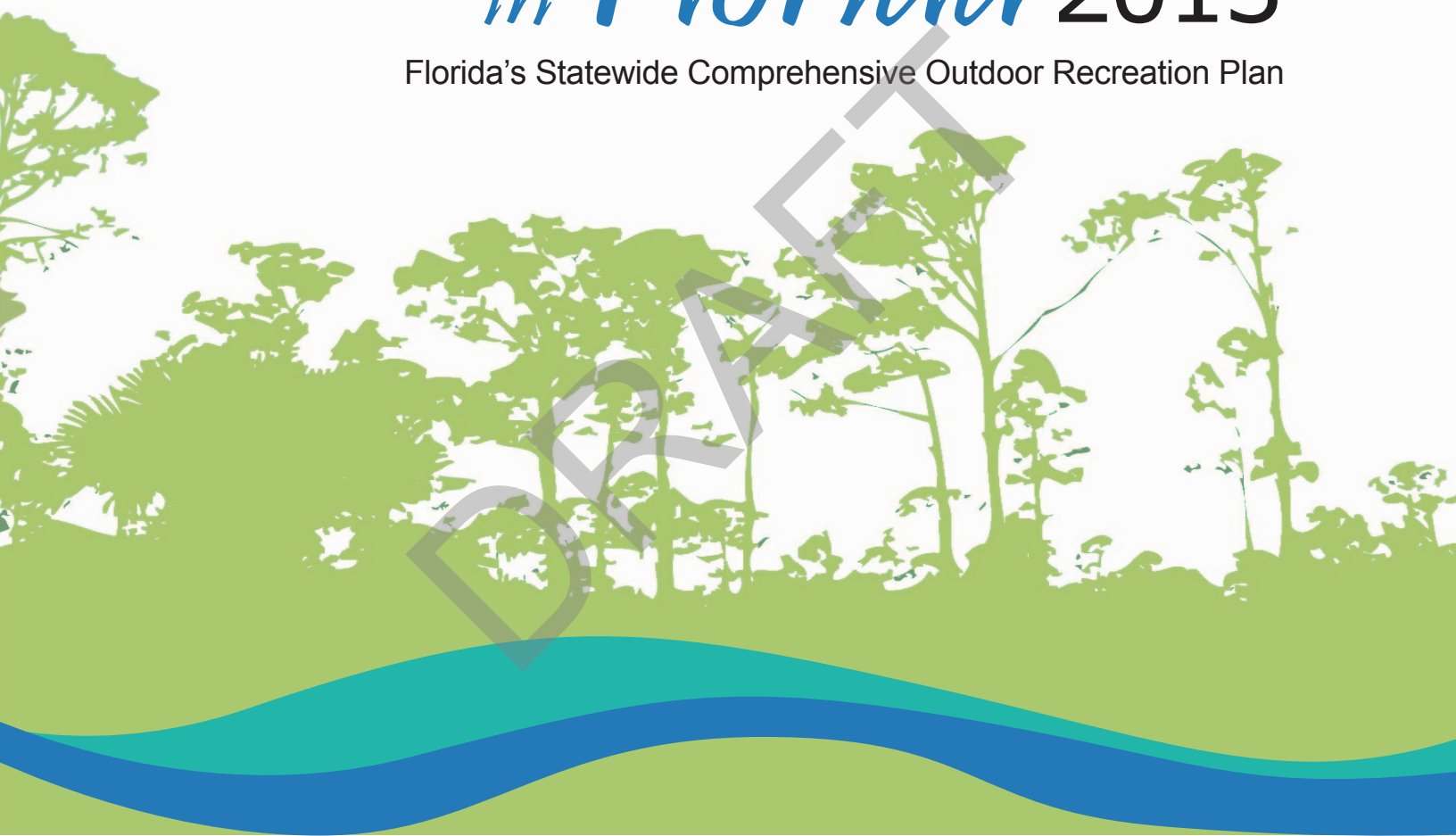


Outdoor Recreation *in Florida* 2013

Florida's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan



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*Front cover photos (L to R): Fishing at Dr. Julian G. Bruce St. George Island State Park, credit: Juliane Eckert;
Children walking at Troy Spring State Park; Lighthouse in the distance at Anclote Key Preserve State Park;
Kayaking at Fort George Island Cultural State Park*

Outdoor Recreation in Florida 2013

A Comprehensive Program for Meeting Florida's Outdoor Recreation Needs



State of Florida, Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Recreation and Parks
Tallahassee, Florida



Photo credits: Amelia Island State Park; Highlands Hammock State Park; St. George Island State Park, credit: Tabatha Spurlock

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Chapter One - Introduction and Background

PURPOSE

The purpose of Florida's statewide comprehensive outdoor recreation plan (SCORP) 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 and 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. 99-645);
- 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 Environmental 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

Section 375.021, Florida Statutes

Comprehensive multi-purpose outdoor recreation plan

- 1) The Department is given the responsibility, authority, and power to develop and execute a comprehensive multi-purpose 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 Department of Economic Opportunity, 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.

Spotlight

258.004(3), Florida Statutes, directs DEP to study and appraise the recreation needs of the state and assemble and disseminate information relative to recreation.

OUTDOOR RECREATION: A LEGITIMATE ROLE FOR GOVERNMENT

Outdoor recreation, broadly defined, is any leisure time activity conducted outdoors. Within the vast range of that definition lie an almost unlimited number of activities, from wilderness camping to neighborhood playground use, organized sports and outdoor performances.

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. Examples include fishing, hiking, biking, horseback riding, hunting, camping, boating, surfing, nature study and visiting historical sites. Resource-based recreation is typically provided by state and federal governments.

User-oriented outdoor recreation is a type of outdoor recreation 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, pool swimming, and playground activities. User-oriented activities are needed in vast amounts in urban and suburban areas. As with other urban services, user-oriented recreation facilities and programs are most often provided by local governments.

User-oriented outdoor recreation can always be provided if there is adequate physical space and funds. An increase in urbanization often results in an increase in user-oriented outdoor recreation to help meet the recreational needs of expanding urban populations. On the other hand, provision of resource-based outdoor recreation is limited to the availability of cultural and natural resources. As population grows, greater demand is placed on resource-based recreation as suitable land areas and resources are converted to development or other land uses. Because they satisfy essentially different human needs, it is difficult to compare these two types of outdoor recreation in terms of importance or urgency. In the final analysis, both user-oriented and resource-based outdoor recreation are important. The peoples' needs



Resource-based recreation at Lake Talquin, credit: FWC



User-oriented recreation, credit: Paul Kantz (Florida Today)



Honeymoon Island State Park, credit: Sherry S. Werner

for both must be met expeditiously if Florida hopes to keep pace with the demands of a growing population.

Since the late-19th Century, Americans have accepted the idea that the provision of most types of outdoor recreation is a proper function of government. Public responsibility for outdoor recreation stems from two essential purposes: the promotion of social welfare, and the protection of our common natural and cultural heritage. As a matter of social welfare, outdoor recreation is provided by governments as a means of healthfully occupying the leisure time and enhancing the quality of life of citizens. The management of natural resources is also a matter public interest in Florida for the ecological and health benefits our citizens and visitors receive from healthy and diverse natural areas throughout the state in the forms of fresh air, fresh water, exercise and the relief of modern stress. Finally, preserved and interpreted historic and prehistoric resources are vital in that they explain our history and culture and provide a means for individual citizens to relate to the whole of Florida's society.

ROLES IN OUTDOOR RECREATION PLANNING

Florida is a traditional destination for outdoor recreation seekers in the United States and from around the world. More than 87.3 million tourists visit annually to enjoy the sunshine, sandy beaches and abundant

outdoor recreation opportunities. Residents delight in Florida's pleasant climate which provides endless opportunity for year-round outdoor recreation.

More recreation facilities and services are needed today than ever before, due largely to the continued growth, urbanization and diversification of the population, longer life expectancies, greater mobility and a greater appreciation of the values of recreation. People who recreate spend huge sums of money, consume large quantities of energy and demand tremendous amounts of open space in which to recreate. As a result, social and environmental conflicts may be generated that must be addressed through comprehensive and coordinated efforts by recreation managers at many levels of government. Effective coordination is also critical if we hope to maximize the health, economic and environmental benefits derived from recreation. Therefore, professional, systematic planning and program implementation are necessary to guide communities, government agencies and other organizations in addressing both the problems and the benefits of recreation statewide.

The political subdivisions of the state have the major responsibility for providing local recreation opportunities within their respective jurisdictions, with supplemental assistance from both the state and federal governments. At the state level, the leadership role requires that state agencies, particularly the Department of Environmental Protection, must work toward the most efficient utilization of human, financial and natural resources for the maximum benefit to the public. In addition, the state must provide a part of the financial, technical and physical resources needed to meet Florida's statewide recreational demand.

PLANNING PROCESS

The process for creating the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan must reflect a balanced, statewide approach

to be truly comprehensive. This SCORP achieves this in a variety of ways, from soliciting extensive input from recreation providers and consumers through public workshops and Web-based surveys to regular consultations with recreation professionals from around the state to ensure a unified agency-level approach in addressing the future of recreation in Florida.

As an ongoing effort, DEP also maintains an inventory of the recreation facilities provided throughout the state. From mid-2011 to spring 2012, the data base was systematically updated by hundreds of municipal, county, state, federal, and private recreation providers in preparation for this planning effort.

In addition, DEP and Responsive Management, a natural resource survey research consulting firm, conducted the 2011 Outdoor Recreation Participation Study. The study gives an in-depth look at participation in outdoor recreation activities, explores changes and trends, and offers quantitative insight on the recreation demands of both residents and tourists in Florida. The results of the study are used throughout this document to provide both statewide and regional analyses that will be helpful planning tools to a wide variety of public and private recreation providers.

The SCORP stands alone as the state's only comprehensive outdoor recreation plan. The result of its comprehensive methodology and inclusive planning process is a plan that provides a basis for cooperative action to resolve priority issues and a reasoned approach to meeting identified recreation needs throughout Florida. The plan provides statewide outdoor recreation programming guidance and is intended to influence the decisions of all potential recreation suppliers.

Public Participation

Public input to the plan was obtained through a combination of effecting methods, including an online questionnaire, public

workshops, and input from the participation survey. In April 2012, two online surveys were distributed, one targeting the general public and the other for public recreation providers. Input was received on recreation issues identified by the advisory group, meetings with stakeholders, and through research of national and statewide trends in outdoor recreation while additional issues and concerns were generated through open response items. The survey link was distributed to the public by multiple state and local agencies, yielding nearly 3,900 responses. Public workshops to gather input on the recommendations of the plan were conducted between September 12 and October 5, 2012 at these locations: Tallahassee, Sanford, Sarasota and Boca Raton. The SCORP workshops were combined with workshops for the update of the Florida Greenways and Trails System 2012 Plan to better coordinate both planning efforts and to consolidate staff and participant travel.

Planning 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.

The Role of **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

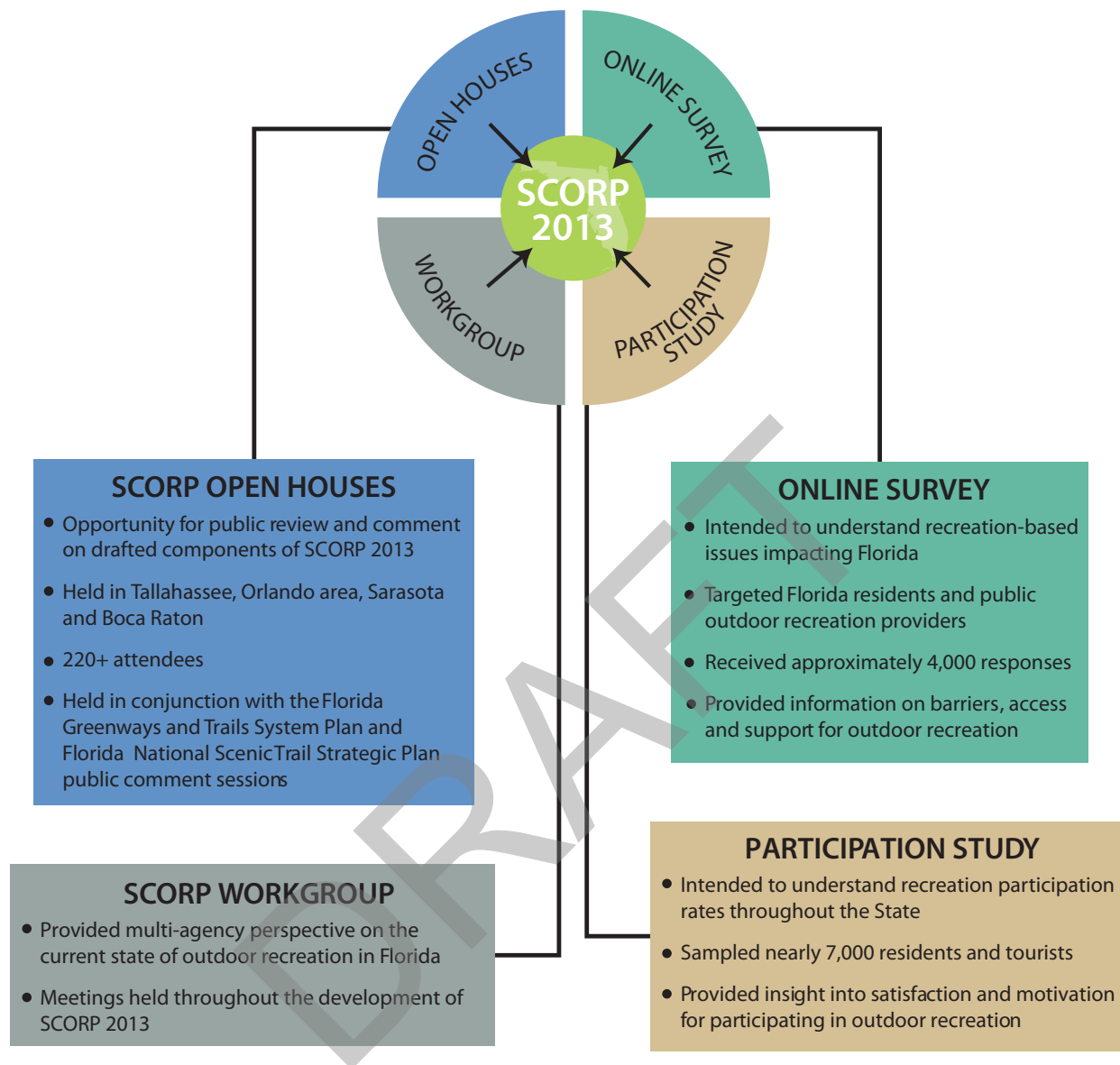


Figure 1.1

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 Level Coordination

The success of the SCORP is largely contingent on the acceptance and implementation of its recommendations by both public and private recreation providers. To begin the update process of the 2013-2018 plan, an advisory group of state level land managing agencies was created to guide the planning efforts of the Division of Recreation and Parks staff. Staff members from the following agencies

participated: Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services – Florida Forest Service, Department of Environmental Protection – Division of Recreation and Parks, Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas, Department of State – Division of Historical Resources, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the State’s five water management districts, and the non-profit Florida Outdoor Recreation Coalition.

The advisory group focused its attention on three specific aspects of Florida’s Outdoor Recreation Plan: the planning process, the plan’s data methodology and the identification of recreation issues and trends. The group discussed each topic in detail and made recommendations in each area. The recommendations provided by the advisory group were critical to the development of an inclusive and relevant planning process. In addition, the advisory group helped to improve working relationships between the policy and recreation program staff of many agencies who will, hopefully, continue the collaboration going forward.

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-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

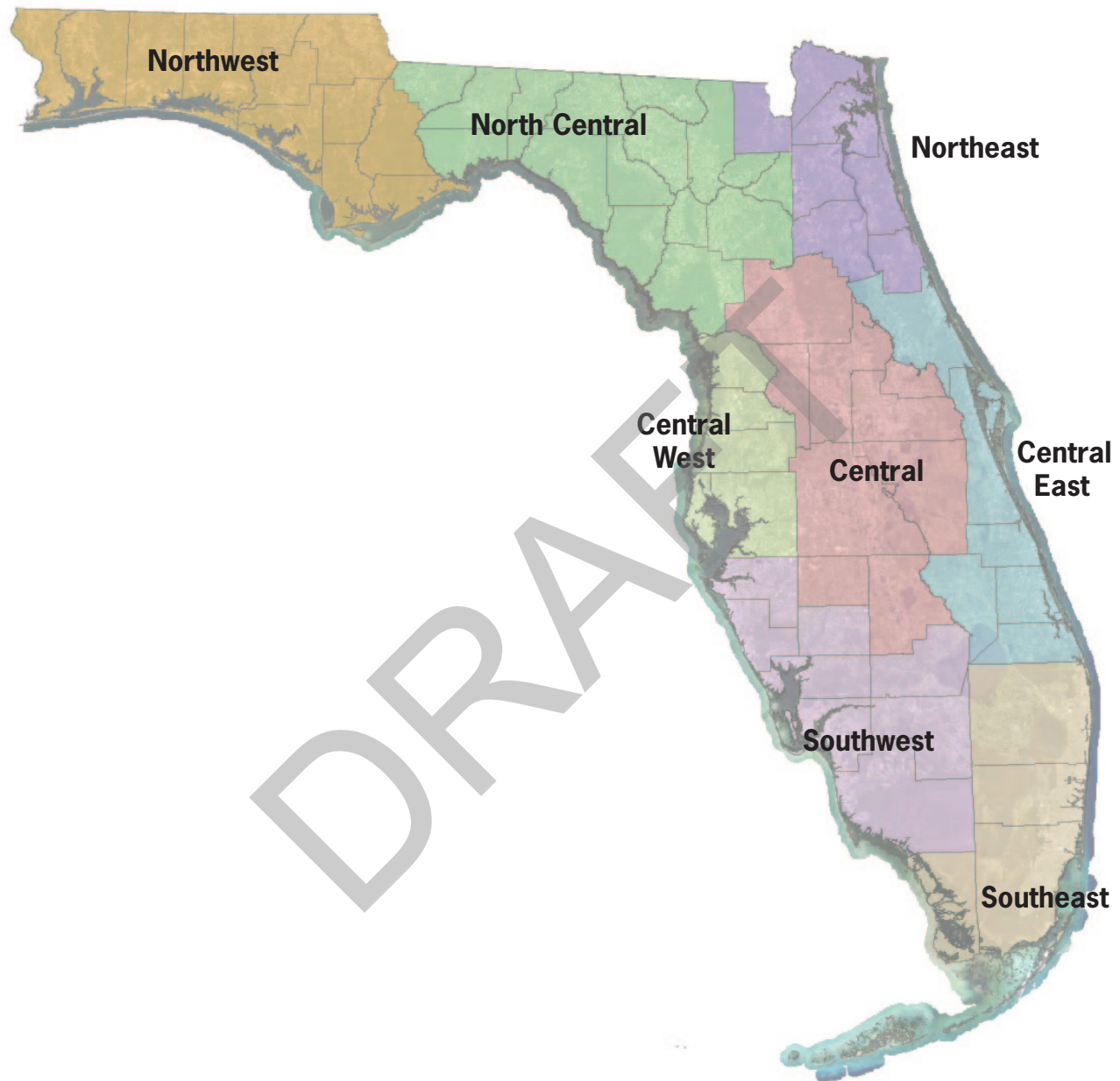
to implement major recreation action program objectives. State-private liaison is established primarily through the trade organizations, conferences and networking opportunities such as the Governor’s Conference on Tourism and VISIT FLORIDA, which is primarily involved with tourism promotion and an array of 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.

Planning Regions

The 2013-2018 plan divides the state into eight planning regions (see Figure 1.2) to establish consistency with VISIT FLORIDA planning regions, considering the strong ties between recreation and tourism. This format for recreation data analyses will facilitate a statewide and regional comparative analysis of recreation participation, demand and need with the state’s current trends in tourism.

CONCLUSION

Florida is a leader in outdoor recreation across the nation and has made excellent progress in developing an outdoor recreation program to meet the needs of its residents and visitors. The need is still great, however, and demand for outdoor recreation opportunities will evolve and continue to grow in tandem with the state’s population. 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.



SCORP Planning Regions

Figure 1.2

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Chapter Two - Florida's Outdoor Recreation Setting

This chapter provides an overview of the social and physical setting for outdoor recreation in Florida. As Florida moves through the 21st Century, its astonishing rate of population growth continues.

FLORIDA'S PEOPLE AND ECONOMY

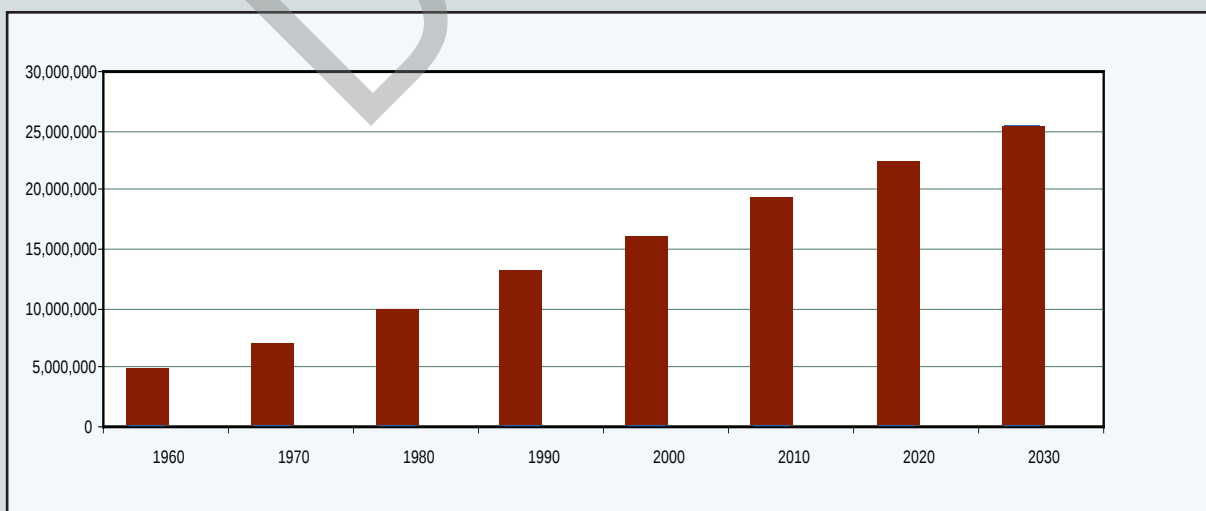
Florida's population was 18.8 million in 2010 according to the 2010 U.S. Census, a 17.6 percent increase from 2000. Today, Florida is the fourth most-populated state in the nation and its population is projected to reach nearly 24.5 million by 2025.

The 2010 Census in Florida reported a rise in the Hispanic/Latino population from roughly 17 percent (2000 Census) to 22.5 percent – making Hispanics the fastest growing segment of the population in the state. In addition to becoming more culturally diverse, Florida's population is also getting older. In 2010, 17.3 percent of Floridians were aged 65 or older, compared to the national average of 13 percent. Florida's median age of 40.7 was fifth highest in the nation (the

national average is 37.2 years), an upward shift compared to 38.7 in 2000. The state's rapid population growth, increasing ethnic diversity and the shift in age of its population will create complex challenges affecting many aspects of the state's social and economic framework. The planning and coordination of Florida's system of outdoor recreation programs will be affected by these changes.

If current trends continue, most of the new population will concentrate in relatively unpopulated counties adjacent to the highly developed metropolitan areas, particularly along the coast. As these areas become more crowded, problems such as loss of open space and natural areas, crowding and a higher cost of living will provide an impetus for further expansion into more rural areas. This sprawling pattern of growth reduces the availability of outdoor recreation land and facilities unless more land is acquired and more facilities developed in pace with the expansion. Ensuring that an adequate base of land for both user-oriented and resource-based recreation is acquired and sufficient

Florida's Population, 1960 to 2030



Source: University of Florida, Bureau of Economic and Business Research, 2008

Figure 2.1



Reflections at Anastasia State Park, credit: Shannon Shackelford

funding resources are available for facilities development and operations continues to be a major challenge for recreation planning and programming in Florida.

To ensure a continued high quality of life in Florida, the amenities provided by the statewide outdoor recreation program must be coupled with a healthy social and economic climate. Among socio-economic variables, income is a major factor in determining the ability of people to participate in many kinds of recreational activity. Unfortunately, during the past five years the nation has faced substantial economic challenges, and Florida is no exception. Between 2008 and 2009, per capita annual income in Florida dropped by roughly \$2,600 to \$37,382. This appears to have been the worst of the economic downturn as, in response to a slowly-improving national and state economic performance, incomes rose to an estimated \$39,636 per capita in 2011, returning to near the 2008 level (Bureau of Economic Analysis). Significantly, Florida's unemployment rate has surpassed the national average every year since 2008, and currently stands at 8.1

percent (November 2012), compared to a 7.7 percent national average. There is no certainty that pre-2008 economic growth rates and unemployment figures will return in the near future. The health of the state and local economies will always directly affect the public resources available to support outdoor recreation. Therefore, current economic conditions and subsequent financial support for recreation will continue as priority issues for recreation system planning in Florida.

Tourism-based activities support a major share of Florida's economy. An estimated 87.3 million tourists visited Florida in 2011, a 6 percent increase from 2010. Taxable spending in the tourism and recreation category during 2011 totaled \$67.2 billion, according to data from VISIT FLORIDA, the official tourism marketing organization of the state. Many tourism leaders are cautiously optimistic that Florida will remain a preferred destination for both domestic and international travelers, although increased competition from other vacation destinations, potential high gasoline costs and increases in other travel costs are major concerns.

Visitor Estimates for Florida 2005-2011

YEAR	Annual Visitors (millions)	Percent Change
2005	83.6	NA
2006	83.9	.03%
2007	84.5	.07%
2008	84.2	- 0.4%
2009	80.9	NA*
2010	82.3	1.7%
2011	87.3	6%

*A new estimation methodology was introduced in 2009

Table 2.1

source: VISIT FLORIDA

PHYSICAL SITUATION

Florida is an elongated peninsula with a total land area of 65,755 square miles, including 4,672 square miles of interior water. The state stretches 450 miles from north to south and 470 miles from east to west. This size makes Florida the second largest state east of the Mississippi River (Georgia being slightly larger). Despite its size, no point in Florida is more than 70 miles from either the Atlantic or Gulf coast. Florida's highly diverse coastline stretches 1,350 miles around the peninsula. To the north, Florida shares common boundaries with Alabama and Georgia.

CLIMATE

Florida's climate is one of its primary assets and perhaps the single, most important factor contributing to the love of outdoor recreation by residents and visitors. Florida lies completely within the temperate zone, yet its climate, particularly in the lower peninsula, is subtropical, with wet, humid summers and relatively dry, cool winters. The influence of the waters of the Gulf of Mexico on the west and the Atlantic Ocean on the east tends to moderate seasonal temperature extremes. Most of the state enjoys a long, warm summer, relatively minor seasonal transitions, and a short, mild winter. The mean annual

temperature ranges from the upper 60s in the northern portions of the state to the upper 70s in the south. Florida's abundant rainfall is seasonal. Most of the state's average annual rainfall of 54 inches consists of short summer showers. In the winter months, when sunshine is so conducive to outdoor activity, Florida enjoys the greatest average percentage of seasonal sunshine in the eastern United States.

Florida's geography makes it extremely vulnerable to tropical storms. These cyclonic weather systems have always been a part of Florida's natural climatic patterns, but in 2004, one tropical storm and four major hurricanes made landfall along Florida's coastline, impacting nearly 85 percent of the state's beaches. As the science surrounding climate change makes it clearer that carbon emissions are affecting global climate, the state's outdoor recreation resources may be more vulnerable to the effects of climate

Florida's Recreation and Leisure-Based Tourism

There are many reasons why Florida is a popular place to visit and vacation. Beautiful beaches, theme parks, access to water and climate are all well-known draws for people to come to the state. Arguably, many of Florida's most unique traits are rooted in its landscape, leading millions of people each year to participate in outdoor recreation and leisure activities while in Florida.

According to VISIT FLORIDA research, the percentages of tourists who choose to visit the state because of outdoor opportunities is significant.

Percentage of visitors who came to Florida primarily for recreation and leisure



change than many other states. Changes in climate can affect water temperatures and salinity, disrupting natural conditions in sensitive areas such as coastal wetlands and coral reefs. Coastal erosion has also compromised many of the state's important saltwater beaches, necessitating costly restoration and stabilization efforts to protect this vital component of Florida's economy and culture.

GEOLOGY

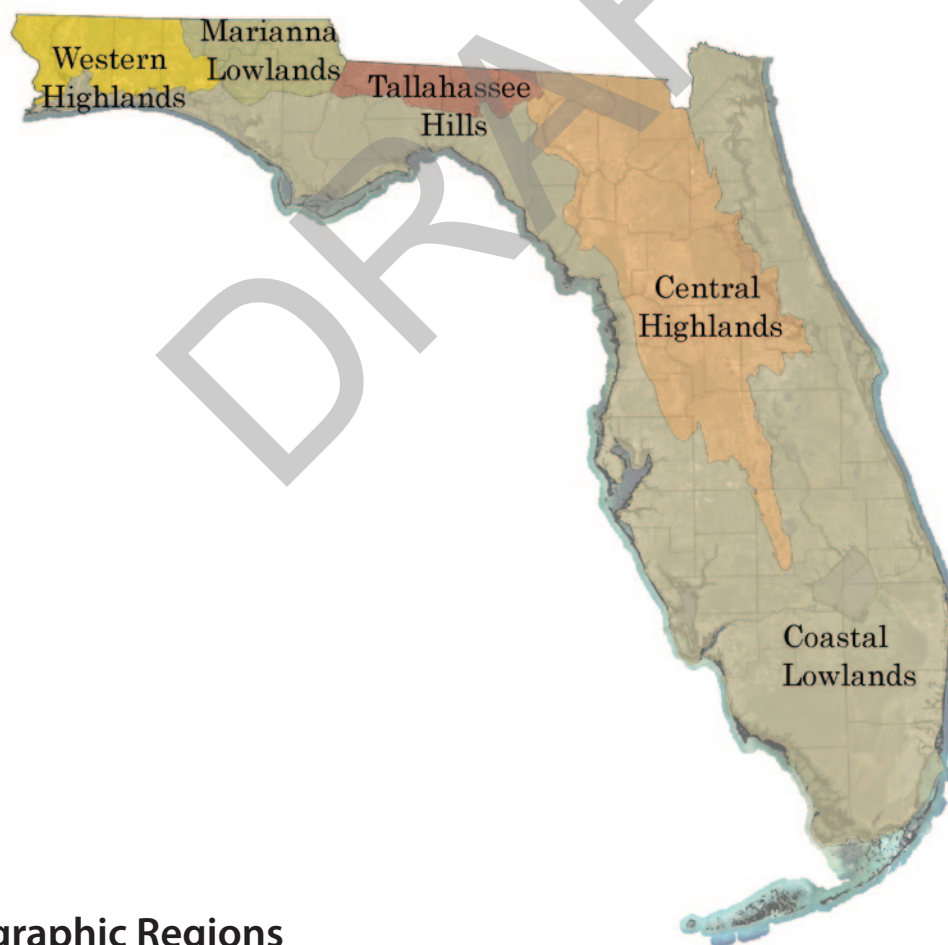
Florida occupies only about half of a larger geological unit, the Floridian Plateau. This plateau is a partly submerged platform nearly 500 miles long and 250 to 400 miles wide. It separates the deep waters of the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. The submerged portions of the plateau are called the continental shelf, extending out to an

ocean depth of about 300 feet. The plateau has been in existence for millions of years, during which time it has been alternately dry land or shallow sea. It consists of a core of metamorphic rocks buried under layers of sedimentary rocks (chiefly limestone) which vary in thickness from a little less than a mile to upwards of four miles.

PHYSIOGRAPHY

Five physical or natural regions are commonly identified in the state. They are the **Western Highlands**, the **Marianna Lowlands**, the **Tallahassee Hills**, the **Central Highlands**, and the **Coastal Lowlands** (see Figure 2.3).

The **Western Highlands** includes most of the Florida Panhandle between the Perdido and Apalachicola Rivers, north of the Coastal Lowlands. It is a southward-sloping plateau,



Physiographic Regions

Figure 2.2

hilly in the northern part and trenched by narrow steep-walled stream valleys. The higher hills in the northern part of the plateau are over 300 feet in elevation and include the highest measured elevation in the state-345 feet.

The **Marianna Lowlands**, west of the Apalachicola River, is a low, rolling hill and sinkhole region, with numerous small lakes. This region occupies a roughly quadrilateral area, with its southern and western limits marked by a rise to the Western Highlands. The elevation is due to the increasing thickness of sand covering the limestone base that lies near the land surface.

The **Tallahassee Hills** region, north of the Coastal Lowlands, stretches from the Apalachicola River to the northern Withlacoochee River. It is approximately 100 miles wide by 25 miles in length and is characterized by long, gentle slopes with rounded summits.

The **Central Highlands** region extends from the Tallahassee Hills and the Okefenokee Swamp in the north almost to Lake Okeechobee in the south. Its length is about 250 miles. The width tapers from 60 miles in its northern portions down to a blunt point at the southern boundary. Much of the northern part is a nearly level plain approximately 150 feet above sea level. The western part consists of hills and hollows interspersed with broad, low plains. This sub-region ranges in altitude from 200 feet to less than 40 feet above sea level. Adjoining this sub-region to the east and extending southward to the end of the Central Highlands is a sub-region known as the Lake Region. It is characterized by numerous lakes and high hills of up to 325 feet above sea level.

The **Coastal Lowlands** forms the entire Florida coastline, including the Florida Keys, and reaches inland as much as 60 miles at some points. The inner edge generally lies along the 100-foot contour line. In recent geologic times, these lowlands were marine

terraces and experienced three or more successive inundations by higher sea levels. This is a flat region, except where ancient shorelines or dune ridges occur or where the surface has been modified by stream erosion or underground solution. The Gulf coast has the appearance of a drowned coastline, one that is sinking into the sea. The east coast has the appearance of an emergent coast, one that is rising from the sea. In fact, sea levels on both coasts are rising very gradually as the result of changes in global climatic patterns.

HYDROLOGY

More than 2.8 million acres of Florida are covered by water. This includes some 7,000 natural and man-made lakes larger than ten acres, as well as marshes, swamps and seasonal floodplains.

Most of the defined river systems in Florida are in the northern half of the state. South Florida's lack of these systems is due to its differing geological history and flatter terrain. Drainage in south Florida occurs through broad, shallow channels, most of which have been altered extensively by man for purposes of reclamation and water management. In addition to the thousands of lakes and the thousands of miles of streams, wetlands comprise a major component of the state's surface waters. It has been estimated that in 1973, wetlands and their associated open-water areas accounted for approximately one-third of Florida's total area. An overview of wetlands in Florida, including a description of wetland protection efforts is contained in Appendix I.

A considerable amount of drainage in Florida goes into and through the underlying limestone rock, forming a groundwater reservoir. This underground reservoir, or aquifer, discharges tremendous quantities of fresh water to wells and to some of the world's largest springs. Florida has 33 first magnitude springs, discharging more than six billion gallons of water per day. The combined flow of all the state's springs is estimated to be eight billion gallons per day.



Manatee calf and mother, Blue Springs State Park

Between Florida's offshore waters and its inland fresh waters are sheltered coastal waters generally referred to as estuaries. Estuaries form where the flow of fresh water from inland rivers and streams meets coastal waters. Estuaries are among Florida's most biologically productive waters, and are vital to the state's commercial and sports fisheries.

VEGETATION AND WILDLIFE

Vegetation dominates the Florida landscape. More than 65 percent of the state is covered by a seemingly endless variety of plant associations and natural communities. All of Florida's natural vegetation is significant from the standpoint of outdoor recreation. In addition to its obvious aesthetic qualities, it utilizes carbon dioxide and produces oxygen, absorbs wastes and maintains water quality, provides food and habitat for game and other forms of wildlife, and performs a host of other environmental functions that themselves contribute to outdoor recreation. Providing effective management of Florida's diverse native plant communities through prescribed burning, exotic plant control, hydrological restoration and other methods is critical for maintaining their biological and recreational values.

Florida's wildlife is as varied as the habitats that support it. Species range from those common throughout the southeastern United States to some that are virtually unknown elsewhere in the country such as the Florida panther, the Florida manatee and the Florida scrub jay. Florida is inhabited by more than 490 bird species, 135 native, non-marine reptiles and amphibians, 250 native freshwater fish and nearly 80 mammals that spend all or part of their lives on land. These diverse wildlife resources provide a major attraction for outdoor recreation enthusiasts. Fish, both freshwater and saltwater, are exceptionally important to the economy and to outdoor recreation in Florida. Numerous game species play an important role as well. Non-game species, particularly birdlife, support nature observation and appreciation and a range of environmental education activities.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

There is evidence that man has inhabited Florida for approximately the last 12,000 years. Prehistoric cultures thrived in this hospitable area and left behind much evidence of their way of life. This evidence has become a source of wonder and curiosity

for modern man. The story is still unfolding from professional exploration and analysis of the data from the many Native American mounds, other prehistoric and historic archaeological sites, and historic structures found throughout the state.

In 1513, barely 20 years after the first voyage of Columbus, Florida was opened up to the western world by Spanish discovery. Thus began 450 years of exploration,

colonization, settlement and development by Spanish, French, British, and American people, which constitute Florida's long and unique modern history.

Both of these eras, the Prehistoric and the Modern, combine to leave rich historical and cultural resources. These resources provide abundant opportunity for a highly popular form of outdoor recreation, visiting historical and archaeological sites.



Silver River State Park, Seminole Indian at Ocali Country Days

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Chapter Three - Outdoor Recreation Programs and Supply

Florida's outdoor recreation program is the collaborative effort of many federal, state and local governments and private organizations, businesses and non-governmental organizations to fund, manage, and support opportunities for outdoor recreation. The following sections discuss the various roles in providing outdoor recreation, and describe how the multitude of outdoor recreation programs contribute to the overall supply of outdoor recreation in Florida.

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 and wildlife or 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 resources on which the recreation is based crosses jurisdictional boundaries as in a regional or statewide trail. Thus, the state must try to ensure, either directly or indirectly, that the public's demand for outdoor recreation is brought into a reasonable balance, at least in a broad regional context, with the supply of opportunities. 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.

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.



Riverboat operated by Blue Springs State Park

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,



Horseback riding at privately run R.O. Ranch Equestrian Park in Mayo, Florida

such areas have been withdrawn from use by the general public, particularly for hunting, and are now available only to leaseholders or others who have access to the lands.

OUTDOOR RECREATION PROGRAMS

In response to an ever-growing and ever-changing public demand, a variety of outdoor recreation programs have developed in Florida through the years. Although both private and public efforts have served this demand, most of the formal outdoor recreation programs have been instituted by various levels of government. Both state and federal agencies have been extensively involved, and practically every county and municipality in Florida conducts some outdoor recreation programs of its own. Many of these diverse programs have evolved more

out of expediency than by careful design. As a result, there has been much duplication and overlap. Fortunately, however, most of the legitimate outdoor recreation needs in the state have been met in some fashion by concerted efforts to coordinate these governmental programs.

Florida's outdoor recreation providers can be classified into five categories: federal government, state government, county government, municipal government and private sector providers. Both federal and state agencies are concerned with areas and facilities designed to accommodate the demand for resource-based outdoor recreation. County and municipal governments are the primary suppliers of the public facilities needed for user-oriented recreation, although some also provide areas

and facilities to meet part of the need for resource-based outdoor recreation. Private recreation providers, non-profit organizations, clubs and other organizations not certified as non-profit by the Florida Department of State, such as hunt clubs, country clubs, yacht clubs and others, are a vital component of the state's outdoor recreation supply and meet a significant portion of the overall demand for both resource-based and user-oriented outdoor recreation in Florida.

The following describes the specific programs of the various categories of public and private recreation providers. Although the public agencies discussed in this section may have other responsibilities, only those related to outdoor recreation opportunities are addressed.

FEDERAL PROGRAMS

The federal government has responsibility for developing recreational facilities and programs that provide public opportunities that are not, or cannot, be made available by state or local government.

Federal roles in outdoor recreation are broad in scope and run the gamut from dredging

waterways, lock and levee construction and maintenance, endangered species protection and habitat preservation, and providing crucial funds for many programs through federal grants. Federal agencies coordinate and cooperate on resource protection efforts such as protecting wilderness areas, designating wild and scenic rivers, and implementing trail connectivity projects that require inter-jurisdictional management. The core mission of most of the federal agencies, with the exception of the National Park Service, is not recreation per se. However, by the nature of their settings - the national forests, wildlife refuges, military installations, dams and locks, waterways and estuaries of the state - these vast tracts of federal land are key locations for outdoor recreation and play a vital role in the state's outdoor recreation supply.

U.S. Department of the Interior

National Park Service

The National Park Service (NPS) has the specific mission to conserve the scenery and natural resources of national parks and provide a wide variety of outdoor recreation opportunities. Besides active land management for outdoor recreation, the



Fort Jefferson Dry Tortugas National Park, credit: National Park Service

Spotlight *Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)*

The National Park Service administers the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a federal program that provides funding for park acquisition and development projects. The LWCF provided over \$16 million to local governments between 2004 and 2011, resulting in the establishment and improvement of over 80 different parks throughout Florida.

Bartlett Park, an urban park located in an economically disadvantaged neighborhood of St. Petersburg, received \$200,000 through the LWCF program. The grant helped add lighted soccer and football fields, water features, an observation deck, fishing docks, hiking trail extensions, and funded the renovation of basketball courts, tennis courts, and playground equipment.



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 the national economic downturn.

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 recreation facilities. Three programs — the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program, the Florida Communities Trust Program and the Florida Recreational Trails Program — provide local governments with 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 funds from these programs.

Private recreation providers are a vital component of the state's outdoor recreation supply. Commercial providers meet a significant portion of the overall demand for both resource-based and user-oriented outdoor recreation in Florida, particularly tourist-generated demand. For example, commercial providers supply nearly 90 percent of the campsites in the state and meet a considerable portion of the overall demand for camping facilities by residents and visitors.

Non-profit organizations include private and quasi-public organizations such as the scouts, church groups and conservation organizations. These groups provide land and facilities primarily for the use of their members, but in some cases for the public at large.

Clubs and other organizations not certified as non-profit by the Florida Department of State (DOS), such as hunt clubs, country clubs, yacht clubs and others, manage lands and facilities that are primarily available only to organization members and their guests. In doing so, they can relieve some of the pressure that is often placed on overcrowded public facilities. In addition, private industry lands (timber companies and other industries with extensive land holdings whose lands or portions thereof are open to the public) are used for resource-based recreation, although some forms of user-oriented facilities are also available. In recent years, however, many

Outdoor Recreation Resources and Facilities by Category of Provider, Statewide 2012						
Facilities	Federal	State	County	Municipal	Non-Government	Total
Outdoor Recreation Areas	70	715	4,000	5,424	3,105	13,314
Land (in Acres)	4,600,730	4,697,593	422,331	113,022	410,594	10,244,270
Water (in Acres)	855,076	2,805,714	50,580	7,278	24,385	3,743,033
Acres TOTAL	5,455,806	7,503,307	472,911	120,300	434,979	13,987,303
Cabins	37	240	103	14	3,136	3,530
Tent Campsites	1,026	1,087	1,223	195	4,768	8,299
RV Campsites	2,138	4,778	3,531	1,451	118,750	130,648
Historic Sites	390	1,182	239	188	190	2,189
Commemorative Structures	9	26	33	148	38	254
Museums	25	103	136	116	163	543
Picnic Tables	1,966	9,345	26,375	24,060	56,373	118,119
Hunting Areas (Acres)	2,065,648	3,324,594	15,002	0	22,952	5,428,196
Bike Trails (Miles Paved)	73.5	358.5	600.8	439.6	63.5	1,536
Bike Trails (Miles Unpaved)	144	2,512.4	816.1	232.3	49.7	3,755
Canoe Trails (Miles)	517	997.6	247.6	136.6	309	2,208
Hiking Trails (Miles)	974	4,460.9	2,834.9	353.9	282.8	8,907
Equestrian Trails (Miles)	120.7	2,291.9	642.9	156.9	169.4	3,382
Jogging Trails (Miles)	71.4	312.1	638.3	263.7	71.3	1,357
OHV Trails (Miles)	401	286	0.2	0.7	0	688
Nature Trails (Miles)	310	278.5	707.5	375.9	208.2	1,880
Freshwater Beach (Miles)	0.7	4.1	17.4	6.7	9.3	38
Freshwater Boat Ramps	89	266	614	297	366	1,632
Freshwater Boat Ramps (Lanes)	98	288	756	362	417	1,921
Freshwater Catwalks	12	2,839	205	244	231	3,531
Freshwater Catwalks (Feet)	907	28,229	193,958	60,385	25,507	308,986
Freshwater Jetties	120	120	3,849	75,125	1,306	80,520
Freshwater Marinas	6	17	7	18	297	345
Freshwater Marinas (Slips)	51	86	234	682	10,218	11,271
Freshwater Piers	27	72	256	276	86	717
Freshwater Piers (Feet)	4,515	4,388	18,998	27,938	41,452	97,291
Saltwater Beach (Miles)	139	125	93.8	80.5	36.7	475
Saltwater Boat Ramps	35	45	278	258	314	930
Saltwater Boat Ramps (Lanes)	52	59	455	359	351	1,276
Saltwater Catwalks	53	52	363	192	145	805
Saltwater Catwalks (Feet)	23,044	20,541	72,542	54,857	42,161	213,145
Saltwater Jetties	10,120	11,603	14,389	26,769	9,964	72,845
Saltwater Marinas	11	32	22	65	618	748
Saltwater Marinas (Slips)	698	401	1,311	5,409	36,601	44,420
Saltwater Piers	17	41	148	155	102	463
Saltwater Piers (Feet)	7,506	20,032	37,509	50,905	19,703	135,655
Baseball Fields	51	66	2,609	2,804	181	5,711
Basketball Goals	55	103	3,791	3,507	647	8,103
Equipped Play Areas	52	92	1,889	2,746	449	5,228
Football Fields	18	48	1,043	936	91	2,136
Golf Courses, 18-Hole	8	3	14	63	800	888
Golf Courses, 9-Hole	5	2	13	20	138	178
Golf Courses, Executive	1	1	3	11	190	206
Golf Holes Total	207	75	399	1,459	16,884	19,024
Multi-Use Courts	6	12	406	375	159	958
Multi-Use Fields	9	56	980	810	235	2,090
Outdoor Swimming Pools	15	27	157	324	1,505	2,028
Racquetball Courts	19	187	644	733	265	1,848
Shuffleboard Courts	6	13	365	1,710	2,353	4,447
Tennis Courts	78	331	1,777	2,767	4,216	9,169
Volleyball Courts	1	50	355	331	46	783

Table 3.1

Federal Recreation Lands Managing by Agency

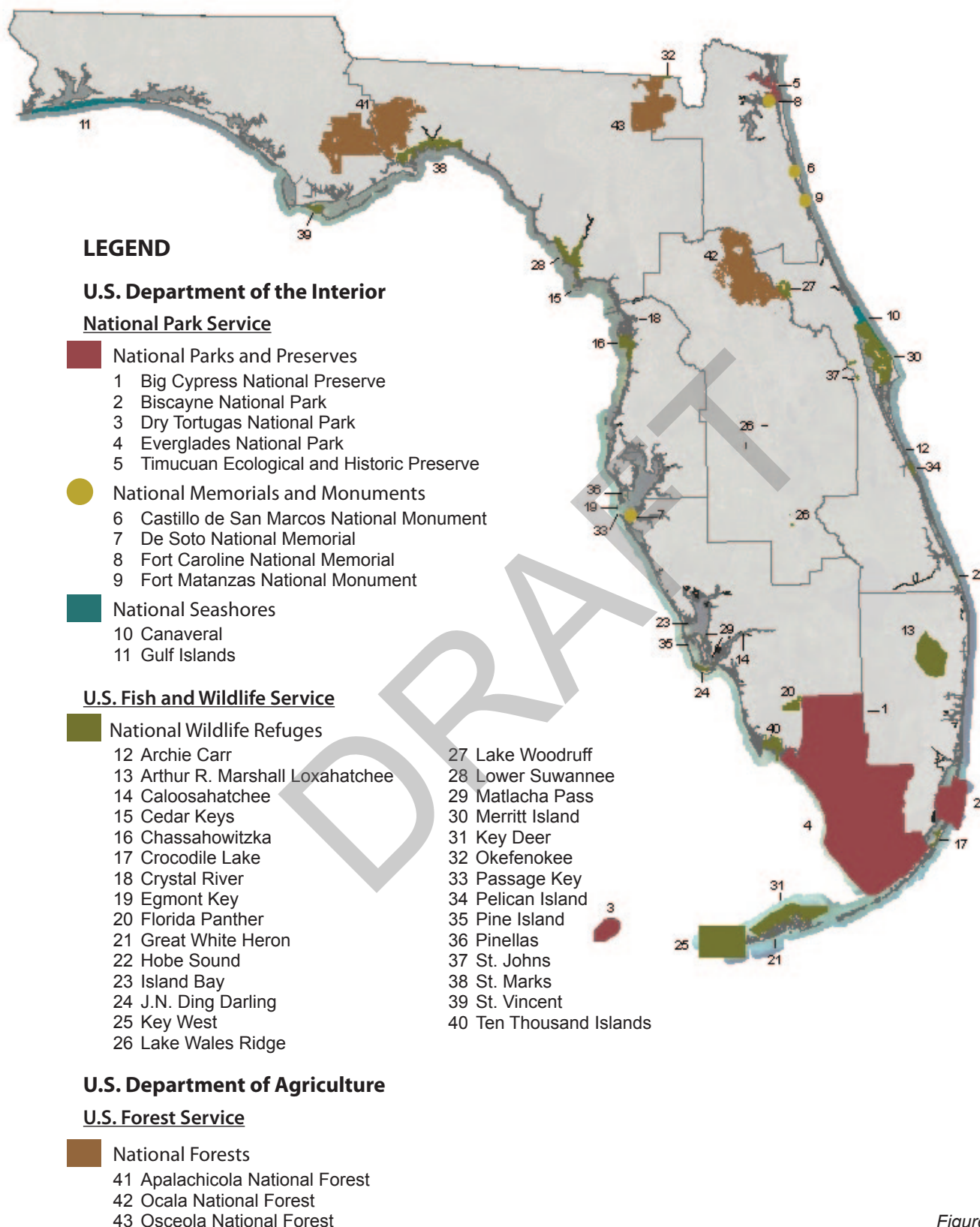


Figure 3.1

Federal Agency Outdoor Recreation Resources				
Region	# of Recreation Areas	Land (in Acres)	Water (in Acres)	Acres Total
Northwest	11	871,043	12,653	883,696
North Central	4	518,415	2,746	521,161
Northeast	9	132,764	405	133,169
Central West	6	24,605	10,007	34,612
Central	3	498,693	10,000	508,693
Central East	13	111,360	174,560	285,920
Southwest	14	610,253	22,052	632,305
Southeast	10	1,833,597	622,653	2,456,250
Statewide	70	4,600,730	855,076	5,455,806

Table 3.2

federal agencies administer financial and technical assistance programs to aid state and local agencies and private citizens.

In Florida, NPS's mission includes:

- Managing 11 areas comprising approximately 2.6 million acres of submerged and upland areas set aside for their natural or historic interest.
- Administering the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Program, which provided more than \$16 million to local governments between 2004 and 2011 to fund 87 park acquisition and development projects. These funds are awarded to meet recreation needs identified through an open selection process described in Appendix E.
- Maintaining the National Register of Historic Places pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (16 United States Code 470).
- Designating significant properties or landmarks of national historical or archaeological interest, as defined in the Historic Sites Act of 1936 (16 United States Code 461), including districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects of state and regional significance.
- Partnering with other federal agencies as well as state and local government programs designed to achieve national goals such as clean air, protection of wilderness areas, clean water and access to waterways and coastal areas under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the Water Resources Development Act.
- Providing matching grants through the Historic Preservation Grants-in-Aid Program, an expansion of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, to government, private groups and individuals for historic preservation surveys, planning activities and community education. These programs are administered in Florida by the Division of Historic Resources (DHR) within DOS.
- Administering the Federal Lands-to-Parks Program, which enables states and local governments to establish park and recreation areas on federal properties which are no longer needed for military or civilian uses by conveying lands for that purpose.
- Coordinating the Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program

by providing planning assistance to communities for projects that are designed to protect rivers, trails and greenways on lands outside of the federal domain.

National Trail System

The National Trail System Act of 1968 (Public Law 90-543), authorized creation of a national trail system comprised of National Recreation Trails, National Scenic Trails and National Historic Trails. While National Scenic Trails and National Historic Trails may only be designated by congressional act, National Recreation Trails may be designated by the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture to recognize exemplary trails of local and regional significance, upon application from the trail managing agency or organization. When designated, these trails are recognized as part of the National Trail System.

In order to be certified as a National Scenic Trail, a trail must contain outstanding recreation opportunities and encompass more than 100 miles of a continuous, primarily non-motorized trail. Eleven National Scenic Trails have been designated across the nation. A total of 1,400 miles of hiking trails across Florida were designated as the Florida National Scenic Trail in 1983. The Florida National Scenic Trail is further discussed under the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) on page X-X.

National Historic Trails commemorate historic and prehistoric routes of travel that are significant to the nation. Throughout the United States, there are 19 National Historic Trails made up of 33,002 miles of designated trails. These trails provide user experiences through a series of interpretive facilities along trails and signed automobile routes. There are currently no National Historic Trails in Florida.

National Recreation Trails provide outdoor recreation opportunities in a variety of urban, rural and remote settings. A total of 30 trails including more than 550 miles of land-based trails and 1,700 miles of paddling trails have been designated in Florida. These trails are managed by federal, state, county and municipal agencies and run the spectrum from urban jogging and bicycling in St. Petersburg to wilderness canoeing in the Everglades.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), an agency within the U.S. Department of the Interior, is to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. This mission is accomplished by enforcing federal wildlife laws, protecting endangered species, managing migratory birds, restoring nationally significant fisheries and conserving and restoring wildlife habitat including



A scene from the Florida National Scenic Trail, credit: USFS

wetlands. USFWS also distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies across the nation. The activities of USFWS in Florida include:

- Management of 28 national wildlife refuges, comprising nearly one million acres of land and water. Most of the refuges are limited-purpose outdoor recreation areas that provide bird watching, wildlife observation, fishing, environmental education and interpretation and at some refuges, public hunting. In addition, the Service manages a national fish hatchery in Welaka and maintains law enforcement facilities at six locations.
- Administration of federal aid programs, including Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration (commonly referred to as the Dingell-Johnson Act and Wallop-Breaux Act), Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration (commonly referred to as the Pittman-Robertson Act) and Wildlife Partnership Act (conservation of non-game species). These grant programs are managed in Florida by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Grants to Florida under the Clean Vessel Act (clean boating programs) are managed by the Clean Marina Program in the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Office of External Affairs.

U.S. Department of Agriculture

U.S. Forest Service

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) provides leadership in the management, protection and use of the nation's forests and rangelands. The agency is dedicated to multiple-use management of these lands for sustained yields of renewable resources such as wood, water, forage, wildlife and recreation to meet the diverse needs of people. The responsibility of USFS in the field of outdoor recreation is to fully develop the recreational potential of national forests and protect landscape aesthetics. USFS also cooperates with other federal, state and local agencies in planning

and developing recreational resources on other federal, state, local and private lands.

In Florida, USFS administers three national forests: the Apalachicola, the Ocala and the Osceola. Together these areas contain approximately 1.2 million acres of land and water, thus making a major contribution to the state's recreational resources. They contain some of Florida's most pristine lands including extensive woodlands, springs and streams. Within the national forests, USFS manages numerous designated public recreation sites. Some of the sites are managed exclusively for dispersed recreational purposes, such as hiking, hunting, fishing and primitive camping.

Florida National Scenic Trail

USFS is the federal administering agency for the Florida National Scenic Trail. The Florida National Scenic Trail, designated by Congress in 1983, extends from the Big Cypress National Preserve north to the Gulf Islands National Seashore in the Florida Panhandle. Along the way, the Florida Trail passes through lands managed by more than two dozen public land managing agencies in more than 40 separate management units. USFS acts as a partner with state land management agencies and private landowners to obtain through-trail access for the project. The non-profit Florida Trail Association, Inc., through its volunteer membership of hiker-volunteers, provides nearly 70,000 hours of manpower each year to build and maintain the Florida National Scenic Trail and other hiking trails throughout Florida.

U.S. Department of Defense

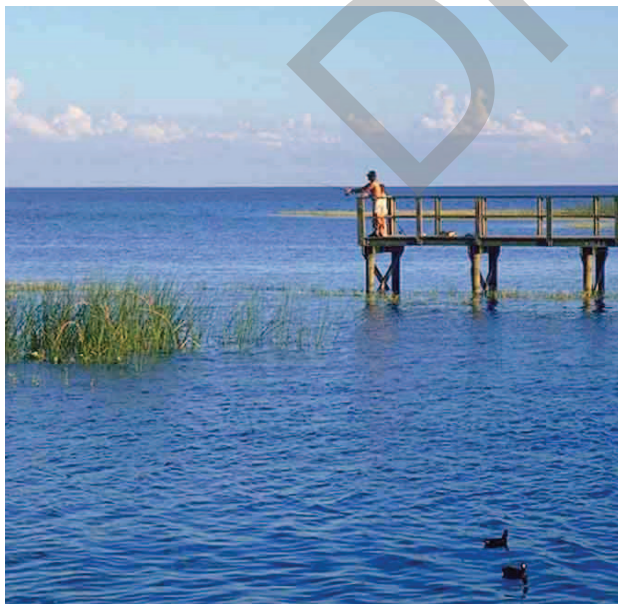
The U.S. Department of Defense (USDOD) includes the Departments of the Army, Navy and Air Force. Each provides outdoor recreation opportunities in Florida. USDOD has 17 military installations in Florida that make lands available for recreational purposes. Although public outdoor recreation is not a primary function of USDOD, its contributions in this regard are nevertheless

important to Florida's overall outdoor recreation program. Generally, all military installations offer some degree of outdoor recreation programs for military personnel, dependents and their guests. However, access to their resources for recreational use by the general public is usually limited.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Along with its primary responsibilities for navigation, flood risk management, environmental restoration and beach renourishment, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has made considerable efforts to provide recreational facilities. It is the policy of USACE to plan for and provide outdoor recreation resources and facilities at all of its water resources projects. For information of the Corps Recreational Opportunities visit www.corpslakes.us

USACE's general authority for recreational development stems from the Flood Control Act of 1944, which was later expanded by the Federal Water Project Recreation Act of 1965 (16 United States Code 460). The latter act directs that each project give full consideration to opportunities for outdoor recreation and fish and wildlife enhancement, and it establishes outdoor recreation and



Dock fishing at Lake Okeechobee, credit: US Army Corps of Engineers

preservation of wildlife and fish as a full project purpose.

Florida is divided into two USACE districts. The Mobile District manages recreation sites at the Jim Woodruff Lock and Dam on Lake Seminole, a 37,500-acre impoundment in southern Georgia and Jackson County, Florida. Excellent opportunities for camping, hiking, fishing, hunting and boating are available.

The Jacksonville District manages Lake Okeechobee and the Okeechobee Waterway in southern Florida. Not only does this managed area provide extensive outdoor recreation opportunities, but its series of locks and canals provides a cross-Florida waterway that is popular among pleasure boaters and connects the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico via the lake and the Caloosahatchee River. A few of the outdoor recreation opportunities include three full-facility campgrounds along the Okeechobee waterway and the 110 mile Lake Okeechobee Scenic Trail that runs along the top of the Herbert Hoover Dike.

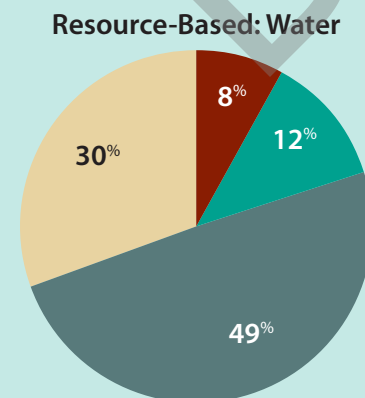
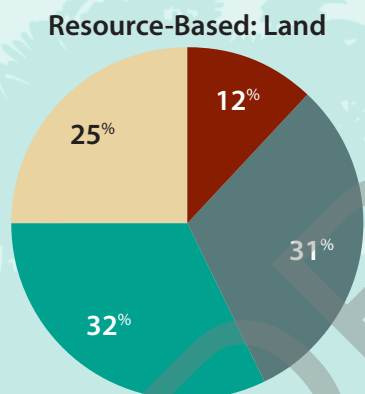
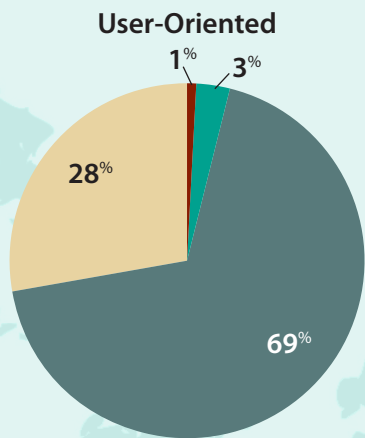
In partnership with the South Florida Water Management District, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and other federal, state, local and tribal agencies, the USACE is implementing the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), one of the world's largest wetland restoration projects. The project covers 16 counties and over 18,000 square miles. The Plan was approved by Congress in the Water Resources Development Act of 2000, which was reauthorized by Congress in November 2007. It includes more than 60 elements and will require more than 30 years to construct at an estimated cost of \$10.9 billion. The CERP Master Recreation Plan will provide guidance to assist recreation planning within CERP project fee title lands, and will help provide recreation opportunities that are compatible with the restoration purposes of the project.

U.S. Department of Transportation

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) within the U.S. Department of

Supply Distribution

The distribution of recreational facilities and resources by level of provider in the State is illustrated in these charts.



Transportation provides grants to state and local governments for various recreational trail projects, including bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and scenic highways. The Recreational Trails Program provides funds to the states to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized trail uses. The Office of Greenways and Trails in the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Recreation and Parks administers the financial assistance program in coordination with the FHWA.

The Transportation Enhancement Program provides funding for improvements that are not provided as part of the features routinely provided in transportation projects. Enhancements such as bicycle and pedestrian facilities, preservation and conversion of abandoned railroad corridors to trails, landscaping and other scenic beautification projects have been provided in Florida through this program. Since 2008, a total of approximately \$207.1 million in enhancement funds have been apportioned to Florida through the program.

The National Scenic Byways Program recognizes roads having outstanding scenic, historic, cultural, natural, recreational and archaeological qualities by designating them as National Scenic Byways, All-American Roads, America's Byways or State Scenic Byways. Grants and technical assistance are provided to the states to implement projects on designated byways, and to plan, design and develop a state scenic byway program. The Florida Department of Transportation (DOT), in cooperation with FHWA, is the administering agency for the Florida Scenic Highway Program.

U.S. Department of Commerce

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is a scientific and technical organization that works to preserve and enhance the nation's coastal resources



Sarasota Bay National Estuary

and ecosystems. Its mission is to provide products, services and information that promote safe navigation, support coastal communities, sustain marine ecosystems and mitigate coastal hazards. The National Ocean Service provides assistance to Florida in observing, understanding and managing coastal and marine resources. Florida is an active partner in several programs that directly affect resource protection in Florida's coastal areas.

National Estuarine Research Reserves

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System is a network of estuarine areas across the nation established for long-term stewardship, research and education. Each reserve has developed an organized ecological research program containing extensive teacher training, education, research and monitoring. Findings are communicated to coastal managers and other decision makers, as well as local citizens. Florida contains three of these reserves: Apalachicola, Guana Tolomato Matanzas and Rookery Bay.

National Marine Sanctuaries

The National Marine Sanctuary Program designates and manages areas of the marine environment with special national significance due to their conservation, recreational, ecological, historical, scientific, cultural, archaeological, educational or aesthetic qualities. The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, one of 13 in the National Marine

Sanctuaries System, covers 3,926 square miles and encompasses part of the most extensive living coral reef system in the nation.

National Coastal Zone Management Program

The National Coastal Zone Management Program fosters an effective partnership among federal, state and local governments. By leveraging federal and state matching funds, the program strengthens the capabilities of each partner to address coastal issues while giving states the flexibility to design a program that accommodates their unique coastal challenges.

The Florida Coastal Management program is administered by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Intergovernmental Programs. The state program serves as the lead coordinator with eight other state agencies and five water management districts in enforcing 23 statutes and implementing several coastal zone management programs in cooperation with NOAA. The program works to protect coastal resources, build and maintain vital communities, enhance coastal access, protect remarkable places and revitalize working waterfronts.

In 2002, the National Coastal Zone program initiated the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program. The program is aimed at protecting important coastal and estuarine areas that have significant conservation, recreation, ecological, historical or aesthetic values and that are threatened by conversion from their natural or recreational state to other uses. The Florida Coastal Management Program manages this grant program, which provides up to \$3 million for each eligible project.

STATE PROGRAMS

The State of Florida's responsibilities for providing public recreation are fulfilled through a variety of facilities and programs, each unique to the mission of nine separate entities.

Florida Department of Environmental Protection

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is charged with the protection, administration, management, supervision, development and conservation of Florida's natural and cultural resources. This broad mandate is accomplished by direct acquisition and management of public outdoor recreation and conservation areas, as well as through major initiatives and agency priorities which contribute to a healthy ecosystem. DEP's functions include protecting and conserving Florida's water supply and its quality, protecting springs and oceans, restoring America's Everglades, acquiring, conserving and managing conservation and recreation lands, enforcing environmental laws and regulations, investing in cleaner sources of energy and protecting the health of Florida's communities.

Division of Recreation and Parks

DEP's Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP) develops and operates Florida's state park system and state greenways and trails for the benefit and enjoyment of Florida's citizens and visitors. The state park system contains many of the best remaining examples of Florida's original domain and cultural heritage. Units in the state park system are classified for management according to the natural and cultural resources they contain and the desired balance between resource preservation and public use.

Besides providing hundreds of thousands of acres for public recreational use, the state

park system is the largest steward of public historic properties in the state. More than 83 parks contain significant historic resources, including almost 300 historic structures and more than 1,500 archaeological sites. These resources provide a broad array of unique interpretive and educational opportunities for residents and visitors. In addition to administering Florida's state park system, DRP also administers the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program and the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund. The Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program provides financial assistance to eligible local governments, including the 67 county general governments and 412 incorporated municipalities of Florida. Funding from the program is awarded on a competitive basis that considers the total project costs and the economic status of the applicants among other evaluation criteria. Pursuant to Section 375.075, Florida Statutes, and Chapter 62D-5, Part V, Florida Administrative Code, DEP recommends to the Legislature each year that an appropriation of not less than five percent of the total amount credited annually to the Land Acquisition Trust Fund be authorized for the program.

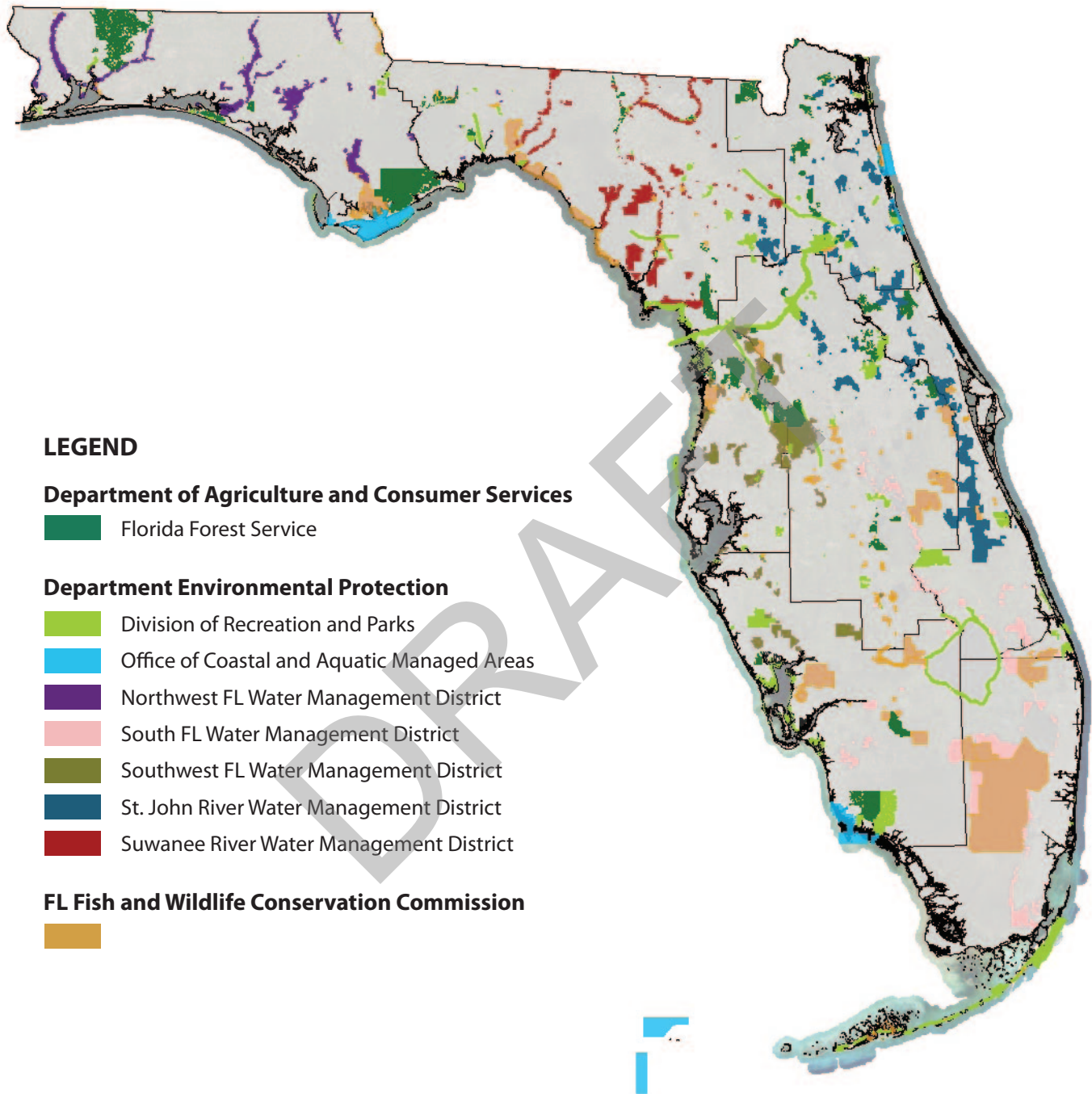
Since 2001, the program has also received two percent of the bond proceeds made available through the Florida Forever program. Funding for the program has been awarded to approximately 1,031 projects in the amount of \$159.1 million for the last 10 fiscal year funding cycles. However, due to the state's economic shortfall and budget constraints in the last three years, no funding has been received for this program.

Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP)

The Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP) is a state competitive grant program that provides financial assistance to local governments to develop and/or acquire land for public outdoor recreational purposes. For the last 10 years, funding for the program has been awarded to approximately 1,031 projects in the amount of \$159.1 million for the last 10 fiscal year funding cycles.

Pasco County matched a \$100,000 FRDAP grant to enhance access to Pithlachascotee River Preserve, using the funds to develop an interpretive boardwalk, playground, restrooms, parking and landscaping.

State Recreation Lands by Managing Agency



Source: Florida Natural Areas Inventory

Figure 3.2

State Agency Outdoor Recreation Resources				
Region	# of Recreation Areas	Land (in Acres)	Water (in Acres)	Acres Total
Northwest	83	835,357	359,030	1,194,387
North Central	168	565,149	1,028,469	1,593,618
Northeast	80	342,118	171,364	513,482
Central West	63	349,959	492,253	842,212
Central	108	656,916	103,374	760,290
Central East	88	479,219	113,589	592,808
Southwest	65	525,907	382,257	908,164
Southeast	68	942,968	155,378	1,098,346
Statewide	715	4,697,593	2,805,714	7,503,307

Table 3.3

Office of Greenways and Trails

The Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT) within the Division of Recreation and Parks provides statewide leadership and coordination to establish, expand and promote the Florida Greenways and Trails System. To fulfill its mission under the Florida Greenways and Trails Act (Chapter 260, F. S), OGT coordinates and implements the Plan for the Florida Greenways and Trails System (FGTS) in partnership with communities, businesses, agencies, the Florida Greenways and Trails Council and many other stakeholders. OGT also maintains and updates the vision maps that are a companion to the FGTS Plan, encompassing land-based trails, paddling trails and ecological greenways. The vision maps for multi-use, hiking and paddling trails are included in Appendix X. OGT establishes the vision for the FGTS by identifying and coordinating greenways and trails planning efforts throughout Florida. OGT expands the statewide system through the acquisition of eligible projects under the Greenways and Trails component of the Florida Forever Program, and has partnerships with nearly 30 communities that develop and manage state acquired greenways and trails on behalf of OGT.

RTP and OGT Acquisition Program

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) and the Greenways and Trails Acquisition Program have worked with over 70 communities across the state to develop and expand recreational trails.

RTP

The City of Chattahoochee developed the Chattahoochee Nature Trails, improving recreation opportunities by adding and improving more than three miles of trails and boardwalks, as well as parking, kiosk and a water fountain as support facilities. This recently completed project enhanced recreational opportunities in a "Rural Area of Critical Economic Concern" and was awarded the 2012 Recreation Trails Program Achievement Award.

Greenways and Trails Acquisition Program

The East Central Regional Rail Trail is the longest rail-to-trail acquisition in State of Florida history, stretching almost 51 miles between Volusia and Brevard Counties. The trail will connect three major tourism destinations in the state: the greater Orlando area, Kennedy Space Center, and Daytona's beaches. The trail corridor was purchased by the state through the Greenways and Trails Acquisition Program, with Brevard and Volusia Counties responsible for construction and management of the trail. A ribbon cutting ceremony was held for the first completed section of the trail in February 2012.

OGT coordinates with and provides technical assistance regarding the acquisition, development, designation and management of greenways and trails projects that fulfill the FGTS plan and vision. OGT administers the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), a federally funded competitive grant program that provides financial assistance to local communities for the development of trails. Since inception, RTP has assisted communities in 42 Florida counties to establish and expand their trails.

OGT disseminates information about the many benefits that greenways and trails provide to Florida residents and visitors. OGT provides information to residents and visitors about greenways and trails recreational opportunities through publications, e-newsletters, FloridaGreenwaysAndTrails.com and VisitFlorida.com/trails.

Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas

The Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas (CAMA) is the principal manager of submerged lands and their associated marine and aquatic resources in Florida. The Florida Aquatic Preserve Act of 1975 (Chapter 258, Part II, Florida Statutes), authorizes the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund to maintain state owned submerged lands with exceptional biological, aesthetic and scientific value as aquatic preserves. These areas offer prime opportunities for fishing, boating, swimming, paddling, snorkeling, diving and other water-related types of recreation. CAMA manages Florida's 41 aquatic preserves, including 37 saltwater and four freshwater sites, encompassing more than two million acres of sovereign submerged lands of the state (see Figure 3.8). In cooperation with NOAA, CAMA manages approximately 240,000 acres of submerged land and coastal uplands in three national estuarine research reserves: Apalachicola, Guana Tolomato Matanzas and Rookery Bay. In addition, CAMA partners with NOAA to manage the Florida Keys

National Marine Sanctuary. The sanctuary contains 3,926 square miles of submerged lands around the 126-mile long Florida Keys, and encompasses the most extensive living coral reef system in the nation.

Through the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative and the Coral Reef Conservation Program, CAMA supports Florida's membership in the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force and the U.S. All Islands Committee. These programs coordinate research and monitoring, develop management strategies, and promote partnerships to protect the coral reefs, hard bottom communities and associated reef resources of southeast Florida.

Division of State Lands

Since 1968, Florida has invested approximately \$7.8 billion through successive land acquisition programs to conserve approximately 3.8 million acres of land for environmental preservation, conservation and outdoor recreation purposes. The Division of State Lands (DSL) administers these land acquisition programs on behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund and DEP. DSL also provides administrative oversight for approximately 11 million acres of state owned lands, including 700 freshwater springs, 4,510 islands of ten acres or more and 7,000 lakes.

Florida Forever

DSL administers the Florida Forever program, which was created by the 1999 Florida Legislature as the successor program to the Florida Preservation 2000 program established in 1990. Under Florida Forever, \$300 million in funds were made available each year, until 2009, to support a variety of land acquisition purposes, including the preservation of environmental, conservation, and water management lands and to provide grants to local governments. Funding levels have been drastically reduced since then because of the severe economic downturn and resultant statewide budgetary crises. Since Florida Forever's inception, 682,350 acres of land

and water have been acquired, reflecting an investment of more than \$2.8 billion.

In 2008, Florida Forever was extended for another decade by the Florida Legislature. As part of the program's re-authorization, several important changes were made to the original program that was established in 1999. Two new land acquisition programs were created. The Rural and Family Lands Protection Act was established in the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services for the acquisition of agricultural lands through perpetual easements and other less-than-fee techniques. The Stan Mayfield Working Waterfronts Program was created in the Department of Community Affairs, Florida Communities Trust, to preserve and restore working waterfronts and provide public access to Florida's waters. In 2011, the Florida Communities Trust and Stan Mayfield Working Waterfronts programs were transferred to the Division of State Lands. In addition to these new programs, greater

emphasis was placed on providing public access to conservation lands, increasing accountability of public land management, protecting listed plant and animal species, and addressing climate change.

Florida Communities Trust

The Florida Communities Trust (FCT), established in 1989 to help local governments preserve parks, open space, beaches and natural areas, has created more livable communities throughout Florida. The FCT program was transferred to DSL in 2011. Matching and full grants for conservation and recreation land acquisition projects are provided to communities, as well as to non-profit environmental organizations, through an annual competitive application process. FCT receives 21 percent of annual proceeds from Florida Forever.

As of April 2012, more than 90,450 acres were acquired through the program. FCT has provided nearly \$826 million of the \$1.5

Florida Communities Trust (FCT)

Florida Communities Trust provides matching and full grants for conservation and recreation land acquisition projects.

- *More than 90,450 acres acquired as of April 2012*
- *Nearly \$826 million in project funding provided*
- *More than \$695 million in matching funds from local government partners*

Acreage Pines Natural Area, a 123-acre parcel, was acquired by Palm Beach County with matching funds from FCT. Since the 2001 acquisition, restoration efforts have focused on removing exotic nonnative vegetation, introducing prescribed burns, and restoring hydrology to historic wetland levels. Additionally, public-use facilities were developed including an educational kiosk, a bicycle rack, an accessible nature trail and boardwalk spanning through a restored wetland to a wildlife observation platform, and 1,400 feet of natural-surface hiking trails.

The Acreage Pines Natural Area is within the footprint of the Northeast Everglades Natural Area, a multi-agency system of 165,000 acres of conservation lands and activity and education centers in northern Palm Beach County and southern Martin County that provide a wide-range of nature-based outdoor recreational opportunities.



Acreage Pines Natural Area



Acreage Pines Trail

billion spent to acquire these lands, while local government partners have provided matching funds in excess of \$695 million.

Division of Water Resource Management

The Division of Water Resource Management (DWRM) is responsible for protecting the quality of Florida's drinking water as well as its rivers, lakes and wetlands, and for reclaiming lands after they have been mined for phosphate and other minerals. Its programs establish the technical basis for setting the state's surface water and ground water quality standards, which are critical to maintaining the viability of water resources for public outdoor recreational use. By 2025, Floridians are expected to use about two billion gallons more fresh water each day. The Water Protection and Sustainability Program, created in 2005, has the task of increasing available water supplies, including alternative water supplies, and promoting efficient water use and conservation to meet existing and future water supply needs. DEP's annual report, *Tapping New Sources: Meeting 2025 Water Supply Needs*, describes the highlights and accomplishments of this program.

Coastal protection and restoration are vital in preserving one of Florida's most valuable natural resources - its 825 miles of sandy shoreline fronting the Atlantic Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico and the Straits of Florida. As of 2011, more than 222 miles of beach have been restored as a result of the Beach Erosion Control Program, working in concert with other agencies and local governments to protect, preserve and restore coastal sandy beaches. Financial assistance in an amount up to 50 percent of project costs is available to county and municipal governments, community development districts and special taxing districts for shore protection and preservation. In addition to beach restoration and nourishment, funds are also available for construction of dune walkovers and parking facilities for public access. Through 2011, more than \$739.5 million has been appropriated by the Florida Legislature for

beach erosion control activities and hurricane damage recovery.

Bureau of Mine Reclamation

DWRM's Mine Reclamation Program regulates surface mine reclamation through a review and monitoring process. Originally established in the late 1980s to regulate, restore and reclaim phosphate-mined land, the program has evolved into a habitat and wildlife management program. The Bureau periodically funds reclamation of phosphate lands mined before mid-1975 and develops, as well as manages, extensive habitat corridors in Florida's mining areas. To date, 46,524 acres have been reclaimed through the funding program, with 6,835 acres under active reclamation; \$127 million has been disbursed to landowners reclaiming mined lands with nearly \$27 million more committed to ongoing reclamation. Today, the program is responsible for managing 23 state-owned parcels along the Peace and Alafia Rivers and in the Green Swamp to implement long-term management activities needed for protection of these greenways, wildlife corridors and riparian buffers.

Office of Sustainable Initiatives

Clean Marina Program

In 1992, Congress enacted the Clean Vessel Act, which established a federal grant program administered by USFWS to reduce pollution from vessel sewage discharges. Funding comes from the Sport Fishing Restoration Program account made up of revenues from excise taxes on fishing equipment, boats and motorboat fuels. The Clean Marina Program is a cooperative effort by the Office of Sustainable Initiatives, the Marine Industries Association of Florida, Florida Sea Grant Program, International Marina Institute, U.S. Coast Guard and public and private marinas throughout the state. Clean boater programs educate recreational boaters, marinas, boat yards and marine retailers about pollution control and enhance recreational boating through brochures and workshops that emphasize protecting aquatic resources.



Florida has over 200 freshwater boat ramps constructed by FWC using Federal Aid in Sportfish Restoration funds, credit: FWC

Water Management Districts

The Office of Water Policy in DEP addresses statewide water management issues in coordination with Florida's water management districts and other agencies. Chapter 373, Florida Statutes, created five water management districts for the purpose of managing and conserving the state's water resources. The five districts were organized around major drainage basins in the state: Northwest Florida, Suwannee River, St. Johns River, Southwest Florida and South Florida. Land acquisition is one of the districts' primary tools for carrying out their mission of flood control, water storage and management, water resource development, and preservation of wetlands, streams and lakes.

The districts play a key role in providing public outdoor recreation opportunities on lands under their ownership. The water management districts acquire land through funding from Florida Forever and other sources. Under Florida Forever, 30 percent

of the program's annual funding of \$300 million is allocated for this purpose. This amount is divided among the five districts according to a population-based formula established in Section 373.59(8), Florida Statutes. The districts are required to make their lands available for compatible public outdoor recreation uses whenever practicable. Numerous public access sites and recreational facilities have been developed on district owned lands throughout the state in cooperation with other state agencies, the federal government, counties, municipalities and the private sector. Examples of the recreational opportunities provided on district lands include hiking, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, bicycling, canoeing, primitive camping and wildlife viewing.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) was established by a 1998 amendment to the Florida Constitution

that consolidated the responsibility for conserving the state's freshwater and saltwater aquatic life and wildlife into a single agency. FWC operates under a mission of "managing fish and wildlife for their long-term well-being and benefit of the people."

The Commission is composed of seven members appointed by the Governor, subject to confirmation by the Senate, for staggered terms of five years. FWC exercises regulatory and executive powers of the state over marine life and is charged with exercising all the non-judicial powers of the state with respect to wild animals, freshwater aquatic life and marine life. Central to FWC's role in outdoor recreation is the management of hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing opportunities. FWC receives federal funds for preservation, restoration and enhancement of Florida's sport fishing resources, including boating access facilities, from the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration (sometimes referred to as Dingell-Johnson or Wallop-Breaux) program. The FWC also receives funds for protection of endangered species from the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration (commonly referred to as Pittman-Robertson) Trust Fund. These programs are administered at the federal level by United States Fish and Wildlife Service, which provide grants and technical assistance to the states.

Division of Habitat and Species Conservation

This division is responsible for the state's Wildlife Management Area system, which includes 158 tracts totaling approximately 5.7 million acres in public and private ownership, one of the nation's largest. FWC is the lead manager of 54 areas that cover 1.4 million acres and is a co-manager of 104 areas that cover an additional 4.3 million acres. This system is vital to sustaining the fish and wildlife resources of the state and also provides an expansive and rugged setting for a range of outdoor recreation opportunities. Some of FWC's cooperating agreements are short-term arrangements, particularly on private lands. As a result,

Spotlight **Florida Boating Improvement Program**

The Florida Boating Improvement Program provides funding through competitive grants for boating access projects and other boating-related activities on coastal and/or inland waters of Florida. Eligible program participants include county governments, municipalities and other governmental entities of the State of Florida.

- *Over \$3 million awarded in FY 2011/12*
- *32 projects funded in FY 2011/12*

the amount of hunting land available to the public on these areas fluctuates from year to year.

In 2001, Congress created the State Wildlife Grants Program and required each state to develop a comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy in order to continue receiving federal wildlife grants. FWC created Florida's Wildlife Legacy Initiative in 2004 to serve the agency's long-term commitment to conserve native wildlife. The initiative crafts a statewide vision for the future of wildlife in Florida, in coordination with other state, federal and local agencies, universities, conservation organizations, recreation groups, businesses and the public. Species range from those which are common throughout the southeastern United States to some which are virtually unknown elsewhere in the country, such as the Florida panther, the Florida manatee and the Florida scrub jay. The initiative supports various forms of outdoor recreation including hunting, fishing, bird watching and nature study.

Division of Freshwater Fisheries Management

The Division of Freshwater Fisheries Management (DFFM) provides expertise on freshwater fish populations, angler use and other aspects of freshwater fisheries

to ensure high quality fishing in Florida lakes, rivers and streams. Florida has over 3 million acres of fresh water comprising 7,700 named lakes, and 12,000 miles of fishable rivers, streams and canals. More than 200 species of freshwater fishes inhabit these waters and include many highly sought after sportfish species. DFFM provides the public with information on freshwater fisheries management issues, fishing opportunities, aquatic education and outreach, and other matters aimed at promoting responsible life-long participation in sport fishing. Additionally, freshwater fish production facilities provide a dependable supply of the specific size, quantity and quality of freshwater fish to meet specific freshwater fisheries management objectives.



George Crady Bridge Fishing Pier in Jacksonville

Division of Marine Fisheries Management

The Division of Marine Fisheries Management (MFM) develops sustainable management recommendations for consideration by the FWC Commissioners for more than 500 saltwater species in Florida. These management plans ensure the long-term conservation of Florida's valuable marine fisheries resources while balancing the needs of the fishermen with the needs of the marine species. More than 2.7 million saltwater anglers fish Florida's 2,276 miles of tidal shoreline, creating an economic impact of more than \$5.7 billion and more than 54,000 jobs. MFM staff also work with federal agencies on marine issues and represent the state on the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. The MFM outreach and education team provides

the public with opportunities to learn more about saltwater fishing, from learning basic fishing skills and fish identification to sustainable habits such as the best ways to catch and release a fish. MFM's other programs include the planning and deploying artificial reefs; reaching out to commercial, recreational and charter fishermen; ensuring seafood dealers are selling safe and quality products; removing derelict traps from the water through the trap retrieval program; and making public comment on issues that may affect Florida anglers.

Division of Law Enforcement

FWC's Division of Law Enforcement officers provide protection to residents and visitors who enjoy Florida's natural resources, and enforce resource protection and boating safety regulations in the state's woods and waters. The Boating and Waterways Section is responsible for educating boaters about boating safety, ensuring boat access, installing and maintaining waterway signage, and identifying derelict vessels.

The Boating and Waterways Section administers several grant programs, including the Florida Boating Improvement Program and the Boating Infrastructure Grant Program. The Federal Sport Fish Restoration Program (commonly referred to as the Dingell-Johnson Act and Wallop-Breaux Act) is a "user pays, user benefits" program that is aimed at improving sport fishing and boating opportunities. Federal funds are collected from taxes on fishing tackle, motor fuels and import duties on tackle and yachts. The money is returned to appropriate state agencies for research, management, education and facility development related to sport fishing. These three programs funded over 200 grants around the state, totaling more than \$31 million, to provide for construction of boat ramps and related access facilities.

Division of Hunting and Game Management

The Division of Hunting and Game Management (HGM) facilitates sustainable responsible use of Florida's game wildlife

resources by providing scientific expertise on game wildlife species, including alligators, deer, small game, waterfowl and wild turkeys and developing sound management recommendations based upon scientific information. With a cadre of volunteer instructors HGM delivers hunter safety training and certification and manages public shooting ranges; HGM coordinates and develops rules, regulations, and information for the public pertaining public hunting throughout the state. Through these activities, HGM strives to accomplish a high level of satisfaction among those who use and depend on healthy game wildlife resources.

Office of Public Access

The Office of Public Access and Wildlife Viewing (PAWV) plans and develops public use enhancements on FWC-managed areas such as trails, fishing docks and viewing blinds. Among the trails managed by the office is the nationally recognized 105-mile Big Bend Saltwater Paddling Trail, an open-water route along Florida's coast from the Aucilla to Suwannee rivers. PAWV coordinates FWC's volunteer programs, delivers wildlife viewing information to the public and assists local communities to provide sustainable wildlife viewing opportunities. The Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail, managed by this office, is a collection of nearly 500 sites throughout the state selected for their excellent wildlife viewing. The trail uses special highway signs identifying designated sites, guidebooks and maps, a website and social media to showcase Florida's birding and wildlife viewing opportunities.

Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Florida Forest Service

The Florida Forest Service (FFS) is a major contributor to Florida's total outdoor recreation supply. The primary outdoor recreation objective is to maximize compatible recreational use of state forest lands. Florida's state forest system

consists of 35 areas totaling more than 1,058,700 acres, most of which provide abundant opportunities for many popular outdoor recreation activities. Resource-based recreation opportunities offered by FFS include camping, swimming, hiking, horseback riding, bicycling, off-highway vehicle use, hunting, fishing, paddling and nature study.

Hunting is allowed on most properties managed by FFS, and is administered in cooperation with FWCC as part of that agency's wildlife management program. Section 589.19 (4), Florida Statutes states that the FFS shall designate areas of state forest as an Operation Outdoor Freedom Special Hunt Area to honor wounded veterans and service members in order for them to have a valuable hunting experience. FFS is also responsible for administering the Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Program established by the T. Mark Schmidt Off-Highway Vehicle Safety and Recreation Act (Chapter 261, Florida Statutes) in 2002. The Act provides a set of guidelines for providing and maintaining state lands for off-highway motorcycle, all-terrain vehicle (ATV), two-rider ATV, recreational off-highway vehicle use, collectively referred to as off-highway vehicles.

Besides directly providing resources and facilities for outdoor recreation, FFS assists private landowners in developing forest management plans that often include a recreation component. At the landowner's request, FFS will assess the land's potential for hunting, fishing, wildlife management, water access facilities, camping and related activities. FFS may also assist landowners in designing facilities such as campgrounds, boat ramps and hiking trails to make the land available for recreational purposes.

Florida Department of State

Office of Cultural and Historical Programs

The Office of Cultural and Historical Programs (OCHP) is the state agency responsible for preserving and promoting the historical,



Temple Mounds at Crystal River Archaeological State Park

archaeological, museum, arts and folk culture resources in Florida. Within OCHP, the Division of Historical Resources (DHR) is the primary agency for directing historic preservation. The director of DHR serves as the State Historic Preservation Officer providing a liaison with the national historic preservation programs conducted by NPS.

The Bureau of Historic Preservation conducts historic preservation programs aimed at identifying, evaluating, preserving and interpreting the historic and cultural resources of the state. The bureau contains four sections with important responsibilities for historic resource management.

The Compliance Review Section administers the Florida Master Site File and reviews federal or state undertakings that may affect historical or cultural resources. The Preservation Services Section oversees the Architectural Preservation Services Program, the Main Street Program, and the Grants-in-Aid Program. The Survey and Registration Section oversees the National Register/National Historic Landmark Program.

The Public Outreach Section directs the Publications, Historical Markers, and Florida Folklife Programs.

Chapter 267, Florida Statutes, directs DHR to cooperate with state and federal agencies, local government, private organizations and individuals to conduct a comprehensive statewide survey of historic resources and to develop a statewide historic preservation plan. The primary purpose of the state's historic preservation plan is to guide the implementation of sound planning procedures for the location, identification, and protection of the state's archaeological and historical resources.

Florida Department of Economic Opportunity

The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) offers technical and financial assistance to local governments in a wide range of functional areas. As the state planning agency, DEO is charged with coordinating state-level review of local government comprehensive plans and comprehensive regional policy plans required

by Chapters 163 and 186, Florida Statutes. DEO has also assisted local governments and regional agencies on resource management and protection matters through its involvement in resource planning and management committees established by the Governor in accordance with Chapter 380, Florida Statutes.

Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program

The Waterfronts Florida Partnership Program was originally established in 1997. In 2005, the program received statutory authorization to be administered in coordination with DEP and NOAA under Chapter 342, Florida Statutes. The program helps communities revitalize and promote interest in their waterfront districts by providing technical assistance, support, training and financial assistance. Waterfront revitalization may target environmental resource protection, public access, retention of viable traditional waterfront economies and hazard mitigation.

Since 1997, a total of 23 communities have received designation as Waterfronts Florida Partnership communities. In 2009, two new communities were designated: Ft. Myers and the community of Millville in Panama City.

Rural Land Stewardship Area Program

Chapter 2011-139, Laws of Florida, substantially amended the Rural Land Stewardship Area program. Now at Section 163.3248, Florida Statutes, the law provides that one or more landowners may request that the local government designate their lands as a rural land stewardship area. The program allows local governments to adopt a future land use overlay to designate all or portions of the lands as a rural land stewardship area if the properties currently are classified as predominantly agricultural, rural, open, open-rural, or a substantively equivalent land use. Rural Land Stewardship Areas are areas within which planning and economic incentives are applied to encourage



San Carlos Island Community is one of the communities benefitting from the Waterfronts Florida program

the implementation of innovative and flexible planning and development strategies and the use of creative land use planning techniques to support a diverse economic and employment base.

Rural land stewardship areas must be at least 10,000 acres or greater and located outside of municipalities and established urban service areas. This program, among other things, helps preserve inherent qualities provided by rural areas, including the protection of natural resources, ecosystems, and habitats while controlling urban sprawl.

Florida Department of Transportation

In providing for the state's transportation needs, Florida Department of Transportation (DOT), under Chapter 334, Florida Statutes, gives consideration to the preservation and enhancement of the environment and the conservation of natural resources, including scenic, historic and recreational assets. Florida's highway system affords a vast number of scenic recreational opportunities, but perhaps its most significant contribution to outdoor recreation is providing access to Florida's recreation resources. DOT constructs and maintains rest areas for public use and provides opportunities for water-based recreation on causeways and bridges. Additionally, DOT administers the State Pedestrian and Bicycle Program, the Florida Scenic Highway Program and the Transportation Enhancement Program.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Program

DOT developed the State Pedestrian and Bicycle Program in Florida as a means of promoting alternative transportation modes and recreational bicycling in Florida. DOT develops initiatives and programs to improve the environment for safe, comfortable and convenient walking and bicycling trips and to improve the performance and interaction among motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians. As part of this program, the state pedestrian and bicycle coordinator and district pedestrian and bicycle coordinators in each of DOT's seven field operations regions work with

municipal pedestrian and bicycle coordinators to develop and update design, maintenance and operation guidelines for all state, municipal and local bicycle facilities.

Florida Scenic Highway Program

The Florida Scenic Highway Program is a grass-roots effort to showcase and heighten awareness of Florida's intrinsic resources - cultural, historical, archaeological, recreational, natural and scenic - which collectively enhance the overall traveling experience. Designated highways tell a story that is representative of Florida's past and present lifestyles. Participation in the program is voluntary and benefits the communities along the routes in matters such as resource enhancement and protection. Proposed projects are reviewed based on criteria established by FHWA. Each designated corridor is managed by a corridor management entity made up of interested citizens. As of June 2012, there were 23 designated scenic highways in Florida.

State University System of Florida

The State University System of Florida consists of 11 institutions that serve 321,503 students and contain almost 14,000 acres of land. Each university has an approved master plan that addresses the issue of outdoor recreation space. Recreational facilities maintained by each university provide opportunities for participation in a variety of athletic activities such as tennis, basketball, baseball, softball, soccer and football. Many state universities also operate resource-based recreation areas detached from the main campus for use by students, alumni and in some instances, the general public. These areas provide opportunities for both active and passive outdoor recreation activities, such as golfing, swimming, canoeing, hiking, camping, nature study and picnicking.

Regional Planning Councils

Section 186.501, Florida Statutes, also known as the Regional Planning Council Act, divides the state into eleven regional planning councils. The council provides a

link between local and state governments, and is comprised of two-thirds county and municipal officials and one-third gubernatorial appointees. Additionally, the council includes ex-officio members from FDOT, FDEP, the corresponding Water Management District and a nominee from FDEO.

One of the primary functions of each council is the preparation and adoption of a strategic regional policy plan, providing goals and policies which guide the economic, physical and social development of the region. Using this plan as a guideline, the councils review local strategic and development plans, link planning efforts of various entities to ensure regional consistency, and settle any planning or growth management disputes.

Special Districts

Chapter 189, Florida Statutes, also known as the Uniform Special District Accountability Act of 1989, addresses the operation of special districts in Florida. Over 1,600 special districts exist statewide, providing infrastructure and services in a wide range of areas including fire control, libraries, ports and inlets, mosquito control, water control, community development, roads and hospitals. In some cases, special districts play an expanded role in providing outdoor recreation opportunities, conservation and resource management services.

Navigation districts in the state play a particularly important role in outdoor recreation. The Florida Inland Navigation District (FIND) and the West Coast Inland



Regional Planning Councils

Figure 3.3

Navigation District (WCIND) provide assistance programs that develop waterway access projects such as boat ramps, marinas, boardwalks, fishing piers, waterfront parks, navigation channels, shoreline stabilization and environmental restoration projects. FIND is the state sponsor of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway from the Georgia border to the southern end of Miami-Dade County. WCIND stretches from the northern border of Manatee County to the southern border of Lee County and contains the 152-mile long Gulf Intracoastal Waterway.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROVIDERS

Besides being the main provider of user-oriented recreation facilities and programs, local governments are pursuing opportunities to acquire open space and conservation areas for their communities, often in partnerships with state agencies or non-profit conservation groups. Although the size of the properties acquired under these programs may not be as large as the properties acquired for

Local Agency Outdoor Recreation Resources				
Region	# of Recreation Areas	Land (in Acres)	Water (in Acres)	Acres Total
Northwest	875	9,505	962	10,467
North Central	709	31,710	1,663	33,373
Northeast	934	43,700	475	44,175
Central West	1,406	115,508	2,582	118,090
Central	1,407	55,717	34,947	90,664
Central East	1,283	65,561	9,914	75,475
Southwest	1,017	138,044	3,208	141,252
Southeast	2,032	75,539	3,618	79,157
Statewide	9,663	535,284	57,369	592,653

Table 3.4

conservation by state and federal agencies, they can be critically important in achieving a community's goals for environmental preservation, recreation and open space, or growth management.

Much of the success of the state's land acquisition programs is the result of the cooperative partnerships between federal, state and local governments and national and local land trusts. Many of the projects have been sponsored jointly by partnering arrangements and such partnerships with local governments have increased in recent years. Of Florida's 67 counties, 29 have implemented land acquisition programs as have several cities and regional authorities. Such programs have generated nearly \$2 billion to acquire conservation and recreation lands.

County Roles

Florida's counties vary in character from densely populated metropolitan areas such as Miami-Dade and Pinellas, to sparsely populated rural areas like Glades and Liberty. County governments are key components of Florida's recreation and park system. All counties do not have the same outdoor recreation needs nor have they all been able

to fund responsive programs to the same degree, but every county in the state has an officially established outdoor recreation program. In some counties, user-oriented recreation programming is limited, but resource-based facilities such as roadside picnic areas or boat ramps are common amenities. In some counties, user-oriented facilities may be available only at public schools and municipal parks. More than half of Florida's counties, however, have undertaken sophisticated recreation programs involving the administration of numerous and diverse parks, facilities and program activities.

Counties are primarily concerned with the local outdoor recreation needs generated by extra-municipal populations and as a rule are the ideal level of government to provide regional or large community parks. Unlike cities, the larger acreage of counties provides a wider range of resources and a greater variety of outdoor recreation venues. As a result, the typical county outdoor recreation program in Florida may offer a combination of resource-based and user-oriented activities. Beaches, swimming areas, boating access sites, picnic sites, scenic areas and, occasionally, campgrounds are among the

more popular types of resource-based areas and facilities provided.

Municipal Roles

Virtually all of Florida's 412 municipalities have recreation programs and facilities of one type or another. Many cities have developed park and recreation programs with trained staff involved in the administration of parks, facilities and programs. Smaller cities may have only limited facilities and rely on the county government, local school system, private organizations or non-profit groups to carry out athletic programs.

Because of population densities and the lack of large open space areas that support resource-based recreation opportunities, municipal recreation systems tend to concentrate on providing more intensive user-oriented facilities that require relatively little space. Typical municipal outdoor recreation facilities include playgrounds, swimming pools, ball fields, tennis courts and golf courses. Because of the near total reliance on user-oriented facilities, municipal programs have only a limited bearing on the statewide resource-based outdoor recreation program. There are some exceptions, however, especially in the cases of cities located on bodies of water. For example, Atlantic and Gulf coastal communities provide many excellent public beach facilities, while those located on navigable waters (coastal or inland) operate marinas, boat ramps, mooring fields and other boating facilities.

Although little in the way of resource-based outdoor recreation facilities is provided by the typical municipal outdoor recreation program, municipal programs play a primary role in the provision of user-oriented recreation opportunities in Florida. The importance of the role of municipal programs will grow as increased public emphasis is placed on close-to-home recreation. Since municipal recreation agencies are the recreation system closest to the people, they are usually the first to feel the pressures to establish programs for meeting the added demands of new residents.

NON-GOVERNMENT ROLES

In addition to the more conventional forms of outdoor recreation provided by all levels of government, a wide array of recreational opportunities is afforded by the private sector. Private programs range from for-profit recreational enterprises such as campgrounds, golf courses, marinas and attractions of all kinds to non-profit conservation organizations. Industries with extensive land holdings, notably the forest products industry in Florida, provide vast recreation resources and excellent facilities on their lands for the use of the public often at only a nominal fee. However, this resource is quickly disappearing in many parts of the state as timber lands are being converted to private access leases or developed for residential and commercial purposes.

Private outdoor recreation, because of its size, complexity and the fact that it undergoes rapid and frequent change, is extremely difficult to inventory in a comprehensive manner. In addition to its direct delivery of outdoor recreation opportunities, the private sector can respond quickly to opportunities for acquiring property for subsequent donation or resale. This capability makes the private sector a valuable partner with public agencies in the provision of resource-based outdoor recreation. During the past decade, private companies and non-profit organizations have transferred thousands of acres to state government for recreation and conservation purposes. Those transfers represent a substantial contribution to the overall supply of outdoor recreational opportunities in Florida.

Commercial Providers

Florida's commercial outdoor recreation providers are a vital component of the state's economy. Commercial providers meet a significant portion of the overall demand for both resource-based and user-oriented outdoor recreation in Florida, particularly tourist-generated demand. Because of their capabilities and further potential for fulfilling



Golfing at one of Florida's private recreation providers

demand, the private commercial sector must bear a large share of the responsibility for meeting demand for both resource-based and user-oriented recreation.

Private Organizations

This category includes private and quasi-public organizations such as the YMCA, 4-H, scouting organizations, faith-based groups and a myriad of conservation organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, Audubon Society, Archbold Biological Station and Tall Timbers Research Station and Land Conservancy. In many cases these organizations not only acquire and manage conservation land, but they also conduct preservation, restoration and research programs and public educational activities. These groups provide land and facilities primarily for the use of members, but in some cases for the public at large.

Clubs

This category includes hunt clubs, country clubs, tennis clubs, yacht clubs and others. These groups manage land or facilities that are primarily available only to organization members or their guests. In addition, private industry lands are included (timber companies and other industries with extensive land holdings whose lands or portions thereof are open to the public). The majority of these lands are used for resource-based recreation, although some forms of user-oriented facilities are also available.

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Chapter Four - Outdoor Recreation Demand and Need

There is no consensus in the field of recreation planning as to the most appropriate methods for measuring current and future demand for outdoor recreation resources and facilities. Since outdoor recreation resources and facilities are generally felt to be “free” goods and services, “demand,” as an economic concept, does not readily lend itself to practical application. No commonly accepted methods exist for determining, on a statewide or broad regional basis, the amount of outdoor recreation a person would “consume” under certain conditions of cost and availability. As a result, the use of the term “demand” is common as a means of expressing the actual participation in recreation activity by some defined group or population over a fixed period of time. Such measurements can provide reasonably sound estimates of recreation demand and are vital to long-range statewide outdoor recreation planning.

OUTDOOR RECREATION DEMAND

To estimate outdoor recreation demand in Florida, the Division of Recreation and Parks conducts periodic surveys of resident and tourist participation in outdoor recreation activities. The 2011 Florida Outdoor Recreation Participation Study was conducted by Responsive Management, a natural resource survey research firm. The study

surveyed Florida residents by telephone between April and September 2011 regarding their participation in 26 different outdoor recreation activities. Participants were asked to identify each activity they participated in during the preceding 12 months. A survey of tourists was conducted in three phases: May, August and October 2011. Responsive Management completed 3,961 surveys with residents and 2,890 surveys with tourists. The methodologies used to conduct the resident and tourist surveys are described in Appendix E.

Based on the results of the surveys, the percentages of Florida residents and tourists who participated in each of the activities were calculated. The percentages indicate the number of residents and tourists in each region who actually took part in an activity at least one time during the preceding year. By applying these percentages to estimates of resident and tourist populations for 2010, the number of people who participated in each activity was calculated for the state and for each planning region. These methods were repeated using resident and tourist population projections for 2020. Figure 4.1 shows the top five recreation activities for residents and visitors statewide for 2010. Appendix F provides the resident and tourist participation rates for each measured activity.



Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park is a favorite recreational spot for residents and tourists

Saltwater beach activities remain the activity in which the largest percentage of residents participated. Wildlife viewing, bicycling, picnicking, visiting historical or archaeological sites and saltwater fishing had the next highest percentages of participation. Resident participation rates for other activities ranged from 29 percent for swimming in public outdoor pools to one percent for horseback camping.

Among tourists, saltwater beach activities also had the highest level of participation

Top Five Outdoor Recreation Opportunities: *Residents & Tourists*

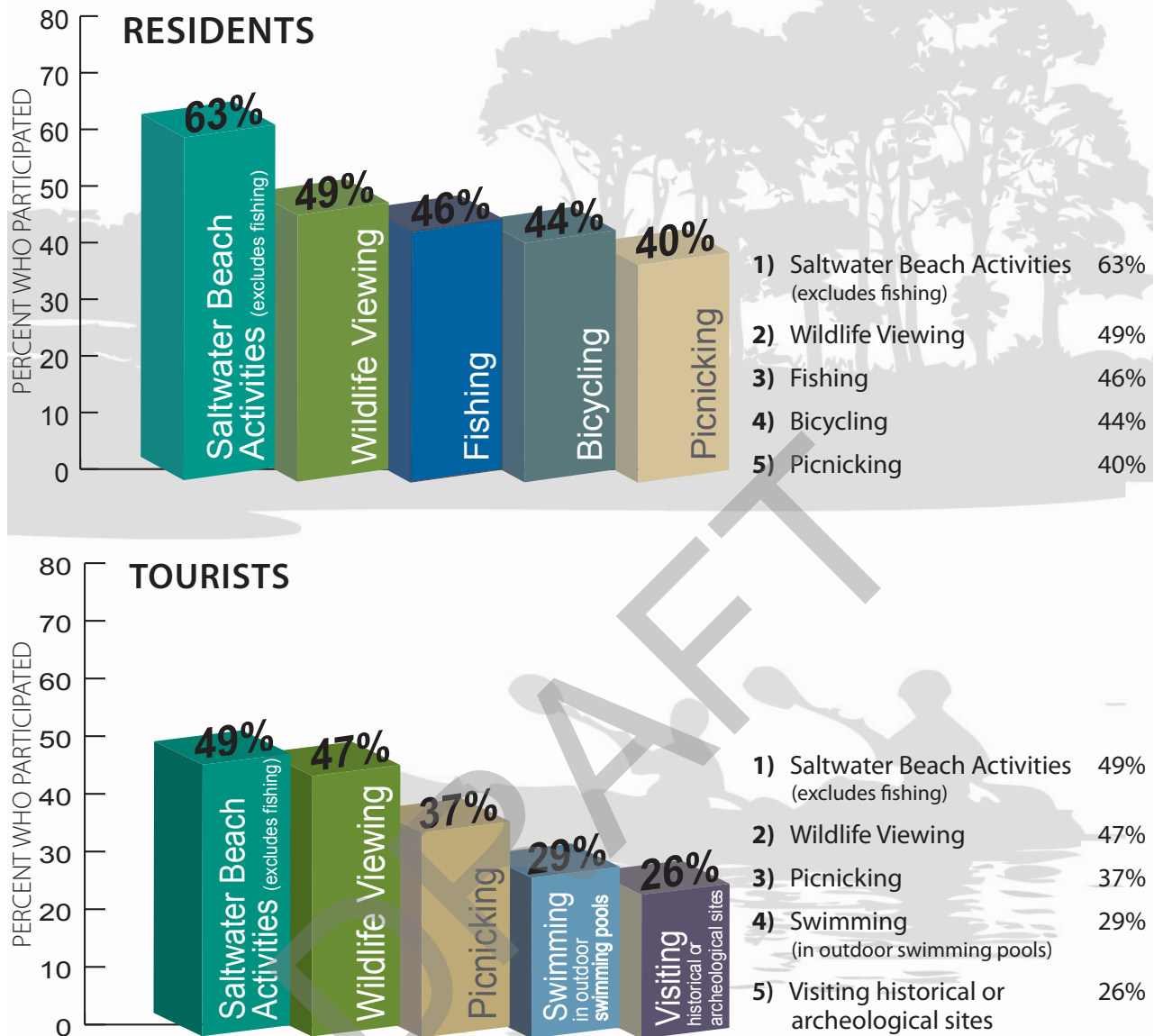


Figure 4.1

at 49 percent. This was followed closely by wildlife viewing at 48 percent. Picnicking, swimming in public outdoor pools, visiting archaeological and historic sites, hiking and saltwater fishing had the next highest levels of participation. Participation rates for the other activities ranged from 14 percent for both bicycling and freshwater beach use to 2 percent for soccer and football.

Importance of Recreation

The participation survey determined that nearly all Florida residents (96 percent) say

that outdoor recreation is important to them; this includes 72 percent who think it is very important and 24 percent who think it is somewhat important. The results are similar among tourists: 98 percent say outdoor recreation is important to them personally (65 percent saying very important and 33 percent saying somewhat important).

Motivations for Participation

An important aspect of planning for outdoor recreation is understanding why people recreate; what motivates them to get

outside and participate. According to the participation survey, for Florida residents, health and physical fitness is considered the most important reason for participation, followed by being with family and friends, for fun/relaxation, and being outdoors and closer to nature.

Top Reasons for Resident Participation

- 1) For health/physical fitness
- 2) To be with family and friends
- 3) For relaxation/fun/enjoyment
- 4) To be outdoors/close to nature
- 5) To enjoy the scenery

The most important reason for tourist participation in outdoor recreation in Florida is for fun and relaxation, followed by being with family and friends and the attractiveness of Florida's recreation opportunities and climate.

Top Reasons for Tourist Participation

- 1) For relaxation/fun/enjoyment
- 2) To be with family and friends
- 3) Florida has good/attractive recreation opportunities/climate
- 4) To be outdoors/close to nature
- 5) Beach (specifically mentioned)

Satisfaction with Opportunities

The participation survey found that the overwhelming majority of Florida residents are satisfied with the outdoor recreation opportunities in their home county and support Florida maintaining its current levels of outdoor recreation services and opportunities. Among tourists, satisfaction with opportunities is even higher, and a large majority of tourists support maintaining the current levels of outdoor recreation services and opportunities in Florida. This is not to say there are no needs for improvement,

but rather emphasizes the need for at least maintaining current levels of service as the population grows.

Satisfaction with Outdoor Recreation Opportunities - *Residents and Tourists*

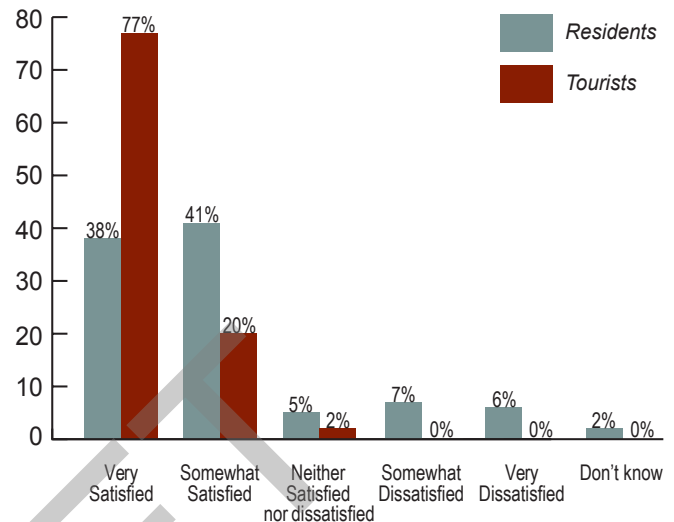


Figure 4.2

Respondents' opinions of the quality of facilities in their home counties are also positive, with nearly 80 percent rating the facilities excellent or good. On the other end, 20 percent rate them fair or poor, and without continued maintenance, this number is expected to rise.

Top Desired Facilities - *Residents and Tourists*

RESIDENTS

- 1) Community parks
- 2) Biking paths
- 3) Playgrounds
- 4) Outdoor public swimming pools
- 5) Hiking/walking trails

TOURISTS

- 1) Improved amenities at existing recreation areas (bathrooms, etc.)
- 2) Community Parks
- 3) Beach Access/Parking
- 4) Waterpark
- 5) Saltwater Boat Access/Ramps



Trousdell Aquatics Center is operated by the City of Tallahassee Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Affairs

COMPARING DEMAND AND SUPPLY

The resident and tourist demand figures derived from the participation study were compared to the supply data presented in Chapter 3. This produced estimates of the additional outdoor recreation resources and facilities that will be required to maintain current levels of services as resident and tourist populations increase in the future.

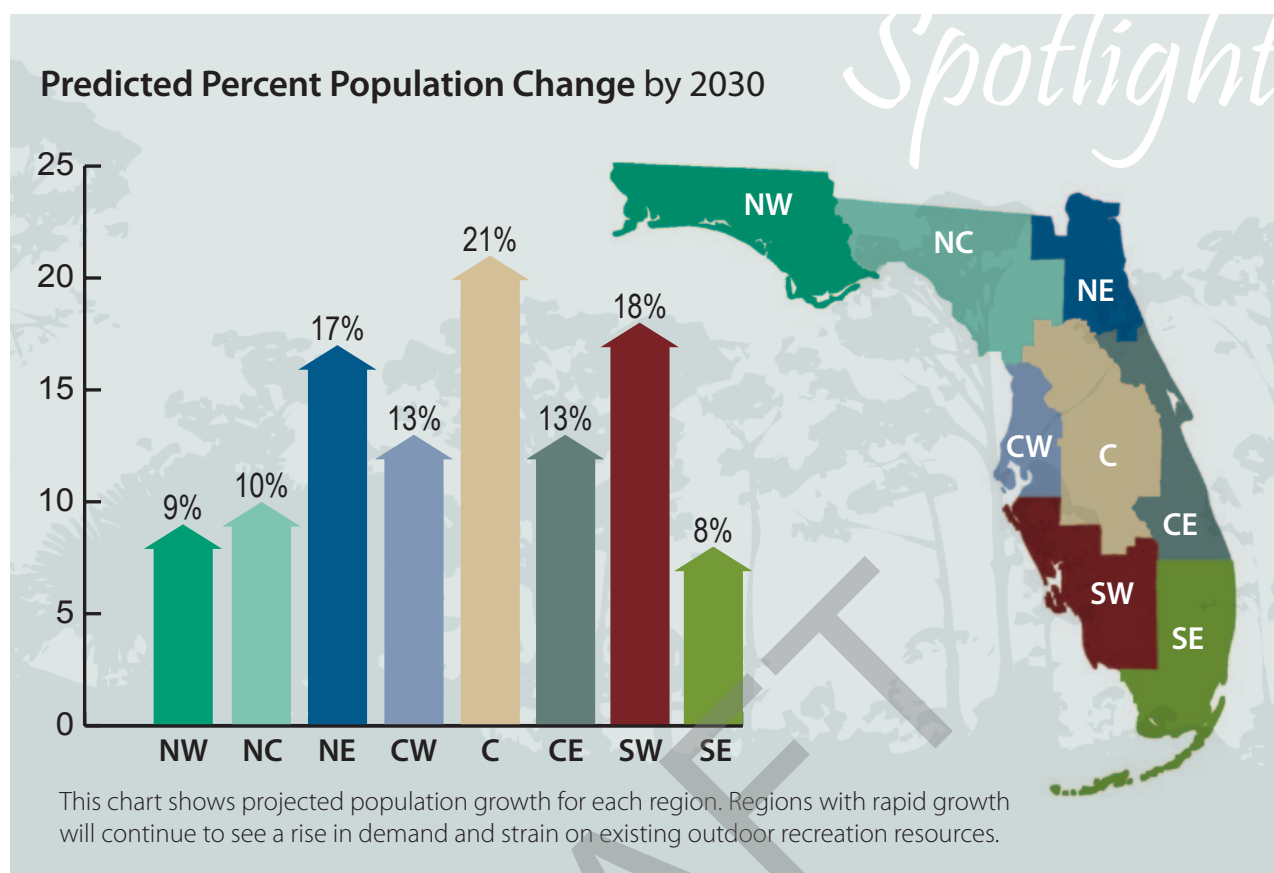
The level of service that is currently provided by each region's existing supply of resources and facilities was determined for each activity. "Level of service" as used in this plan means the amount of resources and facilities that are available to support an activity, expressed in terms of units of supply per 1,000 participants. For example, the level of service for hiking trails would be expressed as miles of trail per 1,000 participants. Levels of service were not calculated for certain outdoor recreation activities, such as saltwater and freshwater boating, since the resources that support them are so extensive that they can accommodate a virtually unlimited amount of demand (for example,

the open waters of the Atlantic Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico and the state's thousands of lakes and rivers).

Regional Comparisons: Assessing Need

Each region's level of service was estimated for all 26 activities. To provide a standard by which the regions could be compared, the statewide median level of service for each activity was calculated. Table 4.1 (page 53) identifies whether each region's level of service falls above or below the statewide median for an activity.

The level of service comparisons are only one measure of outdoor recreation resource and facility needs in Florida. Outdoor recreation levels of service vary tremendously from community to community and are determined by complex factors that cannot be addressed practicably at a statewide level. The analysis is intended to reflect conditions in the region as a whole and should not be applied to particular communities. Additionally, level of service is heavily influenced by the resident and tourist populations. A region with a



lower level of service does not necessarily have fewer facilities, but often has a greater number of participants using the facilities.

Despite these limitations, the analysis presented in the plan is useful for identifying regional and statewide patterns of outdoor recreation supply and demand and offering a reasonably sound understanding of regions with the greatest needs to support the demands of their population. Increasing opportunities should be a statewide priority, and not solely focused on regions below the statewide median. While these regions have greater relative needs to adequately supply their participants, all regions must continue to

enhance their outdoor recreation opportunities to meet the needs of a growing population.

The results of the assessment are presented fully in Appendix G.

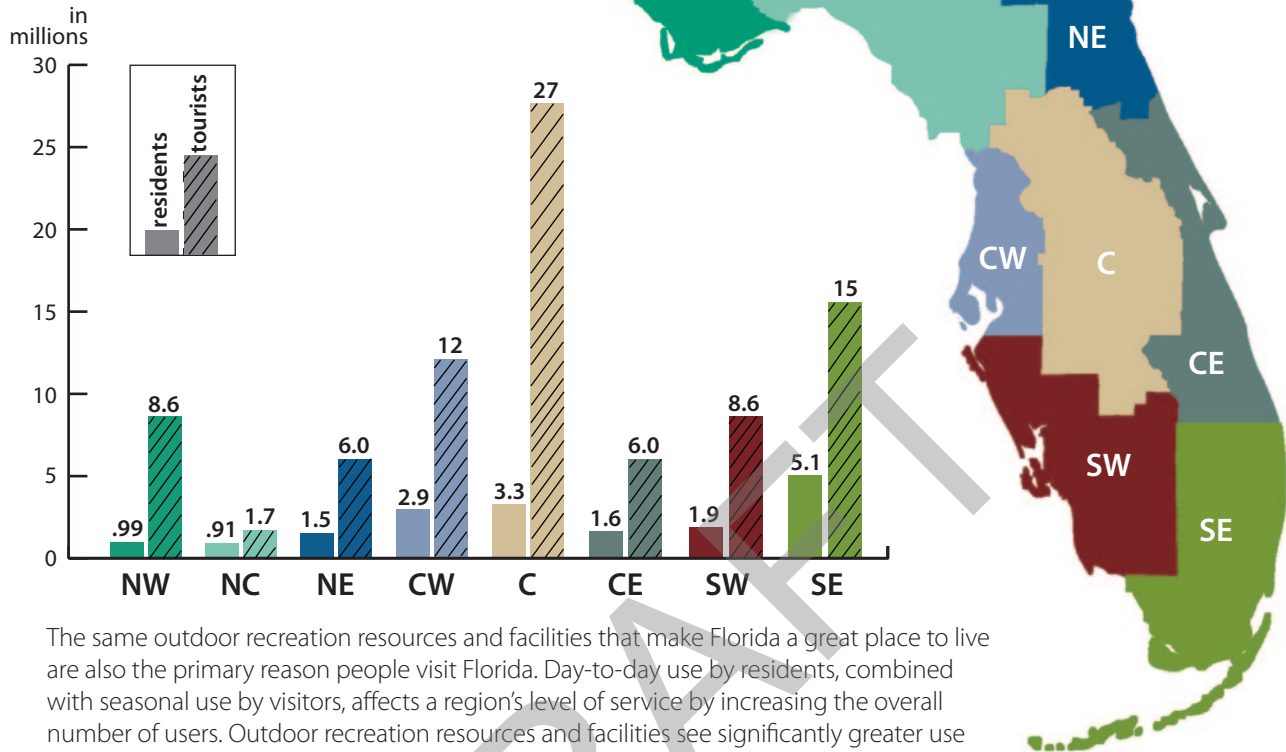
As shown in the tables, levels of service vary widely from region to region, depending on the available supply of resources and facilities, resident and tourist demand and population. To provide a standard by which the regions could be compared, the statewide median level of service for each activity was calculated. Regions in which the level of service falls below the statewide median for an activity are identified in the tables.

$$\text{Level of Service} = \frac{\text{Resources and Facilities for an Activity}}{\left(\frac{\text{Participants in the Activity}}{1,000} \right)}$$

Figure 4.3

Understanding Level of Service: An Overview of Demand and Supply

Regional Distribution of Residents and Tourists (Potential Users)



The same outdoor recreation resources and facilities that make Florida a great place to live are also the primary reason people visit Florida. Day-to-day use by residents, combined with seasonal use by visitors, affects a region's level of service by increasing the overall number of users. Outdoor recreation resources and facilities see significantly greater use in regions with high tourism rates, reducing the overall level of service in that region.

Figure 4.4

Regional Distribution of Recreation Resources and Facilities

The charts below show the relative distribution of outdoor recreation resources and facilities by region. Dividing a region's amount of recreation resources and facilities for each activity by the number of residents and tourists who actually participate in the activity determines the level of service for each activity by region.

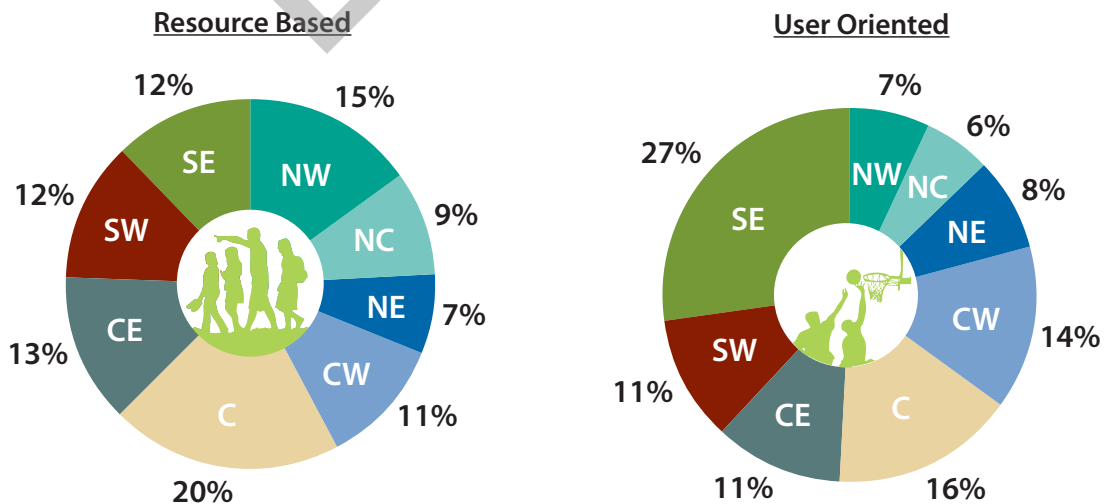


Figure 4.5

Regional Level of Service Comparisons to Statewide Median*

○ Level of Service **Above** Statewide Median ● Level of Service **Below** Statewide Median

Resource-Based Activities	Region							
	NW	NC	NE	CW	C	CE	SW	SE
Saltwater Beach Activities	○	●	○	●	NA	○	○	●
Freshwater Beach Activities	○	○	●	●	●	○	●	○
Saltwater Fishing Non-boat	○	●	●	●	NA	○	○	○
Freshwater Fishing Non-boat	●	○	●	○	○	●	○	●
Saltwater Boat Ramp	○	○	●	●	NA	○	○	●
Freshwater Boat Ramp	○	○	○	●	●	○	●	●
Bicycling Paved	●	○	●	○	●	○	○	●
Bicycling Unpaved	●	○	○	●	●	○	○	●
Hiking	○	○	●	●	●	○	○	●
Horseback Riding	●	○	○	●	●	○	○	●
Off-Road Vehicle Driving	○	○	●	●	●	○	○	●
Nature Study	○	○	○	●	●	○	●	●
Picnicking	●	○	●	●	●	○	○	○
Visiting Historical or Archaeological Sites	●	○	○	●	●	○	○	●
Tent Camping	○	○	○	●	●	●	○	●
RV or Trailer Camping	●	○	●	○	●	○	○	●
Hunting	○	○	●	●	●	●	○	○

User-Oriented Activities	Region							
	NW	NC	NE	CW	C	CE	SW	SE
Swimming in Public Outdoor Pool	●	○	●	●	●	○	○	○
Baseball or Softball	○	○	○	●	●	○	●	●
Outdoor Basketball	●	○	○	○	●	○	●	●
Outdoor Tennis	●	○	●	●	●	○	○	○
Soccer	○	○	○	●	●	○	●	●
Football	○	○	○	●	●	○	●	●

* Table shows SCORP planning regions as either above or below the statewide median level of service, per activity. See Appendix G for regional level of service calculations per activity.

Table 4.1

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter is to identify regional and statewide patterns of outdoor recreation supply and demand, offering a reasonably sound understanding of regions with the greatest needs to support the demands of their population. Regions with dense populations, such as the Northeast, Central West, Central and Southeast regions tend to have the greatest needs, a trend which will likely continue if these needs are not adequately addressed.

The steady rise of Florida's population will lead to an increasing demand in all regions, calling for a continuing need for the provision of outdoor recreation facilities and the conservation of natural and cultural resources. It is critical to ensure that these resources and facilities enjoyed by the over 100 million residents and tourists today are there for those in the future.

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Chapter Five - Outdoor Recreation Issues and Recommendations

Understanding outdoor recreation issues and anticipating emerging trends is an important element of the state's outdoor recreation plan. Florida is among the largest and most dynamic states in the nation. Changes in the state's social, economic, and environmental systems will affect many aspects of people's lives, including how they recreate. Although these considerations do not lend themselves readily to quantitative analysis, it is nonetheless important that they be well understood in future decision making. This chapter discusses issues affecting outdoor recreation in Florida, and outlines recommendations for implementing the state's outdoor recreation plan. The issues and recommendations outlined in this chapter are the product of a variety of methods for input, including: the SCORP workgroup, meetings with outdoor recreation stakeholders, research of nationwide trends and issues, the 2011 Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey, public workshops and online questionnaires.

A SYSTEM OF LANDS

Florida's diverse public and private outdoor recreation lands, facilities, programs and managing agencies are bound together by a universally common trait – their ability to provide public recreational opportunities of one type or another. These various areas and the users they serve can be viewed together as an interconnected system. While tremendous progress has been made in acquiring the needed lands and providing the facilities and programs to support public use of the lands, relatively little has been done to integrate the efforts of the providers. The following statement is intended to describe an ideal, but as yet unrealized, recreation system for the state.

Florida's ideal outdoor recreation system will be a diverse, connected and balanced system of outdoor recreation resources, facilities and programs that provides the state's residents and visitors with a full



An online questionnaire regarding outdoor recreation issues in Florida yielded nearly 4,000 responses. The word map above is an abstract representation of input received in an open response item of the questionnaire, with the size of the word reflecting frequency of mention.

range of outdoor recreation opportunities, regardless of their age, gender, ethnic background, economic status, physical or mental ability, or location within the state. The system will be coordinated at the state level with all agencies and suppliers working in tandem, and with ample opportunity for the public to participate in decision making. It will further the public's understanding and appreciation of Florida's environment and outdoor recreation resources.

ISSUES, GOALS AND STRATEGIES: A METHOD FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Three overarching issue areas have been identified as impacting recreation in Florida. In this chapter, each issue is broken down by related topics. A discussion of each topic is followed by specific goals and strategies to address the issues and implement the plan.

ISSUE 1: Raising awareness of the values and benefits of outdoor recreation

- **Goal 1-1:** Highlight the economic impact of outdoor recreation
- **Goal 1-2:** Emphasize outdoor recreation's impact on health and quality of life
- **Goal 1-3:** Ensure and identify future resources for programs essential to recreation

ISSUE 2: Improving public access through agency coordination

- **Goal 2-1:** Maintain and manage adequate availability of resources for a growing population
- **Goal 2-2:** Coordinate recreation providers to better connect lands and opportunities
- **Goal 2-3:** Increase and improve universal accessibility
- **Goal 2-4:** Protect Florida's waters while providing adequate public access

ISSUE 3: Reconnecting people to the outdoors

- **Goal 3-1:** Improve urban recreation opportunities
- **Goal 3-2:** Connect all people to the outdoors

- **Goal 3-3:** Facilitate participation through accessible information
- **Goal 3-4:** Encourage volunteerism, stewardship, and advocacy

Issue One: Raising awareness of the value and benefits of outdoor recreation

Summary: Educating the public on the benefits of outdoor recreation to individuals and communities is integral in maintaining support for recreation programs.

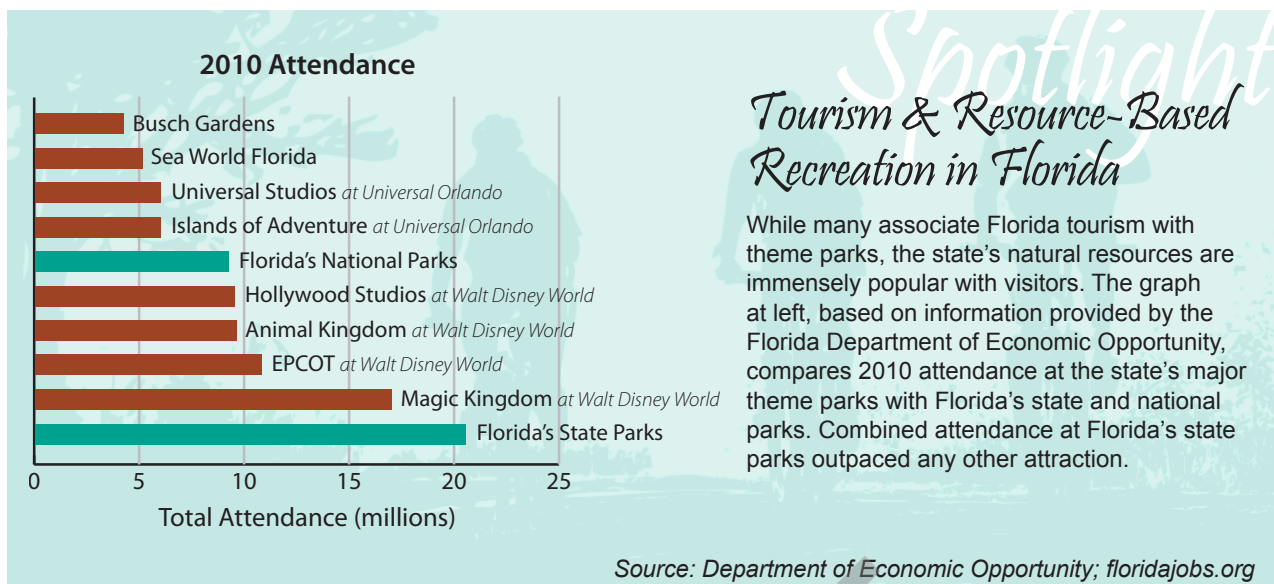
The Economic Impact of Outdoor Recreation

For residents and tourists alike, outdoor recreation is an important part of everyday life. Florida's temperate climate, combined with outstanding cultural and natural resources, allows for recreation participation year round. Outdoor recreation stimulates the economy through the purchase of equipment necessary for participation, with money spent on trips and travel and through a host of direct and indirect ways.

Tourism: An Economic Driver

Florida has long been a destination for domestic and international travelers, and outdoor recreation is a major contributor to the state's tourism market. According to VISIT FLORIDA, Florida's tourism rates have seen a steady rise since 2009, leading to an estimated 87.3 million visitors in 2011. In 2011, recreation and/or leisure was the primary reason for more than 88 percent of domestic visits, 81 percent of Canadian visits, and 68.5 percent of international visits, showing the strong link between recreation and tourism. While relaxing and enjoying the outstanding natural and cultural resources that Florida has to offer, visitors are also making a significant contribution to Florida's economy. Total tourism spending was calculated at \$67.2 billion in 2011, creating more than one million jobs to support the industry.

On a national level, a recent study by the Outdoor Industry Association, *The Outdoor Recreation Economy*, determined that



each year Americans spend \$646 billion on outdoor recreation, supporting 6.1 million jobs across the country. In comparison, the Division of Recreation and Parks reports state parks provide a direct economic impact of \$1 billion to local economies each year, while generating 19,347 jobs.

Quick Fact

Every 85 visitors creates one Florida job.

- VISIT FLORIDA®



Weeki Wachee Springs State Park

Nature-based tourism is an important component of the tourism industry. Fishing, hunting, boating, paddling and wildlife viewing are among the more popular examples of activities associated with this type of tourism. These activities have a huge impact on the state's economy. According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), wildlife viewing, hunting, boating and fishing provide a total economic effect of \$3.2 billion, creating more than 34,000 jobs. Wildlife festivals, ideal for generating interest, educating the public and distributing information, also provide great boosts to local economies. One example, the 2009 Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival had an impact of almost \$1 million in Brevard County alone.

Recreation, Real Estate and Business Relocation

Parks and open space have been tied to an increase in property values since the 19th Century, and studies have consistently shown connections between property values and proximity to parks, trails and open spaces. Parks and trails are often a central piece in revitalization efforts of towns and neighborhoods, offering sustainable and appealing infrastructure which draws residents to areas previously considered undesirable. This increase in property value

provides additional property tax revenues to further the positive growth of a community.

Parks are also a contributing factor when seeking business relocation. Industry today is increasingly based on high-technology and service-sector companies, where information and knowledge are the main sources of economic growth and wealth. Companies in this industry are extremely mobile and can be more selective in the location of their businesses, and are interested in areas that will retain and attract talent. Quality of life in a community is a considerable contributing factor when making these decisions, with the availability of outdoor recreation opportunities playing a large role.

Raising Awareness

Multiple studies and reports highlight the significant impact of outdoor recreation on the economy. However, these reports are often agency or activity specific and utilize a variety of methods when determining the impact. Recreation providers and advocates could benefit from a comprehensive analysis of the total impact recreation has on Florida's economy, the report serving as a universal platform for educating the public on the importance of outdoor recreation. The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) has contributed to this effort with a website titled The Economic Benefit of Eco-tourism, which compiles economic impact information from various state and federal programs onto one page. State agencies, in coordination with DEO, should look to further this effort. The following strategies will help recreation providers and stakeholders educate the public on the benefits of outdoor recreation to the economy.

Goal 1-1: Highlight the economic impact of recreation.

Strategies:

- 1) DEP and relevant State agencies, in coordination with all recreation providers, should produce a report on the overall economic impact of outdoor recreation in Florida.
- 2) Local recreation providers should work with local economic development councils to promote Florida's recreation opportunities as a means to attract businesses.
- 3) Recreation providers should communicate with private developers on the connection between property values and availability of natural landscapes and recreation opportunities.

Quality of Life

Active lifestyles and time spent outdoors are major contributors to a person's health and overall quality of life, as the connection between good health and physical activity is widely recognized. Public lands and waters provide opportunities for healthy exercise and physical activity, relaxation and solitude, and challenge and risk. Providing and facilitating access to public lands through high quality systems of parks, greenways and other natural areas is a major step towards creating and maintaining active, healthy communities. Even so, more must be done to ensure that the public understands and is receiving the full benefits recreation has to offer. A 2011 report by the Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation determined Florida's adult obesity rate to be 26.1 percent, an 80 percent increase over the past 15 years. These striking figures illustrate either the lack of awareness of recreation's

Rising Obesity Rates

Adult Obesity Rates in Florida			
Obesity Rate in 1995	Obesity Rate in 2011	Projected Obesity Rate in 2030 based on current trajectory*	Projected Obesity Rate in 2030 if BMI Decreased by 5%*
14.3%	26.6%	58.6%	51.1%

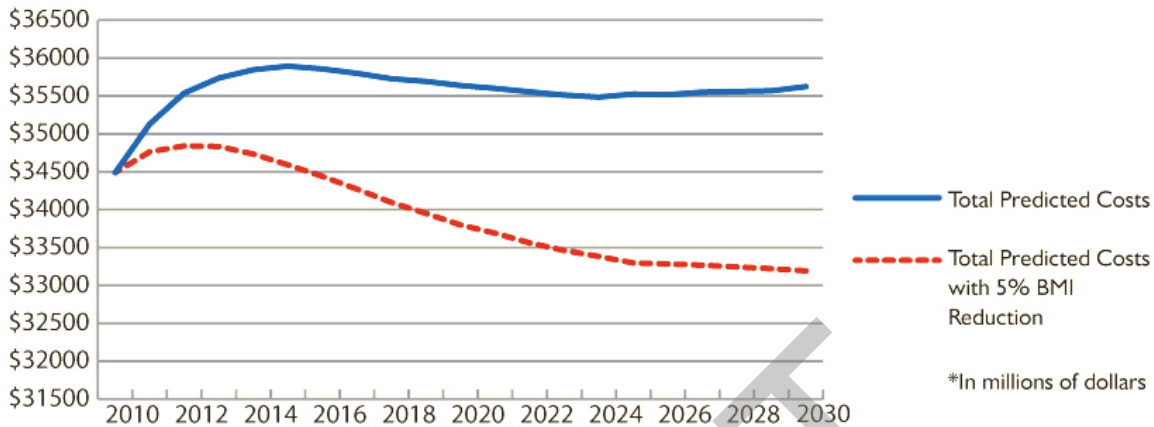
*All ages, all genders, adjusted for self-reporting bias. BMI: Body Mass Index

Source: Trust for America's Health

Rising Costs Related to Obesity

Spotlight

PROJECTIONS FOR ANNUAL OBESITY-RELATED HEALTH SPENDING* IN FLORIDA, 2010-2030



Source: Trust for America's Health

impact on health and quality of life or a lack of motivation to get active. Both of these can be addressed by strengthening ties between recreation providers, public health departments and health care providers.

The outdoor recreation and public health communities, through different approaches,

ultimately seek a similar result: active and healthy communities. The Florida Department of Health's State Health Improvement Plan recognizes this connection, and includes many recreation-related objectives in achieving their overall goal of improving public health in Florida. At the local level, recreation providers are linking up with health care providers to promote spending time outdoors through efforts such as the Whole Child Leon "95210" program, which works with local health care providers to "prescribe" patients a plan for achieving a "happy, healthy life." Working with health care providers and local health departments also provides different avenues for funding by including recreation as part of a greater community-based health initiative. One example is the Community Transformation Grant, a program managed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which encourages community-level efforts to fight chronic disease by promoting healthy lifestyles, of which recreation plays a significant role. The following strategies for federal, state and local agencies will help raise public awareness of and support for recreation as a means to enhance health and quality of life.

Quick Fact

Every \$1 spent on biking trails and walking paths could save approximately \$3 in medical expenses.

- American Heart Association



T.H. Stone Memorial St. Joseph Peninsula State Park

Goal 1-2: Emphasize the impact of recreation on health and quality of life.

Strategies:

- 1) Public recreation providers should partner with county health departments and local health care providers to promote active, healthy lifestyles through community-level health improvement initiatives.
- 2) DEP should assist DOH in implementing recreation-related objectives in the State Health Improvement Plan.
- 3) DOH and county health departments should determine ways to further incorporate outdoor recreation opportunities into community health assessments, utilizing tools such as the Florida Outdoor Recreation Inventory to determine existing opportunities and measure their impact on community health.

Funding

Finding adequate funding resources for outdoor recreation continues to be an extremely important issue for Florida recreation providers. Severe budget limitations for parks and recreation are being seen at every level of government, as agencies try and maintain current levels of service. At the same time, increasing population raises the demand for additional facilities. At the state level, land acquisition programs, such as Florida Forever, are below historical funding levels. Additionally, revenue shortfalls and budget reductions have reduced the level of funds available for operations and maintenance, facility repairs and construction, resource management and visitor services.

Local governments have been greatly impacted by the economic downturn, resulting in extreme budget reductions in city and counties. Parks and recreation services are often among the first services to be reduced, and many programs have been merged with others at the expense of staff, programs, and resources. Florida Parks in the 21st Century 2008, a report released by The Florida Recreation and Park Association, The Trust for Public Land, the Florida League

of Cities and the Florida Association of Counties, documented a combined need of \$10.5 billion identified in recreation and open space elements of local government comprehensive plans, based on current levels of service. This figure represents funds needed for acquiring new and expanded parks, repairing and renovating existing parks and constructing new park facilities. It can be assumed that, given the economic realities of the past four years, this figure has continued to rise.

Recreation management agencies need to be realistic regarding the availability of additional funding in the near future, and should focus on using existing funds with maximum efficiency to ensure the highest needs and priorities are being met. Alternative funding sources, such as private sponsorships are becoming more prevalent, but recreation providers must take into consideration the values and mission of private entities before entering such partnerships.

Goal 1-3: Ensure and identify alternative funding for programs essential to Florida's recreation program.

Strategies:

- 1) Recreation providers should seek partnerships with private sector companies that share the common vision of creating healthy, active and livable communities.
- 2) Recreation providers should work with stakeholders and the general public to advocate the provision of adequate funding for existing land and water conservation programs.
- 3) DEP should coordinate with DEO in working with local governments to identify sources of public and private grant funding to meet recreational programming and park development needs.
- 4) The Florida Recreation and Park Association, the Trust for Public Land, The Nature Conservancy and other organizations should continue to provide technical assistance to local governments and citizen groups for identifying alternative sources of funding and enacting local land acquisition programs.

Issue Two: Improving public access through agency coordination

Recreation in Florida can be greatly improved through continued agency coordination in acquisition, management, and programming of public lands.

Acquisition, Access and Population Growth

The availability of adequate land for recreation is the most essential element of Florida's outdoor recreation system. Acquisition and development efforts must keep pace with a growing population, which is projected to reach 23.8 million by 2030. Programs such as Florida Forever and various local initiatives are essential to assuring a continued supply of public lands in the future. Population increases will continue to put pressure on existing lands and facilities, and public land management agencies must take proper measures to ensure that these resources are available for generations to come.

Enhancing Access

Access to Florida's existing public lands continues to be an issue with the public. There is a perception that the land is "locked up" after purchase, that access which existed before acquisition is reduced or eliminated once the land comes into public ownership. Most public land is available for some type of public access, but not enough priority has always been given to opening land for appropriate recreational use. Given current economic realities, however, land management agencies are often focusing development efforts towards improving and enhancing existing access points. By focusing on existing infrastructure, limited funds can be best used to improve and expand existing facilities.

Involving Local Communities

Public land managers can improve access to their lands and water by better involving local communities. Outfitters, guide companies, and other businesses can directly provide supplemental services on public lands, expanding business opportunities while

providing better public access. Through effective communication, land management agencies can provide information to help inform communities how they can benefit from public lands, and in return access to these lands can be improved. The following recommendations have been established to help continue to provide public recreational access in Florida.

Goal 2-1: Maintain and manage adequate availability of resources for a growing population.

Strategies:

- 1)** Given Florida's current economic situation, public land management agencies should focus efforts on enhancing existing access points and facilities, as present resources allow.
- 2)** By working with local business communities, land management agencies should work closely with local recreation suppliers and outfitters on how they can benefit from nearby public lands to stimulate local economies, create jobs and facilitate public recreational access.
- 3)** Agencies should ensure that all public lands are open for appropriate public access as soon as possible after acquisition, without compromising the agencies' mission or the resources of the land.
- 4)** Resource management and restoration activities on public lands should be greatly expanded. Activities such as prescribed burning, exotic species removal and hydrological restoration are vital to providing and maintaining the natural and cultural resources that support resource-based recreation.

Connecting Opportunities: Agency Coordination

A recurring theme from the public input process was the need to better connect existing recreational opportunities in order to improve the overall quality and availability of recreation opportunities. Improving communication and coordination with community planners, transportation departments, and adjacent land management agencies at all levels of

Spotlight *Agency Coordination in Action: Get Outdoors Florida!*

Get Outdoors Florida! is a coalition of public and private stakeholders in outdoor recreation, including federal and state land managers, state conservation, health, and education agencies, educator, healthcare providers, non-profits, and businesses.

The mission of Get Outdoors Florida! is:

"Engaging communities, families and individuals in outdoor experiences to achieve healthier lifestyles and sustain Florida's natural resources."



For more information, visit getoutdoorsflorida.com

government can result in better-connected opportunities. Proper coordination can also reduce unnecessary duplication of resources or facilities while avoiding any deficits. At a community scale, such coordination can result in better distributed and connected parks and green spaces, as well as linked trail systems providing alternative methods of transportation. A well planned and coordinated park system facilitates recreation participation, providing healthier and more vibrant communities.

Florida Greenways and Trails System Plan

With connection of opportunities, discussion often revolves around trails. A well planned trail system can connect public lands, lengthen and enhance experiences, and provide a viable source for alternative transportation within and between communities. The Division of Recreation and Parks, through the Office of Greenways and Trails, provides a statewide vision for Florida's greenways and trails through the Florida Greenways and Trails System Plan. This plan determines



A sign showing agency coordination in Leon County

existing resources, identifies trail gaps, and offers a focused vision on connecting Florida's greenway and trail system. The fulfillment of this plan depends on coordination and collaboration of funding and resources from public, private and non-profit entities.

Goal 2-2: Coordinate recreation providers to better connect lands and opportunities.

Strategies:

- 1) State agencies should work cooperatively with VISIT FLORIDA to create a single, coordinated data source for accessing public information about outdoor recreation opportunities on Florida's public lands.
- 2) DEP, in cooperation with other groups, should continue to strengthen state agency coordination in conjunction with SCORP planning. This will keep open lines of communication on statewide recreation issues and trends and methods of addressing them.
- 3) DEP should pursue efforts to conduct a statewide forum on outdoor recreation to enhance the coordination of efforts among public and private suppliers.
- 4) Recreation agencies should continue sharing information for the SCORP outdoor recreation inventory and periodic assessments of demand to minimize unnecessary duplication of efforts and ensure a single data source that is kept accurate and up to date.

Universal Accessibility

Florida's public lands exist for the benefit and enjoyment of all people. Great efforts have been made by recreation providers across the board in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, but equality of access to public lands and the opportunities they provide still remains an issue. Along with the removal of physical barriers, the act also requires all reasonable efforts be made to ensure that facilities, programs and services are accessible.

The distribution of information is very important in providing universal accessibility. Programs and facilities designed for people with disabilities do little good if adequate and accessible information is not made available. Agencies should ensure that accessibility information regarding their parks or natural areas can be easily obtained through a variety of ways, and should consider establishing outreach programs to encourage participation if they have not already done so.

Programs such as the Universal Trail Assessment Process (UTAP) provide guidelines for assessing and reporting trail conditions – like slope, distance, grade and width – which may limit one's ability to participate. These objective reports provide information that allows potential users to

decide if the trail is accessible to them and meets their needs and abilities.

Goal 2-3: All recreation providers should seek to increase universal accessibility.

Strategies:

- 1) State land management agencies should partner with organizations such as the Florida Disabled Outdoors Association to establish specific programs for visitors with disabilities and make uniformly available throughout the state.
- 2) Outdoor recreation providers should develop and implement schedules for identifying and eliminating architectural barriers in existing facilities under their management.
- 3) Upon construction or renovation of trails, agencies should complete UTAP trail assessments and provide trail accessibility information to the public.
- 4) All recreation providers should stay current on information technology, following best practices for distribution of information to the public.
- 5) Outdoor recreation providers should develop and strengthen partnerships with the Agency for Persons with Disabilities and organizations such as Florida Disabled Outdoors Association to educate themselves and the public, and to provide recreation activities and programs for people of all ages and abilities.



Florida Disabled Outdoors Association (FDOA)

Miracle Sports Program

The Florida Disabled Outdoors Association is a non-profit organization that seeks to provide access for all through the coordination of six unique programs and by providing accessibility consultation with agencies around the state.

Miracle Sports, an FDOA program in Tallahassee since 2008, provides access to athletics for everyone. The program takes place on a barrier-free field developed through a partnership with the City of Tallahassee, and has logged over 4,200 team sport recreation hours since its inception.

Florida's Waters

Much of Florida's recreation participation is centered around water, and preserving these opportunities is essential to the state's recreation program. Protection of water resources is the most important step in maintaining freshwater and saltwater resources in a swimmable, fishable condition. This involves a complex and science-based system of federal, state, and local regulatory and enforcement programs, which must ensure that the greatest efforts are taken towards protecting and improving the quality of Florida's water resources. Florida's springs, a unique and very popular resource, continue to be threatened by nutrient pollution from sources such as excess fertilizer use, septic systems, and stormwater runoff. Community-based programs which combine regulation and enforcement with education and stewardship opportunities are necessary to ensure Florida's springs remain healthy and available for public use and enjoyment.

Access to Florida's waters faces increased pressure from shoreline development as populations continue to rise. A combined effort by federal, state, and local governments is needed to ensure funding for acquisition of land to provide public recreational access

Quick Fact

Florida has over 1,300 miles of coastline, 10,000 miles of rivers and streams, and 7,800 lakes within its boundaries.

- Florida's Water Management Districts



Honeymoon Island State Park, credit Kristin Crawford

to waters. While the regional analysis of demand and need in this plan is not intended to identify local needs, it is certain that needs remain in the areas of developing additional boat ramps, canoe launches, docks, catwalks



Suwannee River State Park

and piers, as well as support facilities such as parking areas and restrooms.

Protecting water resources is a central theme in the America's Great Outdoors initiative. This nationwide initiative strives to connect Americans to the outdoors, with a focus on grassroots and community level conservation and restoration efforts. America's Great Outdoors has identified water resources as essential to making these connections. Florida has made great strides in protecting and promoting its waterways, notably in efforts such as the Suwannee River Wilderness Trail and the Florida Circumnavigation Saltwater Paddling Trail, which were established through multi-agency coordination and dependent on community involvement and support. Continued community-level promotion, stewardship and support of Florida's key water features will help ensure the preservation of these important resources. The following recommendations are made for protecting water resources and improving public access to Florida's waters.

Goal 2-4: Protect water resources while providing adequate public access.

Strategies:

- 1) All levels of government, working with the private sector, should identify alternative means of meeting public demand for water through developing alternative water supplies such as brackish surface and groundwater, stormwater and reclaimed wastewater.
- 2) DEP should continue to provide funding to support construction of public recreational facilities in springs, monitor spring water quality, and oversee other restoration activities to help ensure that springs remain available for public use.
- 3) DEO should continue to provide planning assistance to local governments in adopting effective land development regulations, such as the Model Land Development Code, for protecting Florida's springs.
- 4) Funding should continue to be made available through the Florida Forever program to acquire land for increased water

access, preservation of working waterfronts, environmental restoration, and water resource protection and supply.

- 5) Federal, state and local governments should work to reduce the amount of nutrient pollution that enters Florida's waters through programs that teach the public about where nutrients come from and what they can do to help.
- 6) Public agencies and private organizations should continue clean-up and rehabilitation efforts for specific water bodies, such as Lake Okeechobee, the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Rivers, the Everglades and the waters surrounding the Florida Keys.
- 7) Local governments should maximize the use of local comprehensive planning processes to increase public access to Florida's waters by preserving recreational and commercial working waterfronts and identifying sites for public and private recreation.
- 8) Public recreation providers should identify water areas under their jurisdictions where inadequate recreational access exists or where existing water access can be improved, and give priority to making the needed improvements.

Issue Three: Reconnecting people to the outdoors and enhancing stewardship

Strengthening appreciation and participation in outdoor recreation requires both education and better connections to natural landscapes.

Urban Recreation

Providing recreation opportunities in urban areas is one of the most difficult but also most important issues in connecting people to the outdoors. With approximately 90 percent of Floridians living in or near cities, accessing and experiencing the outdoors is heavily dependent on the availability of nearby opportunities. Urban parks and open spaces are vital in providing people opportunities for recreation and solitude, and to generally improve their quality of life. Parks are also important in preserving significant historic or cultural landmarks. Urban recreation is key to providing an

Nearly 90 percent of Floridians reside in urban areas.

- Florida Department of Health



Aerial view of Miami, www.123rf.com

initial connection with natural landscapes. Local green spaces, parks and cultural sites often provide the stepping stone into the great outdoors, and local governments should ensure that these opportunities are provided. The provision of these opportunities cannot rest solely on local governments, however. Support for urban recreation should continue through programs like the Florida Recreation Development and Assistance Program (FRDAP) and the LWCF grant program.

By blending the built and natural environments, urban communities can facilitate and encourage participation in outdoor recreation, while reaping all the community benefits of a thriving, well-connected system of parks and open spaces. The following recommendations will help urban communities provide stronger connections to the outdoors.

Goal 3-1: Improve urban recreation opportunities.

Strategies:

- 1) Municipal planning and recreation departments, along with FDOT, should continue to incorporate walking and biking into transportation plans, with a focus on safe and connected opportunities.
- 2) Public recreation providers should continue and strengthen all federal, state and local initiatives which support the creation, enhancement and expansion of urban parks and open spaces.
- 3) Cities should create central, cornerstone parks to revitalize their communities and facilitate active, healthy living.
- 4) Communities should attempt to restore abandoned commercial developments, particularly sites of environmental concern, back to their natural state.

Connecting People and the Outdoors

Physical activity is essential to health and quality of life. However, time, competing priorities, and lack of motivation appear to be furthering an ongoing trend of disconnection between people and the outdoors. Recreation providers are always searching for innovative approaches to motivate people to take time to get outdoors through programming, the use of technology, marketing, and similar measures.

Youth

Children are notably susceptible to health-related problems due to sedentary lifestyles,



Myakka River State Park, credit Chantal Wilford

yet many children continue to lack physical activity. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, obesity prevalence among the nation's youth and adolescents has almost tripled since 1980. High obesity rates and inactivity are prompted by a de-emphasis of play time, physical education and outdoor activities in public schools combined with the popularity of extra curricular activities such as playing video games, watching television and using home computers. Offering programs which reach youth both through schools and outside of school is essential to creating and strengthening ties to the outdoors.

Environmental Education

Environmental education increases public awareness and knowledge about environmental issues and provides the participants in its programs the skills necessary to make informed environmental decisions and to take responsible actions. It involves lifelong learning; its audiences are of all age groups, from very young children through senior citizens. National trends associated with environmental education including climate change, invasive species and sea level rise, are factors that will affect outdoor recreation and thus are trends for the public to be aware of. One of the best

ways to connect children to the outdoors is through education-based environmental programs, particularly through the school system. However, budget constraints and a shift in focus have eliminated many programs which once provided children with outlets to structured and unstructured time outdoors. Budgets for field trips are almost non-existent in many cases, and both school boards and public recreation agencies must determine new ways to connect children to the outdoors and promote active, outdoor lifestyles.

Federal environmental education initiatives include the "More Kids in the Woods" program through the U.S. Forest Service, the "Let's Go Outside" program through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Services Jr. Ranger and Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program, and the Hands-on-the-Land Network, which seeks to coordinate education on public lands. Statewide environmental education initiatives include the Department of Environmental Protection's Learning in Florida's Environment (LIFE) program, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network, the Get Outdoors Florida! Coalition, and 4H programs. Various private and non-profit programs also exist around the state.

Quick Fact

Sixty minutes of daily unstructured free play is essential to children's physical and mental health.

- American Academy of Pediatrics



At play on Dr. Julian G. Bruce St. George Island State Park

The Department of Environmental Protection's Learning in Florida's Environment (LIFE) program is an excellent example of partnering nearby natural resources with local schools to integrate environmental education into everyday learning. The LIFE program strives to reach a more diverse audience by engaging youth through their schools and connecting outdoor recreation with learning to build stewardship for the resource. Once DEP grants expire, programs at these sites continue through alternative funding sources such as private sponsorships, other grants or funding from local school boards. Service Learning is a component of the program, where students can participate in activities which apply their learning and allows for students to participate in environmental events such as International Coastal Cleanup

Day, Environmental Education Week, Earth Day, National Public Lands Day, World Water Monitoring Day and others. Service Learning can expand into citizen science efforts including LAKEWATCH and other programs, where environmental observations collected by the public can become data useful to land managers and scientists.

Working with the school system is only one of many ways to connect youth to the outdoors. Time away from school is similarly influential on a child's development, and programs which offer enriching outdoor activities to fill this time are important. Recently, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, in partnership with the Wildlife Foundation of Florida, established the Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network. This program employs a hub-and-spoke system of Wild Outdoor Centers (hubs) located within 45 minutes of major urban areas, and Near Outdoor Centers (spokes) which offer outdoor experiences closer to home. This concept of building skills and relationships with nature through a convenient, close to home setting while providing opportunities to experience nature at a grander scale is a good approach to getting children outdoors.

These programs are examples of the many environmental education programs that have been initiated by government, non-profit, and private entities. Funding for these programs is often difficult to obtain, and many programs have been successful in reaching outside the public sector for support. It is also important that outdoor connections are not solely focused on the youth, as family-centered programming will help unite different generations with a common sense of stewardship.

Addressing a Changing Population

Florida continues to see a steady rise in population, and the demographic composition is ever-changing. Two of the fastest growing demographics in the state are people of Hispanic origin and people over the age of 65. Recreation providers must do their best in meeting the needs of these populations in an

Spotlight **Emerging Activities: Stand-Up Paddleboarding**

Stand-up paddleboarding (SUP) is rapidly becoming a popular activity on Florida's rivers, lakes, and oceans. Stand-up paddleboards are larger and more buoyant than surfboards, incorporating long paddles which allow participants to stand and glide along the water. People are taking to SUP for a variety of uses like fishing, exercising, wildlife viewing and even yoga. The Outdoor Industry Association estimated that 1.24 million people nationwide participated in SUP in 2011, an 18 percent increase from 2010. Sales of stand-up paddleboards doubled between those same years, and many outfitters have begun renting the boards.



SUP in Walton County, credit: waltonoutdoors.com

effort to provide adequate access for all. Like with any demographic, it is important not to generalize a certain population, but instead, to gather input and information regarding this demographic at a local level to make better informed plans and decisions.

The Hispanic population is Florida's fastest growing segment of the population. Census data shows that the Hispanic population in Florida rose 57.4 percent between 2000 and 2010, compared to Florida's overall population increase of 17.6 percent. A majority of Hispanics in the state, approximately 55 percent, live in the Southeast counties of Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, Monroe and Broward. It is important that public recreation providers seek a better understanding of the trends and barriers of outdoor recreation participation within the Hispanic population when developing future recreation plans.

Another important subset of Florida's population is the 65 and older population. The baby boomer generation, which marked the sharpest period of population growth in our nation's history, is beginning to settle into retirement. Active lifestyles are equally as important for this age group as they are for youth, and ways must be found to keep people active and healthy. In order to do this, adequate and appropriate facilities and programs should be made available to all.

Goal 3-2: Connect all people to the outdoors.

Strategies:

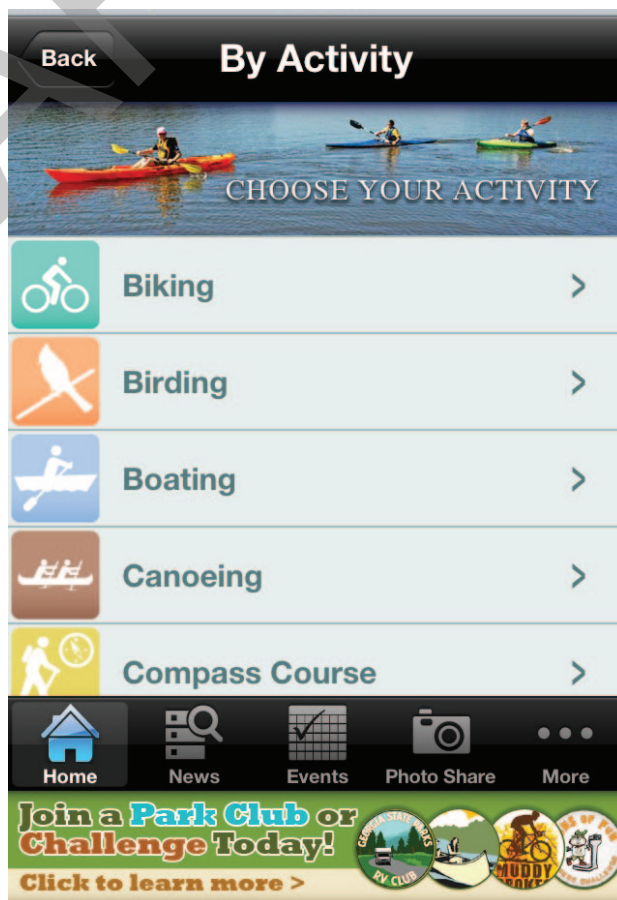
- 1) All public recreation providers should encourage family-centered programming that appeals to both youth and adults. This multi-generational approach will join all ages in a shared appreciation for natural resources.
- 2) Public schools in Florida, in partnerships with Department of Education, should continue to integrate environmental education throughout their curricula to increase awareness of the benefits of and threats to Florida's natural systems. Schools should seek funding through grants, partnerships and sponsorships with public and private entities to fund environmental education-based activities such as modeled after best practices identified by the Learning in Florida's Environment (LIFE) Program.
- 3) Agencies should establish and promote packaged interest programs, which harness interest in natural and cultural resource-based recreational, interpretive or educational activities to stimulate interest and lead participants to greater participation in the outdoors.
- 4) Recreation providers should adapt recreation programs and facilities to meet the needs of a changing population, particularly the needs of Hispanics and seniors.

Technology and Information

Technology is rapidly advancing and changing the way we live, learn and even recreate. Today, the typical participant is equipped with some electronic device when recreating. It is important that recreation providers recognize

how technology is used and can be used more in a recreation setting, and then apply this knowledge as one way to better connect with the population.

The advancement and prevalence of smart phones and applications is enormous, and it is important that recreation providers find ways to utilize this technology to enhance, but not replace, outdoor recreation experiences. Smartphone applications, simply called apps, are one of many viable ways to distribute information and education to visitors, and these types of apps should continue to be developed. As of mid- 2012, 13 states, from Wyoming to Delaware, had developed PocketRanger mobile apps for their state park systems. These apps provide information such as park locations, available activities, and wildlife education and are very beneficial in providing quick, accessible information. Technology like this



PocketRanger Mobile App

is especially beneficial in connecting with the younger generation.

Following a recommendation from the 2008 SCORP, the Division of Recreation and Parks developed one-stop, comprehensive website for all recreation opportunities in Florida. The site provides an interactive map which features all recreation opportunities entered into the Florida Outdoor Recreation Inventory. The map can be searched by activity, location or agency. Continual development of the site to make it more user friendly, along with the contribution of timely and accurate updates from recreation providers, will make this tool even more beneficial to both the public and recreation planners. The following recommendations are proposed to help ensure recreation providers continue to incorporate technology into facilitating participation.

Goal 3-3: Facilitate participation in outdoor recreation through easily-accessible information and technological advancements.

Strategies:

- 1) DEP should continue to develop and enhance the Florida Outdoor Recreation Inventory website centralizing comprehensive information about outdoor recreation opportunities in Florida. The website should be improved by adding links to websites maintained by other providers.
- 2) Recreation providers should continue to incorporate technological advancements as means to facilitate and encourage outdoor recreation participation, such as smartphone applications and interactive maps online.
- 3) Recreation providers should offer technology-driven programs and events, blending technology with traditional outdoor recreation activities.

Stewardship and Advocacy

Participation in outdoor recreation and enjoyment of natural resources is only one link in fully connecting people to the outdoors. A strong sense of stewardship, volunteerism and advocacy for recreation opportunities and

conservation brings the participant full circle as they not only enjoy the resources, but help preserve them for future generations. User groups, non-profit organizations and citizen support organizations are some of the strongest advocates for recreation and conservation, and given appropriate tools and education, can provide tremendous help in securing support and resources.

Volunteerism is another outstanding resource for public programs, as volunteer programs help improve natural areas while connecting people with the resources, and providing a significant financial boost to recreation programs. For example, in Fiscal Year (FY) 2011-2012, 1.4 million volunteer hours, equivalent to 625 full time employees, contributed an effort valued at \$27.8 million to the Division of Recreation and Parks. Volunteers for the Florida Forest Service contributed 58,400 hours in FY 2011-12. By providing meaningful and enjoyable experiences, recreation providers can gather and retain volunteers, an incredible resource during tough economic times.

Goal 3-4: Encourage volunteers, stewardship, and advocacy.

Strategies:

- 1) All park and recreation agencies should maximize the use of volunteers and citizen-based support organizations to supplement their existing resources and personnel. Agencies should develop new, innovative and enjoyable volunteer opportunities that engage all generations and retain volunteers for future projects.
- 2) Agencies should coordinate the distribution of information regarding volunteer opportunities to potential volunteer groups.
- 3) Recreation providers should work with organizations such as FRPA, the Trust for Public Land, and other recreation groups and businesses to educate the public about the benefits of volunteerism on public lands and encourage expanded opportunities for the public to participate in volunteer programs.