeological surveys of the entire park and compare to past surveys and maps to identify, map, and manage vulnerable resources.
  - Evaluate the effects of the surrounding pollution (surface and groundwater contamination, air pollution, light pollution) on plant and animal populations with recommended actions for the park, city, county, or state in line with the missions and visions of TSP and TDEC.
  - Draft and publish a white paper on survey that is easily available to the public to increase public buy-in and investment.
- C. Partnerships with Conservation and civic organizations to achieve resource management goals. These would include:
  - Partnering with the Southeastern Grassland Institute to increase native grasses and forbs in all grass areas.
  - Continuing the partnership with Wolf River Conservancy for creek and wetland preservation, protection, and promotion efforts.
  - Formally partner with the Nonconnah Creek Conservancy to advance waterway protections.
  - Partner with City of Memphis to protect and re-habilitate Cypress Creek which empties into the MS River/McKellar Lake on park property. This partnership would include: Trash clean ups (heavy amount of trash washes into river through Cypress Creek), public education campaigns, water quality monitoring, erosion control, creek restoration efforts, and upstream conservation efforts (off-park).
  - Partner with West TN Water Basin Authority for waterway restoration and conservation rights efforts on park.
- D. Implement conservation and restoration efforts in each distinctive area of the park. This would include:
  - Focusing on ecological restoration of the wetlands.
  - Implementing controlled burns as needed in the grasslands.
  - Ecological restoration of the creeks and riparian zones.

- Beautifying sections of the park with native flowering and fruiting plants. These areas would include the roadways, the campground, picnic shelters, the Wildlife Habitat Area, and reducing mowing in all sections of the park to increase native animal/insect habitat and support Go-Green efforts.
- E. Strengthen and build for the success of Resource Management efforts by ensuring all park staff is involved in resource management, educating park visitors and the public of the importance of the resource through programming and outreach, strengthening DEI efforts for visitation and investing in future park stakeholders, and working with the Area 1 Manager, Senior Leadership, and community partners to address the environmental racism and justice issues the park experiences.

## 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
Wetlands	70 acres	Fair	Threats from railroad, underground infrastructure, and runoff from Riverport Rd.
Grassland	90 Acres	Good	Some invasives and undesired plants. Prescribed burning and overseeding are needed.
Mature hardwood forest	700 acres	Fair	Mostly healthy second growth forest. Some issues with invasives. Other challenges with dumping, erosion, and poaching.
Ponds	2	Fair	Need removal of existing trees. Some erosion around banks. Need re -stocking.

Cypress Creek	.6 mi	Poor	Litter regularly washes into the creek. Beaver Dams and debris piles inhibit flow in places. Some issues with erosion. History of raw sewage spills.
Mississippi River / Keller Lake	1.25 mi	Poor	Threats from heavy industry and commercial activity in the area. History of raw sewage spills
Ephemeral creeks	Numerous	Fair	Some litter. A few have been filled in at spots by previous landowners, or impounded up creek on properties off park

## 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
Wetlands	<b>Public Use: Managed access with hiking trails through these areas. Wildlife viewing.</b> <b>General Management: Working with utilities and private companies with pipelines through this area to ensure there are no spills, leaks, or other events that damage the wetland areas. Allowing access to the infrastructure in a way that creates minimum disturbance.</b>	Moderate
Grassland	<b>Public Use: Utilized as a wildlife viewing area. Managed access with a hard surface trail through the area.</b> <b>General Management: Continue with planning to oversee with native grasses and flowers. Planning to institute rotational burning to improve conditions. Invasive and undesirable plant eradication.</b>	High
Mature hardwood forest	<b>Public Use: Managed access limited to trails.</b> <b>General Management: Ongoing invasive species management. Cleanup of any new dumpsites found and removal older dumpsites as ability dictates. Observation patrols for poaching and encroachment.</b>	High

Ponds	<p><b>Public Use: Primarily fishing, organized events such as youth fishing rodeos, and interpretive programs with staff.</b></p> <p><b>General Management: Improve quality of fishery in conjunction with TWRA. Monitor water quality and bank erosion. Mitigation efforts if required.</b></p>	Moderate
Cypress Creek	<p><b>Public Use: Crossed by trails and access Rd to day use area.</b></p> <p><b>General Management: Litter removal and prevention. Removal of debris piles to prevent flooding. Implement erosion control efforts.</b></p>	High
Mississippi River / Keller Lake	<p><b>Public Use: Can be accessed by Rd. Fishing is not allowed in this area and must be monitored.</b></p> <p><b>General Management: Continue to work with local industry and environmental regulators to ensure all protective measures are adhered to. Regularly patrol and educate the public about fishing regulations in the area and assess conditions.</b></p>	Moderate
Ephemeral creeks	<p><b>Public Use: Several crossed by hiking trails.</b></p> <p><b>General Management: Continue to remove litter and debris from creek beds. Work to remove blockages and infills.</b></p>	Moderate

## Land Management Strategies

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

Land Management Strategy	Timeline
Acquire property adjacent to park along Boxtown Road	Mid Term
Potential additional land acquisitions along border of park	Mid Term

## Interpretive Programming and Education Plan

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

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

### TO Fuller State Park Interpretive Purpose Statement

The purpose of the Interpretive and Educational Programming (IPE) arm of TO Fuller State Park operations is to facilitate the vibrant health and wellbeing of the park, our neighboring communities, and ecosystems by

- Truthfully and respectfully sharing the stories of all the peoples of Tennessee who built the state and *whose legacy we have all inherited*
- Honor our small part of Mother Earth *with loving care* expressed through environmental education and justice programming for visitors of all ages
- Allow the power of play to intensely engage bodies, hearts, and minds in safe, healthy, and transformative ways through *re-creational experiences*

In this way, the park's IPE arm engages the "heads, hearts, and hands" of participants through a variety of program offerings, continuing the teaching praxis of Dr. Thomas Oscar Fuller to generate a pool of "stakeholding stewards" that invest in the long-term thriving of the park and our enclosing environments.

## 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:** To continue facilitating educational and interpretive experiences that truthfully and respectfully share the stories of the peoples of Tennessee by:

- Continuing Fuller Park representation on the Ranger DEI committee. The DEI committee works with the IPE team by providing recommendations, critical responses to concerns that have come up with on-site and virtual programming, and supporting IPE’s initiatives
- Carefully researching the local, regional, and state-wide histories of the black, brown, and indigenous peoples who have shaped the local, regional, and state histories and legacies but were legally locked out of 98% of state parks until desegregation:
  - Curating an electronic and hard copy library to be held and maintained in the Interpretive Center of the most up to date multidisciplinary research and interpretation, primary and secondary accounts, and first-hand observations of park staff and residents
  - Conducting an oral history project of the 85-year history of the park as well as the neighboring communities that the park was established to primarily serve—Boxtown, Mitchell, French Fort, Riverside (mostly or all black neighborhoods from the 30s through 70s)
  - Deepening interpretation of the Black Civilian Conservation Corps Troop that built the park
  - Including the history of Fort Pickering and the Contraband camp located on President’s Island
  - Deepening interpretation of the original 85 Africans enslaved by the Ensley family (Ensley Army Corps of Engineers and Ensley Bottoms are named after this slaveholding family)
  - Getting copies and/or loans of Dr. Fuller’s books and writings
- Partnering with communities historically associated with or descendant from what is now TO Fuller to best interpret sensitive, painful, and/or unknown histories empathetically and humanly through advisory meetings and/or boards
  - Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations, Boxtown Community, and the local/state Descendants of Enslaved Africans
- Carefully researching local, regional, and state-wide histories to tell the stories of women who have shaped local, regional, and state histories and legacies
- Incorporate the histories of the local environmental justice issues (example the protests in the 70s regarding the Valero Refinery, the more recent protests concerning oil pipelines, the Sewage Treatment Plant, and illegal dumping) into regular programming—*reported and documented community concerns*
- Deepening partnership with the University of Memphis (U of M) staff to better interpret the Chucalissa archaeological site and making the renewing of the relationships between Fuller Park, the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations, and U of M.

**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:

- Regularly posting on the Park’s social media pages
- Continuing incorporating videos on the Park’s social media pages
- Continuing to provide space for rangers and SIRs to write and submit stories to the TN Conservationist
- Add Spanish-language interpretive panels
- Adding outdoor interpretive panels related to the history and ecology of the park; for example panels related to the grassland found in the WHA or a panel related to Boxtown history
- Maintaining regular end of week and weekend hours for the Interpretive Center so that visitors have access to the interpretive signage found in the IC

**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: To continue offering a range of interpretive programs that engage the “heads, hearts, and hands” of visitors we will:

- Continue to offer the annual Jr Ranger Camp at a sliding scale for families who cannot afford camp fees
- Expand K-12 camps from once a year to 3 to 4 distinct camps that take place in the Spring, Summer, and Fall
  - 1 camp in the summer for 6- to 11-year-olds (1 week)
  - 1 after school camp for 6-to-11-year
  - 2 camps for middle and high school students
- Carefully research and curating relevant, up-to-date academic materials related to natural, cultural, and historic resources to be housed in the Interpretive Center in order to share quality information
  - This can include partnering with local universities and providing internships to students to conduct modern archaeological and natural resources surveys to identify, map, and interpret resources

**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: To provide an easily accessible recreational space that allows the power of play to intensely engage bodies, hearts, and minds in safe, healthy, and transformative ways that draw folks from all walks of life and benefit individuals, communities and society:

- In partnership with the Area 1 Manager, State Natural Areas, and the Area 1 Interpretive Specialists to provide annual fee-based interpretive programming and adventures in the Overton Forest and Ghost River State Natural Areas, and any other State Natural Areas within 1.5 hours of Fuller Park
  - Guided Plant, Bird, and History Hikes in the Overton and Riverwoods SNA
  - Kayaking the Wolf River in the Ghost River and Lucius Birch SNAs
- Partner with local businesses, community leaders, and TSP Marketing to host and market a wide variety of recreational activities through special use permits and contracts (similar to BiMall)
  - Continuing to partner with local community groups like WIND CDC to provide community-led recreational activities like the Senior Biking Program with MPD and WIND CDC (free to participants program)
    - Trail Runners
  - Continuing to partner with MPD community liaisons to host their teen camps and lock-ins on-site and provide Ranger and SIR-led programs (free to participants)
  - Working with TSP Marketing, OGC, and the Area Manager to secure partnerships with businesses such as REI to host fee-based camping 101 programs (from previous experience of working with REI on behalf of Bicentennial)
- Partner with Marketing to better advertise recreational experiences currently available at the park (similar to what Marketing does for other parks currently)
  - Basketball, Tennis, Softball Field, Swimming, Hiking, Birding, Wildlife Viewing, Fishing
  - Offer the tennis and basketball courts, and the softball field as a rentable day-use facility online and with the park—currently available first come first serve, but the park gets requests to rent areas.
    - Renting these areas will fund their upkeep
  - Before the pool re-opens, work with Area 1 Manager, OGC, and TSP marketing so that the pool can be safely rented by organizations, businesses and families in evenings or on days the pool is closed to the public for additional revenue (similar to BiMall special event contracts, which are drafted individually by OGC).
- Research activities and organizations that use outdoor spaces for alternative recreational activities and partner with those organizations to host events here—one example is larping and cos-play events. These will be free or fee as appropriate
- Maintain the 3 little libraries found in the park to encourage reading in the park

#### 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 Pro Forma

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	33%	70.2%	28.5%	30%	31%	32%

## Works Cited

Bloom, Katherine C. (2008) *The Evolution of a System: A Tale of Two Traditionally African American State Parks in Tennessee*. Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia.

