



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY **2013**

Outdoor Recreation in Florida



Florida's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) A Program for Meeting Florida's Recreation Needs

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



FLORIDA
State Parks
...the Real FloridaSM



Introduction

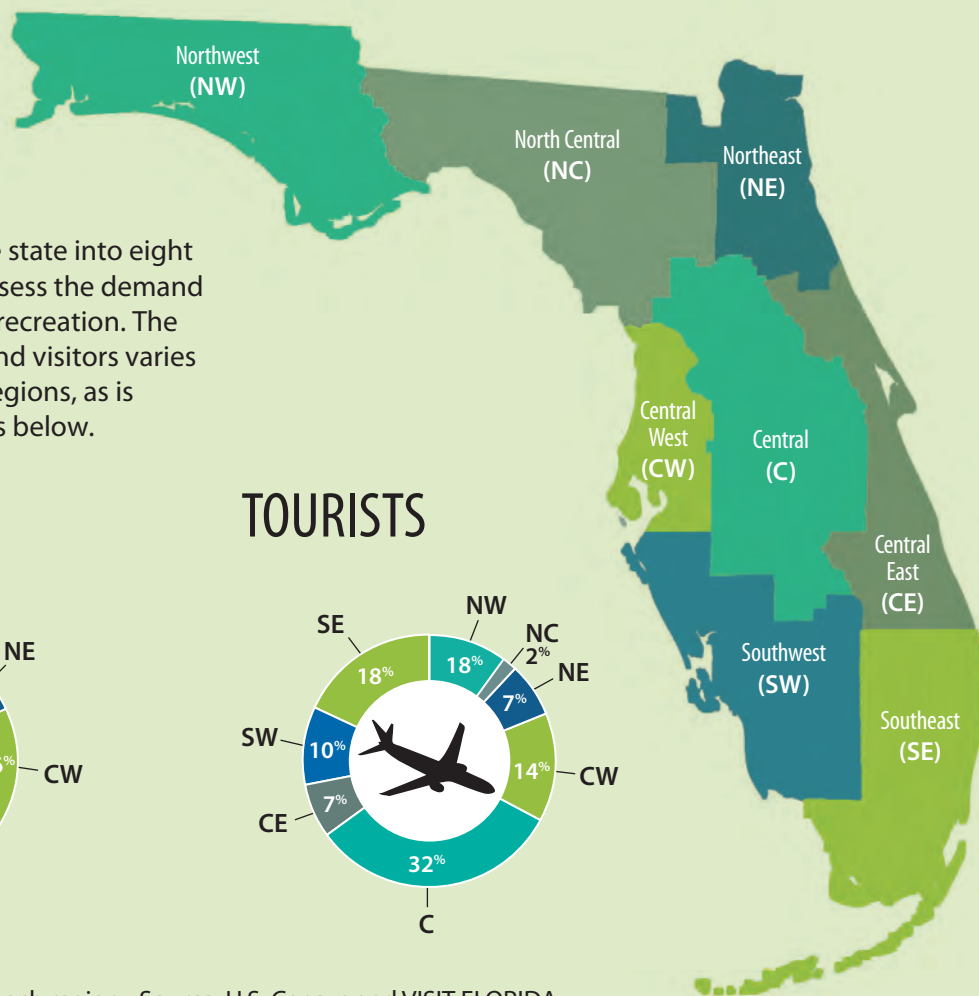
Florida is a dream destination for outdoor recreation enthusiasts. Our warm climate, spectacular natural beauty and world-class parks and trail systems enrich the lives of 20 million residents and nearly 100 million visitors annually. Outdoor recreation is a major economic engine in Florida and is a key component of our tourism industry, the Sunshine State's number one source of jobs.

To assess the current condition of these outdoor opportunities, a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is prepared every five years. Through cooperation with a wide variety of public agencies, private organizations and commercial interests, the SCORP is the state's official planning document for outdoor recreation. The plan collects information on supply, demand and lingering issues that affect participation and access to outdoor activities throughout the state.

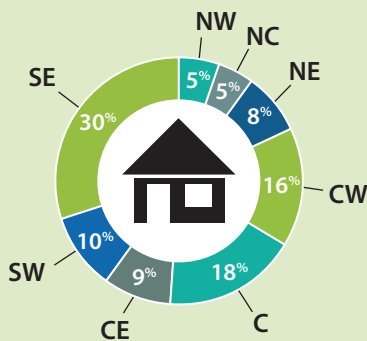
This Executive Summary introduces readers to the primary issues and strategies identified in Florida's 2013 SCORP. Consult the full SCORP document (www.dep.state.fl.us/parks/outdoor/scorp.htm) for additional information and figures as summarized in the following pages.

SCORP's Planning Regions

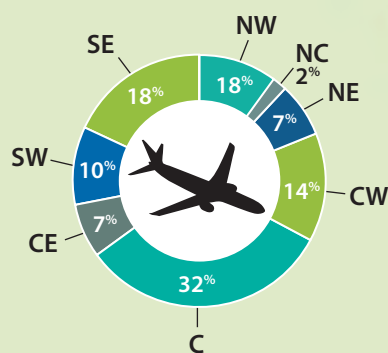
The SCORP divides the state into eight planning regions to assess the demand and need for outdoor recreation. The number of residents and visitors varies greatly between the regions, as is illustrated in the charts below.



RESIDENTS



TOURISTS

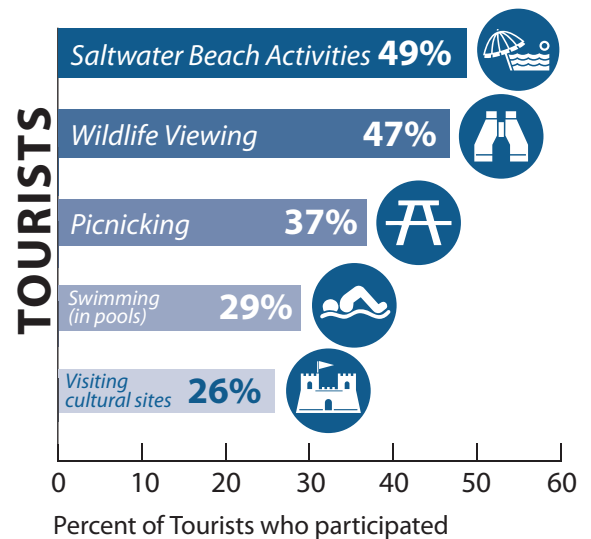
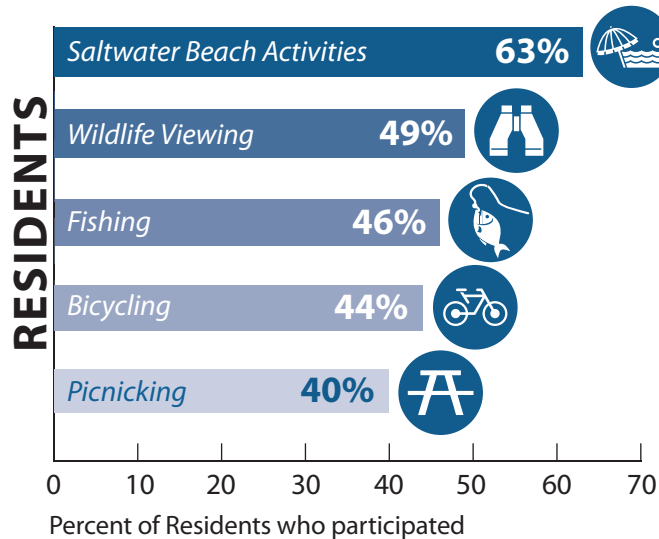


Percent of state totals in each region • Source: U.S. Census and VISIT FLORIDA

Demand and Need for Outdoor Recreation

Demand for outdoor recreation was measured by the 2011 Florida Outdoor Recreation Participation Study. Below are the top five outdoor recreation activities in Florida for each group.

Top Five Outdoor Recreation Activities



Florida Outdoor Recreation Inventory

The Florida Outdoor Recreation Inventory is a comprehensive inventory of more than 14,000 outdoor recreation sites and facilities throughout the state. This inventory provides an understanding of outdoor recreation supply and is an integral factor in assessing the state's needs. An interactive map is available online at www.dep.state.fl.us/parks/outdoor/recinventory.htm.



Regional Needs

By comparing participation levels to existing outdoor recreation facilities and resources, the plan identifies regions with the greatest need for outdoor recreation opportunities.



Central
Central West
Southeast
Northeast
Northwest
Southwest
Central East
North Central

Value and Benefits of Outdoor Recreation: Economic

The benefits of outdoor recreation reach far beyond the experience itself – stimulating Florida's economy and enhancing quality of life.

Dollars spent on gear, outfitters, trips and travel have a great impact on the state's economy and small businesses, while beaches, parks and forests offer opportunities for remarkable experiences that contribute to mental and physical health.

In 2012, 91.5 million people visited Florida – primarily for recreation and leisure.



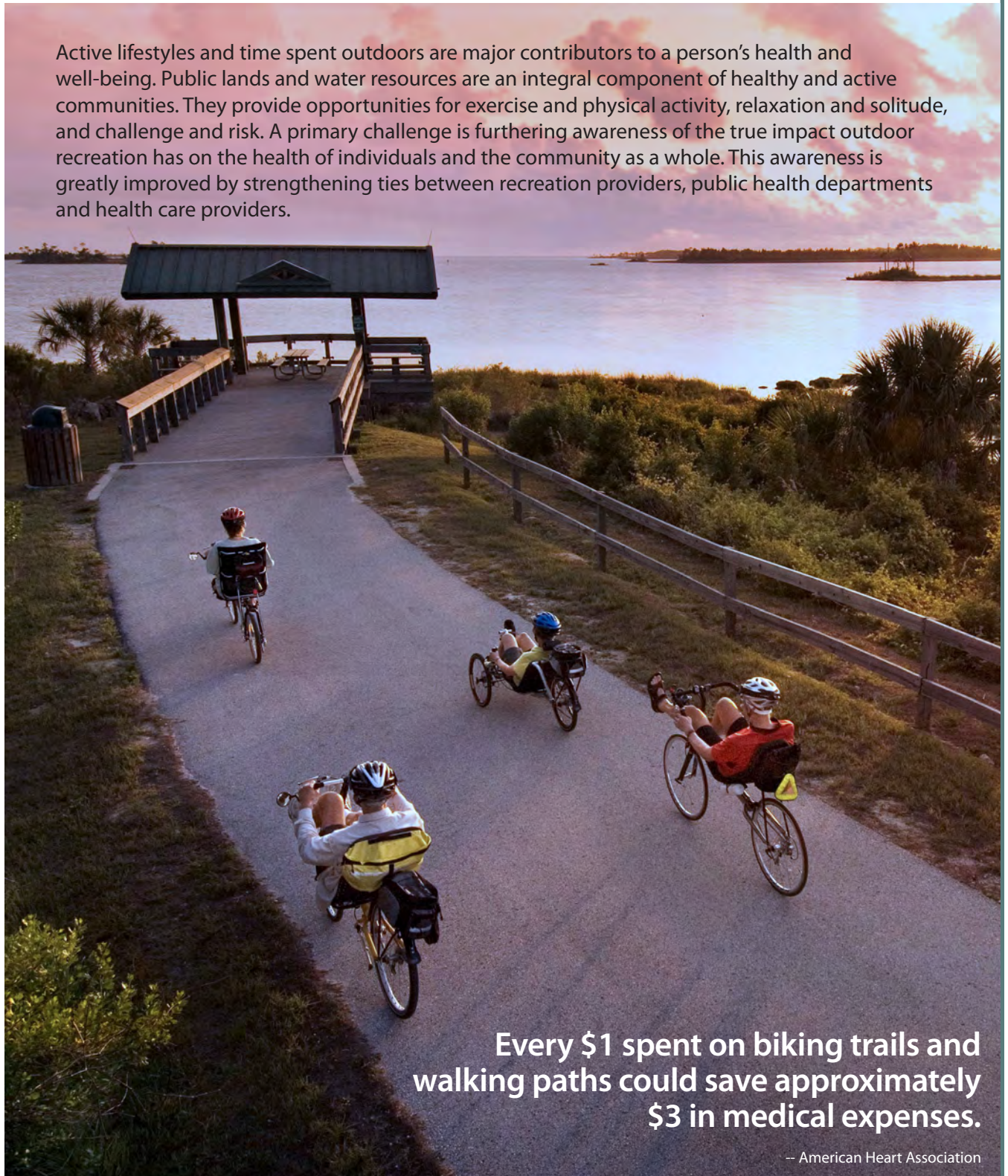
(VISIT FLORIDA)



Each year, more than **\$38 billion** is spent on outdoor recreation in the state, providing **329,000** jobs, **\$10.7 billion** in wages and salaries and **\$2.5 billion** in state and local tax revenues. (Outdoor Industry Association, 2013)

Value and Benefits of Outdoor Recreation: Health

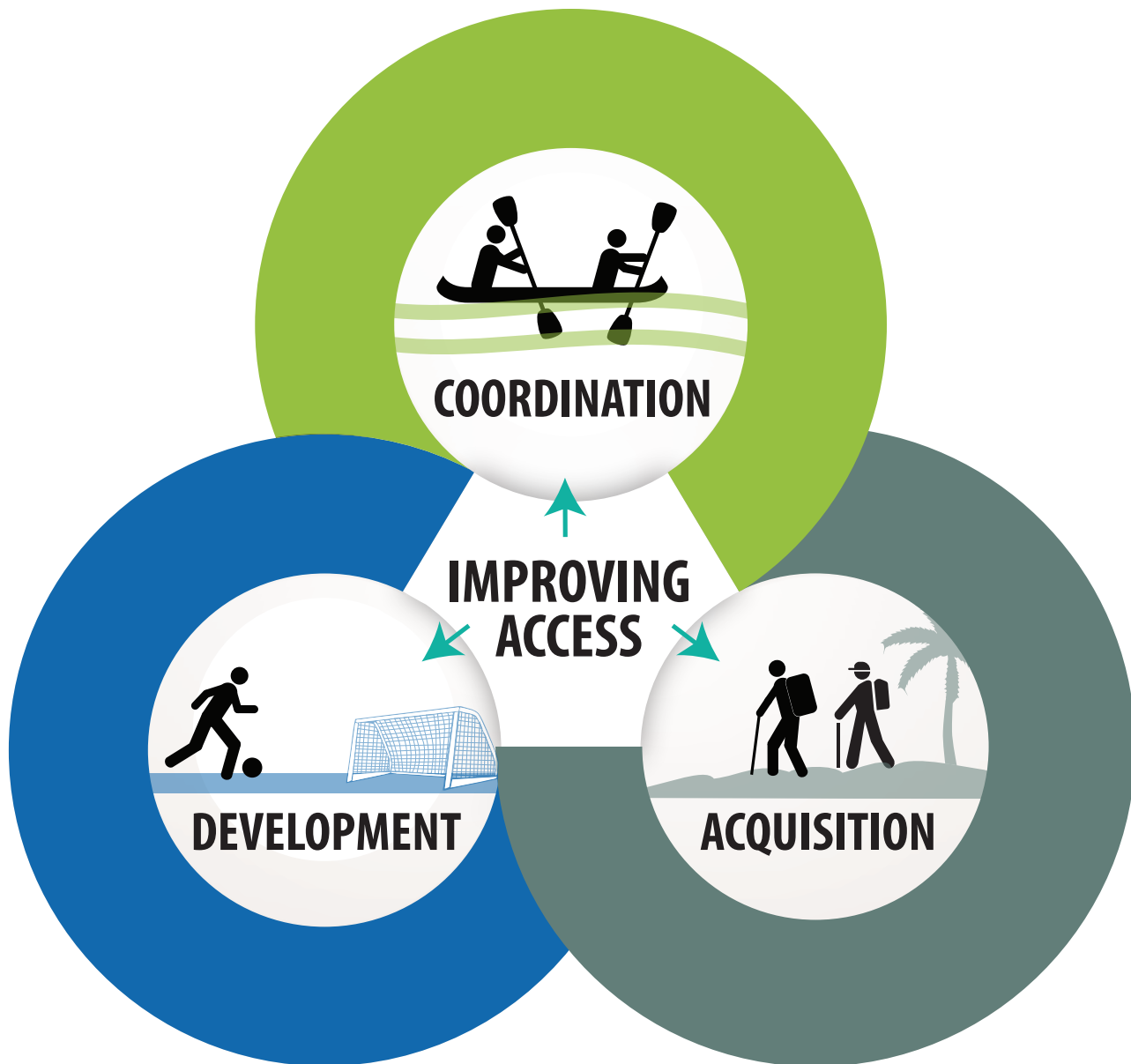
Active lifestyles and time spent outdoors are major contributors to a person's health and well-being. Public lands and water resources are an integral component of healthy and active communities. They provide opportunities for exercise and physical activity, relaxation and solitude, and challenge and risk. A primary challenge is furthering awareness of the true impact outdoor recreation has on the health of individuals and the community as a whole. This awareness is greatly improved by strengthening ties between recreation providers, public health departments and health care providers.



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

— American Heart Association

Improving Access to Outdoor Recreation



Improving access to outdoor recreation requires a three-pronged approach: land acquisition, development of infrastructure and coordination between providers. Partnerships are a key part of this approach.

Florida has nearly **14 million acres*** of land and water available for recreation. At the same time, Florida has the **3rd largest population and is one of the fastest growing** states in the nation, with annual visitation approaching **100 million.****

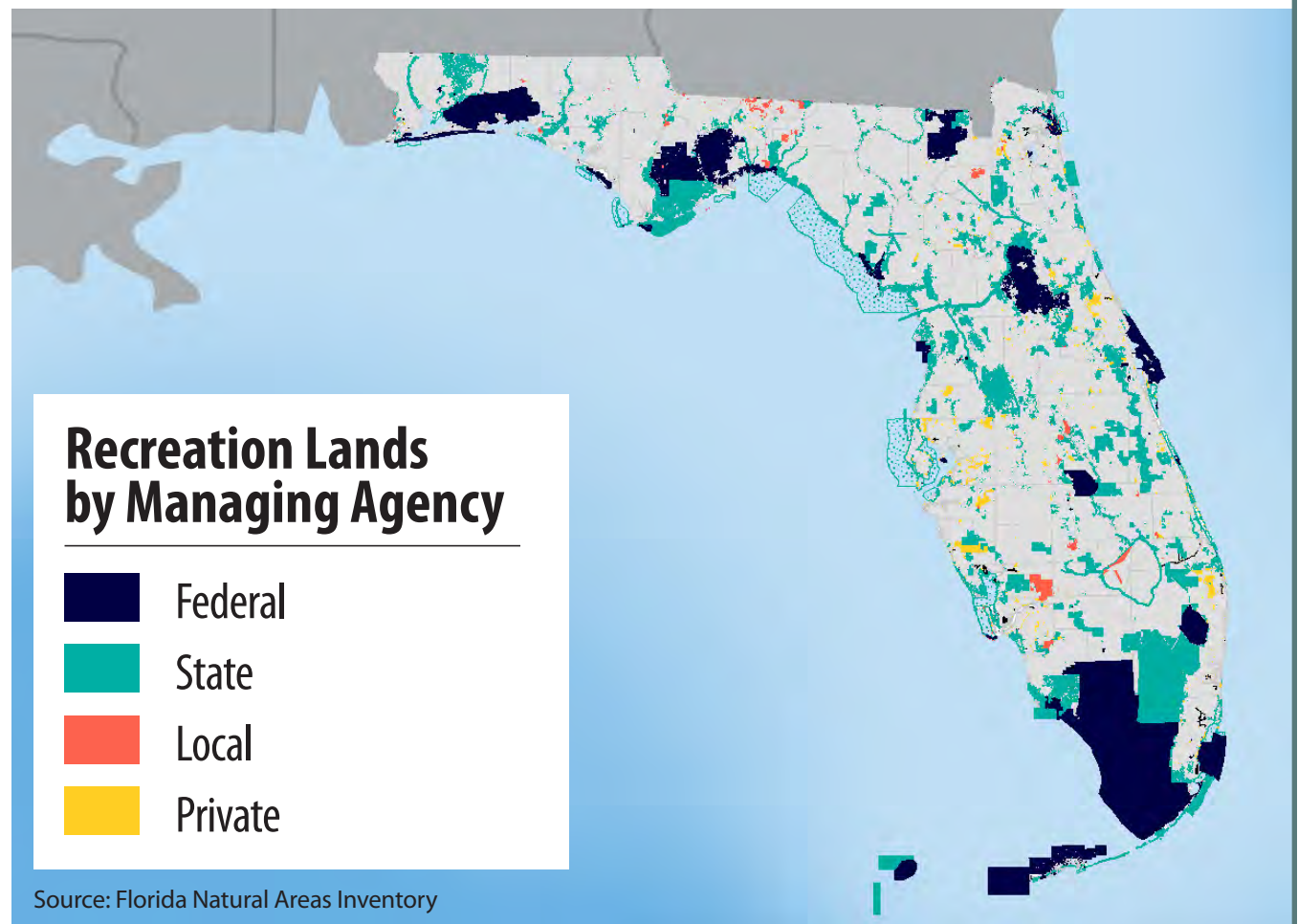
* Source: Florida Outdoor Recreation Inventory ** Source: Visit Florida



Coordination

From your neighborhood ball field to Everglades National Park, the state's outdoor recreation program relies on a variety of providers and suppliers. In Florida, opportunities for outdoor recreation are funded, managed and supported by governmental agencies, private organizations, businesses and non-governmental organizations. No one of these entities can support Florida's outdoor recreation program on their own; each offers a specific role in meeting the needs of millions of residents and visitors who seek high-quality outdoor experiences.

Together, federal, state, local and private providers in Florida manage nearly 14 million acres of land and water for outdoor recreation. Increases in population and tourism lead to greater demand for outdoor recreation resources, facilities and services. The demand can be met by improving access to outdoor recreation through further coordination between the agencies that manage the land, the organizations that support recreation and conservation and the businesses that supply outdoor recreation equipment and guide services.



Reconnecting People to the Outdoors

As populations change and new generations emerge, it is increasingly important to actively seek ways to connect people with the outdoors. A physical and emotional connection to the natural environment has significant benefits for people's health and aids in the stewardship of our natural resources.

Photo courtesy of Sandy Beck



Establishing this connection requires a greater understanding of the barriers which may inhibit participation, both physically and theoretically.

It also requires an understanding of Florida's increasingly diverse population.

By doing this, recreation providers can improve their grasp on why and how people recreate, and adapt their resources accordingly.

Highlight: Technology and the Outdoors



As mobile technology becomes more integrated into everyday life, it is imperative that outdoor recreation providers seek ways to adapt to this change. From GPS devices that help geocachers find hidden objects, to smartphone applications that help budding biologists identify schoolyard plants, technology is an important component of participation, particularly for children. Providing accurate, online information and incorporating technology into outdoor activities helps recreation providers enhance awareness of opportunities.

Urban and User-Oriented Recreation

Providing recreation opportunities in urban areas is one of the most challenging but important issues in connecting people with the outdoors. As most Floridians live in or near cities, urban parks and open space are increasingly vital to providing opportunities for recreation and solitude, and to improve quality of life.

Some types of outdoor recreation can be provided almost anywhere. Tennis, golf, soccer, softball, football, pool swimming and playground activities are needed in vast amounts in urban and suburban areas. Although most often provided by city and county governments, these facilities and programs are also offered through state agencies, as well as private, commercial and non-governmental organizations. In Florida, all 67 counties and more than 400 municipalities have recreation programs and facilities.

Nearly 90 percent of Floridians reside in urban areas. -- Florida Department of Health



Florida has 5,700 baseball fields, 2,100 football fields, 5,200 equipped play areas, 1,200 golf courses, 2,000 outdoor swimming pools and 9,100 tennis courts.

-- Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Success Stories



Funding for Recreation Lands and Facilities

Due in part to SCORP, Florida is eligible to receive matching grants through the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) to acquire and develop park lands and facilities. Since 2004, Florida's local governments have received more than \$16 million, creating or improving more than 80 parks throughout the state.

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

Partnerships: Improving Outdoor Experiences

Get Outdoors Florida!

Partnerships and collaboration with other organizations are essential to achieving SCORP's goals. Get Outdoors Florida! is a coalition of public and private stakeholders in outdoor recreation, including public agencies, educators, health care 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."



Florida Disabled Outdoors Association

A major focus for recreation providers is fostering equal access to programs, park lands and facilities. Organizations such as the Florida Disabled Outdoors Association (FDOA) strive for inclusiveness by promoting universal design and accessibility. They partner with recreation and health departments, agencies and civic groups to develop programs and opportunities for those with disabilities to help them stay active.

Miracle Sports, an FDOA program in Tallahassee, provides access to athletics for everyone. The program takes place on a barrier-free field developed in partnership with the City of Tallahassee.

Challenges

Highlight: Florida's Changing Population



Florida's population continues to rise, and our demographic composition is ever-changing. Two of the fastest growing groups in the state are people of Hispanic origin and seniors. Recreation providers are working to meet the needs of these and other populations in an effort to promote access for all.

Gathering input and information at the local level helps recreation providers make better informed plans and decisions.

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

Highlight: Barriers to Participation

Recreation providers strive to address the barriers that prevent some Floridians from participating in outdoor activities. Some common barriers* include:

- Lack of information on programs and facilities
- Competing priorities
- Travel distance to recreation opportunities
- Lack of mentors
- Insufficient resources
- Physical abilities

*Derived from SCORP 2013 public input process

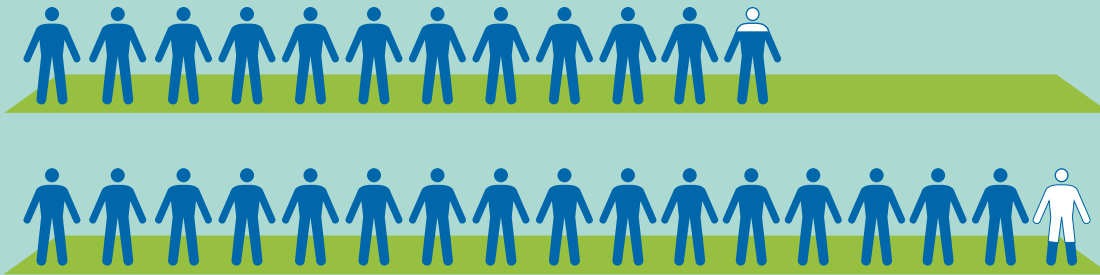


Planning for Growth

Florida's population growth poses challenges for recreation planners as well as urban planners. By 2030, the number of people using Florida's recreation and conservation lands is expected to increase by 38%. Acquisition of new recreation lands and development of new facilities will be needed to keep up with increasing demand.

2010 density: 1,175 people per square mile of recreation/conservation land

2030 density: 1,626 people per square mile of recreation/conservation land



The Florida National Scenic Trail winds for 1,000 miles across some of the most scenic portions of the state. -- United States Forest Service

Florida Quick Facts



Florida has 1,350 miles of coastline, 12,650 miles of rivers and streams and 7,700 lakes. -- Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Ninety-eight percent of Florida visitors say that outdoor recreation is important to their tourist experience. -- Visit Florida

More than 70 percent of Florida's visitors include nature-based activities in their travel. -- Visit Florida

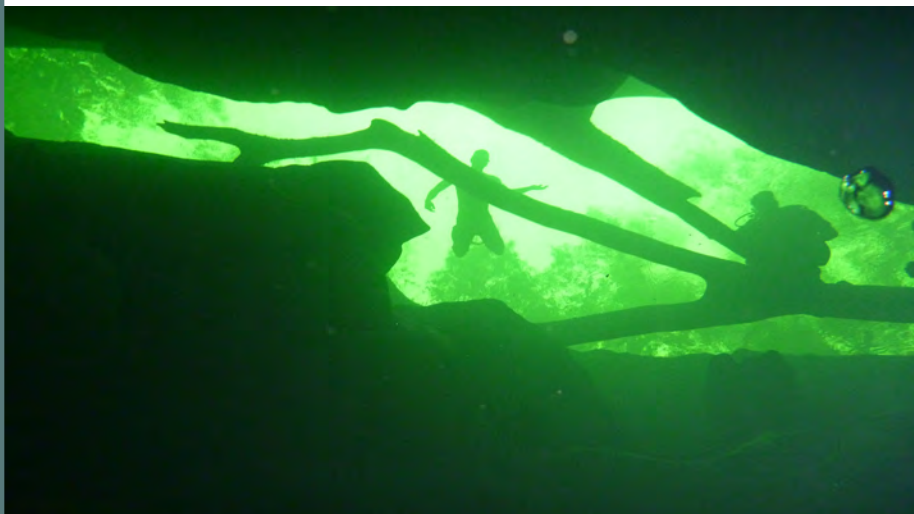
Florida has the highest bird, butterfly and wildflower diversity in eastern North America, drawing tourists from around the world.

--Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Florida Wildflower Foundation

Florida has more than 8,900 miles of hiking trails, 2,200 miles of paddling trails, 5,200 miles of bicycle trails, 139,000 campsites, 2,500 boat ramps and nearly 3,000 historic sites, museums and commemorative structures to explore. -- Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Every 85 visitors creates one Florida job. -- Visit Florida

Florida's Waters: Protecting Resources and Access



Many of Florida's recreation opportunities revolve around water and preserving our aquatic resources is essential to our economy and our way of life. Maintaining public access is a challenge, as springs, aquifers, wetlands, rivers and coastlines continue to face pressure from development and pollution. Wetlands and springs protection efforts, which also safeguard our drinking water supplies and wildlife habitat, receive extra attention in Florida's SCORP.

Ensuring continued access to, and the enjoyment of Florida's springs and waterways is a specific SCORP goal. From water quality monitoring and springs restoration efforts, to developing facilities and amenities such as paddling trails and docks, Florida's citizens, government agencies, local businesses and non-profit organizations all have a vested interest in promoting and protecting the waters we depend on.



Community-level involvement and multi-agency collaboration are essential to developing paddling trails and other large recreation projects like the Florida Circumnavigation Saltwater Paddling Trail, which spans 1,515 miles of Florida's scenic coastlines. Engaging and educating Florida's citizens about water issues is essential.

Conclusion:

Florida is a national leader in outdoor recreation and has made excellent progress in developing a recreation program to meet the demands of its diverse residents and visitors. The need is still great, however, and demand for outdoor recreation opportunities will continue to evolve and grow in concert with the state's population.

Top outdoor activities such as visiting saltwater beaches, wildlife viewing and fishing bring enjoyment to millions, and boost Florida's economy in the process. As the state's outdoor recreation blueprint, SCORP provides valuable guidance to communities, businesses and organizations to help them capitalize on these activities. SCORP also emphasizes the importance of continued funding for recreation programs. Lastly, SCORP assesses Florida's existing recreation lands and facilities, promotes the economic and health benefits of outdoor recreation and reconnects people to the outdoors.

SCORP is a tremendous benefit to the people of Florida, as it encompasses jobs, tourism, health, fitness, wildlife, conservation, transportation and sustainability. Florida's outdoor recreation planning efforts will continue to ensure that the Sunshine State remains one of the world's top tourist destinations as well as one of the best places to live.

