

# Chapter 1 - Introduction and Background

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## Purpose and Scope of the Plan

The purpose of Florida's statewide comprehensive outdoor recreation plan is to outline a five year policy plan and establish a framework for statewide outdoor recreation planning. Section 375.021, Florida Statutes, provides that the plan will document recreational supply and demand, describe current recreational opportunities, estimate needs for additional recreational opportunities and propose means for meeting identified needs. The plan is intended to be a broad statewide and regional appraisal of the outdoor recreation needs of Florida and a guide for the development of a diverse, balanced statewide outdoor recreation system.

In conjunction with that purpose, the plan is intended to fulfill the requirements of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (P.L. 88-578), which was established to create parks and open spaces, protect wilderness, wetlands, refuges, preserve wildlife habitat and enhance recreational opportunities. Under this program, Florida receives matching grants to acquire and develop outdoor recreation lands and facilities. Within the plan, the following issues are required to be addressed in accordance with federal planning requirements:

- Evaluate demand for and supply of outdoor recreation resources and facilities;
- Conduct studies periodically to estimate and analyze outdoor recreation demand;
- Provide ample opportunity for public participation involving all segments of the population;
- Address current wetland protection strategies as required by the Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986 (P.L. 99-

**Section 375.021, Florida Statutes. Comprehensive multipurpose outdoor recreation plan.**

(1) The department is given the responsibility, authority, and power to develop and execute a comprehensive multipurpose outdoor recreation plan for this state with the cooperation of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Department of Transportation, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the Florida Commission on Tourism, and the water management districts.

(2) The purpose of the plan is to document recreational supply and demand, describe current recreational opportunities, estimate the need for additional recreational opportunities, and propose means for meeting identified needs. The plan shall describe statewide recreational needs, opportunities, and potential opportunities.

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- Establish goals and strategies to guide a statewide planning process;
- Identify state and national outdoor recreation trends and initiatives;
- Develop and implement an "Open Project Selection Process" for Land and Water Conservation Fund grants.

This plan is part of an outdoor recreation planning process that Florida has pursued since 1963. The Florida Department of Environ-

mental Protection (DEP), Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP) coordinates and develops the plan according to state and federal legislative requirements. Specific planning authority is provided by Section 375.021(1), Florida Statutes, which gives DEP specific responsibility, authority and power to develop and execute a comprehensive, multipurpose statewide outdoor recreation plan. Additionally, Section 418.12(1), Florida Statutes, directs DEP to study and appraise the recreation needs of the state and as-

semble and disseminate information relative to recreation.

Data analysis for the plan is based on the state's 11 regional planning councils into which Florida's 67 counties are organized geographically so that planning and technical assistance activities can be developed and implemented. This 11 region approach is consistent with previous statewide outdoor recreation plans (see Figure 1.1).

**Figure 1.1**



Source: Florida Department of Environmental Protection

## **Outdoor Recreation - A Legitimate Role for Government**

Public responsibility for outdoor recreation stems essentially from two sources: social welfare, and natural and historical resources management. As a matter of social welfare, outdoor recreation is provided by government as a means of occupying the leisure time of its citizens. The responsibility for providing outdoor recreation for this purpose is primarily local, and is met through a wide variety of programs at the local, state and federal levels.

The other basic justification for public outdoor recreation programming involves natural and historical resources management. Management of natural and historical resources is a matter of great public concern in Florida because of its impact on the quality of life for its citizens and visitors. Along with other important land uses such as agriculture, forestry, mining, transportation and urban development, outdoor recreation has become a major consideration in the allocation of the limited natural resource base. Once a natural outdoor recreation area is lost to other land uses, it usually cannot be reclaimed except with great difficulty and expense. It is a proper function of government to ensure that adequate outdoor recreation resources are protected and preserved, and because of the magnitude of the task, it is generally accomplished at the state and federal levels.

## **Outdoor Recreation Defined**

Outdoor recreation, broadly defined, is any leisure time activity conducted outdoors. Within the vast range of that definition lies an almost unlimited number of activities, from

wilderness camping to neighborhood playground use and outdoor performances.

For planning purposes, the wide range of outdoor recreation activities is generally subdivided into "user-oriented" and "resource-based" recreation. User-oriented types of outdoor recreation are those that can be provided almost anywhere for the convenience of the user. This category is the broader of the two and includes activities such as golf, tennis, baseball, basketball, shuffleboard, volleyball, soccer, pool swimming, archery, skeet and trap shooting, and playground activities. User-oriented activities are needed in vast amounts in urban and suburban areas, and as with other services, user-oriented recreation facilities and programs are primarily provided by local governments.

Resource-based outdoor recreation differs from user-oriented recreation in that it cannot be provided just anywhere, but is dependent upon some element or combination of elements in the natural or cultural environments that cannot be easily duplicated by man. It may be either active or passive in nature. Examples include hiking, hunting, fishing, camping, backpacking, boating, water skiing, surfing, biking, nature study and visiting historical and archaeological sites. Resource-based recreation lends itself better to the capabilities of state and federal government.

An important distinction to make between user-oriented and resource-based outdoor recreation is that the former can always be provided, assuming the availability of space and funds for development, while the latter can be provided only to the extent that the supporting natural or cultural resources are available. While population pressures dic-

tate a high priority for creating user-oriented outdoor recreation opportunities close to urban areas, the rapid depletion of suitable resources gives a sense of urgency to the resource-based outdoor recreation program. Because they satisfy essentially different human needs, it is difficult to compare these two types of outdoor recreation in terms of importance or urgency, except to say that both are important and both must be met expeditiously to keep up with the demands of a growing population.

### **Roles in Providing Outdoor Recreation**

Some division of responsibility is needed if the state's diverse public outdoor recreation needs are to be efficiently met. It is not reasonable, for example, to expect that agencies charged with managing state parks, forests, wildlife and water management areas would also be responsible for local ball fields, tennis courts and neighborhood parks. State government has the responsibility for promoting and coordinating all outdoor recreation efforts beneficial to the general public. It is the only level of government where this task can be accomplished effectively, especially when the resource on which the recreation is based crosses jurisdictional boundaries as in a regional or



*Resource-based Outdoor Recreation  
Big Shoals State Park, Columbia County*

statewide trail. Thus, the state must ensure, either directly or indirectly, that the public's demand for outdoor recreation is brought into a reasonable balance, at least on a broad regional level, with the availability of opportunities for meeting this demand. Rather than meet these needs entirely through state-level programs, the state should assume responsibility for ensuring that needs are met through the planned and coordinated efforts of state, federal and local governments and private interests.



*User-oriented Outdoor Recreation,  
Broward County*

As far as its direct programming efforts are concerned, the state's primary responsibility is to provide resource-based outdoor recreation. It accomplishes this through the acquisition of lands and development of facilities necessary to make natural and cultural outdoor recreation resources of regional or statewide significance available to the public. The extensive land requirements, the typical location outside urban centers, and the higher costs of operation have led the state to assume this role as a bridge between the large, nationally significant parks

managed by the federal government and the community playgrounds and recreational facilities traditionally provided by local governments. No other level of government can meet this vital responsibility.

User-oriented outdoor recreation, like other local services, is largely the responsibility of local government. The need exists primarily in the urban areas and it increases in proportion to the degree of urbanization. Although local governments have focused primarily on user-oriented recreation, many counties have established excellent conservation and environmental land acquisition programs and have contributed to the provision of many types of resource-based recreation. In general, however, local governments are the primary entities responsible for user-oriented recreation.

All local governments, large or small, are faced with the task of providing the full range of recreational opportunities that are so important to the well-being of their citizens. These include everything from cultural arts programs to nature trails. Local governments are finding it increasingly difficult to accomplish this, particularly in light of escalating costs and recent changes in the assessment of ad valorem taxes.

While the state's primary thrust in its outdoor recreation efforts is directed toward resource-based outdoor recreation, a substantial effort is made to assist local governments with financial support and technical assistance for meeting their needs for user-oriented types of outdoor recreation. Three primary programs – the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program, the Florida Communities Trust program and the Florida Recreational Trails Program – provide local governments substantial funds in

the form of matching grants for acquiring and developing recreational lands and facilities. The demonstrated priorities and needs of local governments are given full consideration in the allocation of available funds from these programs.

## **Need for a State Outdoor Recreation Program**

Meeting the outdoor recreation needs of Florida's fast-growing population will require significant additional recreation lands, facilities and services, for both resource-based and user-oriented recreation. However, the ability to provide these will become more difficult as the state's fixed supply of land, water, shoreline areas and cultural resources - the raw materials which support outdoor recreation - are committed to non-recreation uses to accommodate the expanding population. Of equal importance is the need to provide sufficient financial resources to construct, operate and maintain the capital facilities that are required to open these lands for public access and use.

The state must identify current and future outdoor recreation needs, and work to ensure the preservation of a resource base sufficient to meet those needs while resources are still available. Toward this end, Florida's outdoor recreation program emphasizes interagency cooperation and collaborative partnerships with private interests and non-governmental organizations, and supports efforts to better coordinate local, state and federal land acquisition, resource management and recreational facility development.

## **The Planning Process**

The purpose of state-level outdoor recreation planning is to guide the development of a diverse, balanced, statewide outdoor recreation system toward meeting current and future needs. Florida's planning process addresses a wide range of outdoor recreation activities, resources and programs with the goal of ensuring that the needs of all segments of society are met. Of equal concern is preserving the integrity and function of the ecological systems that provide the foundation for resource-based outdoor recreation.

The planning process used to develop this plan focused on identifying the major issues affecting outdoor recreation in Florida, and on determining current and projected priority needs for the acquisition and development of outdoor recreation areas and facilities. The process relied heavily on input from a wide range of stakeholders including state, local and federal recreation providers, private suppliers, recreation user groups, conservation groups and other interested parties. The outcome is a plan that provides a basis for cooperative action to resolve priority issues and a reasoned approach to meeting identified recreation needs. The plan provides statewide outdoor recreation programming guidance and is intended to influence the decisions of all potential recreation suppliers.

## **Public Participation**

The success of the outdoor recreation planning process ultimately depends upon the acceptance of its recommendations by a broad constituency of users and environmental interests, and the willing implementation of those recommendations by the many public and private recreation providers. For



*Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan Public Workshop*

this reason, DEP emphasized the involvement of users, environmental groups and recreation providers in the planning process. Public involvement was solicited through a series of 14 public workshops held in cities around the state between August 2006 and June 2007. The workshops provided ample opportunities for the public to express its views on a wide range of needs and issues. Summaries of the workshops appear in Appendix G. Appendix G also contains a list of meeting times, locations and a report compiling the public input received at each workshop.

Following the workshops, DRP staff developed a draft vision statement from the results, researched relevant issues raised by the public and developed goals, strategies and action steps based upon public input and staff research. The vision, goals and recommendations are detailed in Chapter 7.

## **Planning Coordination**

Outdoor recreation is affected directly or indirectly by a variety of local, state, federal and private programs. To the extent that

these programs are capable of contributing to the implementation of a statewide outdoor recreation program, state government must attempt to coordinate them through the comprehensive outdoor recreation planning process. Toward that end, Florida has emphasized interagency and public/private coordination through a variety of mechanisms described below.

### **State-Level Coordination**

Outdoor recreation planning coordination among state agencies is provided through planning and management committees and special ad hoc committees. For example, state-level coordination in the acquisition and management of environmental and outdoor recreation land is provided through the Acquisition and Restoration Council. Coordination in statewide planning for greenways and trails is provided through the Florida Greenways and Trails Council. These committees are composed of members from all state agencies concerned with natural and historical resources and outdoor recreation.

### **State-Federal Coordination**

Liaison for outdoor recreation planning purposes is maintained with the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, especially through its Southeast Regional Office. Other federal agencies, such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, are consulted frequently at regional and field offices on recreation-related planning matters.

### **State-Local Coordination**

One of the most important links in the chain of outdoor recreation planning coordination is between state and local governments.

Many county and municipal governments assisted in the development of this plan by cooperating in the preparation of the statewide inventory of outdoor recreation resources and facilities. This massive undertaking could not be accomplished without such assistance.

Additionally, all Florida counties and many municipalities have participated in state-sponsored financial and technical assistance programs, and other efforts involving recreation coordination. Local governments participate in the acquisition and management of land for outdoor recreation through multiple land acquisition and grant programs, including the *Florida Forever* program, the Florida Communities Trust program, the Land and Water Conservation Fund program and the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program.

State and local planning is further linked through the Local Government Comprehensive Planning and Land Development Regulation Act (Section 163.3167, Florida Statutes), through which the state provides technical assistance in plan preparation and state-level review of local plans. In developing their comprehensive plans, many local governments have made use of information and data contained in the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.

### **State-Private Coordination**

Private outdoor recreational enterprises constitute a significant element of the Florida economy and will continue to be relied upon to provide a major share of the outdoor recreation supply in the state. Coordination with the private sector is necessary to achieve more efficient development and operation of mutual programs, to improve and

expand the ongoing inventory of private recreation sites and facilities, and to implement major recreation action program objectives. State-private liaison with this sector is established primarily through the trade organizations, such as the Governor's Conference on Tourism and VISIT FLORIDA, which are primarily involved with tourism promotion and commercial recreation enterprises. In addition, the DRP consults formally and informally with representatives of various clubs and groups concerned with conservation and recreation to discuss and resolve matters of mutual concern. State representatives also attend various gatherings of private organizations to present and discuss state recreation policies and programs.

## **Conclusion**

Florida is a leader in outdoor recreation across the nation and has made excellent progress in developing an outdoor recreation program that will meet the needs of its residents and visitors. The need is still great, however, and demand for outdoor recreation opportunities will continue to grow as the state's population continues to increase at its rapid pace. Whether for the health and welfare of Florida's people, the stability of its tourist oriented economy, or the prudent management of its natural resources, a carefully planned and effectively implemented outdoor recreation program is a major public need today. This plan provides a foundation for such a program in Florida.



*Bird watching*