



## Public Participation

Public participation is a core element in the process of developing state recreation plans. This is as it should be, since these plans establish goals and policies for agencies that manage publicly owned resources. Recreation planners and managers may, in fact, be naturally more attuned to the needs and wants of the individuals they serve than many other government bureaucracies, because citizens tend to express a sense of direct ownership of the recreation resources they enjoy. In fact, all segments of the public are, in a very real sense, stakeholders in the outcome of a state recreation plan, whether or not they actually choose to participate in the planning process, and whether or not they even participate in recreation activities at all.

The TRAC committee began its deliberations for this plan by identifying effective public participation as

a priority issue. State recreation plans have traditionally followed a fairly standardized set of public participation methodologies, consisting of facilitated public meetings and random sample surveys. The TRAC considered these methodologies and concluded that this plan should seek to establish new strategies to improve and increase the level of public input into recreation planning and management.

Using an economic analogy, the committee considered recreation providers as representing a “supply chain” and the public as representing a “customer market,” one which is highly segmented and diverse. To assist the TRAC in conceptualizing this market, the planning team was asked to provide develop a schematic representation of its various specific interests and domains. The result was the “Recreation Stakeholders Taxonomy” found on the Reference Disc. As this

graphic indicates, the universe of recreation stakeholders can be subdivided into three levels – providers, non-profit organizations, and individuals – and into five interest clusters based on related categories of resources and activities.

What this stakeholder taxonomy did for the planning process was to reveal opportunities to improve upon traditional public input methodologies. It pointed out the key role of non-profit organizations as potential facilitators for individual participation. It suggested that any attempt to incorporate the public's many varied interests and concerns into a single plan would require a holistic, systematic approach, not a laundry list of specific responses to squeaky wheels. Above all, it made clear the need for something far more dynamic than a snapshot of public attitudes taken once every five years.

The outcome of these discussions was to define two objectives for this planning process where public input was concerned. First, in soliciting public input for the Tennessee 2020 plan, the team would seek ways to improve upon the traditional methodologies of public meetings and random sample surveys. And second, the team would develop strategies for realizing the vision of far more dynamic, ongoing public participation in the future.

## Public Meetings

The planning team held a total of seven public meetings during 2009 to receive public input for this plan. A first round of meetings was held in April, during the development stage of the plan, in the state's four largest metropolitan areas: Memphis, Nashville, Knoxville, and Chattanooga. The format of each of these meetings was an initial presentation of the scope and purpose of the SCORP planning process and a review of Tennessee's 2003 State Recreation Plan, followed by public input which was facilitated by a paper questionnaire. This instrument was designed to elicit open-ended responses about recreation needs and issues

of concern to the participants. A second round was held in late July in three metropolitan areas: Memphis, Nashville, and Knoxville. At these meetings, the provisions of the draft plan were presented for public review, and oral comments were received.

Public notice of these meetings was provided by several means:

- Advertisements in the state's metropolitan daily papers
- Press releases to the state's media list
- Email notices to the membership of the Tennessee Parks and Recreation Association (TRPA) and the GreenList of 120 organizations relating to conservation, recreation activities, and environmental regulation.

A total of 146 individuals attended these seven meetings, a level of public input that the planning team considered inadequate for a statewide plan of this scope. Low participation was, however, not surprising. The public meetings for the 2003 plan attracted an average of only 10 participants per meeting, and SCORP planners in other states have reported similar findings. Another Tennessee state agency that held a round of public meetings in early 2009 had reported disappointing turnouts as well.

The TRAC committee, having taken up the question of public participation as a priority in its first meeting, concluded that the public meeting is becoming increasingly obsolete as a means of generating public participation in recreation planning. Having the option to review and comment on planning drafts online may be a reason why the public has grown less likely to attend such meetings.

Following the TRAC's priority on new strategies to generate more robust public participation, the planning team concluded that it would be a worthwhile exercise to test the effectiveness of online public participation. Some other states have reported success with online surveys in their SCORPs. This approach proved very successful, as described below.

## Public Online Survey

The team adapted the questionnaire developed for the first round of public meetings into a format for the online Survey Monkey service and posted it at TDEC's State Recreation Plan web page. Email notices were sent to the TRPA list and to the GreenList encouraging people to go to the site and take the survey. Responses received at the public meetings were entered into the online survey.

It should be stressed that this kind of survey does not provide a statistically valid sampling of the opinions of Tennesseans as a whole because the respondents are self-selected. It can be, however, a worthwhile form of public input because it reflects the concerns of particular interest groups in the population who consider themselves active stakeholders in the outcome of the recreation planning process.

During a three-month period when this survey was made available, a total of 847 individuals responded.

## Survey Inputs

### Tennessee Recreation Attitudes and Behavior Survey (TRAB)

The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture's Human Dimensions Lab custom designed and ran a survey for this plan during the summer of 2009. This was a random-sample telephone survey with the response data adjusted to represent the Tennessee adult population as a whole, allowing statistically valid findings. The survey had three separate modules:

- **Kids Module.** Questions about children's outdoor activities, family access to parks and other places for interaction with nature, and attitudes toward environmental education.
- **State Parks and Conservation Priorities Module.** Questions about activities and satisfaction levels of visitors to Tennessee State Parks and about attitudes toward a range of conservation-related issues and policies.
- **State Parks Economic Impact Module.** Questions

about the spending of visitors to Tennessee State Parks. The data from this module allowed an estimation of the total economic impact of all State Park visitors in 2009.

The data tables and analysis of the TRAB survey are included on the Reference Disc attached to this plan.

### National Survey of Recreation and the Environment

Like the 2003 State Recreation Plan, this plan used the Tennessee data from the U.S. Forest Service's National Survey of Recreation and the Environment (NSRE) from the years 2003-2009. There were a total of 892 Tennessee respondents in this survey. One component of this survey asks respondents if they have participated in any of a list of 80 recreation activities within the past year. Comparison with the 2003 data



allowed the planning team to measure changes in participation levels for each of these activities. The NSRE survey data is found on the Reference Disc attached to this plan.

### Recreation Providers Survey

There are currently 140 organized parks and recreation departments located in 74 of the state's 95 counties. The planning team developed an online survey of parks and recreation professionals that was designed to capture two kinds of information:

- Inventory of park facilities
- Needs, concerns, and issues

Invitations to participate in this survey were emailed to all organized city and county parks and recreation departments in the state, all State Park managers, as well

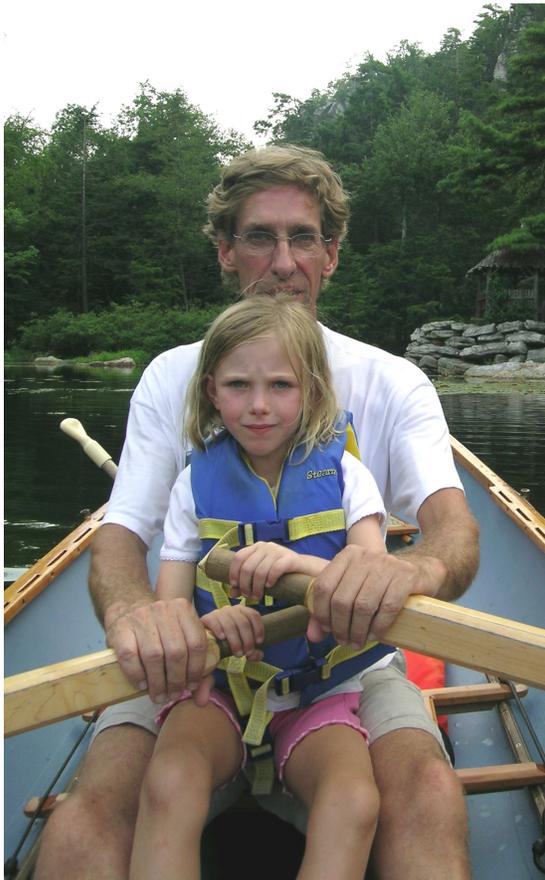
as any municipality of greater than 50,000 population that did not have an organized parks and recreation department. During the last month of the survey, a follow-up email was sent to organizations that had not responded. The survey received responses from 55 departments located in 41 of the 95 Tennessee counties. The reporting counties contain 74% of Tennessee's total population.

The same inventory questionnaire was used in this survey as in the providers survey for the 2003 State Recreation Plan, allowing the findings to be merged into a growing inventory of local recreation facilities. The results of this survey are included on the Reference Disc attached to this plan.

### TRAC Inputs

In 2009 a new Tennessee Recreation Advisory Committee (TRAC) was appointed by the Governor to oversee and guide this planning process. This committee consisted of 17 members representing a cross-section of federal, state, local and private, and non-profit recreation-related professionals. Five TDEC members served as an Executive Committee to organize and support the work of this committee. Representation on the TRAC was as follows:

- City of Chattanooga Parks & Recreation
- City of Farragut Leisure Services
- City of Jackson Parks & Recreation Department
- City of Manchester Parks & Recreation Department
- City of Murfreesboro Parks & Recreation Department
- Cumberland Region Tomorrow
- Metro Nashville Parks & Recreation Department
- PlayCore, Inc.
- TDEC, Division of State Parks
- TDEC, Division of Water Pollution Control
- TDEC, Natural and Cultural Resources Division
- TDEC, Parks and Recreation Technical Assistance Service
- TDEC, Recreation Educational Services Division



Tennessee General Assembly  
Tennessee Valley Authority  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

The intent in selecting individuals to serve on the TRAC was to bring forward-looking, big-picture perspectives to this planning process. Each had demonstrated a thorough command of contemporary recreation issues and trends and considerable experience in implementing solutions. During three half-day sessions during the development stages of this plan, the TRAC committee continually challenged the planning team to confront big, complex issues with ambitious, visionary strategies. The TRAC met a fourth time at the end of the planning process to review and sign off on the final draft plan.

### **TRAC Working Groups**

The TRAC identified four major issue areas which they believed needed to be explored in greater depth by special-focus working groups. The Executive Committee selected individuals who could provide expertise relating specifically to these issues. In addition to participating TRAC members, these working groups represented the following entities:

#### **Public Participation and Advocacy**

City of Athens  
City of Jackson  
Cumberland River Compact  
Governor's Council on Physical Fitness & Health  
Greater Nashville Regional Council  
Metropolitan Technical Assistance Service, Nashville  
Tennessee Department of Tourism

#### **Benefits and Economic Impacts of Recreation**

Goodlettsville Parks, Recreation & Tourism  
Middle Tennessee State University  
Morale, Welfare and Recreation - Ft Campbell, KY  
Rutherford County Chamber/CVB  
Tennessee Department of Health  
University of Tennessee at Martin

#### **Environmental Education**

City of Germantown & TRPA  
City of Jackson  
East Tennessee State University  
Playcore, Inc.  
Tennessee Recreation and Parks Association

#### **State Parks Management and Smart Growth**

Land Trust for Tennessee  
Southwest Tennessee Development District  
TDEC, Archaeology  
TDEC, Greenways & Trails  
TDEC, Tims Ford State Park  
Tennessee Dept. of Agriculture, Division of Forestry  
Tennessee Historical Commission  
Tennessee Valley Authority  
Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency

The deliberations of these working groups showed a remarkable ability to zero in on the realities underlying each issue. The interagency perspective encouraged by such diverse representation allowed them to discover hidden opportunities to leverage existing programs.

### **Conclusions**

The methods used to elicit public and expert participation were successful in allowing this planning process to be grounded in a deeper and broader understanding of issues, attitudes, and concerns than has been possible in the past. Several important lessons learned included:

- The TRAB Survey demonstrated the great potential for well-designed random sample surveys to yield enlightening, scientifically valid answers to critical questions about recreation attitudes and behaviors and to reveal promising research questions for the future.
- The public meeting format, while still very effective at the local level, is probably becoming obsolete for a statewide planning process. Even the use of the far more direct form of notification through emails

did not attract a level of participation that could be considered significant.

- The online survey format succeeded in engaging a far larger number of participants and a far more diverse range of public comments than any previous state recreation planning process in Tennessee. Such surveys show significant promise for increasing the degree of public involvement in the future.
- The streamlined TRAC composition, coupled with special-focus working groups, proved highly effective in encouraging productive discussions and in discovering hidden opportunities for strategic innovation. This committee demonstrated agility in reaching far beyond the range of narrowly defined issues and concerns to find broad commonalities, resulting in this plan's holistic perspective and systematic approach.
- Email notification of public participation opportunities was effective in attracting large numbers

of people to the online survey. It should be noted that this method is also a far more cost-effective use of planning funds compared to traditional notification methods. The use of email for this planning process was limited to the organization lists that were available in 2009. The opportunity exists to greatly enhance public notification in the future by compiling more of these lists.

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## 2015 Action Plan

This plan's Tennessee Recreation One-Stop initiative, will provide an opportunity to radically increase public involvement in recreation planning and advocacy. As envisioned, the website will accomplish this goal in two ways:

- **Email notification.** The process of developing this website as a comprehensive information clearinghouse will require building and maintaining a database of email addresses for the whole spectrum



of recreation-related organizations in Tennessee. This database can be made available for public notifications as needed.

- **Online surveys.** The website's objective of serving the entire range of the recreation user market will make it an ideal place to reach a broad cross-section of that market with online surveys. While self-selected surveys cannot be considered statistically valid, if the sample size is sufficiently large, the results take on greater weight. In addition, the website's user profiling function will enable it to target surveys about specific resources or activities to individual market segments.

TDEC should retain the size of the TRAC convened for this plan and its focus-area working group format in future state recreation planning processes. This committee should continue to representation of all races, regions, and levels of government and the private sector and should include a representative of the Tennessee Commission on Indian Affairs.

TDEC should conduct follow-up surveys to the 2009 TRAB Survey as needed to assist in implementa-

tion of this plan, specifically in the areas of public health and economic impacts of recreation.

TDEC, with the approval of the NPS, should consider discontinuation the public meeting format as a part of future state recreation plans. Instead, future recreation planning teams should supplement widely advertised online surveys with focus groups of specific population segments, such as urban minorities and Hispanics, to provide in-depth understanding of factors underlying high-priority issues.

### 2020 Vision

Tennessee's recreation supply chain will stay closely in touch with its diverse customer market. Online information, targeted surveys, focus groups, and email notifications will enable an ongoing, back-and-forth dialogue between state and local providers and the public they serve. Through insight gained from these active channels of communication, the state's professionals in recreation planning and resource management will be able to adapt swiftly and effectively as the recreation landscape continues to evolve in Tennessee.



# REFERENCE LIBRARY

The 144 documents listed below are included as background reference for the needs and concerns addressed in this plan. These digital files can be found on the **Reference Disc** attached to the inside back cover.

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## TENN. 2020 DIGITAL FORMAT FOLDER

TN 2020 Word file  
TN 2020 PDF files (12)

## SURVEYS FOLDER

NSRE-Report.doc  
Online-Survey-Comments.doc  
Online-Survey-Instrument.pdf  
Online-Survey-Report.doc  
Provider-Survey-Instrument.pdf  
Provider-Survey-Inventory.xls  
Provider-Survey-Rec-Benefits.doc  
Provider-Survey-Report.doc  
TN-Rec-Survey-Instrument.doc  
TN-Rec-Survey-Report.doc  
TN-SP-Econ-Impact-Report.doc

## RESOURCE LIBRARY FOLDER

### Recreation Trends Folder

Cordell-Birders-Profile.pdf  
Cordell-Demand-Nature-Rec.pdf  
Cordell-Nature-Rec-Trends-2008.pdf  
Cordell-Rec-Projections-2050.pdf  
Cordell-Rec-Trends-1960-2009.pdf  
Cordell-Rec-Trends-2008.pdf  
Cordell-Wilderness.pdf  
LWCF-Overview-Hist.pdf  
LWCF-Report.pdf  
ORRG-Great-Outdoors-Am.pdf  
Rec Trends 1980-now.pdf  
Rec-Forum-Report-2007.pdf  
Rec-User-Taxonomy.pdf  
RFF-Climate-Change.pdf

RFF-Fed-Rec-Funding.pdf  
RFF-LWCF.pdf  
RFF-State-Parks.pdf  
RFF-Time-Outdoors-65-09.pdf  
Teixeira-Millennials-Profile.pdf

### Advocacy and Funding Folder

BLM-Local-Econ-Impacts.pdf  
CO-Rec-Econ-Impacts.pdf  
Crompton-Greenway-Property-Values.pdf  
Crompton-Local-Park-Funding.pdf  
Crompton-Parks-Highest-Best-Use.pdf  
Crompton-Parks-Property-Values.pdf  
Crompton-TX-SP-Impacts.pdf  
Louv-Health-Benefits-Land.pdf  
National-Cons-Survey-2009.pdf  
Natural-Resource-Value.pdf  
NC\_SP\_Econ\_Impacts.pdf  
NC-Econ-Impacts-Birding.pdf  
NPS-Impacts-Rivers-Greenways.pdf  
NRPA-Citizen-Support-Parks.pdf  
Ontario-Econ-Impacts-Trails.pdf  
Park-Use-in-Down-Econ-2009.pdf  
Rec-Amenity-Value.pdf  
RFF-Value-Open-Space.pdf  
Saskatchewan-Benefits-Parks.pdf  
TPL-Econ-Impacts-Pub-Lands.pdf  
TPL-Econ-Value-City Parks.pdf  
TX-Local-Parks-Econ-Impacts.pdf  
TX-SP-Econ-Impacts.pdf  
VA-Econ-Impacts-Biking.pdf  
VA-Econ-Impacts-Rec.pdf  
WA-Econ-Impacts-Hiking.pdf

### State Parks Management Folder

All-Taxa-Biol-Inventory.pdf  
Americans-Giving-Up-Golf-NYT.pdf  
TN-SP-Hist.pdf  
TN-SP-Interp-Action-Plan.doc  
TN-SP-Mgmt-Direction-Statement.doc  
TN-SP-Mgmt-Sys-Checklist.doc  
TN-SP-Strategic-Direction.pdf  
USFS-Invasive-Plants.pdf

### Local Parks and Recreation Folder

NRPA-Operating-Ratio-Exec-Summary.pdf  
Open-Space\_Preservation.pdf  
RFF\_Urban-Park-Survey.pdf  
RFF-Local-Parks.pdf  
School-Joint-Use-Agreements.doc  
SC-Rural-Rec-Project.doc  
TPL-CityParkFacts.pdf  
VA-Outdoors-Plan-Local-Rec.pdf

### Tennessee Recreation One-Stop

OneStop Checklist.doc  
Rec-Resource-Activity-Chart.pdf  
Rec-Stakeholder-Taxonomy.pdf

### Public Health Folder

CDC-Behavioral-Risk-Survey-TN.pdf  
CDC-Obesity-Trends-2008.ppt  
F-as-in-Fat-2009.pdf  
Healthy-Communities-Toolkit.pdf  
Low-Income-AA-Rec-Prefs.pdf  
NRPA-Health-Partner-Rec-Orgs.pdf  
Obesity-Epidemic-Causes-Solutions.pdf  
Pres-Council-Phys-Fitness-Health-Folder  
RFF-Rec-&-Health.pdf  
TDEC-Rec-Health-Fitness-Survey.ppt  
TDOH-Obesity-Strategies-TN.pdf  
TN-Comptroller-Obesity-Risk.pdf

### Children In Nature Folder

50-Ways-Get-Kids-Outdrs.doc  
Children's-Relationship-Nature.doc  
Kids-Favorite-Outdoor-Activities.pdf  
Kids-Outdoors-Demog-Factors.pdf  
Nature-&-Child-Dev.pdf  
Naturegrounds.pdf

NEEF-Enviro-Literacy.pdf  
NWF-Children-and-Outdoors-State-Solutions .pdf  
Play-&-Child-Dev.pdf  
Playgrounds-Old-Model.pdf  
P-Sloan-Enviro-Literacy.doc  
Time-Kids-Spend-Outdoors.pdf  
TV-Addiction.pdf  
What-Kids-Do-Outdoors.pdf

### Environmental Education Folder

EE-Benefits.pdf  
Enviro-Literacy-in-America.pdf  
Enviro-Literacy-Meaning.pdf  
Meaningful-Watershed-Exp.pdf  
NAAEE-Envio-Literacy-Plans.pdf  
Pew-EE-Study.pdf  
Place-Based-EE-Bib.pdf

### Quality Growth Folder

Bike-Friendly-States.pdf  
CRT-Toolkit.pdf  
Growth-Readiness.pdf  
Land-Use-Trans-Health.pdf  
Land-Use-Trans-Health-Bib.pdf  
MD-Smart-Growth.pdf  
Sprawl-&-Obesity.pdf  
TDOT-RPOs.doc  
TDOT-Trans-Plan.pdf  
TPL-Reports Folder

### Recreational Waters Folder

NEMO-Fact-Sheets  
TDEC-Watershed-Mgmt.pdf  
TN-Water-Blueprint.pdf  
TN-Watershed-Assocs.doc  
TN-Watersheds-Poster.pdf  
TVA-Scenic-Riverways-Prog.pdf  
Who-Owns-Rivers.doc

### Rural Economies Folder

Cordell-OHV-Rec.pdf  
Econ-Impacts-Heritage-Areas.pdf  
Farm-Based-Recreatioin.pdf  
Native-Planting.pdf  
TN-OHV\_User\_Survey.pdf  
TN-St-Heritage-Corridors-map.pdf  
TN-St-Heritage-Corridors-prop.pdf