

Introduction and Background

Chapter 1

Grayton Beach, Credit: Michial McClellan

Florida is like no place else on Earth. Known as “the Sunshine State,” Florida offers an unparalleled combination of inviting climate, spectacular scenery, abundant lands and waters, world-class parks, a rich legacy of historical and archaeological wonders and amazing wildlife that together, provide an impressive suite of recreation locales and activities all year long. Florida might just as well be called “The Outdoor Recreation State.”

The state of Florida has long valued the importance of its natural resources and associated outdoor recreation. In the 1920s, the state established both the Department of Game and Fresh Water Fish and the Florida Forest Service, and its first state park lands were acquired in the 1930s. In 1949, a comprehensive state parks act was passed creating the Board of Parks and Historic Memorials, which became the Division of Recreation and Parks in 1969.

Amid growing concerns about the potential loss of recreation opportunities due to increased development, the Florida Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Act of 1963 was passed by the Florida Legislature. The act established the Florida Outdoor Recreation Development Council, which formalized the state’s outdoor recreation planning efforts and enabled a series of land acquisition programs for conservation and recreation purposes, all with dedicated funding sources. The first of these, called the Land Acquisition Trust Fund (LATF), was created to fund the new Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Program, which was designed primarily to purchase land for parks and recreation areas.

Thanks to the success of these early endeavors, and to new programs they helped spawn such as *Florida Forever*, approximately 14 million acres of public lands in Florida are available today for outdoor recreation.

Purpose

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

According to Section 375.021, Florida Statutes, Florida’s SCORP must document recreational supply and demand, describe current recreational opportunities, estimate needs for additional recreational opportunities and propose means for meeting those identified needs. Florida’s plan is a broad statewide and regional appraisal of our outdoor recreation needs.

In addition, the SCORP fulfills the requirements of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) 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 is eligible to receive matching grants



SPOTLIGHT

Land and Water Conservation Fund

Since 1965, the LWCF State and Local Assistance Program has provided nearly \$3.7 billion in financial assistance to states, territories, the District of Columbia and local units of government for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. More than 40,000 grants have been given to state, tribal and local governments for outdoor recreation enhancement. See Chapter 3 for more information on Florida's LWCF projects.

to acquire and develop outdoor recreation lands and facilities.

Florida's 2018 SCORP is part of an outdoor recreation planning process that the state began in 1963; this document represents the "Outdoor Recreation State's" 11th official plan. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), Division of Recreation and Parks (DRP) coordinates and develops each plan per state and federal legislative requirements.

In accordance with federal planning requirements, the SCORP must address the following issues:

- Evaluate demand for and supply of outdoor recreation resources and facilities;
- Conduct periodic studies to estimate and analyze outdoor recreation demand;
- Provide opportunities 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 LWCF grants.

Specific planning authority for FDEP is established by Section 375.021(1), Florida Statutes, which gives the agency specific responsibility, authority and power to develop and execute a comprehensive, multipurpose, statewide outdoor recreation plan. Section 258.004(3), Florida Statutes, directs FDEP to study and appraise the recreation needs of the state, and to assemble and disseminate information pertaining to recreation.



Credit: Frank Weber, Orange County Government

SPOTLIGHT

Section 375.021, Florida Statutes: Comprehensive Multi-Purpose Outdoor Recreation Plan

1) The Department (FDEP) is given the responsibility, authority and power to develop and execute a comprehensive multi-purpose outdoor recreation plan for the 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 five water management districts.

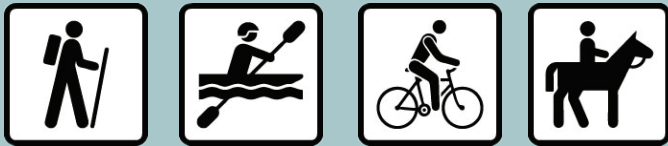
2) The purpose of the plan is to document recreational supply and demand, describe current recreational opportunities, estimate the need for additional recreational opportunities and propose means for meeting identified needs. The plan shall describe statewide recreational needs, opportunities and potential opportunities.



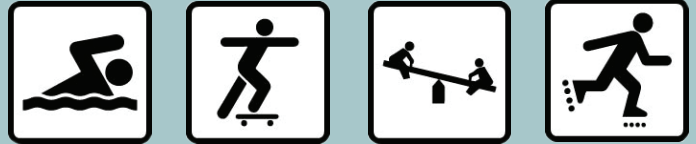
Outdoor Recreation: An Appropriate Role For Government

Broadly speaking, outdoor recreation is any leisure activity conducted outdoors. Americans in general, and Floridians in particular are fortunate in having a multitude of activities available from which to choose, from wilderness camping and scuba diving, to golf and organized sports. These outdoor activities fall into two basic categories:

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 just anywhere. These opportunities are normally provided by state and federal governments. Examples include:



User-oriented outdoor recreation (the broader of the two categories) can be provided almost anywhere for the convenience of the participant. The provision of these recreation facilities and activities is especially important in urban and suburban areas, where more than 90 percent of Florida's residents live. As with other urban services, user-oriented recreation facilities and programs are most often provided by local governments. Examples include:



User-oriented outdoor recreation can be accommodated in a wide array of settings, as long as adequate physical space and funding exists. An increase in urbanization often results in an increase in user-oriented outdoor recreation to help meet the needs of expanding populations. On the other hand, provision of resource-based outdoor recreation is limited to the availability of cultural and natural resources.

As the population grows, greater demand is placed on resource-based recreation as suitable land areas and resources are converted to development or other



Madison Blue Springs State Park



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.

Both user-oriented and resource-based outdoor recreation are crucial to the health and wellness of America's citizenry. The peoples' need for both must be met if the Sunshine State is to keep pace with the demands of a growing population.

For more than a century, Americans have embraced the idea that outdoor recreation is an appropriate and legitimate 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, governments provide outdoor recreation as a means of healthfully occupying the leisure time and enhancing the quality of citizens' lives. 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. Our healthy and diverse natural areas offer fresh air, fresh water, exercise and relief from modern, everyday stress.

Lastly, preserved and interpreted historic and prehistoric resources are vital in that they describe 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 major travel destination for outdoor recreation enthusiasts around the world. According to VISIT FLORIDA, the state's official tourism marketing corporation, more than 100 million tourists now visit annually (112 million in 2016), thanks in large part to our abundant sunshine, sandy beaches, scenery, wildlife and diverse outdoor recreation opportunities. Residents can delight in Florida's subtropical climate which provides endless possibilities for year-round outdoor recreation.

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



Getting kids outdoors is more important than ever.

and a growing appreciation of the health benefits of recreation will also generate additional need for facilities and programs.

According to the Outdoor Industry Association, FWC and FDEP, people who recreate spend substantial sums of money (see Chapter 5). They also consume large quantities of energy, and require tremendous amounts of open space in which to relax and enjoy being outdoors. 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 among recreation providers is also 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 political subdivisions have the responsibility for providing local recreation facilities and programs within their respective jurisdictions, with supplemental assistance from both the state and federal governments. At the state level, the leadership role requires that agencies, particularly the FDEP, 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 portion of the financial, technical and physical resources needed to meet Florida's statewide recreational demand.



Planning Process

To be truly comprehensive, the process for creating the SCORP must incorporate a balanced, statewide approach. The 2018 SCORP "team" solicited extensive input from recreation providers and consumers through public workshops and online surveys, and held regular consultations with recreation professionals from around the state. These efforts help ensure Florida's future recreation needs are sufficiently addressed.

The FDEP, with the help of numerous partners, maintains an extensive inventory of recreation facilities available throughout the state. From fall 2016 to fall 2017, the database for the Florida Outdoor Recreation Inventory (FORI) was systematically updated by FDEP and hundreds of municipal, county, state, federal and private recreation providers in preparation for this planning effort. See Chapter 3 for more information about the FORI.

In addition, FDEP and the consulting firm, Institute for Service Research, conducted the 2016-2017



Credit: Frank Weber, Orange County Government

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 and offers quantitative insight on the recreation demands of both residents and tourists in Florida.

The results of the participation study are used throughout this document to provide statewide, regional and county-level analyses that will be helpful tools to a wide variety of public and private recreation providers. The complete report is posted on FDEP's website, FloridaDEP.gov.

The 2018 SCORP represents the state's only comprehensive outdoor recreation plan. This document provides a basis for cooperative action to resolve priority issues and a logical approach to meeting recreation needs throughout Florida. The plan offers programming guidance and is intended to influence the decisions of all recreation suppliers across the state.

Public Participation

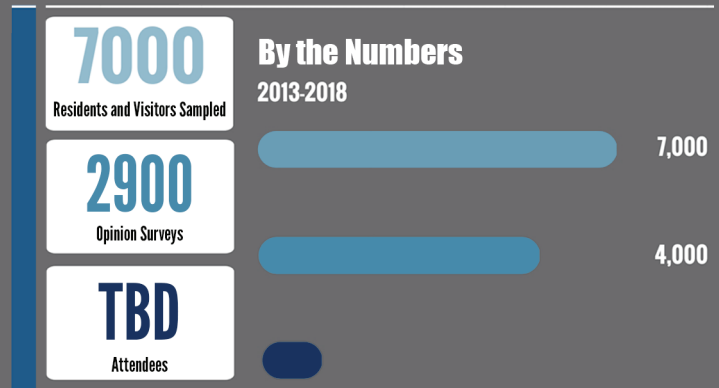
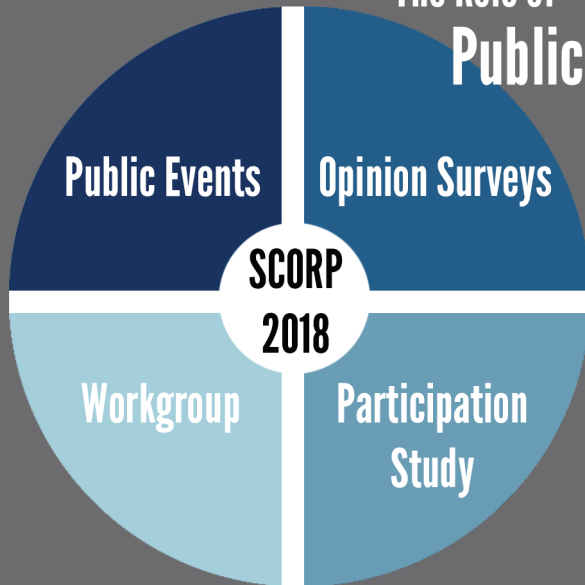
Public input for Florida's SCORP is essential, and was obtained via several methods, including online opinion questionnaires, public workshops and input from the recreation participation surveys. In 2016-2017, two online opinion surveys were distributed, one for the general public and the other for public recreation providers. The opinion survey for the general public was presented in tandem with the resident participation survey, where 2,384 responses were received. The link to the public provider survey was distributed by the FDEP and the Florida Recreation and Park Association, which yielded XXXX responses.

Input was received on recreation issues from the SCORP workgroup, participants at a statewide outdoor recreation workshop series, through meetings with stakeholders and through research of national and statewide trends in outdoor recreation.

Public workshops to gather input on SCORP's recommendations were conducted in January 2018 at locations in Tallahassee, Orlando, Tampa and West Palm Beach. These workshops were augmented by another series of promotional events for SCORP held from October 2015 to March 2016 in Jacksonville, Tampa, Panama City and Fort Lauderdale.



The Role of Public Participation



Information gathered from residents, visitors and public events throughout Florida

SCORP Public Events



- Open house events in 2018 for public review and comment on draft components of SCORP 2018
- Held in Tallahassee, Orlando, Tampa, and West Palm Beach; XXX Attendees
- Public workshops in 2015-2016 for recreation providers and outdoor recreation professionals
- Held in Panama City, Jacksonville, Tampa, and Fort Lauderdale; 200+ Attendees

Participation and Economic Studies



- Intended to understand statewide recreation participation rates and spending
- Participation study sampled more than 7,000 residents and visitors
- Provided insight into satisfaction and motivation for participating in outdoor recreation
- Economic impact study sampled more than 6,000 residents and visitors
- Documented \$145 billion in total economic output for 35 outdoor activities in Florida

Opinion Surveys



- Intended to understand recreation-based issues impacting Florida
- Targeted Florida residents and public outdoor recreation providers
- Received more than 2,900 responses
- Provided information on barriers, access, and support for outdoor recreation

SCORP Workgroup



- Provided multi-agency perspective on the current state of outdoor recreation in Florida
- Quarterly meetings held throughout the development of SCORP 2018



Planning Coordination

One of the most important steps of outdoor recreation planning is coordination between governments. Many county and municipal governments assisted in the development of this SCORP 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.

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, the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program and the Recreational Trails Program.

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 SCORP.



State and Federal Coordination

SCORP's success depends on the acceptance and implementation of its recommendations by both public and private recreation providers. To begin the process of updating the 2018 plan, the existing workgroup of state and federal land managing agencies was strengthened to better guide the planning efforts of the Division of Recreation and Parks staff.

SCORP Participating Agencies

- *U.S. Forest Service*
- *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*
- *Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services – Florida Forest Service*
- *Department of Environmental Protection – Division of Recreation and Parks, Office of Greenways and Trails, Florida Coastal Office*
- *Department of State – Division of Historical Resources*
- *Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission*
- *Florida Department of Economic Opportunity*
- *Florida Department of Transportation*
- *Northwest Florida Water Management District*
- *Suwannee River Water Management District*
- *St. Johns River Water Management District*
- *Southwest Florida Water Management District*
- *South Florida Water Management District*

In addition, representatives from park and recreation departments at the local government level were invited, as were non-profit organizations including the Florida Recreation and Park Association, Get Outdoors Florida! and the Florida Disabled Outdoor Association. Representatives from two commercial ventures (All Rec Solutions and Florida Geotourism Associates) also participated in the workgroup.

The workgroup focused its attention on the following: implementing the current plan, promoting awareness of SCORP, strengthening the workgroup and building additional connections, the plan's data methodology and developing priority areas, goals and strategies for the 2018 plan. The group discussed





Fort Gatlin Recreation Complex, Credit: Orange County Parks and Recreation

each topic in detail and made recommendations in each area. The recommendations provided by the group were critical to the development of an inclusive and relevant planning process.

The 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. Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service were consulted on recreation-related planning matters.

State-Private Coordination

P rivate 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. 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 with representatives of various clubs and groups concerned with conservation and recreation to discuss matters of mutual concern. State representatives also attend various gatherings of private organizations to present and discuss state recreation policies and programs.

Planning Regions

T he 2018 plan divides the state into eight planning regions (see Figure 1.2). These regions are the same as VISIT FLORIDA's planning regions, a good match given the strong ties between the state's recreation and tourism industries. This format enables statewide and regional comparative analyses of recreation participation, demand and need with the state's current trends in tourism.



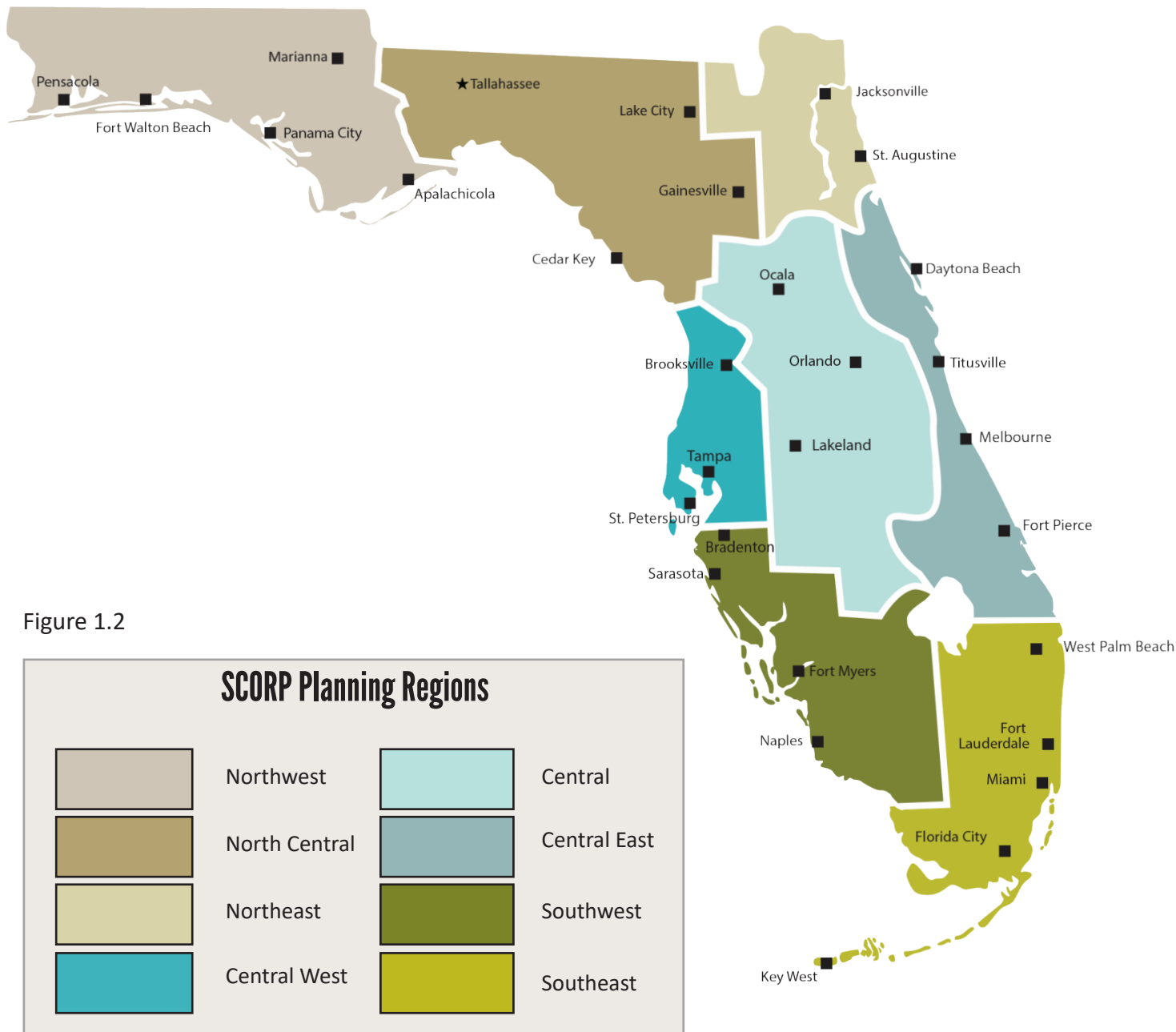


Figure 1.2

Conclusion

Florida remains a global leader in outdoor recreation. Since the 1960s, the state has made excellent progress in developing outdoor recreation plans to serve its residents and visitors. Florida continues to strive toward the development of a truly diverse, balanced, statewide outdoor recreation system, one that offers a wide range of high-quality opportunities in each community.

SCORP's importance will continue as demand for outdoor recreation opportunities grows 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 wise management of its natural resources, a carefully planned and effectively implemented outdoor recreation system remains a major necessity. Florida's 2018 SCORP provides a solid foundation for such a system.



“Outdoor recreation is vitally important to Florida – both for the health and well-being of its people and as the mainstay of the tourist-oriented economy. With its abundant natural assets of lands and waters, wildlife and climate, the state is unusually well-suited as a provider of outdoor recreation for a growing population and millions of annual visitors.”
- Florida Outdoor Recreation at the Crossroads, 1963



Gasparilla Island State Park, Credit: Diana Berkofsky

