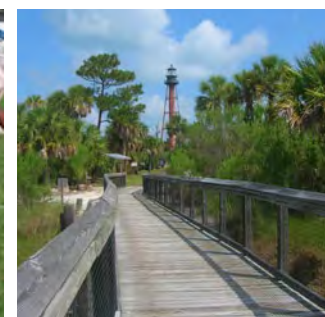
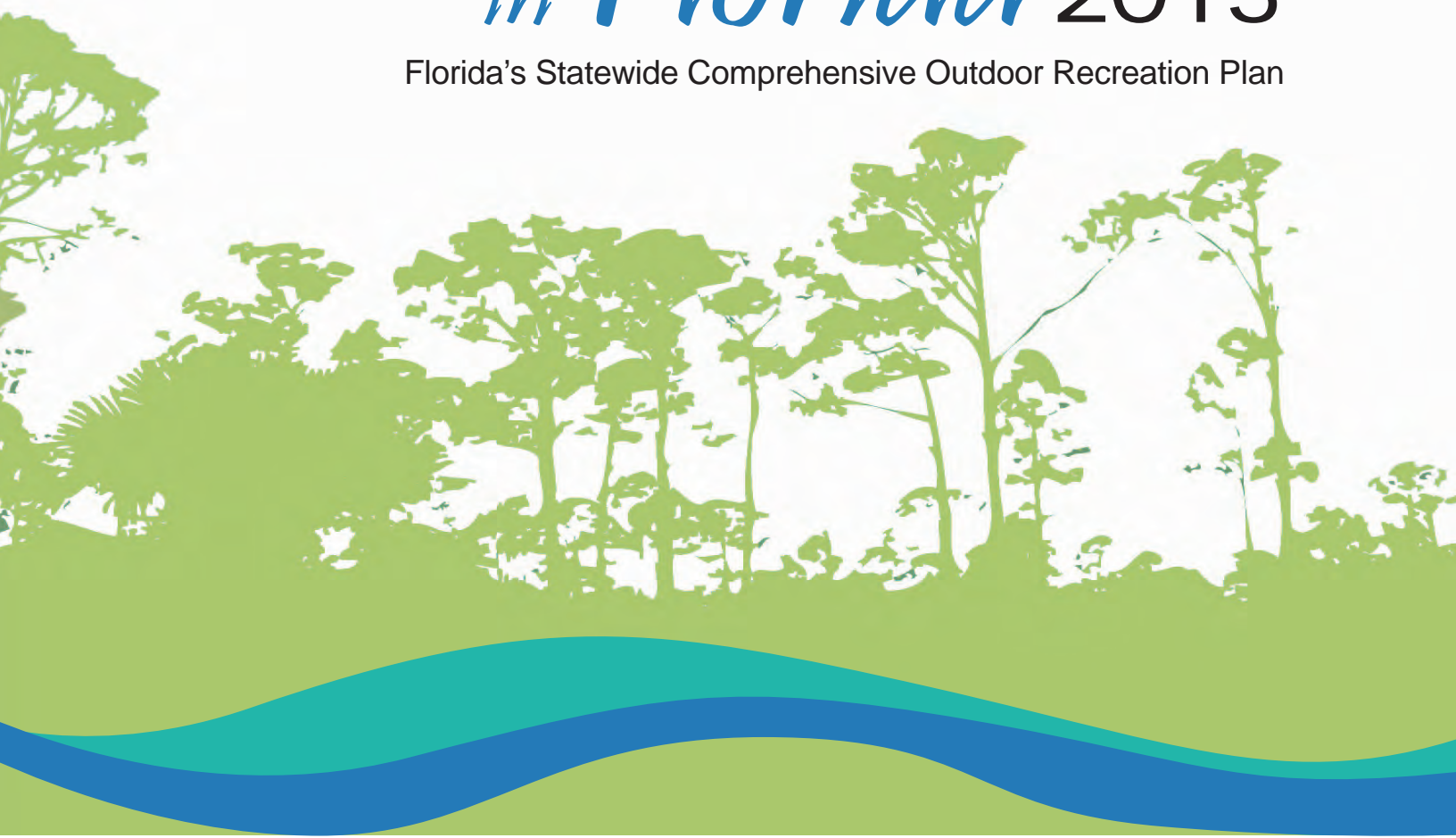


Outdoor Recreation *in Florida* 2013

Florida's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan



Front cover photos (L to R): Fishing at Dr. Julian G. Bruce St. George Island State Park, credit: Juliane Eckert; Stretching before practice in Marion County, credit: Florida Recreation and Park Association; Lighthouse in the distance at Anclote Key Preserve State Park; Kayaking at Fort George Island Cultural State Park

Outdoor Recreation in Florida 2013

A Comprehensive Program for Meeting Florida's Outdoor Recreation Needs



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



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Chapter One - Introduction and Background

PURPOSE

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

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

- Evaluate demand for and supply of outdoor recreation resources and facilities;
- Conduct studies periodically to estimate and analyze outdoor recreation demand;
- Provide ample opportunity for public participation involving all segments of the population;
- Address current wetland protection strategies as required by the Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986 (P.L. 99-645);
- Identify state and national outdoor recreation trends and initiatives;
- Develop and implement an "Open Project Selection Process" for Land and Water Conservation Fund grants.

This plan is part of an outdoor recreation planning process that Florida has pursued since 1963. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP) coordinates and develops the plan according to state and federal legislative requirements.

Specific planning authority is provided by Section 375.021(1), Florida Statutes, which gives DEP specific responsibility, authority and power to develop and execute a comprehensive, multipurpose statewide outdoor recreation plan. Additionally, Section

Section 375.021, Florida Statutes

Comprehensive multi-purpose outdoor recreation plan

- 1) The Department is given the responsibility, authority, and power to develop and execute a comprehensive multi-purpose outdoor recreation plan for this State with the cooperation of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Department of Transportation, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the Department of Economic Opportunity, and the water management districts.
- 2) The purpose of the plan is to document recreational supply and demand, describe current recreational opportunities, estimate the need for additional recreational opportunities, and propose means for meeting identified needs. The plan shall describe statewide recreational needs, opportunities, and potential opportunities.

Spotlight

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

OUTDOOR RECREATION: A LEGITIMATE ROLE FOR GOVERNMENT

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

Resource-based outdoor recreation differs from user-oriented recreation in that it cannot be provided just anywhere, but is dependent upon some element or combination of elements in the natural or cultural environments that cannot be easily duplicated by man. Examples include fishing, hiking, biking, horseback riding, hunting, camping, boating, surfing, nature study and visiting historical sites. Resource-based recreation is typically provided by state and federal governments.

User-oriented outdoor recreation is a type of outdoor recreation that can be provided

almost anywhere for the convenience of the user. This category is the broader of the two and includes activities such as golf, tennis, baseball, basketball, shuffleboard, pool swimming, and playground activities. User-oriented activities are needed in vast amounts in urban and suburban areas. As with other urban services, user-oriented recreation facilities and programs are most often provided by local governments.

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



Resource-based recreation at Lake Talquin, credit: FWC



User-oriented recreation in Broward County, credit: FRPA



A family enjoys RV camping at Gamble Rogers Memorial State Recreation Area at Flagler Beach

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

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

ROLES IN OUTDOOR RECREATION PLANNING

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

sunshine, sandy beaches and abundant outdoor recreation opportunities. Residents delight in Florida's pleasant climate which provides endless opportunity for year-round outdoor recreation.

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

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

PLANNING PROCESS

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

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

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

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

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

Public Participation

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

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

Planning Coordination

One of the most important links in the chain of outdoor recreation planning coordination is between state and local governments. Many county and municipal governments assisted in the development of this plan by cooperating in the preparation of the statewide inventory of outdoor recreation resources and facilities. This massive undertaking could not be accomplished without such assistance.

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

The Role of **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

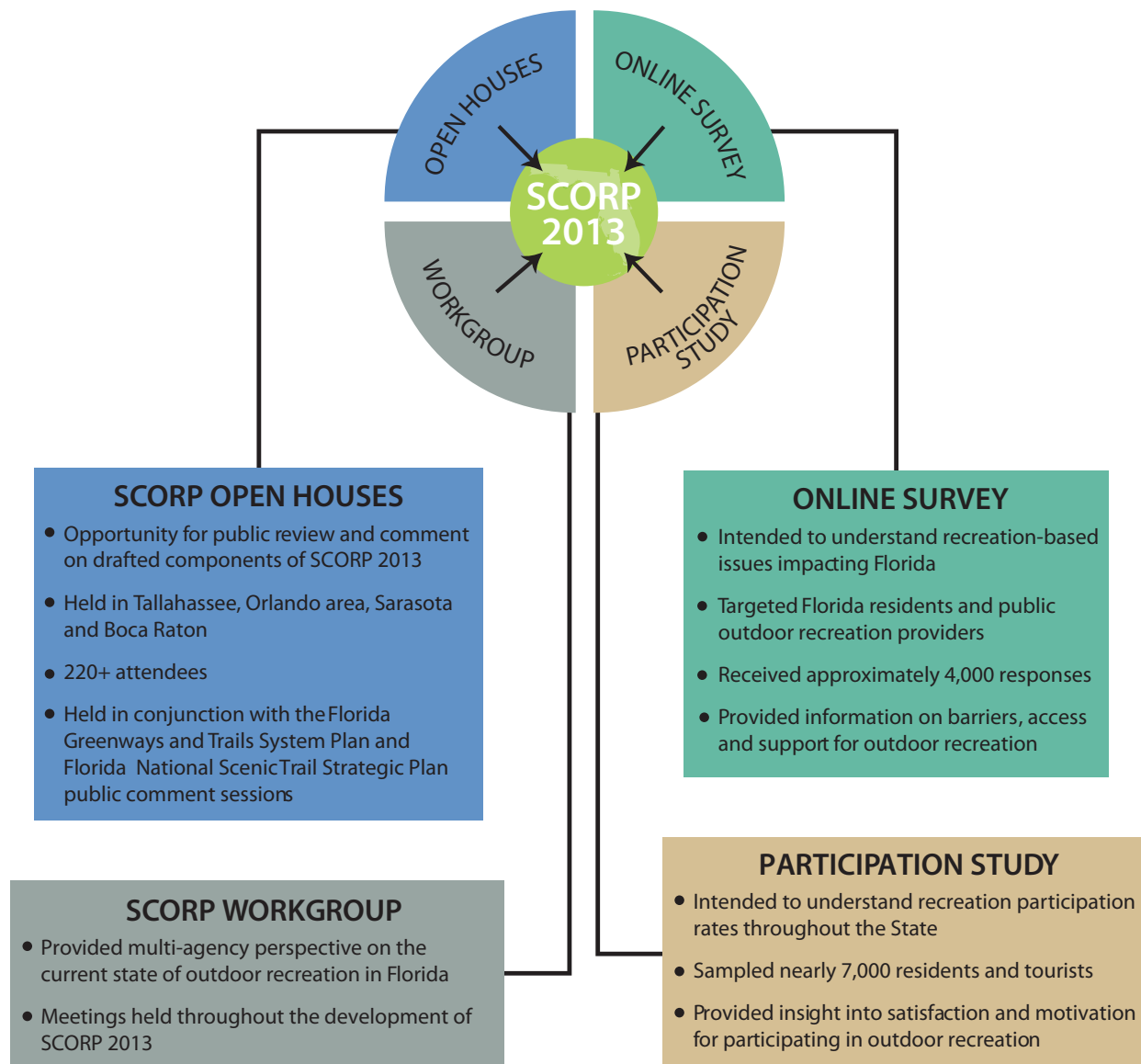


Figure 1.1

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

State Level Coordination

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

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

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

State-Federal Coordination

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

State-Private Coordination

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

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

Planning Regions

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

CONCLUSION

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