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2023-27 SCORP

Intro and Background

“The Sunshine State.” For many people, Florida’s popular nickname conjures images of sunny beaches and mild winter weather. But Florida can also be called the “Outdoor Recreation State” due to its abundant public lands and waters and wide range of year-round recreational opportunities.

Climate and geography play a big part in this, but they are far from the only reasons. Beginning in the early 20th century, Florida established state agencies to acquire and manage lands to protect historic sites, further wildlife conservation and expand opportunities for outdoor recreation. In 1963, the Florida Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Act formalized the state’s outdoor recreation planning efforts and enabled a series of land acquisition programs for conservation and recreation purposes.

Thanks to the success of these early endeavors, and to newer programs such as Florida Forever and federal and local government initiatives, approximately 14 million acres of public lands are available today for outdoor recreation, more than a third of Florida’s total acreage.ⁱ¹ Plus, additional private acreage is available for public recreation, such as in certain wildlife management areas. [\(map/graph of Florida’s public lands and progress made over time\)](#)

Purpose

For decades, all 50 states have produced policy plans commonly known as the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). The purpose of these plans, which are updated every five years, is to guide the development of diverse and balanced statewide outdoor recreational opportunities. The SCORP serves as a framework for recreation planning and helps orchestrate the implementation of each state’s goals and recommendations.

For Florida, a state with a growing number of both year-round residents and annual visitors, SCORP is a vital planning tool. Florida’s SCORP tracks recreational supply and demand, describes current recreational opportunities, estimates the need for additional recreational opportunities and proposes means for meeting those identified needs. This fulfills the vision of Section 375.021, Florida Statutesⁱ² along with the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund

(LWCF) Act of 1965¹³, which was established to create parks and open spaces, protect wilderness, wetlands and refuges, preserve wildlife and enhance recreational opportunities. Under this program, Florida is eligible to receive matching grants to acquire and develop outdoor recreation lands and facilities.

Florida's 2023-27 SCORP, the state's 12th official plan, will focus on providing significant benefits to local communities, especially low-population rural areas and urban core environments.

Outdoor Recreation

Broadly speaking, outdoor recreation is any leisure activity conducted outdoors. These outdoor activities fall into two basic categories:

- User-oriented outdoor recreation is provided for the convenience of the participant. These activities and facilities can be accommodated as long as adequate physical space and funding exist. Examples include playground activities, swimming (in pools) and tennis.
- Resource-based outdoor recreation is dependent upon some element, or combination of elements, in the natural or cultural environments that cannot be easily replicated or provided elsewhere. State and federal agencies provide a significant portion of these opportunities, which often include activities such as kayaking, hunting, hiking and horseback riding. Opportunities for resource-based recreation tend to be more limited due to the natural and cultural resources involved.

Recreation facilities and activities are especially important in urban and suburban areas, where 90% of Floridians reside. A rise in urbanization often leads to an increase in user-oriented outdoor recreation facilities and programs to help meet the needs of expanding populations. However, as populations grow, suitable lands for recreation are often converted to development or other uses. This creates a greater demand on resource-based recreation facilities.

Both user-oriented and resource-based outdoor recreation are crucial to the health and wellness of America's citizenry. The management of natural resources is also a matter of public interest in Florida, for the ecological and health benefits afforded our residents and visitors. Additionally, governments play a major role in preserving and interpreting historic and prehistoric resources. These resources tell the story of our history and culture, providing a means for individual citizens to understand the events that have shaped Florida through the ages.

Planning

Florida is a major travel destination for outdoor recreation enthusiasts from around the world. According to VISIT FLORIDA, the state's official tourism marketing corporation, more than 100 million tourists visit annually (118 million in 2021), thanks in large part to our subtropical

climate, abundant sunshine, sandy beaches, scenery and wildlife. Florida's 22 million residents enjoy these resources as well.

Due to the continued growth, urbanization and diversification of the population, more recreation facilities and services are needed today than ever before. Longer life expectancies, greater mobility and a growing appreciation for the health benefits of recreation also generate the additional need for facilities and programs. As a result, social and environmental conflicts may occur, and these must be addressed through comprehensive and coordinated efforts by recreation managers at many levels of government.

Effective coordination among the state's recreation providers is critical if we hope to maximize the health, economic and environmental benefits derived from recreation. Professional, systematic planning and program implementation are necessary to guide communities, government agencies and other organizations.

Florida's local governments are responsible for providing recreation facilities and programs within their respective jurisdictions, with supplemental assistance from both the state and federal governments. State agencies, especially the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), must leverage their human, financial and natural resources for the maximum benefit to the public. In addition, the state must provide a portion of the financial, technical and physical resources needed to meet Florida's recreation demand.

Process

While DEP's Division of Recreation and Parks, Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT) has coordinated the 2023-27 SCORP, the plan's development is the result of a concerted effort to gain input from recreation users, as well as local, regional and state recreation providers. This process included public workshops and online surveys along with regular consultations with recreation professionals from around the state. This continued engagement is key to the plan's success and implementation.

Additionally, DEP and the University of Florida's Research Design and Data Coordinating Center conducted the 2021-2022 Outdoor Recreation Participation Study. This study provides an in-depth look at participation in a wide variety of outdoor recreation activities, explores changes in trends, examines opinions regarding a variety of issues and offers quantitative insight on the recreation demands of Floridians.

The survey methodology employed random sampling and is statistically representative of residents at the state level. The results of the participation study are used in this document to provide a statewide analysis that will be a helpful tool to a wide variety of public and private

recreation providers. The complete report is in the appendix and is posted on [DEP's SCORP webpage](#).

Participation and Coordination

One of the most important aspects of outdoor recreation planning is coordination between governments. Many county and municipal governments assisted in the development of this SCORP by contributing to the statewide inventory of outdoor recreation resources and facilities known as the Florida Outdoor Recreation Inventory (FORI).

Private outdoor recreation enterprises constitute a significant element of Florida's economy and will continue to provide a major share of the outdoor recreation supply. 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 and private partnerships are established primarily through 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. State representatives also attend various gatherings of private organizations to present and discuss state recreation policies and programs.

Whether for the welfare of Florida's people, the health of its economy or the management of its natural resources, a comprehensive outdoor recreation system is a major necessity. Florida's 2023-2027 SCORP provides a foundation and direction for such a system.

i1: Nelson, Robert H. State-owned Lands in the Eastern United States. PERC Public Lands Report. March 2018. <https://www.perc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/PERC-ELR-web.pdf>.

i2: Section 375.021, Florida Statutes. http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=0300-0399/0375/Sections/0375.021.html.

i3: Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-78/pdf/STATUTE-78-Pg897.pdf>.

Chapter 1: Florida's Outdoor Recreation Setting

Physical Geography and Climate

Florida, the second-largest state east of the Mississippi River, has an elongated peninsula stretching 447 miles from north to south and 361 miles from east to west. Florida's diverse coastline extends 1,350 miles around the peninsula with 825 miles of sandy beaches^{1.1}. To the north, Florida shares borders with Alabama and Georgia.

Florida's climate is one of its primary assets, enabling residents and visitors to enjoy year-round outdoor activities. Florida lies within the temperate zone, yet its climate is subtropical with wet, humid summers and relatively dry, cool winters. The Gulf of Mexico on the west and the Atlantic Ocean on the east help moderate seasonal temperature extremes.

Florida is known for its abundant seasonal rainfall. The average annual rainfall is around 54 inches, most of which occurs during the summer months, whereas the winter months show the greatest average percentage of sunshine in the eastern United States. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), temperatures in Florida have risen more than 2 degrees Fahrenheit since the beginning of the 20th century^{1.2}.

Florida's geography makes it extremely vulnerable to tropical storms and hurricanes. These cyclonic weather systems impact both inland and coastal areas, resulting in the state's outdoor recreation resources possibly being more susceptible to the effects of climate change. Changes in climate can affect water temperatures and salinity, disrupting natural conditions that can influence coastal erosion. What is known today as the state of Florida only occupies about half of a large geological unit known as the Florida Plateau, of which the other half is submerged. The state is divided into the north and central highlands and coastal lowlands^{1.3}.

Wildlife and Natural Resources

Florida has abundant water resources that provide opportunities for water-related activities. Beyond its vast shoreline, more than 12,500 miles of rivers, streams and waterways wind through the state, mostly in the northern half, and the state has approximately 7,700 lakes^{1.4}. South Florida's unique geologic history and flatter terrain have created a relative paucity of river systems.

In addition to its lakes, rivers, and streams, Florida's wetlands and their associated open waters account for about 11 million acres^{1.5}. A considerable amount of Florida's waters percolate

through underlying limestone rock, forming groundwater reservoirs that discharge freshwater to springs. Florida has 33 first magnitude springs, more than any other state^{1.6}.

Vegetation is one of the most significant features of Florida's landscape, with a tremendous variety of natural vegetation that covers about 58% of the state^{1.7}. A huge number of these native plants hold ethnobotanical values like food, shelter, medicine, clothing, fiber and dyes.

Florida's wildlife is as varied as the habitats that support it. Species range from those common throughout the southeastern United States, such as the American alligator, to more endemic species such as the Florida panther and the Florida scrub-jay. Florida's native species include thousands of saltwater fishes and marine invertebrates. The state's diverse wildlife resources provide a major attraction for many outdoor recreation enthusiasts.

People and History

Florida's history and culture are interwoven in a vibrant tapestry where federal, state and local parks, along with public lands and museums, help interpret Florida's colorful past and present.

Archaeological research indicates that humans have inhabited the state for approximately the last 14,500 years, with cultures like Apalachee, Timucua, Calusa, and Tequesta among those who made their homes in what is now the state of Florida^{1.8}. Mounds, middens, earthworks and other archaeological sites continue to be a source of wonder and curiosity. More than 100 locations on the Division of Historical Resource's (DHR) Florida Native Heritage Trail provide excellent opportunities to learn more about these native peoples.

However, native cultures in Florida are not all lost, as tribes including the Seminole, Miccosukee, and Muscogee (Creek) persist today. Florida has written history extending more than 500 years, with the flags of five nations having flown within its borders. Florida's culture and nationalities contributed heavily to the development of the Sunshine State.

Population

Florida reached a milestone in 2014 when it surpassed New York to become the country's third-most populous state⁹. And it continues to grow. According to the University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business Research, Florida's population grew to 21.5 million in 2020, a 14.6% increase from 2010^{1.10}. Florida is projected to have approximately 24.4 million residents by 2030 and 27.1 million by 2045^{1.11}. These population projections make the importance of SCORP even more vital if outdoor recreation opportunities and facilities are to keep up with projected rises in demand.

Economy

Tourism is Florida's number one economic driver, and, according to a 2017 study, outdoor recreation is a key component of Florida's tourism industry, contributing more than \$145 billion to the state's economy each year^{1,12}. About \$60 billion of this spending occurred in parks and other public lands. This same study determined that outdoor recreation in Florida supported 1.2 million jobs and generated tax revenue impacts of nearly \$10 billion. The state's overall economy ranks as the fourth-largest in the nation and if it were a country, Florida—with a gross domestic product (GDP) of more than \$1 trillion—would rank number 17 in the world^{1,13}.

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Chapter 2: Outdoor Recreation Programs and Supply

(regional maps showing conservation lands)

Roles

Florida's outdoor recreation programs are the result of collaborative efforts between federal, state and local governments, as well as private institutions, businesses, and non-governmental organizations. To efficiently meet the state's diverse outdoor recreation needs, division of responsibility is sometimes required.

The state's core responsibility is to ensure that needs are met through the planned and coordinated efforts of all recreation providers public and private.

Local governments are tasked with providing a wide range of recreational opportunities that are important to the well-being of their citizens. However, due to rising costs, slimmer budgets and extensive land requirements, local governments are finding it increasingly difficult to meet this goal. To assist, the state can often serve as a bridge between large, federally-managed parks and forests and community playgrounds and recreation facilities commonly provided by local governments.

Private and commercial recreation providers are also essential, meeting a significant portion of the overall demand for both resource-based and user-oriented outdoor recreation, particularly tourist-generated demand. Non-profit organizations, clubs and other groups include private and quasi-public institutions and facilities that acquire lands exclusively for the use of their members, but in some cases also for the public. In addition, private industry lands can be used for resource-based recreation.

Programs

Most formal outdoor recreation programs have been instituted by various levels of government. Florida's outdoor recreation providers can be classified into five categories: federal, state, county, municipal government and private sector.

Federal programs provide public facilities and services that range from dredging waterways to protecting threatened or endangered wildlife. Federal agencies often coordinate projects with state agencies.

U.S. Department of the Interior

- [National Park Service](#) (NPS)
 - Manages national parks and monuments and designates significant properties and landmarks to conserve their natural and/or historic qualities. In Florida, the NPS manages the Biscayne, Everglades and Dry Tortugas National Parks, the Canaveral and Gulf Islands National Seashores, the Big Cypress National Preserve, the Castillo de San Marcos and Fort Matanzas National Monuments, the De Soto and Fort Caroline National Memorials, and the Timucuan Ecological% Historic Preserve.
 - Collaborates with agencies and programs to provide assistance and preserve natural/historic resources.
 - Coordinates the [National Trails System](#), comprised of National Recreation Trails, National Scenic Trails and National Historic Trails. Almost 50 land and water trails in Florida are designated

[National Recreation Trails](#), including the 1,515-mile Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail. Florida has two federally-designated wild and scenic rivers, the Loxahatchee and Wekiva.

- Manages the Land and Water Conservation Fund and oversees SCORP planning by the states. An approved SCORP plan is required for a state to receive grant money from the fund.
- [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#)
- Conserves and enhances wildlife species and habitats by enforcing federal laws to protect, manage and restore species and habitats.
- Manages national wildlife refuges and promotes recreation opportunities like hunting, fishing and other activities
- Administers federal aid programs and grants such as the Clean Vessel Act that is managed by the Clean Marina Program in the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's [Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection](#).
- Manages the [Clean Marina Program](#) (CMP). In 1992, the Clean Vessel Act established a grant program that would provide marinas with pump-out equipment to reduce aquatic pollution. CMP is a voluntary initiative that provides assistance and education regarding marine and freshwater environments and designates and publicizes those marinas, boatyards and marine retailers that have adopted best management practices.

U.S. Department of Agriculture

- [U.S. Forest Service](#) (USFS)
 - Provides leadership in the management, protection and use of the nation's forests and grasslands.
 - In the field of outdoor recreation, the USFS is responsible for sustainably developing the recreational potential of National Forests while protecting their scenic character.
 - Manages Florida's Apalachicola, Ocala and Osceola National Forests, which contain some of the most pristine woodlands, swamps, springs and streams in the state.
 - Administers the [Florida National Scenic Trail](#) (FNST), a non-motorized footpath extending from the Big Cypress National Preserve north to the Gulf Islands National Seashore. The USFS partners with public and private landowners to ensure trail access and partners with the nonprofit Florida Trail Association regarding trail management and promotion.

U.S. Department of Defense (USDOD)

- [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#) (USACE)
 - Primary responsibilities toward recreation facilities focus on flood risk management, navigation and environmental restoration.
 - In partnership with the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and other agencies, the USACE implemented the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), a project that covers 16 counties and over 18,000 square miles.

U.S. Department of Transportation

- The [Federal Highway Administration](#) (FHWA) provides grants to state and local governments for recreational projects that include bicycle and pedestrian facilities. They provide funds to the states for

the [Recreational Trails Program](#) to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized trail uses.

U.S. Department of Commerce

- [The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) (NOAA) is a scientific and technical organization whose mission is to provide products, services and information that promotes safe navigation, supports coastal communities, sustains marine ecosystems and mitigates coastal hazards.
- [The National Estuarine Research Reserve System](#) is a network of ecological research reserves that includes three in Florida: Apalachicola, Guana Tolomato Matanzas and Rookery Bay.
- [The National Marine Sanctuary Program](#) designates and manages marine areas such as the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, which covers 3,800 square miles and encompasses the most extensive living coral reef system in the nation.
- [The National Coastal Zone Management Program](#) fosters an effective partnership with state, local, and federal governments. Through matching funds, the capabilities of each partner are strengthened to address coastal issues.

The State of Florida has numerous state programs responsible for providing public recreation.

[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.

- [Division of Recreation and Parks](#)
 - Develops and operates Florida's 175 state parks and trails, encompassing more than 800,000 acres and drawing about 30 million visitors annually. Florida is the first park system in the nation to win four gold medals from the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration.
 - [Office of Greenways and Trails](#) (OGT) provides leadership and coordination to establish, expand and promote the Florida Greenways and Trails System (FGTS), a vast network of non-motorized recreation trails. OGT also promotes outdoor recreation through webinars and online materials, coordinates the state's designated paddling trails and develops the state's SCORP.
 - [Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection](#) (RCP) is the principal manager of submerged lands and their associated marine and aquatic resources. RCP manages Florida's 42 aquatic reserves, which encompass more than 2 million acres of sovereign submerged lands. In cooperation with NOAA, RCP manages more than 420,000 acres of submerged lands and coastal uplands in the Apalachicola, Guana Tolomato Matanzas, and Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserves, along with the [Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary](#).
- [Division of State Lands](#) (DSL) administers land acquisition programs, such as *Florida Forever*, on behalf of DEP. DSL provides administrative oversight for approximately 12 million acres of state-owned lands, including hundreds of freshwater springs, lakes and islands.
 - [Florida Forever](#) was established in 1990 by DSL and has since acquired about 900,000 acres. Their support on land acquisition focuses on preservation, conservation, and management of lands, as well as providing grants to local governments.
 - [Recreational Trails Program](#) (RTP) is a federally funded competitive grant program that provides financial assistance to local communities for the development of motorized and non-motorized trails.

- [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.
- The [Land and Water Conservation Fund](#) (LWCF) provides federal grant money to local governments for acquisition or development of land for public outdoor recreation.
- [Division of Water Resource Management](#) (DWRM)
 - 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. The DWRM's programs are critical to maintaining the viability of water resources for public outdoor recreational use and for providing recreation on restored mining lands.
 - 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.
- [Water Management Districts](#) in Florida are coordinated by DEP to provide public access and recreational facilities. Opportunities like hiking, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, camping, canoeing, bicycling and wildlife viewing are managed on district-owned lands in coordination with state agencies, federal governments, counties and the private sector.

[The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission](#) (FWC) is the agency responsible for conserving the state's fish and wildlife resources. Central to FWC's role in outdoor recreation is the management of hunting, fishing, boating and wildlife viewing opportunities. From federal funding programs such as the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration program and the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Trust Fund, the FWC provides grants and technical assistance to states for preservation, restoration, and enhancement of Florida's sportfishing, boating facilities, and endangered species.

- The FWC oversees more than 6 million acres throughout the state that are established [wildlife management areas and wildlife and environmental areas](#). It is the largest such system in the country. A wide variety of outdoor recreation activities occur on these lands, including hunting, fishing, birding, camping, paddling, horseback riding, bicycling and hiking.
- The [Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail](#) is a 2,000-mile, self-guided highway trail that covers nearly 500 sites to view native birds and wildlife. ([sign here](#))
- The FWC has established several [paddling trails](#), including ones along the lower Apalachicola River, Fisheating Creek, Big Bend Coast and the Aucilla, Wacissa and Econfina Rivers. Many of these locations include primitive campsites.
- The [Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network](#) teaches young people valuable outdoor recreation skills such as hunting, fishing, hiking and paddling. Four youth conservation centers are operated in the state: Everglades, Suncoast, Joe Budd and Ocala.
- The [Florida Boat Ramp Finder](#) provides descriptive information, maps and photographs for hundreds of public boat ramps throughout Florida.

[Florida Forest Service](#)

More than 1 million acres of state forests are managed by the Florida Forest Service, part of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. These lands are open for a variety of public recreation uses including hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, hunting and fishing.

- Three tracts feature off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation: Clear Creek OHV Riding Area at Blackwater River State Forest, Croom Motorcycle Area at Withlacoochee State Forest, and the OHV trail system at Tate's Hell State Forest.
- Several state forests offer developed campgrounds and both primitive and improved campsites.
- The Florida Forest Service coordinates [Operation Outdoor Freedom](#) with several partners to provide recreational and rehabilitative opportunities to wounded veterans on state and private lands across Florida at no cost.

Florida Department of State

- [Division of Historical Resources \(DHR\)](#) is responsible for preserving and promoting Florida's historical, archaeological and cultural resources.
 - DHR manages several museums in Tallahassee including the Florida History Museum.
 - DHR coordinates the wording and placement of historical markers throughout Florida.
 - DHR coordinates Florida Main Street to preserve community historic resources and boost local economies.
 - DHR produced several [Florida Heritage Trail publications](#) that promote self-guided tours around the state.

Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO)

DEO assists communities through a variety of grants and assistance programs.

- [Community planning technical assistance grants](#) to local governments or regional planning councils working on behalf of local governments may be up to \$75,000. They can fund planning for parks and recreation.
- Other funding opportunities include Community Development Block Grants, Community Service Block Grants, the State Small Business Credit Initiative, Rural Development Grants and the Rural Infrastructure Fund.
- Identified rural counties are eligible for a reduction or waiver of match for grants provided by the Department.
- DEO provides assistance to workers, businesses and communities after devastating natural disasters such as hurricanes.
- [The Competitive Florida Partnership](#) assists communities through funding and technical assistance to create and implement an economic development strategy. A vital key is input from a wide variety of community stakeholders, including those representing parks and recreation.

Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)

FDOT does more than plan and build roads. They promote bicycle and pedestrian safety through public information, innovative roadway designs and funding for recreational trails.

- The [Complete Streets](#) program seeks to design safe roadways throughout the state for a variety of users including bicyclists, pedestrians, transit vehicles, freight handlers and motorists.
- The [Shared-Use Non-motorized \(SUN\) Trail Program](#) plans and builds paved trail corridors for bicyclists and pedestrians throughout the state.

- An [interactive map](#) showing bicycle friendly roads helps long-distance bicyclists plan trips around the state, and [ConnectPed](#) displays pedestrian and bicycle related data on a map.
- The [Florida Scenic Highways Program](#) promotes scenic, historic, environmental and cultural values along designated routes, as well as recreational opportunities. There are 27 state designated scenic highways and of these, six are federally designated [National Scenic Byways](#).
- FDOT also administers federal programs such as the [Transportation Alternatives Program \(TAP\)](#) that provides funding for smaller scale transportation projects including recreational trails and related facilities.

State University System of Florida

The State University System of Florida consists of 12 institutions that serve more than 300,000 students, the second largest system in the country. Each university has an approved master plan that addresses 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. There are also smaller public and private colleges in Florida that offer recreation facilities for their students.

Florida Regional Planning Councils

Florida is divided into 10 regional planning councils. Each one is controlled by a body comprised of two-thirds county and municipal officials and one-third gubernatorial appointees. Additionally, the council includes ex-members from FDOT, DEP, DEO and corresponding water management districts. One of the primary functions of each council is the preparation and adoption of a strategic regional policy plan which guides the economic, physical and social development of the region.

Special Districts

Over 1,600 special districts exist statewide, providing infrastructure and services in a wide range of areas including fire control, ports and inlets, water control, community development, roads and hospitals. Navigation districts like [Florida Inland Navigation District \(FIND\)](#) and [West Coast Inland Navigation District \(WCIND\)](#) provide assistance programs that develop waterway access projects such as boat ramps, marinas, boardwalks, waterfront parks, navigation channels and environmental restoration projects. The FIND is the state sponsor of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway from the Georgia border to the southern end of Miami-Dade County. The WCIND stretches from the northern border of Manatee County to the southern border of Lee County and contains the 152-mile Gulf Intracoastal Waterway.

Local Governments (call out boxes of examples such as Miami-Dade)

Although the size of properties acquired under local programs may not be as large as those acquired for conservation by state and federal agencies, local governments are critically important in achieving a community's goals for environmental preservation, recreation, open space and growth management. Acquisition programs enacted by local governments have generated billions to acquire conservation and

recreation lands. Most of Florida's counties manage conservation lands comprising more than half a million acres.

County governments are key components of Florida's recreation and park system. Every county in the state has an officially established outdoor recreation program, and these may vary by county. They range from densely populated metropolitan areas like Pinellas or Miami-Dade counties to sparsely populated rural areas like Glades and Liberty counties. Counties are primarily concerned with the local outdoor recreation needs expressed by the unincorporated and incorporated populations within their jurisdictions. Generally, counties are an 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.

In some counties, user-oriented recreation programming is limited, but resource-based facilities such as roadside picnic areas or boat ramps are common. In other cases, some counties only have user-oriented facilities available through public schools and municipal parks. As a result, the typical county outdoor recreation program in Florida may offer a combination of resource-based and user-oriented activities.

Nearly all of Florida's 411 municipalities have developed recreation programs and facilities of one type or another. Many cities have established park and recreation programs with trained staff who administer parks, facilities and programs. Due to 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, golf courses and tennis courts, whereas coastal communities provide many excellent public beach facilities. Those municipalities located along navigable waters (coastal or inland) often operate marinas, boat ramps, docks, mooring fields and other boating facilities.

Municipal programs play a primary role in the provision of user-oriented recreation opportunities in Florida. The importance of municipal programs will continue to grow as increased public emphasis is placed on close-to-home recreation. Since Florida's municipal recreation agencies are the recreation providers closest to the people, they are usually the first to feel the need to establish programs that meet the added demands of new residents.

Private Providers

Private providers and facilities range from for-profit recreational enterprises like golf courses and marinas to non-profit conservation and advocacy organizations. Industries with extensive landholdings, notably the forest products industry in Florida, provide vast recreation resources and excellent facilities for the use of the public, often at a nominal fee. However, this resource is quickly disappearing in many parts of the state as timberlands are being converted to private access leases or developed for residential and commercial purposes. In addition to its direct delivery of outdoor recreation programs, rental equipment, tours and other opportunities, the private sector can respond quickly to opportunities for acquiring property for subsequent donation or resale.

Private organizations can also include quasi-public organizations, scouting organizations, faith-based and veteran groups and foundations. These groups provide a wide array of outdoor programs that include health and fitness and recreation therapy, and they also often acquire and manage conservation lands. These groups provide land and facilities primarily for the use of their members, but in some cases for the public.

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

[Florida Outdoor Recreation Inventory \(FORI\)](#) is a comprehensive inventory of existing outdoor recreation resources and facilities across the state. This is the primary database used to develop SCORP. This [interactive map](#) allows users to locate public lands and thousands of recreation facilities. [\(summary graph\)](#)

Chapter 3: Outdoor Recreation Demand and Need

From small towns to large cities to vast areas of public lands, Florida's recreation providers work hard to deliver high-quality outdoor recreation experiences for both residents and visitors. SCORP is a chance to periodically assess demand and need for these activities, determine if the supply is adequate and how to best go about making improvements.

Measuring current and future demand for Florida's outdoor recreation resources and facilities is challenging. Resources and facilities are generally considered "free" goods and services, and "demand," as an economic concept, is difficult to calculate. Whether on a statewide or regional basis, a method for determining the amount of outdoor recreation a person would "consume" under certain conditions of cost and availability remains elusive.

Consequently, the term "demand" in this document represents a means of expressing the actual participation in a recreation activity by a defined group or population over a fixed time period. These measurements can provide satisfactory estimates of recreation demand helpful for long-range planning efforts.

Outdoor Recreation Demand

SCORP conducts periodic surveys of Florida's residents and tourists to estimate recreation demand in Florida. The 2021-22 Florida Outdoor Recreation Participation Study was conducted from Oct. 26, 2021, to May 6, 2022, by the Research Design and Data Coordinating Center at the University of Florida. For this study, 1,236 people provided feedback about their participation in 34 different outdoor recreation activities. Respondents were asked to identify each activity they or someone in their household participated in during the preceding 12 months. In addition, respondents were asked why they recreate in the outdoors, what would encourage them to engage in more outdoor recreation and the types of outdoor recreation facilities they would like to see built or provided. There were also a number of economic questions.

Note: this survey was preceded by a "pandemic" participation study during the height of the coronavirus pandemic (see callout box in this chapter, "Covid and Outdoor Recreation") and the results were similar.

Of the respondents, 97% were full-time Florida residents, 3% were part-time residents, and four people were non-residents, so this can largely be viewed as a residential survey. The largest number of people were from suburban locations, followed by small cities or towns. The majority of respondents were over 50 years old and almost three-fourths did not have children under the age of 18 living in their household. The methodologies used to conduct the survey are described in Appendix G.

A summary of the results is presented in this chapter. For complete survey results, please see the contractor's final report posted on DEP's SCORP web page at <https://floridadep.gov/Parks/florida-scorp-outdoor-recreation-florida>.

Top Recreation Activities

For this SCORP, the survey asked for results in seven broad categories: trail activities, nature study, saltwater beach activities, freshwater activities, outdoor sports, camping and hunting/shooting. Each of these was broken down into sub-categories for more specific results. For Example, camping was divided into tent camping, RV camping, primitive camping and horseback camping.

Eighty-five percent of respondents indicated that they participated in trail activities, the largest figure in the survey. Trail activities included running/walking, bicycling, skateboarding/rollerblading, geocaching and OHV riding. The number of those who ran or walked on a natural surface was slightly higher than those who used a paved surface. Regarding bicycling, most people rode on a maintained trail followed, by a road with no bike lane, paved greenway, sidewalk, bike lanes and natural surface trails. Most respondents used road bikes followed by mountain bikes, hybrid bikes and electric bikes.

Ranked in order of highest to lowest, results after trail activities were saltwater beach activities, nature study, freshwater activities, outdoor sports, camping and hunting/shooting.

The most popular saltwater beach activities were walking, swimming, boating, fishing, paddling, snorkeling/diving and surfing. Paddling and fishing were broken down for more specific results.

In the Nature Study category, bird watching ranked highest followed by gardening, wildflower viewing and nature photography.

The highest result for freshwater activities was paddling, so this was broken down into paddling by kayak, stand up paddleboard, canoe and motorless boat. Fishing was also broken down into different types of fishing with bank/shore fishing ranking highest followed by boat fishing, fishing from a pier, dock or jetty, kayak/canoe fishing and fishing from a stand up paddle board.

Golf ranked the highest in outdoor sports followed by pickleball, tennis, soccer, basketball, baseball/softball, disc golf, volleyball and football. Pickleball was featured as an emerging trend in the last SCORP, so its second-place ranking in outdoor sports is not surprising.

Tent camping was slightly more popular than RV camping, followed by primitive camping and horseback camping.

Importance of Recreation

According to the participation survey, nearly all respondents (88%) said that outdoor recreation is very important to them. Twelve percent said it was somewhat important, while 1% indicated it was not important.

By comparison, in the 2016 survey, 61% of Florida residents thought outdoor recreation was very important, a drop from 72% in 2011.

Motivations for Participation

A central aspect of planning for outdoor recreation is understanding why people recreate. What motivates someone to go outside and participate? According to the participation survey, Florida residents consider enjoying the scenery the most important reason for participating in outdoor recreation, followed by mental health, general health, being with family and friends, proximity and affordability. About 61% expect to recreate in Florida more often while 38% believe their level of recreation will be about the same. Only 1% expected to recreate less. The majority of respondents recreate with their family.

Satisfaction with Opportunities and Facilities

Regarding satisfaction with outdoor recreation opportunities near their home, 32% of respondents were very satisfied and 55% were somewhat satisfied. Thirteen percent were not satisfied. In order of response, here are the top four improvements that would encourage respondents to recreate more near their homes: more outdoor facilities, better information, fewer crowds, and cleaner facilities. Regarding outdoor facilities, most would like to see more greenways and trails followed by wildlife viewing areas, community parks, boat and kayak access, historic and cultural sites and off leash dog areas.

Economic Impacts

In order to gain a greater understanding of the economic impacts of outdoor recreation, 63% of the respondents indicated they traveled more than 100 miles to recreate outdoors in Florida in the past 12 months. Of these, 88% said they stayed overnight. The majority (57%) stayed in a motel or hotel while 25% stayed with friends or family and 25% camped. A large majority, 88%, like to visit historical and/or cultural sites on these trips.

Thirty-three percent of overnight travelers spent between \$100 and \$250 on these trips while 22% spent between \$251 and \$500, and 22% spent more than \$500. Twenty-three percent spent less than \$100. The large majority of travelers also spent money on gear, fees and food. While this is not an extensive economic study such as what was featured in the last SCORP and is available for viewing on the [SCORP webpage](#), the responses do support the widespread conclusion that outdoor recreation has a sizeable economic impact.

(Callout box)

Trend

Covid and Outdoor Recreation

When the coronavirus pandemic struck in 2020, a surprising trend emerged – people began flocking to the outdoors, especially to locations close to home. Outdoor recreation areas where six feet of social distancing could be maintained were considered safe havens while potentially crowded venues such as movie theaters, restaurants, gyms and shopping malls were closed and concerts, festivals and sporting events were cancelled. Long-distance travel and indoor overnight stays were also curtailed, and many people were furloughed or began working and studying at home, allowing more time to pursue outdoor activities.

According to the [Outdoor Industry Association](#), more than half of Americans above the age of 6 participated in at least one outdoor recreation experience in 2020, the highest level the group recorded. Many were nontraditional users who were new to certain activities. In 2021, National Park Service Deputy Director Shawn Bengé commented on the surge: “This past year has reminded us how important national parks and public lands are to overall wellbeing. Throughout the country, national parks provided close-to-home opportunities for people to spend much needed time outdoors for their physical and psychological health.”

In Florida, like in most states, this trend put a strain on many local, state and national parks and private outdoor venues. Many high-profile parks experienced record numbers of visitors in 2021. These included Canaveral National Seashore and Big Cypress National Preserve. The outdoor industry also experienced a surge with items such as kayaks, bicycles and camping equipment often selling out and manufacturers overwhelmed to the point where supply chain issues emerged, partly due to shipping and employment issues.

While many Americans sought respite in the outdoors during Covid, [research by the Outdoor Industry Association](#) also points to long-term challenges. These include a continuing lack of diversity, with nearly 75% of outdoor participants being white. From 2017 to 2020, participation rates stagnated among Blacks, rose among Hispanics and dropped by 7% for Asian Americans. And while females make up 51% of the American population, females represent 46% of outdoor participants.

Regarding intensity, 24% of those surveyed in 2010 participated in an outdoor pursuit twice a week while 20% did so in 2020. This was true across all age brackets. Not surprisingly, then, the average number of annual outings fell from 87 in 2012 to 71 in 2020. And about a quarter of new COVID-related outdoor participants said they didn't want to continue their new outdoor activities.

While the pandemic helped to create a surge in outdoor pursuits, many of the new people are considered casual participants rather than dedicated outdoor users. This may result in a plateau or decline in future years.

Florida Pandemic Study

For a Florida-specific “pandemic” SCORP outdoor recreation study, the Research Design and Data Coordinating Center at the University of Florida did a participation survey of both residents and visitors from March 30, 2021, to July 21, 2021. A total of 2,122 residents and 114 visitors participated in the survey.

Like the Florida Outdoor Recreation Participation Study that followed this study, the largest percentage of resident respondents participated in trail activities (82%). Trail activities included running/walking, bicycling, geocaching, OHV riding and skateboarding/rollerblading. Nature study, saltwater beach activities, freshwater activities, outdoor sports, camping and hunting/shooting were the other categories ranked in order of highest to lowest results.

Tent camping was more popular than RV camping, followed by primitive camping and horseback camping. Many camping providers, however, report a higher demand for RV camping.

Ninety-seven percent of resident respondents said it was important to access recreation opportunities through greenways and trails. Greenways and trails were the No. 1 outdoor recreation facility respondents would like to see built in their communities. Regarding outdoor sports, 49% wanted to see more pickleball courts followed closely by outdoor basketball courts and soccer fields. Some of these results may have reflected the age of the respondents. Thirty percent were 66 or older, 28% were between the ages of 56 and 65, and 18% were between 46 and 55. Only 2% were in the 18 to 25 age group.

According to the resident survey, COVID did affect recreational activity. Among residents, 42% said they recreated more than usual during the previous year while 43% said about the same and 15% said they recreated less. A phone-related question was also asked to residents since many people communicated more with phones during the pandemic instead of in-person. Ninety-one percent of residents said they typically brought a smartphone with them to recreate outdoors.

Among visitors, trail activities (primarily running, walking and bicycling) had the highest level of participation followed by saltwater beach activities, nature study, outdoor sports, freshwater activities and camping. In the nature study category, birdwatching ranked the highest followed by nature photography and wildflower viewing. Respondents indicated that paddling in a kayak was both their No. 1 outdoor sport and No. 1 freshwater activity. Similar to the residential survey, 98% said that access to recreation opportunities through greenways and trails was important. Also, 82% of visitors indicated they visit historical and/or cultural sites while in Florida. The highest number of visitor respondents were in the 46 through 55 age group (31%) followed by 56 through 65-year-olds (29 %) and 66-and-older persons (26 %).

Outdoor Industry Association. “2021 Outdoor Participation Trends Report.” June 22, 2021. <https://outdoorindustry.org/resource/2021-outdoor-participation-trends-report/>.

Bureau of Economic Analysis. “Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, U.S. and States, 2020.” November 9, 2021. <https://www.bea.gov/data/special-topics/outdoor-recreation>.

Mayo Clinic Staff, 2022. “Safe outdoor activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.”
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/in-depth/safe-activities-during-covid19/art-20489385>.

National Park Service. “National Park Service Visitor Use Statistics.” 2021.
<https://irma.nps.gov/STATS/>.

(Callout box) Note: photos will be replaced for publication

Trend

E-Bikes, Scooters and other Electric Mobility Devices

In recent months and years, a wide variety of electric mobility devices have flooded the recreation market. These are giving users many new choices to enjoy the outdoors, especially those who might be mobility impaired, but they have also created a safety concern among trail managers and traditional trail users due to the speed some of these devices can travel. And how compatible are they on shared-use trails that may include equestrians? So, what are these emerging electric mobility devices and how fast can they move?

Types of E-Bikes

Styles

Cruiser: built for comfort with wide tires and high handlebars. Good for flat surfaces and mostly seen on bike paths and paved roads.

Commuter: Seats and tires are narrower than cruisers and generally run faster.

Road: Narrow tires and drop handlebars for paved surfaces. Built for speed.

Mountain: Wide tires and flat handlebars for off-road, unpaved terrain.

Classes

Class 1: Assists when pedaling up to 20 mph.

Class 2: Equipped with a throttle and assists up to 20 mph.

Class 3: Pedal-assist bike equipped with a speedometer and assists up to 28 mph. Often used by commuters.

Note: some e-bikes feature “race mode,” which is meant for private property and racetracks. These e-bikes can go up to 40 mph.

Most charges will last 20-70 miles depending on terrain, type of bike and how often the assist function is engaged.

Hunting E-bikes

Hunters are increasingly using all-terrain e-bikes to gain access to backcountry areas where motorized vehicles are not allowed. Several models of these camo-colored, fat-tired e-bikes are on the market. Some models feature a 1,000-watt motor that can reach 35 mph without pedaling. A walk-assist feature on one model allows the user to walk along the e-bike and engage the motor at 2.5 miles per hour. Many hunting e-bikes have a heavy-duty rack above the back tire for loading gear and game, and many can pull a small trailer. Some models have two front tires for greater stability in rough terrain. Since e-bikes enable a larger number of hunters greater access to remote areas, some land managers worry about increased pressure on wildlife populations. The U.S. Forest Service [updated its e-bike policy in 2022](#), stating, “As use trends change with time and new technologies, the way we manage lands to ensure their long-term health and resilience must change as well.”

More information: <https://ebikegeneration.com/blogs/news/top-7-electric-hunting-bikes-for-2019>.

E-bike Regulations

Local, state and federal laws and regulations are frequently updated as managers seek to keep up with emerging trends. Users need to check the rules of specific trails and lands they intend to access before embarking. Many trail managers are trying to regulate e-bikes with speed limits of 15 or 20 mph, but enforcement is often difficult. According to a 2022 Pinellas Trail System e-bike survey, about a quarter of both e-bike and traditional bicycle respondents said they did not know the speed limit on the Pinellas Trail (20 mph).

For the federally funded [Recreational Trails Program](#), applicants may check the mixed use, non-motorized/motorized category if e-bikes are allowed on the trail for which they are applying, possibly enhancing their chances of receiving funding.

More info:

<https://www.juicedbikes.com/pages/chapter-2-different-types-of-electric-bikes>

<https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/how-to-choose-an-ebike.html>

Opinion column against e-bike use on Legacy Trail:

<https://www.heraldtribune.com/story/opinion/columns/guest/2022/01/20/put-brakes-e-bikers-who-plague-sarasotas-legacy-trail/6577034001/>

Opinion column in favor of e-bike use on Legacy Trail:

<https://www.heraldtribune.com/story/opinion/columns/guest/2022/04/07/dont-blame-e-bikes-reckless-riding-sarasotas-legacy-trail/9491321002/>

Types of Electric Scooters

There are several brands of adult electric scooters. Most weigh under 30 pounds and have a 250-watt motor. Top speeds range from 12 to 19 mph, and distances per charge range from 7 to 25 miles. Most have a weight limit of 220 pounds.

An intermediate scooter has a 500-watt motor and an extreme performance scooter has dual 1600-watt motors. This high-end scooter has a range up to 52 miles, can reach speeds of up to 56 miles per hour and has a 385-pound weight limit. It has a bright LED headlight for night riding. At 100 pounds, this scooter weighs much more than most.

Electric scooters for children weigh less and are generally not as durable. Their top speed is around 10 miles per hour with a range of around 8 miles.

The majority of electric scooters have two wheels, but there is also a one-wheel variety with a 13-mile range. More stable three- and four-wheel scooters, popular with seniors, are similar to electric wheelchairs.

For more information: <https://electric-scooter.guide/guides/definitive-guide-electric-scooters/>

Electric Skateboards

Unlike scooters, electric skateboards are hands free, meaning they have a wireless remote that controls every aspect of the ride. The fastest ones can zoom along at 29 mph with a range per charge of around 20 miles. Most electric skateboards have four wheels.

Electric Unicycles

Electric unicycles have become popular. Some can reach speeds of 31 mph with a maximum range per charge of 75 miles. They come with bright, automotive-quality headlights. Electric unicycles have fold-down foot pedals and are self-balancing. They have a handle at the top for easy carrying.

Hoverboards

Hoverboards come in two-wheel and one-wheel varieties. For the two-wheel hoverboards, the user's feet are placed between the two wheels facing forward, and for the one-wheel version, one foot is placed in front and the other behind the wheel with the rider riding like they would on a skateboard or surfboard, a different position than for a unicycle. Some hoverboards have wide tires for off-road use. Some one-wheel hoverboards can reach 19 miles per hour and travel up to 25 miles on a charge. The two-wheel hoverboards are similar to the Segway, first unveiled in 2001, but without the stem and handlebars. There is also a variety that features "electric roller skate hovershoes," that have two separate independent wheels. For more information:

<https://hoverboardsworld.com/best-one-wheel-hoverboards/>.

(Callout box)

Trend

Pickleball Still Growing

As reported in the last SCORP, pickleball is an emerging outdoor sport, having grown an average of 11.5% per year from 2016 through 2021. Invented in 1965 by three dads to entertain their kids in summer, there were an estimated 4.8 million pickleball players in the country in 2022. From 2020 through 2021, it has grown fastest among players under 24 years of age (21%). There are professional pickleball tournaments with prize money and players on tour.

Pickleball is being played by all ages and the demand for more pickleball courts has increased. Many say it is easy to learn but difficult to master. It is played with solid rackets and a type of whiffle ball on a court divided by a low net. The court is almost half the size of a tennis court. Like tennis, two or four people can play in a match. There is a “no-slam” zone known as “the kitchen” near the net, and serves must underhand, so finesse is emphasized more than power. It is easier on the body than traditional racket sports and seniors can often play on equal footing with younger people. Pickleball, anyone?

Source: USA Pickleball Association. “2022 Pickleball Fact and Media Sheet.”

<https://usapickleball.org/about-us/organizational-docs/pickleball-fact-sheet/#:~:text=Estimated%20Pickleball%20Players%20Within%20the,Single%20Sport%20Report%20on%20Pickleball.>

(Callout box)

Trend

Pump Tracks

A pump track is a small circular trail of rollers and berms for wheeled sports equipment. If ridden properly, a user only needs to pedal or push in the beginning, followed by a pumping action to maintain momentum. Roller skates, roller blades, bicycles, scooters and skateboards can all be used on pump tracks. And it’s not just for kids. Adults use them as well, and competitions are sometimes held on pump tracks.

Pump tracks can be built as permanent infrastructure as part of a public space or they can be set up as a temporary mobile structure designed to fit in a specific space. They can be built cheaply from dirt or clay, requiring periodic maintenance, or they can be made from wood, concrete, asphalt, fiberglass or other composite materials. They can be incorporated into the landscape or installed above ground.

Pump tracks serve all ages and abilities, and their benefits are well documented. They can help improve bike handling skills, spatial awareness and cooperation, and the space needed is often slightly larger than a baseball diamond. Is there a pump track in your community?

(Callout box)

Trend

Technology Innovations and Outdoor Recreation

How is technology affecting outdoor recreation? If you are reading this online, that is one way. And if you use your computer or smartphone to plan an outing or download a map, that is another example. While printed materials may never completely fall out of favor, more and more people are relying on digital devices to find locations for outdoor recreation and to guide them once there. People are also buying outdoor recreation merchandise online and using instructional videos for education on outdoor skills in place of or in addition to personal instruction.

Technology is also helping outdoor recreation providers gauge the use of a particular activity, from sophisticated trail counters that determine if a person is walking, on a bike or on a horse, to cell phone tracking to determine where a user is traveling. Reservation systems can also be made quick and easy online, and some outdoor activities, such as geocaching, can be done in concert with a mobile phone or GPS tracking device. Recreation providers must constantly be on the lookout for the latest trends in technology and how they might affect outdoor pursuits.

Drones continue to be an emerging trend in outdoor recreation, with new models becoming available each year along with new regulations for their use. Drones can also assist recreation providers in gauging use and impacts.

Sophisticated remote-controlled (RC) airplanes and boats are on the market with the advent of lighter weight rechargeable batteries. While these hobbies may not yield high cardiovascular rewards, they are getting more people outdoors. There are several RC clubs around the state and most have designated areas where they can safely pursue their hobbies.

One emerging outdoor pursuit in the country uses a very basic technological innovation—rail biking. This activity allows users to ride on abandoned rail lines via a specially-designed two- or four-seater bike or with an adapted mountain bike.

While its increase in popularity is relatively new, rail biking is actually an old technology that is seeing a comeback in places that have accessible abandoned rail lines. Thus far, rail biking is not popular in Florida, as most abandoned rail lines have either been converted to paved multi-use trails or been removed.

Electronic sports or “esports” are among of the fastest growing sports in the world, but since esports tends to be played indoors on computers or gaming consoles, they are not considered outdoor pursuits.

Chapter 4: Outdoor Recreation Priorities and Recommendations

Harold loves to swim, and, on weekends during the school year, his parents take him to the city pool about two miles away. During the summer, he and his friends would love to swim almost every day, but parents can only take them on weekends and there is no safe way to reach the pool without a vehicle. But a new multiuse trail built near Harold's neighborhood now allows Harold and his friends to safely ride their bikes to the pool on their own along with places like the library and basketball courts. Plus, a friend who cannot pedal a bicycle due to an injury can join them on her three-wheeled electric scooter. What a difference a multiuse trail has made to their summer break!

This example is at the heart of SCORP – not only meeting the growing demands for outdoor recreation, but helping to provide safe access to meet those needs.

Our Vision

Florida is among the most populous and dynamic states in the nation, and perpetual changes (social, technological, economic and environmental) continue to affect our lives, including how and where we recreate.

Florida's diverse public and private outdoor recreation lands, facilities, programs and managing agencies collectively contribute to the state's wealth of recreational opportunities and to the health and wellness of its citizens. However, outdoor recreation providers and the natural and cultural resources upon which they depend face many challenges.

While tremendous progress has been made in acquiring needed lands and providing facilities and programs to support public use of these lands, more work is required to improve access and accessibility for all Floridians and to bring high-quality recreation experiences to those living in underserved communities. Many neighborhoods, particularly those in low-income and rural areas, need additional parks and trails close to home, as well as the means to safely connect to them.

The statement below describes the vision for an ideal, but as yet unrealized, outdoor recreation system for the Sunshine State.

Florida's ideal outdoor recreation system will be a diverse, connected, accessible and balanced system of resources, facilities and programs that provide the state's residents and visitors with a wide range of local recreation opportunities. This outdoor recreation system will improve the health, well-being and quality of life of Florida's citizens, regardless of 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 opportunities for the public to participate in decision making. Florida's outdoor recreation system will continue to be a major contributor to the state's economy and tourism

industry, and it will further the public's understanding, appreciation and stewardship of our environment and outdoor recreation resources.

Priority Areas, Goals. And Strategies: A Method of Implementation

In early 2020, during the height of the pandemic, the SCORP workgroup began meeting quarterly online to provide input on the plan. In mid-2022, these meetings shifted to in-person gatherings. The workgroup identified four priority areas covering a broad range of outdoor recreation topics to develop for Florida's 2023 SCORP. The goals and strategies in the 2023 plan also resulted from many additional forms of input, including the 2021-2022 Outdoor Recreation Participation Survey, research of nationwide trends and issues, public workshops, open house events, discussions with outdoor recreation stakeholders and online questionnaires. The public was given several opportunities to comment on the 2023 plan, and those comments resulted in a much-improved SCORP.

For each priority area, specific goals and strategies are included to address the identified challenges and issues. Most strategies are to be undertaken by a wide spectrum of public and private recreation providers and partners. Recreation partners are those groups, organizations and agencies that promote and support outdoor recreation. All recreation providers and partners throughout Florida are called upon to help implement the 2023 plan.

Priority Area 1: Health and Well-being

- Identify and communicate the benefits of high-quality outdoor recreational experiences on all aspects of health, including mental health and the health of children, aging populations and people with disabilities.
 - Collaborate to develop a statewide campaign that promotes the whole-health benefits of outdoor recreation.
 - Work with private sector companies and local governments to create healthy, active and walkable communities.
 - Partner with organizations and agencies to establish specific, widely available programs for all populations and persons with disabilities.
- Promote outdoor recreation as a means to improve both community and individual health.
 - Partner with the Florida Department of Health and local health care providers on promotional campaigns.
 - Promote joint outings with health care organizations and providers.
 - Promote field trips, projects and outings with youth groups and school systems to introduce young people to trails and outdoor pursuits.

Priority Area 2: Public Access, Accessibility and Connectivity

- Provide high quality trail information.
 - Ensure that information at trailheads is clear, accessible and up to date and is consistent between web pages, trail signage, apps, brochures and other means of communication.

- Develop high quality trail apps for trail users.
- Develop communication toolkits and aesthetically pleasing guides to better inform the public about trail opportunities.
- Advertise and highlight trails and associated amenities that have a high degree of accessibility.
- Use QR codes and other digital means to convey information.
- Ensure that trail information is clear relative to location and accommodation for parking oversize vehicles and those with trailers such as for boats and horses.
- Identify and retain first-time outdoor recreation users through programming and partnerships.
 - Utilize technology to provide new users with quality outdoor recreation information so they feel safer and more empowered to participate.
 - Provide wildlife encounter information to empower new users to feel safer and more confident in natural environments.
 - Provide user compatibility and etiquette tips for safe and enjoyable encounters with other types of trail users.
 - Develop short trail loops and featured trail sections that have a high degree of accessibility.
- Improve overall connectivity and infrastructure.
 - Embrace the [Complete Streets](#) program to enhance bicycle and pedestrian safety and access.
 - Support expansion of public transportation to improve physical access to outdoor recreation opportunities.
 - Strive to provide access for all levels of ability.
- Utilize technology to improve access to information about the opportunities and benefits of outdoor recreation.
 - Maintain and update the Florida Outdoor Recreation Inventory (FORI) to improve knowledge and accessibility to local recreation opportunities.
 - Ensure that FORI and SCORP are user friendly.

Priority Area 3: Economic Opportunities, Adventure Travel and Ecotourism

- Promote the economic benefits of Florida's recreation opportunities.
 - Promote the Trail Town program as a way to encourage local business buy-in and growth revolving around outdoor recreation.
 - Distribute flyers and provide up to date web information about economic benefits.
 - Create outdoor recreation community alliances to connect providers and developers.
 - Promote and participate in the creation of city and county comprehensive outdoor recreation plans.

- Partner with Visit Florida, Florida Main Street, tourist development councils and chambers of commerce to promote outdoor recreation and associated ecotourism benefits.
- Promote the development of long-distance trails and regional trail networks that can attract adventure travel users throughout the country and world.
- Promote the use of trail counters, random surveys and tracking through smartphone apps to gauge trail use and trends and justify funding requests.

Priority Area 4: Resource Management and Stewardship

- Support grant programs and public land purchases that will create new outdoor recreation opportunities.
 - Provide information on grant opportunities and work to increase awareness of funding sources.
- Enhance the ecological and aesthetic environment of public spaces.
 - Prioritize the development of green spaces that provide a sense of place in local communities.
 - Focus on the balance between outdoor recreation and respecting wildlife and wildlife habitat.
 - Develop plans to adapt to sea level rise and other effects of climate change.
 - Focus on invasive species removal, prescribed fire management and hydrological restoration.
- Merge environment-based outdoor recreation with a focus on culture and heritage.
 - Highlight the [Florida Scenic Highways Program](#) as a prime example of merging recreation with culture and heritage education.
 - Highlight public historic sites that combine historic preservation with outdoor recreation.
 - Highlight [Florida Heritage Trail publications](#) that promote self-guided tours around the state.
 - Support [Florida Main Street](#) to preserve and revitalize historic downtowns.
- Support green infrastructure and low-impact development of new outdoor recreation opportunities.
 - Educate developers through forums and other means about green development and incorporating outdoor recreation infrastructure.