

Arkansas Outdoors

SCORP

2019-2023



Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan



This SCORP meets the requirements for continued eligibility to receive matching Land and Water Conservation Funds. This plan was funded in part through a grant from the National Park Service under LWCF Act of 1965 (PL 88-575).



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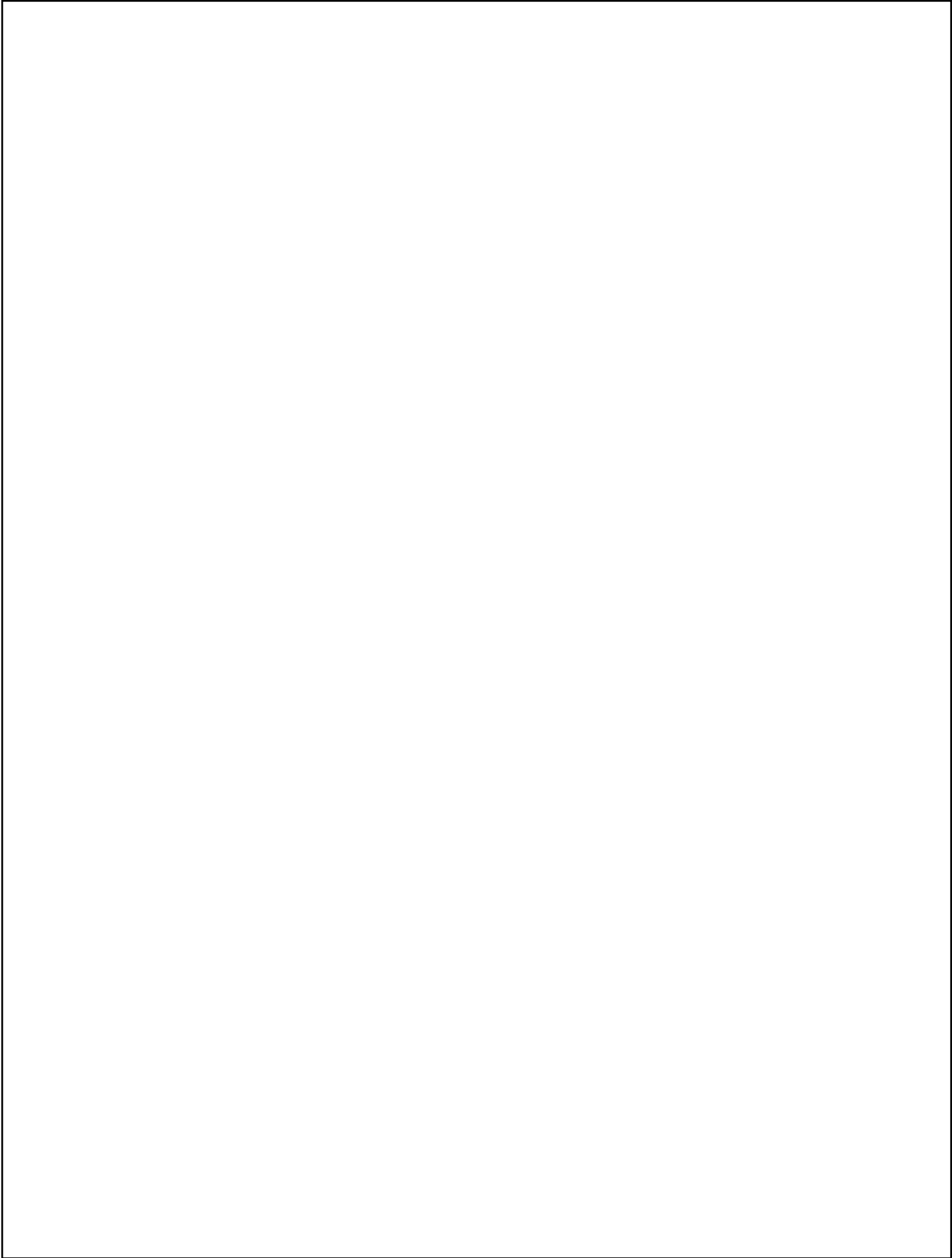
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AMERICANS WITH
DISABILITIES ACT
EMPLOYER**



Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism
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Fellow Arkansans:

Allow me to present the 2019-2023 Arkansas Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, or “SCORP.” The plan is a required component of Land and Water Conservation Fund eligibility, and so this document represents, at base level, the continued eligibility of Arkansas to receive LWCF funding. These dollars help to fund projects that provide outdoor recreation for all the citizens of Arkansas, and also guests to our state.

The SCORP, however, is much more than a mere cog in the machinery of federal funding. It is also a catalogue of the state’s public outdoor recreation opportunities, the natural resources and attendant facilities that make and keep Arkansas one of the finest places in the country to enjoy the great outdoors. The SCORP aims to capture this diverse beauty in its entirety, from the highlands of the Ozarks to the lowlands of the Arkansas Delta, and all points in between. And make no mistake: “all points in between” means just that, as the SCORP presents a holistic picture of public outdoor recreation in Arkansas, including the magnificent outdoor opportunities present in even our largest cities. In Arkansas, you can drive to where the sidewalk ends if you wish, or you can just stroll to the end of the block; either way, you’re bound to find out why we’re called the Natural State.

Perhaps most importantly, the plan is exactly that: a plan. By taking inventory of the state’s recreation opportunities and gathering the opinions, suggestions, and wishes of the citizens that daily take advantage of those opportunities, the SCORP writing staff were able to identify a set of priorities that will aid in the development of new, innovative facilities for public outdoor recreation, and in the preservation of our precious natural resources that make the whole enterprise possible. These priorities come directly from the public, and from the outdoor recreation professionals that serve the public; it is the sincere hope of our staff that these priorities can serve as a helpful guide as these dedicated professionals continue to increase access to Arkansas’s wealth of public outdoor recreation opportunities.

Finally, this plan represents a collaborative effort that reflects well on all Arkansans. Multiple state agencies, hundreds of professional recreation providers, and thousands of everyday citizens have contributed to this project, and it is in this spirit of teamwork and the public trust that I present this plan to any and all who love the great outdoors of this great state, and most of all, to the people of Arkansas.

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How to Use This SCORP

This SCORP serves as a quick reference for ideas, inspiration, and guidance for those developing outdoor recreation in Arkansas. The SCORP's goal is to help outdoor recreation providers recognize and remove barriers so that *everyone* can enjoy outdoor recreation.

When planning your next project, consider using the SCORP to help influence your decision making process.

Gain Context

Read through the "Introduction" and "Research" chapters to better understand the SCORP's purpose, theme, and research methods.

1

Understand Barriers

Barriers are obstacles that keep people from participating in outdoor recreation.

Learn how to recognize, remove, and prevent barriers.

2

Discover Arkansas's Needs

SCORP Priorities are large ideas meant to encourage future outdoor recreation projects.

Think of them as the recreation categories that will positively impact Arkansas the most.

3

Plan Your Project

Take another look at your community. Now that you have the tools you need, it's time to plan a project that meets the needs of your city, your region, and the state of Arkansas.

4



Preface: ***Arkansas's Outdoor Legacy***

Arkansas has been known for its wild and bountiful outdoors since the very beginning. Long before the booming urban corridor in the northwest corner of the state began to draw visitors and move-ins from all over the world with its blend of modern comforts and breathtaking natural vistas; before the capital city of Little Rock situated the Presidential Library of native son Bill Clinton in a reclaimed wetland overlooking the Arkansas River; even before President Richard Milhous Nixon made the Buffalo National River the country's very first river so designated; before all these things it was the sights to be seen and experiences to be had out-of-doors that brought people to Arkansas's doorstep, and what kept them here.

The out-of-doors drew them here when this place was "Arkansaw", and filled with Arkansawyers, in the days before that little "-s", so sophisticated-looking in its day, was officially ensconced on the end of the name, and the breadth and wildness of that natural beauty was perhaps a little broader, and most certainly a little bit wilder, when Nature Herself, red in tooth and claw, still lurked through the shadows of virgin forests, when trees tall as buildings and girthed like God's own forearm blotted out the sun and filled travelers and hunters and settlers with awe, and perhaps with a little bit of dread, and, at the end of it all, the promise of a life lived well, if lived a little hard.

And before! Before those one-gallused huntsmen and calico-bonneted grannies settled at the head of the creek, or on top of the bald, or back off the Mississippi (but not far enough, it's never far enough when the water's however-many-feet-high and rising, Mama) where a towhead marks the channel-split and the possibility of a little human interaction by way of a landed raft, or perhaps a skiff sent from the decks of one of the great steamers; a little bit of trade, a little bit of news, a little bit of fellowship.

But not *too* much. Too much talk—with travelers, with river pilots, with those from Elsewhere—might break the spell, that spell woven by the Arkansaw country and under which the Arkansawyer was in fervent thrall.

And before! Back beyond the Eurocentric view of "civilization", before the "first" settlers came to this land, there walked those humans who had no concept of "first." (For who could discover a country of which such intimate knowledge beat in every breast, thrummed in every vein?) These people, too, came for the bounty of Nature, for the life out-of-doors offered by the land that would become, justly or not, "Arkansas." Some came in a time out of mind, but came to stay, and left their story in the rocky soil underneath the towering bluffs that line the clear rivers of the state's northwest, a natural home that no doubt served them well. Others were drawn, as so many would be in their future and our oh-so-recent past, by the forests and the streams that roiled with wildlife, with fish and fowl and fauna and the call of the hunt, and with all manner of good things to eat and to smell and to gather, to celebrate life's joys and help to salve its inevitable ills.

And before? Before it all is speculation, even more so than the reconstructed lives of the Bluff Dwellers and their successors, but to think that someone or something has always been here—in Arkansas, however called—drawn by its bountiful, beautiful grandeur, is a thing that feels true and right to the natural-born Arkansan, and to many a visitor as well.

Today, Arkansas's official motto is "The Natural State", and it's still easy to see why, despite some rather significant changes from our historical and prehistorical forebears. And if one can't see why Arkansas is called such, well, then it's a fortunate thing indeed that one has happened upon this, Arkansas's 2019 Statewide Comprehension Outdoor Recreation Plan, or SCORP. A government document, yes—note the acronym!—but a government document dedicated to the enjoyment of all that Arkansas has to offer in the great out-of-doors, and so one that is surely more fun to read than your average bureaucratic bauble, and one that points the way to more fun, and fun more visceral, and fun more in keeping with the natural character of the Natural State.

On one hand, the SCORP is a catalogue of Arkansas's outdoor recreation, but on the other, it is a document that points some potential ways forward for outdoor recreation in Arkansas, ways that preserve the past and accommodate the changing needs of a changing public in the years ahead.

And with that, we'll wax a little less poetic, and get on with the serious business of having serious fun in Arkansas's great outdoors. We hope you find some useful information in this document, and not a little bit of inspiration, whether you're a professional recreation provider or a concerned citizen or a citizen out to forget the cares of the modern world.

And regardless, take this SCORP in the spirit it was written: by and for those who love the outdoors, their fellow Arkansans, and all those who come to our state to parley and play in the beautiful, bountiful out-of-doors of the Natural State.

Signed,

The 2019-2023 SCORP Team



Introduction

Background and Purpose

The SCORP is a government document. Its core purpose is to provide a snapshot of Arkansas's existing public, outdoor recreation resources, and to provide suggestions, direction, and inspiration to the state's outdoor recreation providers as they seek to conserve, maintain, and expand the wealth of outdoor recreation opportunities enjoyed by Arkansas's citizens and visitors.

In addition to providing everyday guidance for those developing and maintaining public outdoor recreation facilities, the SCORP is also an invaluable component in the grant-writing processes through which many public outdoor recreation facilities are funded. It's common for such grants to require the applicant to reference the current SCORP; in particular, any application

seeking to tap the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) State Assistance Program must specify the ways in which their project aligns with the most current version of the SCORP's Priorities. In fact, the Land and Water Conservation Act of 1964, which created the Fund, also contains the mandate for each state to produce, and periodically update, a unique and tailored SCORP. Other state agencies, such as the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council (ANCRC), have incorporated SCORP references into grant application requirements, as well.

The LWCF is itself funded by the extraction of oil and gas from America's Outer Continental Shelf. In this way, the necessary environmental harm of fuel extraction is somewhat offset by assisting

local and state governments in the purchase of land to be put perpetually in the public trust, and the development of those lands into viable public outdoor recreation areas. These areas may be used primarily as conservation resources, such as the Falcon Bottoms Natural Area in Columbia County, or as recreational opportunities more suited to organized activities, such as the development of a Miracle League Field at the Monticello Sports Complex in Monticello. While very different from one another, both of these projects have two things in common: they are made possible in part by funding from the LWCF, and they radically increase the opportunities for all of Arkansas's citizens to enjoy the incredible beauty of their

state's natural environment, regardless of social status, economic privilege, or physical ability.

This newest version of Arkansas's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan contains many echoes from the past, as befits a state that retains its rural roots and long memory, even as it boasts new and bold ideas reflective of the state's changing demographics and vibrant, forward trajectory. While some of these ideas, the old and the new, seem wildly divergent, that same thread that has tied Arkansans to one another for as long as any of us remember runs through this new plan as well: an abiding love of, and respect for, the out-of-doors and all it has to offer.

Recognizing and removing barriers will help parks serve everyone in our community

Theme: Overcoming Barriers

While the purpose of the SCORP is to catalogue resources for public outdoor recreation in Arkansas and to maintain Arkansas's eligibility for LWCF funding, the theme and goal of this year's SCORP is "overcoming barriers." Essentially, it is the goal of the SCORP team to remove any and all barriers that lie between any Arkansan and the vast array of public outdoor recreational opportunities that should be available to each and every citizen.

What follows are some recommendations for helping our fellow Arkansans overcome the barriers they face when attempting to enjoy the great outdoors in Arkansas, be it the town, the country, or somewhere in between.



The Planning Process

The planning process for the 2019-2023 SCORP began almost as soon as the 2014 edition was presented to the public. Our planning process was designed to observe the state's needs, trends, and future recreation priorities, while being inclusive and thorough.

For the past four years, staff within the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism (ADPT) and the Outdoor Recreation Grants Program (ORGP) have conducted research, taken surveys, and visited with the users and providers of public outdoor recreation in the Natural State to better craft a roadmap to more and better outdoor recreation opportunities in Arkansas.

The intent of this process was not to present a plan to the stakeholders mentioned above, but to craft a plan based on the input, advice, and suggestions of these Arkansans. The stakeholders come from all walks of Arkansas life, and all provided insightful ideas of what public outdoor recreation might look like over the next five years.

The first step in the process was research. The University of Arkansas Center for Social Research (CSR) conducted three forms of public participation: a survey of Arkansas residents, a survey of outdoor recreation providers, and an "online town hall", a public forum open to anyone who wished to make his or her voice heard. The resultant dataset was integral to the establishment of the SCORP's goal and priorities, and is available in full in Appendices C and D of this document.

Through our findings, the overarching theme and goal of the SCORP was established, the obstacles to achieving that goal identified, and the recreational priorities most likely to accomplish that goal formulated.

The final steps of this planning process saw our staff presenting this research and a rudimentary draft of the SCORP to the SCORP Advisory Board, a panel of citizens chosen for their love of the outdoors and their varied expertise in providing recreation to the Arkansas public.



The Arkansas Resident Survey

First and foremost, staff needed a clear picture of what Arkansans most enjoy about their recreational resources and what improvements to those resources they would most like to see in the future.

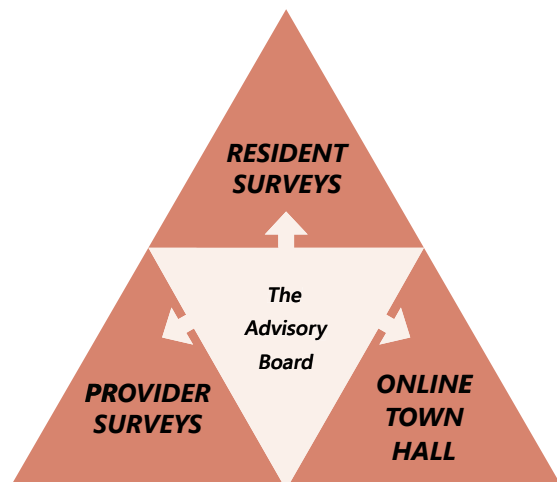
The survey provided to residents was in-depth and specific, giving respondents the opportunity to articulate their individual experiences within general recreational activities. Also, the survey took into account the region in which the respondent lives, giving staff data on recreational needs specific to one of six distinct regions of our geographically and culturally diverse state.

The Recreation Provider Survey

A modified version of the resident survey was given to recreation providers throughout the state, allowing those dedicated professionals to provide staff with a "boots on the ground" perspective of the day-to-day operations of public outdoor recreation.

The Online Town Hall

To get the perspective of those actually using and enjoying these recreational spaces and facilities, staff organized an "online town hall," wherein any citizen, be they user, provider, or both, could present their comments at any time or place convenient to them. And, ultimately, staff has spent four years just visiting with folks where they live and play.



The SCORP Advisory Board

The SCORP Advisory Board, consisting of 13 respected outdoor recreation professionals, was established to provide meaningful input and guidance throughout the SCORP's planning and development period. As a whole, the Advisory Board represented a multitude of outdoor recreation interests and organizations within Arkansas. Their guidance helped strengthen the validity of this document by sharing experiences, resources, and opinions, which strongly influenced the collection of public input and this document's final content. The Advisory Board gave input via email and telephone correspondence, and also met twice in person; once to discuss the SCORP's overall vision and direction, and a final time to review the SCORP draft and discuss final revisions.





Chapter 2: *Research*

A Change in Methodology

So, when's the last time you took a telephone survey? When's the last time you answered the telephone without knowing who was on the other end of the line? As a matter of fact, how often do you use a telephone that's even connected to a line?

These were precisely the questions that we asked ourselves when planning our data-gathering strategies. As current research points to a decline in telephone survey response rates, we made the decision to abandon that method. This marks an unprecedented change in the SCORP process, as every previous Arkansas SCORP has relied on the telephone survey for public input.

By trading the telephone for the internet, Arkansas was able to craft research methods

similar to those used in award-winning SCORP documents from other states. This change in methodology increased response rates, made possible the identification of region-specific responses, and ultimately provided our staff with data that are more accurate, more detailed, and more comprehensive than data found in telephone surveys from previous SCORPs produced for the State of Arkansas.

Since this change in methodology marks a new way of collecting data, these responses and response rates cannot be directly compared with past SCORP research. However, the basic nature of the questions is comparable, and significantly different only in their increased specificity. Going forward, this new method will be easily replicable in future SCORPs.

The Research Regions

The online method of data collection allowed for a dataset to be correlated to each specific region of the state. These regions, shown in Figure 1, are based on Demographic Market Areas, or DMAs. The decision to use DMAs was made with the intent to cross-reference information with surveys administered by the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism, which agency also provided analytical and technical assistance. While a geography aficionado will notice that Arkansas’s DMA regions do not exactly match up with most other regional conceptions of the state, the repository of knowledge and data available in the Department of Parks and Tourism, as well as accepted best practices pertaining to this kind of research, made the adoption of DMAs the best and most fruitful choice for the SCORP.

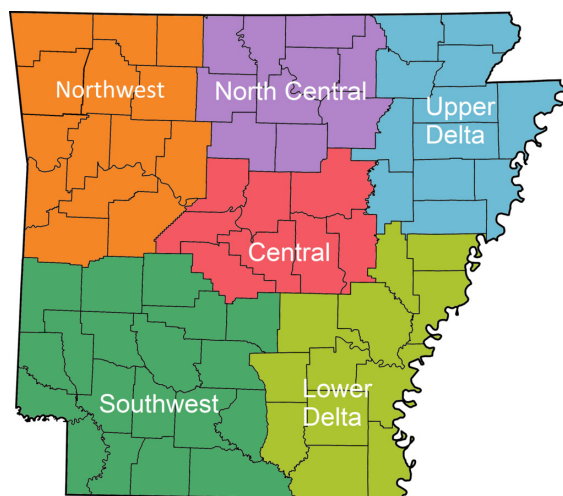


Fig 1: Demographic Marketing Areas

Overall Response Rates

Response rates are a metric easily compared, and in this regard, the new method has proved a great success. While the percent response rate of returned surveys is comparable to previous SCORP studies, the total number of survey responses increased dramatically, showing a 209% increase since 2014.

Total Response Rates by Year

Year	% Response Rate	# of Responses
2009	12%	535
2014	11%	500
2018	14%	1,547

Total Response Rates by Region

Region	# of Responses
Northwest	446
Southwest	185
North Central	102
Central	321
Upper Delta	85
Lower Delta	252

Mode of Completion

Mode	Residents	Recreation Providers
Online	554	117
Hard Copy	837	N/A

The Arkansas Resident Survey

The Arkansas Resident Outdoor Recreation Survey was the largest research project for the SCORP, drawing directly from the experiences of user groups more than any other form of research. This survey's methodology and key findings will be presented here, while a more detailed analysis of both the Resident and the Recreation Provider surveys can be found in Appendices C and D.

Push-to-Web Methodology

The Arkansas Resident Survey used a dual-data collection methodology, commonly known as Push-To-Web, which was used to modernize the way our staff collected user data on outdoor recreation. The first step in this process was to have a representative sample drawn from home addresses across the state. Potential respondents were then mailed an invitation letter, followed by two reminder postcards, that encouraged them to participate in an online survey hosted by the University of Arkansas's Center for Social Research. Each invitation listed the survey's web address to direct the potential respondents to the survey's website. After two postcard reminders were sent, non-responders were mailed a hard-copy version of the same survey and a pre-paid postage return envelope. To increase participation, those who received the hardcopy survey also received an incentive of \$1 as a "thank you" for their time and cooperation.

After data cleaning and quality assurance checks, the resident survey resulted in 1,135 respondents, with 353 having completed the survey online, and 782 having completed the pen-and-paper hard-copy version. Data were weighted on gender, age, household income, ethnicity and region to better reflect the population of Arkansas based on U.S. Census statistics. While our final data matches population figures for gender and region, our final data does still skew somewhat to older, higher income, and more white than the Arkansas total population. You can see the differences between our sample and the Arkansas population in the "Representative Samples" graphic on the bottom of page 10.

The Recreation Provider Survey

The second survey completed was the Outdoor Recreation Provider Survey. Managers, directors, and planners for outdoor recreation spaces at all public levels (local, state, and federal) were contacted via email and telephone and invited to participate in an online survey.

In total, 117 outdoor recreation providers completed the survey about their needs, priorities, and general information about the park and/or public space they oversee.

The Online Town Hall

The final form of research also was a method of public participation that has not been done in any previous Arkansas SCORP. The Online Town Hall was an interactive website hosted by the University of Arkansas's Center for Social Research for five months.

Unlike the first two quantitative research projects, this avenue was designed to receive qualitative feedback from Arkansans. It gave residents of Arkansas a chance to share their opinions and experiences in their own words. The website listed 14 questions about outdoor recreation, ranging from general questions like, "What do you enjoy most about outdoor recreation?", to more personal questions like, "Can you share a story about how outdoor recreation has impacted your life?"

This medium gave our staff the opportunity to collect additional commentary and gave a voice to under-served populations who were under-represented in our other research projects, such as African Americans, Hispanic Arkansans, and Arkansans who have limited mobility or other health related impairments that limit their outdoor recreation participation.

Glossary

Definitions of each recreation category can be found within Appendix C on page 38.

Key Findings of All Research

Residents of the Natural State took advantage of the Arkansas outdoors across a wide range of activities. The most popular outdoor recreation activities ranged from more passive appreciation of the outdoors (i.e., sightseeing from a car, hammocking, or having a cookout), to more immersive activities (i.e., fishing, camping, viewing wildlife or birds, exploring in an off-road vehicle), to physically active pursuits (i.e., day hiking, hunting, paddling, cycling, or running).

This range of outdoor recreation activities illustrates the varying benefits that Arkansans receive from outdoor recreation: not just health and fitness benefits, but also benefits to a person's mental health, providing a sense of quiet, solitude or contemplation, and a chance to unplug, as well as social benefits like spending quality time with friends and family or providing social interaction.

Individual Activity
Walking (77.2%)

#1

Recreation Category
Leisure (88.7%)

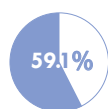
92%

of respondents participated in some type of outdoor recreation



(34.5%) participated in some type of sports-related activity

One Third



Over Half

of respondents participated in a nature-related activity

75%

participated in some type of water-related recreation

Representative Samples of the Arkansas Resident Survey

	Pre-Weighted Proportions	Arkansas Population	Final Data	% +/- Difference
GENDER				
Male	59.2%	48.3%	48.3%	0
Female	40.8%	51.7%	51.7%	0
AGE				
18-34	13.4%	27.2%	16.7%	-10.5
35-54	33.6%	36.5%	41.7%	5.2
55-74	42.6%	27.6%	31.6%	4.0
75+	10.5%	8.7%	10.0%	1.3
INCOME				
Less than \$30K	22.8%	35.7%	28.5%	-7.2
\$30K-\$50K	17.4%	21.4%	23.8%	2.4
\$50K-\$100K	35.9%	28.0%	31.2%	3.2
\$100K+	23.9%	14.9%	16.6%	1.7

	Pre-Weighted Proportions	Arkansas Population	Final Data	+/- Difference
ETHNICITY				
White	89.2%	74.5%	86.9%	12.4
African Amer.	6.5%	15.3%	8.4%	-7.2
Hispanic	1.1%	6.4%	1.4%	-5.0
Other	3.2%	3.7%	3.7%	0
REGION				
Central	26.7%	27.6%	27.6%	0
North Central	8.6%	6.7%	6.7%	0
Upper Delta	7.7%	12.8%	12.8%	0
Lower Delta	6.4%	7.3%	7.3%	0
Northwest	15.9%	14.6%	14.6%	0
Southwest	34.7%	31.0%	31.0%	0



Chapter 3: *Overcoming Barriers*

Recognizing Barriers

After gathering, ordering, and analyzing thousands of data points, SCORP staff found that the survey results exposed several recurring barriers that face Arkansans as they attempt to enjoy public outdoor recreation. Despite the seemingly endless array of opportunities here in the Natural State, many of our fellow citizens nonetheless find it difficult, or even impossible, to enjoy them.

The SCORP Goal

As a result, the 2019-2023 Arkansas SCORP theme is "Overcoming Barriers," with the goal of recognizing and removing barriers to help parks serve everyone in our community. This goal, of course, begs the question: "What is a barrier?"

The answer is multi-faceted; sometimes the answer is obvious, and sometimes it requires the recreation provider to put themselves in another person's shoes. Only then will outdoor recreation transcend these barriers, whether they're physical, socioeconomic, or psychological.

Physical Barriers

Physical barriers are among the easiest to spot, but are often overlooked. Many parks, for example, have not received adequate funding to provide access points that people of all abilities may utilize. Others have outdated facilities that pose physical hazards to those whose physical mobility is compromised by age, illness, or the need for a wheelchair or other medical apparatus.

Geographic and Socioeconomic Barriers

Geographic and socioeconomic barriers exist where some citizens do not have the same comforts as those more financially secure. These barriers can be seen where communities are cut off from public outdoor recreation areas by arterial highways, or where there is a geographical distance that is impossible to overcome without the use of a vehicle. In a society that prioritizes and presumes car ownership, this barrier is practically invisible.

The fact remains, however, that many cities have disadvantaged communities that are filled with citizens who live in areas without recreation opportunities, or who cannot afford a vehicle. They do not have the luxury to occasionally “duck out” of work for a trip to the park, or to take their children to a ball field located on the edge of town. Do these citizens not also deserve to partake in Arkansas’s outdoors? This would seem to fly in the face of “public” recreation, and of the very idea of the public trust that the LWCF—and, by extension, the SCORP—is mandated to uphold and realize.

Psychological Barriers

Still other barriers are present within communities traditionally marginalized, and are manifested not in physical form, but psychological. The existence of these barriers may be deeply discomforting to the average recreation provider—we know not a single one who would dream of excluding a person from their facilities for any reason—but it is for this very reason that these barriers remain, and why they must be confronted and dismantled.

These psychological barriers are the perception that one is unwelcome or unsafe in the outdoors, whether that’s the wilderness outside of town or the golf course that is located where one is unlikely to see a face that resembles one’s own. These barriers are hard to see if one naturally feels comfortable and safe wherever one goes, but again, that is why it’s important for these perceived barriers to be recognized and removed. And while that might seem an insurmountable task, our survey results suggest otherwise; that barriers can be mitigated through proper programing and infrastructure.

"Recognizing and removing barriers to help parks serve everyone in our community"

In the following section, we’ll identify some of the most damaging barriers as borne out in the survey, and discuss the ways that these particular barriers can affect a wide range of communities, how they may affect some communities more than others, and the (sometimes subtle) ways in which these barriers manifest themselves in the lives of many Arkansans.

While some of these barriers cut across ethnic and gender lines, others will appear to be explicitly gendered and/or racialized. For this reason, we’ve highlighted those barriers that cut across all demographic categories, affecting a large number of Arkansans from all walks of life.

The SCORP Barriers



Barrier 1: Income Inequality

It is a hard and simple fact that how much money one has influences the activities in which one may engage. At its most obvious, income inequality places a barrier to participation on those in our communities that lack the money to purchase the equipment needed to participate in a given activity, or to transport themselves (or their children) to a faraway baseball tournament or hiking trail or waterbody.

Beyond this obvious reason, our survey suggests income equality is a barrier accelerant, a damaging condition that accompanies other barriers to outdoor recreation.

Take, for example, our second barrier: physical impairment. Of all our survey respondents, those reporting an annual income falling within the lowest available bracket were most likely to name physical impairment as a primary barrier to their enjoyment of outdoor recreation. This is true as well for those reporting a lack of adequate access for the disabled.

Respondents in this income bracket, too, were most likely to report a concern for their safety, our fifth identified barrier, as hindering their enjoyment of public outdoor recreation facilities. Concern for injury was most prevalent in the lowest income bracket, as well.

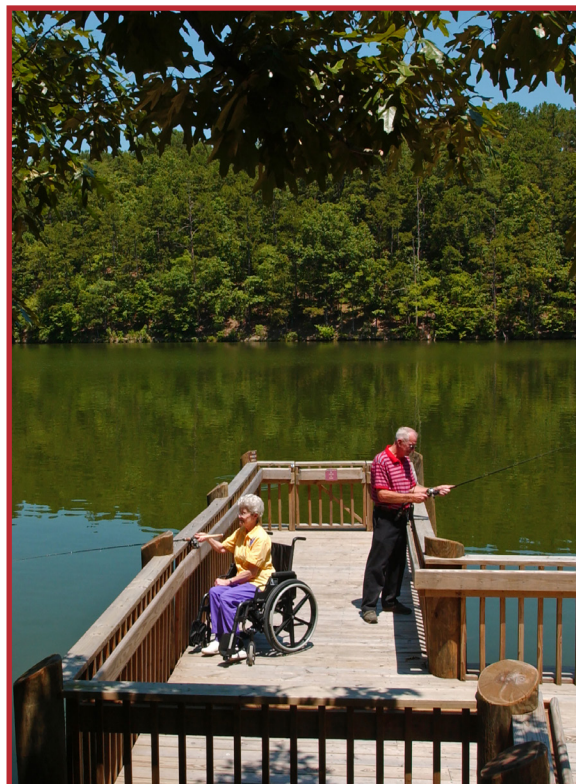
And while we were heartened to find that feeling unwelcome or uninvited based on one's identity was a barrier not often reported by survey respondents, those in the lowest income bracket identified this barrier at three times the rate of those in the next-highest reporting group, with that next-highest group also representing the second-lowest income bracket.

Based on this information, we've identified income equality as a major barrier to outdoor recreation. While a recreation provider isn't likely to hear someone identify income inequality as the reason they're not out enjoying nature, our survey results indicate a relative lack of money is a common factor in many other, more obvious obstacles to enjoying the outdoors.

Barrier 2: Physical Impairment

Unsurprisingly, living with a physical impairment presents a significant barrier to participating in outdoor recreation. This particular barrier is no respecter of demographics, and 16.5% of respondents across all demographic categories reported avoiding outdoor recreation on account of physical impairment. As such, recreation providers should take into account this kind of impediment when designing parks and projects.

And while providing recreational spaces with accessible parking and ingress/egress for the physically impaired has long been state and federal policy, it is important to realize that merely providing parking and access to those with physical impairments does not necessarily remove any barriers to outdoor recreation. Instead, it's important to look at access as a holistic enterprise, and to look for ways that projects can not only provide access for the differently abled, but also full integration into the recreational space.



Barrier 3: Lack of Free Time

A large number of respondents across demographic categories reported a lack of free time as a barrier to participating in outdoor recreational activities. Again, recreation providers cannot fix this problem on a case-by-case basis, but they can incorporate this concern into their project-planning calculus. Outdoor recreation facilities that are close to urban areas, or even in the downtown space itself, cut down on travel time to and from recreation venues. Providers can also look at the kinds of activities available at outdoor facilities, and propose projects that provide opportunities for recreation that requires little in the way of planning or, perhaps more importantly, time commitment.

Barrier 4: Nobody To Go With

Although plenty of people might like a little solitude when they're enjoying the great outdoors, many respondents nevertheless reported a lack of companionship as a barrier preventing them from enjoying outdoor recreation.

Of course, it's impractical for recreation providers to go out and befriend every individual in their constituency just so everyone has a recreation buddy, but it will perhaps be prudent for Arkansas's recreation professionals to consider the isolating aspects of modern life when designing projects, especially those projects in more densely-populated areas that lend themselves to casual public interactions.

Barrier 5: Feeling Unsafe

Every person is, of course, concerned about his or her safety, but concern for personal safety, specifically within the context of outdoor recreation, tends to be a racialized and gendered concern. With disproportionate numbers of women and ethnic minorities who reported feelings of unease in certain outdoor recreation areas, and cited those feelings as a serious barrier to personal enjoyment of public outdoor recreation spaces.

This distinct and personal feeling of unease is also a barrier exacerbated by perception. Regardless if the space for outdoor recreation has ever had an incident of crime or not, it doesn't matter if the user does not feel safe there; in this case, the perception of safety is the same as safety itself.

Recognizing this barrier might be a challenge to an outdoor recreation provider who generally feels at ease in public outdoor spaces. These outdoor recreation professionals, even those who belong to a demographic group that tends to express these concerns, may also fail to see this issue at play. Perception here is, again, reality, and if an individual, regardless of demographic, perceives no threat, then that individual might have trouble imagining another person perceiving that space as threatening.

As such, recreation providers should make a special effort to understand the cultural and physical realities that might influence a negative perception of public outdoor spaces in the minds of other individuals and groups.

A Quick Guide to Overcoming Barriers

- 1 — Understand how different barriers can impact outdoor recreation.
- 2 — Review which barriers have been identified in the SCORP.
- 3 — Investigate your community to identify existing barriers.
- 4 — Engage your community to create an action plan for removing these barriers and preventing future barriers from occurring!



Chapter 4: ***The SCORP Priorities***

Addressing Arkansas's Needs

As you look through the SCORP Priorities on the following pages, you'll see they suggest strategies for providing more and better opportunities for public outdoor recreation in Arkansas. And as noted earlier, many of these priorities will overlap and intersect with themselves as well as the barriers found in the previous chapter. For example, the barriers that cause a reported lack of companionship and a reported lack of free time might both correlate highly with age and income; regardless of ethnicity, those respondents in their prime working years are the most likely to see both a lack of free time and companionship as barriers, with those numbers decreasing in older age groups; we likewise see a slight increase in these responses as income increases. These correlations might prove

especially relevant to recreation providers in larger urban areas (e.g., Little Rock), where large numbers of young people live and work in an urban core. With this being said, more than one of the priorities will address issues of companionship and time constraints, and might thus prove helpful in the planning of public outdoor recreation projects in areas that fit this particular bill.

As for the priorities, we have identified what we believe to be the five most important of these priorities, and those that appear to be the most feasible to implement in the coming years. These priorities are presented as broad, umbrella-like concepts that can be tailored to fit countless local projects and also tackle the most specific of community barriers.

Priorities will become important for recreation providers during the grant-writing process, as LWCF & ANCRG grants require applicants to reference one or more SCORP Priorities in each application, and provide a narrative explaining how the proposed project will help Arkansas meet its public outdoor recreation goals by implementing each referenced SCORP Priority.

Participation

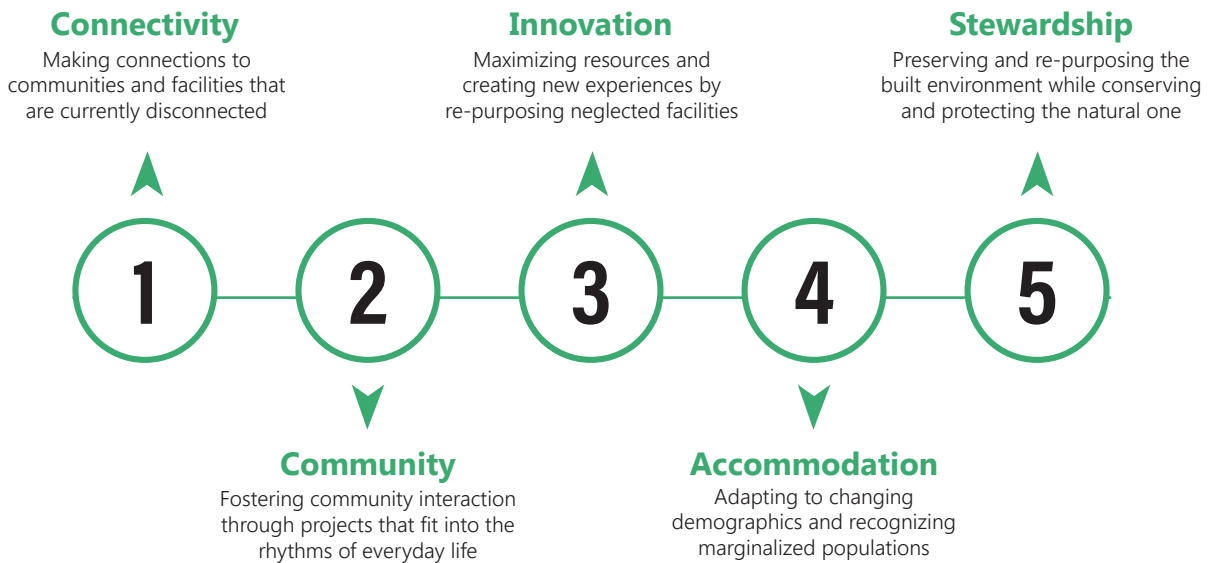
As noted earlier, fully 97% of survey respondents reported engaging in some form of public outdoor recreational activity during the previous year, so it would seem that “participation” isn’t posing much of an issue in Arkansas. However, the variety of activities participated in are not as inclusive as they could be.

A look at the demographic breakdown of the respondents reveals a few inherent barriers. For example, despite Arkansas’s rapidly diversifying citizenry, the vast majority of respondents identify as either White or African American; while it’s expected that these two groups would produce more robust numbers, the lack of a statistically significant number of respondents from any other ethnic group—despite the diverse and

growing number of ethnic communities in our state—points to an obstruction of participation.

To combat this, recreation providers can take a look at their community—and the various smaller communities within the larger community—and seek to undertake projects that create a more inclusive outdoor recreation environment. This can be as simple as identifying an under-served community—perhaps an ethnic minority clustered in a geographical area with little or no access to public outdoor recreation, or a low-income neighborhood separated from community facilities by geographical obstacles such as distance and arterial highways—and providing that community with a facility dedicated to public outdoor recreation that is readily accessible to everyone.

While identifying and accommodating minority communities—ethnic or religious minorities, economically-disadvantaged neighborhoods, the disabled—is the most obvious and common way to increase participation, it is not the only way to address SCORP Priorities. Recreation providers are encouraged to think creatively to identify gaps in community participation, and to bridge those participation gaps in a manner appropriate for their city or county.



Priority 1: **Connectivity**

Making connections to communities and facilities that currently are disconnected

The first SCORP Priority is "Connectivity." Once again, recreation providers can meet this priority in any number of ways, and in ways that are most appropriate and feasible for their city, county, or constituency. The idea of connectivity in public outdoor recreation is the same as the idea of connectivity generally: it's the notion that an interconnected web of public outdoor recreation opportunities is better than isolated facilities.

Connective trails are one of the most common examples of connectivity in public outdoor recreation. Walking is ranked #1 among all recreation activities, and has held a top position in every Arkansas SCORP. It should also be noted that walking is the activity that cuts across all demographic categories to a greater degree than any other. And while people still enjoy going to the park and walking around a track or through the woods on a winding paved trail, more and more Arkansans are saying they enjoy trails that take them from point A to point B, and beyond. If a walking trail begins in one park and ends in another, or winds its way through town and provides the walker with access to other recreational facilities or public spaces, then that project will have met the Connectivity Priority.

And while connecting you community is a fine goal to have, there's no reason to stop there! Perhaps your city is near the route of a larger, longer trail system; if so, the connection of your local trail system to the wider world may encourage exploration by locals, and perhaps a lengthy and profitable visit from adventurous folks from elsewhere.

For those far removed from such thoroughfares, a connective trail might provide access to the scenic countryside outside of town. In bucolic

rural Arkansas, a little trail to "nowhere" might well be a trail to somewhere...a somewhere an adventurous child could explore, or a long-time resident may have never frequented otherwise. Any connectivity—no matter the locations connected—is a tie that binds a community one to another, individual with group, group with nature, and one to all. In a connected community, the journey truly counts as much as the destination.

While a simple idea, large connective trails can be very expensive to design and implement, and they are by no means the only way to meet this Priority. Merely connecting disparate facilities within a single park—via walking trail or wheelchair-accessible pathways, for example—is a step toward greater connectivity.

Ideas for Connections

- *Connecting parks to each other*
- *Connecting the community to the greater city*
- *Connecting the city to the greater region*
- *Connecting existing facilities with accessible sidewalks*
- *Use existing connections*
- *Use right-of-ways from abandoned railroads*

Priority Spotlight: The Razorback Greenway



Make connections that extend beyond your city limits!

At 36 miles, the Razorback Greenway connects not only communities, but entire cities. All of the towns along its length are made accessible to pedestrians and bicyclists, making it both fun and practical.

CONNECTIVITY: Barriers & Recommendations

BARRIERS	OUR RECOMMENDATIONS
Income Inequality	Consider routing trails or safe routes for people who cannot afford or have limited access to vehicles
	Some children have parents that work two jobs. Give those kids a safe route to walk or bike to school or a nearby park
Feeling Unsafe	Proper lighting: Use string lights above alleyways or have uplit trees and buildings where street lights may not reach
	Place trails in high-use areas. People may feel safer when they are surrounded by other individuals
Nobody to Go With	Your city or a local organization can implement programs to create opportunities for community interaction
Physical Impairment	Connect new and existing facilities with accessible paths
Lack of Free Time	Bike share programs are great for those wanting to commute or explore the area
	Offer trails or designated paths in close proximity to residential areas
	Make it so someone could bike to work with ease. It may take just as much time to drive as it does to bike!

Priority 2: Community

Fostering community interaction through projects that fit into the rhythms of everyday life

Many survey respondents expressed a desire for community-centered projects, leading SCORP staff to include "Community" as a SCORP Priority.

Almost any project that fosters community interaction more or less through happenstance—rather than through purposeful association, as with, e.g., sports leagues—will be in keeping with the Community Priority. While not a requirement of this priority, projects that focus on a town or city's downtown area are especially appropriate.

Examples of such projects are downtown pavilions, which might be used to host community-centered activities, like farmers markets, community gardens, community-centered activities, or design "pocket parks", wherein small open spaces in urban cores (often an abandoned lot) are converted into small green spaces for resting, visiting, eating, or impromptu gatherings of friends and family.

Programming

Along with providing appropriate spaces for community-centered projects, it is also important to have these spaces properly programmed. In one sense, "programming" is very similar to "design". However, programming goes beyond "design" in that it takes into consideration the many external factors that can make or break a park's success.

While having a park for its own sake is not necessarily a bad thing, it's a much better thing to design a community space with a mind toward its possible planned uses. Will this space lend itself to picnicking? Lunch breaks for downtown workers? Or perhaps something more elaborate, such as impromptu jam sessions on a Saturday night, or a free movie screening hosted by the local library or church or Rotary Club. While the best-laid plans of planners and providers sometimes go awry, a

properly programmed park will have a much better chance at becoming a valued and cherished community space for years to come.

Along with the process of planning your outdoor community space to foster the kinds of activities most likely to engage your local populace, it's important to provide the opportunity for the community members to take ownership of those spaces and find new and interesting ways to take advantage of their park. To that end, planners might want to initiate inclusive activities within that new community space. Invite local experts or hobbyists to provide free, community-wide workshops. Local gardeners, beekeepers, craftspersons...each community has a hidden expert or two, many of whom are more than happy to share their passion. Planning your project for a productive use of your community space will help ensure its success as a community hub.

The Community Priority lends itself to imagination, and can be employed in both large and small projects. At its core, this Priority is about providing outdoor recreation spaces within the context of everyday life.

Don't forget about trails!

Trails, especially those that connect community spaces (parks, neighborhoods, downtowns), encourage a slower, friendlier, more interactive daily routine for everyone.

Voila! Community!

Priority Spotlight: Wynne Splash Park and Farmers Market



Invigorate your community with a multi-purpose space!

With greenspace, play equipment, walkable pathways, and pavilions—all located in the center of town, accessible by all—this project is both passive and active, and exemplifies the Community Priority.

COMMUNITY: Barriers & Recommendations

BARRIERS	OUR RECOMMENDATIONS
Income Inequality	Provide free programmed events like a seasonal concert series or movies in the park
Feeling Unsafe	Give opportunities for multi-cultural events such as food festivals or art shows. Diversifying the use within a space may welcome use for all nationalities, races, and genders
	Proper programming can make spaces feel safe even when nobody else is present
Nobody to Go With	Program spaces that can be a 'get-away' for someone seeking solidarity
	Program spaces and events where people can connect and/or relate to others over shared interests (i.e. community gardens, e-sport competitions, cycling tours)
Physical Impairment	Provide an adequate number of seating areas
Lack of Free Time	Develop communal spaces in close proximity to workplaces to cater to those taking a 30 to 60 minute lunch break

Priority 3: Innovation

Maximizing resources and creating new experiences by re-purposing neglected facilities

Along with the survey distributed to the users of Arkansas's public outdoor recreation resources, SCORP staff disseminated a similar survey to professionals who provide and maintain public outdoor recreation opportunities and facilities. These recreation providers expressed a desire and a need to keep up with current recreation trends in the face of budgetary constraints and lack of resources (see Appendix D). This led to the inclusion of "Innovation" as a Priority.

As the word implies, projects that are in keeping with the Innovation Priority will be ones that seek to revitalize, reinvigorate, or even reinvent public outdoor recreation opportunities in their communities. Innovation may apply to physical structures, vacant urban areas, or possibly somewhere in between.

Innovation might also be reflected in a new and interesting way to utilize a neglected recreation space, or re-purpose outdated or out-of-favor facilities. Perhaps a disused tennis court is converted to a pickleball court, or an outdated baseball field is converted to a community garden space.

Along with providing citizens with new and interesting opportunities in their shared outdoor spaces, innovative re-purposing of existing facilities can help cash-strapped communities revitalize public outdoor recreation while practicing fiscal restraint.

When it is feasible to use existing superstructures or other professional-grade facility components, it becomes easier to involve the community in the execution of an innovative project. When the work of professionals has already been done, laypersons can provide the labor necessary to re-stripe that tennis court and string that pickleball net; a baseball field no longer in use is still a professionally graded and leveled space ideal for the construction of simple raised plots.

Under the direction of an innovative and creative parks professional, a community workday can result in a new, vibrant facility more in keeping with the wishes of a modern, changing populace.

As with the innovative spirit itself, the ways to implement the Innovation Priority are practically limitless.

Think outside the box!

Yes, even this box! Opportunities to make new forms of outdoor recreation lie around every corner. Talk with your community and see what they have to say.

You'll be surprised with the ideas that they come up with!

Priority Spotlight: *Historic Crawfordsville High School Campus*



This old gymnasium will be reborn!

Long neglected, the old CHS gym is being repurposed as an open-air, multi-purpose facility. Innovative thinking has allowed Crawfordsville to use a beloved old structure to anchor a new and vibrant park.

INNOVATION: *Barriers & Recommendations*

BARRIERS	OUR RECOMMENDATIONS
Income Inequality	Turning an existing space into a free-use park
Feeling Unsafe	Turning blighted space into greenspace may help remove the perception of danger
Physical Impairment	Retrofitting playground equipment
Nobody to Go With	Utilize social media to find and include marginalized communities
Lack of Free Time	Partner with local businesses to expand pocket parks into commercial/industrial campuses

Priority 4: Accommodation

Adapting to changing demographics and recognizing marginalized populations

All recreation providers want their parks to be accommodating to all users; no worthy provider would intentionally exclude any person or user group from a communal space. As such, it might seem unnecessary to include Accommodation as a SCORP Priority. Based on survey responses, however, we feel this Priority is an important one.

Accommodation means much more than the bare minimum of including a sidewalk and wheelchair ramp, making a previously inaccessible area accessible. While it may be true that most parks could use a few upgrades for wheelchair access, there are demographics beyond the physically impaired that experience barriers to outdoor recreation. This Priority encourages providers to look—really *look*—at their communities, and make an honest assessment of the services provided by their public spaces and facilities.

Are the demographics of the town changing?

Are there new faces and groups moving into the community?

Are accessible ramps truly accommodating those with limited mobility?

Similar to the previous Priority, Innovation, the Accommodation Priority challenges outdoor recreation providers to find creative solutions to overcome existing barriers.

Meeting this Priority might be as simple as providing an opportunity tailored to a new or growing demographic within the larger community. This could be establishing soccer

fields in a community that has recently seen a growth in its Hispanic population, or including benches and shade structures along a walking trail commonly frequented by senior citizens.

It might also mean intertwining wheelchair-accessible infrastructure to where it runs alongside existing play structure. This would open up the play area to allow children in wheelchairs, parents with physical impairments, and even grandparents with limited mobility to be right alongside other scampering youngsters.

At the end of the day, meeting this Priority will mean adapting to changes in daily life, practicing empathy for the whole community, and taking great pains to truly learn each and every group within the community, and what Accommodation means to them.

Other Questions to Consider

- What are some ways you can make the existing infrastructure of your parks more accommodating?
- Are your parks engaging those with physical impairments, or just meeting the minimum requirements?

Priority Spotlight: Jonesboro Miracle League Field and Playground



More than just accessible... Accommodating!

Baseball, playground, seating: In this all-inclusive facility, no distinction is made between those with or without a physical impairment. The design integrates activities for everyone, regardless of ability.

ACCOMMODATION: Barriers & Recommendations

BARRIERS	OUR RECOMMENDATIONS
Income Inequality	Propose projects in or near public housing developments
Feeling Unsafe	Include multi-lingual signage within park, trail, and playground systems
	Engage with local veterans to promote neighborhood watch programs
Physical Impairment	For best results, include persons who are physically impaired in parks commissions and hold focus group meetings at rehabilitation or special needs centers
Nobody to Go With	Create spaces that can accommodate for cultural uniqueness and changing demographics
	Engage with local seniors - initiate mentor programs

Priority 5: Stewardship

Preserving and re-purposing the built environment while conserving and protecting the natural one

While change is good, the wheel doesn't always need to be reinvented, and that is why "Stewardship" is the last, but not least, SCORP Priority. Along with their desire to meet changing demographics and public interest with new and interesting facilities, public recreation providers expressed the need to care for and maintain the existing facilities the locals already use and enjoy. To meet the Stewardship priority means preserving and conserving all of the public resources in one's care, both man-made and natural.

The Built Environment

Meeting the Stewardship Priority might mean renovating an existing outdoor recreation facility to improve safety, to increase accessibility for the disabled, or just to enhance the aesthetics and appeal of an old-but-loved park feature.

At the heart of this priority are the tried-and-true Arkansas values of thrift and ingenuity. While there's nothing wrong with a brand-new facility, there's also nothing quite like an old, sturdy facility—maybe a little worse for wear, but still strong and full of memories—being given a new lease on life through a little bit of imagination and elbow grease. The result is a newly-viable piece of the local park at half the cost and with twice the emotional investment.

The Natural Environment

Though it's important to care for and preserve our material past, it's also imperative that public recreation providers protect our rapidly-disappearing natural environment. Nature preserves are not only the purview of state and federal governments, and they need not be huge, grand swaths of wildlands; acquiring a few acres of old trees in the middle of town is an act of Stewardship, as is restoring a streambank that runs through a neighborhood. Not all parks need pavilions and playgrounds; sometimes what a community needs is a nice big tree under which to sit, and babbling brook in which to wade. Stewardship means caring for all that we have, and claiming as much as possible for the enjoyment of all citizens.

Stewardship does not apply only to structures; it can also be understood as "conservation". Projects that place an emphasis on wildlife or habitat conservation will be in keeping with the Stewardship Priority, as will projects that entail environmentally-friendly elements such as native-plant landscaping or renewable-resource utilization (such as installing solar panels in restroom or concession facilities), or controlling flooding and runoff in public outdoor recreation areas through rain gardens or other ecologically-sound mitigation strategies.

Interpretation

Stewardship of both the built and natural environment is enhanced through interpretation. Without the context of interpretation, the public may not be aware of a structure's importance. Is the refurbished pavilion the site of an important local event? A sign or a plaque will enhance the public's enjoyment of that facility and may inspire more citizens to take personal responsibility for its preservation and protection.

Conservation areas are likewise enhanced through interpretation. To a screen-addled youngster, a forested area might be nothing more than a bunch of trees and briars. But with a cleared understory, a simple path, and interpretive signs providing some guidance—what kind of tree, what critters might be hiding in its boughs, the local significance of this patch of woods—that batch of trees becomes an adventure, rewarding the curious person, young or old, who makes the journey with their imagination on and their phone turned off.

When considering safety, interpretive programs and guided walks can ease concerned users by providing an informative and enjoyable way to explore the area, all while enhancing one's experience.

Interpretation can take an innovative form, as well. QR-codes or proximity beacons can be applied to the signs adorning trees or the plaques affixed to statues or structures, allowing tech-savvy visitors to be whisked away to a land of living trees and talking stone, all while safely ensconced in their neighborhood park.

Priority Spotlight: Fourche Creek Urban Wetland



Stewardship means both built and natural environments!

Fourche Creek in Little Rock provides an encompassing look at Stewardship. Protecting the natural landscape goes hand-in-hand with improving the built one through, in this case, a public boat launch.

STEWARDSHIP: Barriers & Recommendations

BARRIERS	OUR RECOMMENDATIONS
Income Inequality	Preserve and maintain existing facilities, especially within communities with frequent usage and lower income
	Create safe routes to give opportunities for those without transportation to experience nature
Feeling Unsafe	Improve lighting conditions, consider using energy efficient or solar powered fixtures
	Increase visibility by maintaing foliage and removing the understory of a wooded area
	Proper signage can educate park users of dangerous and/or unfamiliar species in the area
Physical Impairment	Create nature trails that meet ADA requirements
Nobody to Go With	Engage community groups with events like an invasive species cleanup

Appendix A:

State Wetlands Narrative

While it's difficult to argue that any one natural resource or ecosystem is any more important than any other—the oft-used allusion to life's web, while simple, is after all a good one, and the loss of any one ecosystem is nothing less than a clipped strand that will cascade into a great and apocalyptic unraveling of Nature's grand spinning—it's hard to overstate the importance of wetlands in the grand environmental scheme. Wetlands are ecotones, liminal transition zones in the larger ecosystem that act as buffers, filters, and anchors, their presence assuring the major systems of the natural world remain in balance and, consequently, functional. As sanctuaries, too, the value of wetlands cannot be too greatly stressed, as their unique attributes provide the only suitable homes for prodigious numbers of threatened and endangered species, and the only suitable flyway for many species of migratory waterfowl.

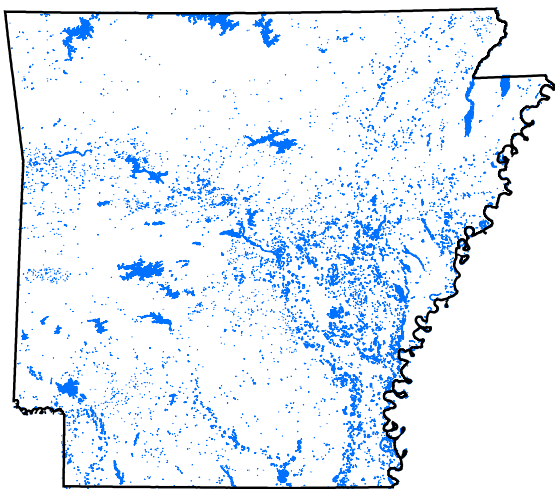
In Arkansas, wetlands constitute ~8% of Arkansas's land surface. That number may seem small, but it is a number that belies disproportionate worth. All of the preceding applies to wetlands found in Arkansas; they perform invaluable environmental functions as buffers and biospheres, anchors and aviaries. They also provide disproportionate benefits to the human population and economy as well, their fecund reaches making up a substantial portion of the Mississippi Flyway and supporting the migration of millions and millions of migratory waterfowl each year. These migratory birds in their teeming hordes have long helped to sustain the culture and the economy of eastern Arkansas, making the wetlands of the Cache-Lower White River system the duck-hunting capital of the world. Globally vital, the Cache-Lower White River portion of the Mississippi Flyway was recognized as such at the 1971 Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance.



Along with the continued importance, both cultural and economic, of waterfowl hunting in those portions of Arkansas blessed with abundant wetlands, the modern tourism-driven economy in Arkansas derives a significant boost from public recreational interest in the great flooded forests of eastern Arkansas. With white-blazed river trails guiding locals and guests down the meandering bayous and back again, their canoes and kayaks dwarfed by the towering cypress, this new generation of eco-tourists can see Arkansas in all its water-rich glory.

One might even keep a wistful ear open for the cry of the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker, the Lord God Bird of Arkansas lore that, while almost certainly extinct, nevertheless enjoyed an alleged sighting and subsequent resurgence in the popular imagination not so many years ago. And should its booming call echo in the imaginations of cryptozoologists looking for tamer quarry and lazier searches than those to be found on a Bigfoot-hunting expedition, well, the Arkansas wetlands are big enough to accommodate flights of all kinds, be they of ducks or of fancy.

As with the wetlands that constitute Arkansas's portion of the great Mississippi Flyway and adjacent swaths of the Mississippi Alluvial Plain, the South Central (Gulf Coastal) Plains and the Arkansas River Valley have large forested wetland complexes that occur in the flood plains of larger streams such as Bayou Dorcheat and the Saline,



Arkansas Wetlands Today

Ouachita, and Little Rivers. Other wetlands can be found in less-likely areas, including the Ouachita and Ozark Mountain regions, which have small, scattered wetland habitats associated with the springs and seeps that occur in the karst-riddled highlands.

All of this brings us back around to that initial figure: 8%. Misleading in more ways than one, that number represents not only a percentage of disproportionate worth and importance, but also a commentary on the immense toll the industrialized world has taken on the natural one. In fact, before the arrival of European settlers, Arkansas wetlands constituted an estimated 9,848,600 acres of surface area; by 1937, with the advent and fruition of modern farming and levee-building techniques, the number of acres covered in natural wetlands had decreased to ~4,900,000. Total proportional wetland loss in the state of Arkansas has outpaced every other, and by the 1980s, Arkansas had lost 72% of its original wetlands; taking into account those wetlands that have been converted from bottomland forested wetlands to upland or other types of wetlands (especially those conducive to commercial-scale cultivation of rice and soybeans), an estimated 90% of Arkansas's original wetlands are either gone or converted. Even as the rate of loss has declined in recent years, the state continues to lose wetlands through drainage and flood-protection projects, dredging and stream channelization, and conversion of forested wetlands to those suitable for cultivation.

It is hard to conceive of a scenario wherein Arkansas's wetlands are restored to their pre-EuroAmerican majesty. Those forested wetlands that have been converted to arable wetlands support both the state's economy—agriculture is Arkansas's #1 industry, and the crops produced here are integral to the national and global food supply—and the annual, sodden misery of the Arkansas Delta in the days before the levee system is something worth leaving in the past. That being said, the reversal of human overreach can be achieved only through the concerted effort of an engaged citizenry made up of disparate, seemingly-adversarial stakeholder groups. Thankfully, such efforts are even now taking place in Arkansas.

Beginning in 1985, the Farm Bill has included so-called Swampbuster provisions that disincentivize the conversion of marginal wetlands to agricultural production, while other programs incentivize the enrollment of agriculture-adjacent wetlands into conservation easements through tax credits, conferral of water rights, technical assistance, and cost-sharing in the service of mitigation- and efficiency-focused projects involving wetlands and agriculture.

The idea, too, that agriculturists are always at odds with environmentalists and conservationists is rapidly becoming a thing of the past. Farmers in Arkansas today realize the economic benefits bestowed by robust, properly functioning wetlands, and integration of modern farming techniques coupled with the aforementioned easement programs make the preservation and restoration of natural wetlands not only personally satisfying, but profitable as well. Along with decreased inputs and increased yields, healthy wetlands increase the flow of tourist dollars into wetlands communities well beyond the traditional duck-hunting season, with paddlers, birdwatchers, and sightseers traveling to rural Arkansas to bask in the primeval glory of Arkansas's forested wetlands.

Along with these encouraging trends, there are many established State and Federal programs designed to protect, preserve, and restore Arkansas's wetlands. Perhaps the most prominent—and certainly the most visible—of the Federal programs is the National Wildlife Refuge System, ten units of which are located in Arkansas. Nine of those Arkansas units encompass wetlands. Arkansas's state agencies are also playing a vital role in the protection and restoration of Arkansas's wetlands, led by the Arkansas Game & Fish Commission and the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission. While the AGFC manages more than 170,000 acres, predominately wetlands, in the Mississippi River Valley, the ANHC continues to identify and procure for the public trust those wetlands falling outside the realm of the larger AGFC tracts. One recent triumph of the ANHC was the acquisition of ~680 acres of bottomland drained by Bayou Dorcheat. Dorcheat, one of the most ecologically vital free-flowing bayous in the continental United States, is home to numerous endangered

species and is characterized by a unique blend of riverine and bottomland forest wetlands, and while still free-flowing and remote, has been for years threatened by the extraction of fossil fuels in the area and, concomitantly, the possibility of large-scale logging operations. Through the efforts of the ANHC, however, Bayou Dorcheat is now protected from harm and a part of the public trust for nearly the entirety of its Arkansas run.

And finally, this very document continues the legacy of wetlands protection in Arkansas's modern era. A requirement of the SCORP, this wetlands statement not only ensures the continued cooperation of local, state, and federal government in Arkansas to protect wetlands, but is a statement of purpose to all those who enjoy and strive to protect Arkansas's wetlands, both citizen and public servant alike.



A Case For Trails *by Michael Sprague, State Trails Coordinator*

Trails are a valuable way to strengthen communities and meet societal needs. They link people not only with destinations, such as schools, parks, and work, but also to area landscapes, history, neighbors, and community issues. By giving people a powerful, healthy, effective, rewarding alternative way to recreate and contemplate life issues, they provide for a means to connect people with themselves, both physically and mentally. Also, they make the city more appealing by providing a greater sense of space and through protecting natural areas and environmental and public-access corridors.

Trails connect people with destinations and give people a less-stressful way to get around. They can save people money on transportation and alleviate traffic strains by putting fewer vehicles on the road. Also they provide more freedom for minors to go places by themselves, which can give parents relief from the need to chauffeur their kids.



Trails also deepen our relationships with the landscape, whether it's a natural setting or an urban one. Trail users see their environment in a more intimate way and notice things they may have overlooked before, giving them a better understanding of the place in which they live.

This relationship also provides the setting to connect people with the history of the area. Instead of quickly driving by a place, trails give people time and perspective to contemplate how people in the past related to the locale, furthering their understanding of the previous generations and how and why events came about.

Another exciting way trails add value is the way in which they enhance community relations and communications. Trails create an atmosphere where people meet a broad spectrum of others in their community that they may not ever encounter if they only drive to and from their destinations. Among other benefits, this allows for people to get to better know their neighbors, their community, and issues that may be of concern. It provides a more efficient and connective society with regards to networking and the flow of ideas.

Trails provide a place to walk, bicycle, or travel in some other way of self propulsion, which is an incredible asset for the recreational appeal, for personal health, and for the health of the community. A safe, appealing place in which people can get somewhere while exercising encourages people to get in better health. The benefits of increased physical activity may have a powerful rippling effect, from improved wellbeing and self worth to lower costs for society because of less stress placed upon our overall health care system. Not only does something as simple as walking or bicycling improve physical self, it can greatly improve mental health by allowing for an atmosphere for thought and reflection, giving people time and space to put their lives in order. By providing a place to escape and do these things, like recreate, exercise, and think, trails give people an alternative way to deal with stress, boredom, loneliness, and depression, rather than indulging less healthy alternatives.



Trails make places more appealing. They give people a greater sense of physical space in the area. Having a trail link to a park enlarges people's impression of the park. Connecting the parks by trails changes the perception of the parks from being islands in the city to being jewels on the necklace of one big park. Trails are the threads that link the public places, creating a fabric of space and access, inlaid in the landscape in a harmonious way with the surrounding area. Also, a trail network gives people the excitement of being on a part of this much greater system, which is connected with the rest of the city. Trails further add appeal by protecting open space and access, corridors, which give places more character and value.

A well-thought-out trail system increases quality of life. It does this for the whole community without regard to economic or social status. It betters people's connections with destinations, the local surroundings and history, neighbors and the community, physical health and with themselves. A good system provides value to an area. What seems like simple paths can dramatically improve the community's and resident's transportation, self worth, sense of place, and relationships with others, communications, health, recreational opportunities, and image.

Trail Design Process

A thorough, thoughtful process with an inclusive participatory process is important for developing trails.

An important step in the beginning of the process to have a brainstorming session or two. The idea is to identify all the potential trail routes in the area regardless of cost and other circumstances. Then, when all the potential routes are mapped out, bring stakeholders into the process and start the discussion of which alternatives are feasible, needed, and appropriate. Once that is determined, reach out even more to the public and others to further gauge support for the routes.

Further development of the project will need to be planned. Judging from the criteria of feasibility, need, and support, priorities should be determined for what sections need to be worked on. Other questions also need to be answered, such as: what entity will be responsible for the trail?; can the right of way be obtained?; what work arounds will be needed?; how much will the project cost?; are there short-term solutions that may lower the costs?; etc.

Financial support will need to be found for the design/engineering, construction, and maintenance of the project. That may be found through a government entity, grants, user groups, and other organizations and/or private donors and foundations.

Once the right of way and finances are obtained, the trail project may be developed. It is important that the public be informed about the project, not only before and during the construction, but also after the trail is put in place, so that they know of its availability.

Maintenance is an important follow through of the project. If resources aren't budgeted for maintenance, the trail may become or be perceived as unsafe over time and be unwelcoming for users. This will cause the whole endeavor to lose support. Maintenance is a must when it comes to trail projects.

Trail projects are like many other infrastructure projects. They need a process that will think about all possibilities. They should include all stakeholders. They need to have support of the community. They need to go through the appropriate right-of-way, design, and construction processes, and they need proper interpretation and maintenance once completed.

*Time and Money Well Spent*¹

While the intangible benefits of a robust trail system—a slower pace of life, increased interaction among residents, greater connection to one's surroundings and community—the fact remains that trails cost money to build and maintain, and most cities cannot afford to undertake large construction projects, no matter how desirable, that produce no income. Current research, however, strongly suggests that investing in trails now can pay large dividends for forward-thinking communities in the future.

One such study, commissioned by the Walton Family Foundation, studied the impact of trails in Northwest Arkansas. The study, released in 2018, provides evidence that the development of a large and high-quality system of bicycle trails currently benefits the multi-city region at the

rate of \$137 million per year. This economic windfall comes in the form of both business (\$51m/yr) and health (\$86m/yr) benefits.

Businesses in the area benefit directly from NWA's bicycle trail infrastructure are, naturally, those in the business of providing bicycle-related goods. Household and resident spending in the region on such goods and services—bicycles, related accessories and equipment, and associated retail taxes—generate \$24 million dollars per year.

It is not only bicycle-related business that benefit, however; the study estimates that an additional \$27 million per year is spent in the region by an estimated 90,000 – 150,000 out-of-state visitors that travel to NWA in order to enjoy the many miles of bicycle trails to be found there. That means spending not only in bicycle shops, but also restaurants, hotels, entertainment venues, and local retail stores.

Trails also encourage a more active, healthier lifestyle, and even a moderate increase in activity in the general population translates to substantial economic benefit in the form of healthier outcomes. By increasing normal activity and eschewing a sedentary lifestyle, the citizens of NWA have realized \$79 million dollars a year in reduced mortality costs, as increased activity leads to decreases in the number of deaths caused by certain diseases linked to a sedentary lifestyle, such as diabetes and heart disease. Additionally, the study found that this increased activity level led to a marked decrease in healthcare costs, resulting in a \$6.8 million economic benefit for the region.

Now, will every community have the resources to construct a trail system the size and scope of that found in the NWA region? Of course not, but neither should that be a deterrent. Trails can come in all shapes and sizes, and when it comes to economic benefits—especially those associated with a healthier, more active citizenry—a little bit of trail goes a long, long way. And so does each dollar spent on that trail.

1: BBC Research & Consulting (2018). *Economic and Health Benefits of Bicycling in Northwest Arkansas*

Arkansas Resident Survey

Differences by Age

Participation in nearly every outdoor recreation activity declines with age, with golf being an exception. For older Arkansans, those 55-74 and 75+ are much more likely to cite a disability, impairment, or condition as being a barrier to their outdoor recreation.

Differences by Household Income

Outdoor recreation participation rises with household income across all activity types. Not only do those with higher incomes report more participation, they also report more perceived benefits from their participation. For those with lower incomes, they report more perceived barriers, relating to being not as sure where to go or having someone to go with, as well as more concerns about safety or injuries. Disabilities, impairments, or conditions are also more likely to be a barrier among those with lower incomes.

Increased free access to outdoor recreation, adaptive gear and programming, and social opportunities are all of more interest to those with lower incomes.

Differences by Race/Ethnicity

We did not have enough representation to report among Hispanic or Other Ethnic groups. We did have enough sample to report among White vs. African American, and noted some key differences. Although African American were just as likely to participate in some type of outdoor recreation (with Walking being the top activity), they showed significantly lower levels of participation in more "off the beaten path" activities such as hiking, camping, fishing, hunting and off-roading. As a whole, they reported much lower participation in nearly every water-related activity.

However, African Americans were much more likely to participate in community gardening, family gatherings and picnics/BBQ/cookouts. These type of social events, often held in public outdoor spaces may offer an opportunity to reach out and further engage this demographic in a greater variety of outdoor recreation activities. African Americans were more likely to cite safety concerns as well as the need for more information: about where to go and how to learn more and develop new skills. It is important to note that despite these barriers, 35% of the African Americans in our study said that there are Outdoor Recreation activities that they are not currently doing, but would LIKE to do in the next year.

Addressing safety concerns, providing better/free access, and providing instruction via workshops or guided tours were all cited by African Americans to help alleviate barriers.

Differences Among Those Who Report Any Impairment

Overall, 27% of our respondents reported some sort of impairment: 26% reported some sort of physical, mental or emotional impairment or chronic illness, and 11% reported a health or mobility impairment that requires the use of special equipment. Among these respondents, participation levels were lower across all types of outdoor recreation activities, and 57% cited their disability, impairment or condition as a barrier. Concerns about safety and injuries were a greater concern to those with an impairment.

Although only 7% reported that inadequate access for people with disabilities was a barrier, 20% said that having inclusive facilities designed for people with disabilities would increase their participation.

Differences by Rural vs. Urban Region

Beyond demographic and socio-economic factors that influence outdoor recreation, the state's geography also has an impact. Arkansas is a very rural state, with 42% of residents living in a non-metropolitan county; this contrasts with just 15% of the entire US population living in a non-metropolitan county.

Overall, Arkansans who live in a metropolitan county were more likely to participate in outdoor recreation (any activity) overall, but rural Arkansans were more likely to participate in a few specific activities: fishing, hunting, horseback riding, off-roading, and baseball. Urban Arkansans are much more likely to participate in running, cycling, several sports activities, outdoor concerts/events, farmers markets, dog parks, zoos, garden and arboretum, and inline/roller skating.

In addition to population density, the varied geology and topography of the state also impacts recreational opportunities and choices, along with the greater presence of different types of recreational infrastructure, properties or facilities in different regions. Some of these regional differences include:

- Running and cycling participation is highest in the Central and Northwest regions, which aligns both with the more urban areas of Arkansas, as well as where more infrastructure (multi-use trails) has been developed.
- Camping participation is lowest in the Delta region.
- Fishing and hunting participation are both lowest in the Central region.
- Off-road activities are most popular in the North Central and Southwest regions.
- Some other unique regional differences include the relative popularity of caving/spelunking as well as swim/wade in freshwater in North Central Arkansas, motor boating and inner tubing/floating in Southwest Arkansas, and flying drones, gliders or model aircraft in the Delta, and soccer in Northwest Arkansas.

In cases where there are fewer outdoor recreation resources located within a region, then that region's residents will be more likely to go to other regions for that activity. When a region has enough resources, then the majority of the activity takes place by residents without leaving their home region. In some cases, certain regions of the state may be more attractive for certain activities based on that region's natural resources (such as mountains or lakes for camping, or flooded timber for duck hunting), but in other cases, low activity levels and larger proportions of travel to other regions may indicate a lack of infrastructure. For example, the patterns of travel for camping and hunting shown on the following charts likely correspond to more opportunities based on natural assets. However, the patterns for activities such as cycling and walking are more likely to indicate a need for greater resource development in certain regions, particularly in the Delta.

Differences by Gender

Although men and women are equally likely to be involved in some form of outdoor recreation activity, there are significant differences in certain activities. Women are more likely than men to participate in walking. Some activities that women are more likely to do may correlate with taking and/or supervising children in the activity, such as swimming, visiting splash pads, or visiting a playground. Women are also much more likely to report doing some sort of outdoors leisure activity such as attending an outdoor concert or event, community gardening, yoga, a farmers market, or just relaxing outside. Women are nearly twice as likely as men to say they had played an outdoor tech-based game. Women were much more likely to report they had participated in an organized walking or running event, while men were more likely to have participated in a cycling event.

Event Participation: Total and by Gender

	TOTAL	Male	Female
Any Event Participation Net	17.0%	12.8%	21.3%
Walker	12.4%	8.1%	16.6%
Runner	5.2%	3.5%	6.8%
Bicyclist	2.7%	4.0%	1.6%
Multi-sport event	0.9%	0.9%	0.8%

Men were more likely than women to participate in day hiking, camping, fishing, hunting, target shooting, off-road vehicles, football, golf, motor boats, and visiting lakes, rivers, etc.

Men were also more likely to say that outdoor recreation provides a sense of adventure or exploration or a sense of completion. Women were much more likely to cite barriers to participation, particularly the barriers related to not being sure where to go, having others to go with, needing to learn more skills or to secure the right gear or equipment, and being concerned about safety. To address these concerns, women were much more likely to want solutions that address safety and lighting, access, social groups or social opportunities, and workshops or clinics.

Activities with the Greatest Disparity Between Male/Female Participation

Greater Female Participation

	Male	Female	+/-
Relax	48.5%	61.0%	+12.5%
Zoo, garden, arboretum	28.3%	40.1%	+11.8%
Yoga	1.8%	12.4%	+10.6%
Walking	72.0%	81.6%	+9.7%
Playground	29.0%	38.4%	+9.4%
Outdoor concert/event	34.0%	43.4%	+9.4%
Farmers Market	41.6%	50.4%	+8.8%
Splash pad / Spray park	11.4%	19.7%	+8.3%
Swim/Wade in outdoor pool	42.7%	50.2%	+7.5%
Arts outside	18.5%	25.8%	+7.4%

Greater Male Participation

	Male	Female	+/-
Hunting	40.1%	14.6%	+25.5%
Off-road vehicle	45.4%	26.3%	+19.1%
Target Shooting	37.8%	18.9%	+18.9%
Fishing	54.8%	38.3%	+16.4%
Motor boating	38.1%	23.9%	+14.2%
Camping	43.3%	30.9%	+12.4%
Golf	16.5%	6.9%	+9.6%
Visit lakes, rivers, etc.	62.6%	54.5%	+8.1%
Day Hiking	35.5%	30.0%	+5.5%
Football	8.5%	3.4%	+5.1%

Glossary of Outdoor Recreation Activity Nets:

General Activities:

Walking, Day Hiking, Backpacking, Running, Cycling, Camping, Fishing, Hunting, Target Shooting, Horseback Riding, Off-Road Vehicles, Sightseeing by Car, Sightseeing by Motorcycle.

Sport Activities:

Adaptive Sports, Baseball, Basketball, Disc Golf, Dodgeball, Football, Golf, Fling Golf, Foot Golf, Mini-Golf, Kickball, Lacrosse, Paintball/Laser Tag, Pickleball, Rugby, Soccer, Softball, T-Ball, Tennis, Ultimate Frisbee, Volleyball.

Air Activities:

Fly Drones/Gliders/Model Aircraft, Hang Glide/Sky Dive/Paraglide, Hot Air Balloon, Small Plane

Water Activities:

Swim/Wade in Outdoor Pool, Swim/Wade in Freshwater, Splash Pad/Spray Park, Motor Boating, Water Skiing/Wake Board/Surf, Personal Watercraft, Paddling, Sail Boating, SCUBA, Inner Tubing/Floating, Visit Lakes/Rivers/etc.

Leisure Activities:

Outdoor Concert/Event, Community Gardening, Yoga, Farmer's Market, Family Gathering, Fly a Kite, Picnic/BBQ/Cook-out, Tech-based Games, Yard Games, Relax, Dog Park, Playground.

Nature Activities:

Arts Outside, Nature Activity/Program by Park Staff, Nature Interpretive Center, Zoo/Garden/Arboretum, Wildlife/Bird/Nature Viewing.

Other Outdoor Recreation Activities:

Skateboard/Longboard, Inline/Roller Skate, Caving/Spelunking, Rock Climbing, Zip Line/Ropes, Obstacle Course/Adventure Race

Outdoor Recreation Activity Nets*: Gender and Age

	TOTAL	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55-74	75+
Any Activity Net	97.0%	97.9%	96.2%	100.0%	99.1%	94.8%	91.4%
Any General Activity Net	93.9%	96.0%	91.8%	100.0%	97.3%	90.4%	82.3%
Any Leisure Activity Net	88.7%	85.8%	91.5%	96.4%	89.8%	87.0%	80.3%
Any Water Activity Net	75.4%	77.7%	73.7%	94.8%	81.1%	67.5%	46.1%
Any Nature Activity Net	59.1%	57.9%	60.7%	64.6%	63.3%	56.7%	43.1%
Any Sport Activity Net	34.5%	37.8%	31.5%	50.6%	41.4%	22.9%	22.6%
Any Other Activity Net	18.8%	15.5%	22.2%	29.2%	24.1%	11.9%	6.6%
Any Air Activity Net	9.7%	10.1%	9.2%	17.3%	10.0%	7.6%	2.4%

* See page 38 for definitions of each activity net

Top Individual Activities: Gender and Age

	TOTAL	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55-74	75+
Walking	77.2%	72.0%	81.6%	86.7%	82.2%	75.2%	52.8%
Sightseeing by car	67.3%	67.7%	67.3%	73.3%	65.5%	66.7%	59.9%
Picnic, BBQ, cook-out	66.6%	65.0%	68.5%	76.5%	71.0%	61.7%	49.4%
Visit lakes, rivers, etc.	58.2%	62.6%	54.5%	71.7%	62.6%	51.5%	32.9%
Relax	54.7%	48.5%	61.0%	61.8%	56.9%	54.5%	48.5%
Family Gathering	53.3%	50.8%	56.0%	58.5%	53.9%	54.5%	45.3%
Swim/Wade in freshwater	50.2%	51.4%	49.0%	73.0%	58.0%	39.2%	15.3%
Swim/Wade in outdoor pool	46.4%	42.7%	50.2%	69.1%	55.7%	34.9%	19.8%
Fishing	46.0%	54.8%	38.3%	52.7%	52.3%	39.0%	26.0%
Farmers Market	46.0%	41.6%	50.4%	44.8%	45.8%	49.2%	38.2%
Outdoor concert/event	38.6%	34.0%	43.4%	52.2%	44.1%	32.9%	15.8%
Wildlife / bird / nature viewing	37.4%	39.9%	35.1%	34.0%	37.2%	42.4%	25.4%
Camping	36.9%	43.3%	30.9%	49.1%	43.0%	27.7%	11.4%
Off-road vehicle	35.4%	45.4%	26.3%	44.2%	45.4%	24.8%	12.2%
Zoo, garden, arboretum	34.3%	28.3%	40.1%	49.9%	38.4%	26.2%	20.9%
Yard games	33.8%	33.2%	34.6%	54.4%	39.7%	24.2%	11.1%
Playground	33.7%	29.0%	38.4%	57.2%	35.8%	26.9%	13.7%
Day Hiking	32.6%	35.5%	30.0%	48.3%	40.7%	21.5%	7.5%
Motor boating	30.7%	38.1%	23.9%	35.1%	33.9%	25.6%	12.9%
Target Shooting	27.9%	37.8%	18.9%	37.0%	31.7%	20.9%	7.0%
Hunting	26.8%	40.1%	14.6%	30.0%	30.5%	21.9%	11.2%
Nature interpretive center	25.6%	27.3%	24.0%	26.0%	26.7%	24.6%	23.5%
Paddling	22.7%	25.0%	20.9%	33.0%	26.7%	17.1%	3.3%
Arts outside	22.3%	18.5%	25.8%	26.3%	22.6%	20.8%	14.5%
Cycling	21.9%	24.4%	19.7%	23.9%	29.3%	15.8%	7.6%
Running	19.7%	19.5%	19.5%	41.4%	24.4%	8.4%	2.4%

Outdoor Recreation Activity Nets*: Household Income and Race/Ethnicity

	TOTAL	<\$30k	\$30k-\$50k	\$50k-\$100k	\$100k+	White	African American
Any Activity Net	97.0%	95.0%	97.2%	98.7%	99.4%	97.0%	97.1%
Any General Activity Net	93.9%	90.8%	93.0%	97.5%	97.7%	94.6%	89.9%
Any Leisure Activity Net	88.7%	85.4%	88.0%	92.4%	91.0%	88.2%	89.5%
Any Water Activity Net	75.4%	64.6%	72.3%	85.3%	85.5%	78.8%	44.1%
Any Nature Activity Net	59.1%	52.6%	62.4%	62.7%	64.5%	59.4%	47.7%
Any Sport Activity Net	34.5%	21.5%	33.2%	40.1%	53.6%	35.0%	28.1%
Any Other Activity Net	18.8%	13.7%	18.3%	21.1%	25.6%	19.2%	17.4%
Any Air Activity Net	9.7%	6.9%	7.2%	10.1%	16.4%	9.7%	10.7%

* See page 38 for definitions of each activity net

Top Individual Activities: Household Income and Race/Ethnicity

	TOTAL	<\$30k	\$30k-\$50k	\$50k-\$100k	\$100k+	White	African American
Walking	77.2%	73.0%	78.9%	80.7%	79.7%	76.6%	84.4%
Sightseeing by car	67.3%	64.3%	72.8%	69.4%	63.0%	69.1%	47.0%
Picnic, BBQ, cook-out	66.6%	63.3%	67.5%	69.9%	68.8%	65.2%	76.4%
Visit lakes, rivers, etc.	58.2%	48.9%	52.8%	69.3%	66.3%	62.2%	22.2%
Relax	54.7%	59.6%	50.4%	59.6%	50.7%	55.5%	51.7%
Family Gathering	53.3%	53.0%	57.1%	53.9%	49.8%	51.0%	65.3%
Swim/Wade in freshwater	50.2%	37.3%	50.8%	60.1%	58.9%	54.3%	11.2%
Swim/Wade in outdoor pool	46.4%	37.9%	41.7%	53.7%	61.3%	47.6%	34.4%
Fishing	46.0%	40.8%	40.6%	51.0%	51.7%	47.1%	31.1%
Farmers Market	46.0%	37.9%	46.6%	48.5%	56.1%	47.2%	31.7%
Outdoor concert/event	38.6%	33.1%	37.1%	42.8%	51.2%	38.4%	39.2%
Wildlife / bird / nature viewing	37.4%	36.6%	37.8%	42.1%	32.9%	39.5%	19.2%
Camping	36.9%	28.8%	32.8%	44.8%	49.2%	39.7%	13.1%
Off-road vehicle	35.4%	24.9%	30.3%	46.1%	45.1%	37.2%	19.8%
Zoo, garden, arboretum	34.3%	29.3%	38.1%	35.9%	39.6%	32.6%	40.6%
Yard games	33.8%	28.1%	33.6%	41.2%	35.4%	36.1%	20.5%
Playground	33.7%	34.8%	34.7%	35.0%	32.4%	32.2%	41.2%
Day Hiking	32.6%	22.9%	28.8%	41.1%	44.0%	34.6%	9.7%
Motor boating	30.7%	17.8%	25.1%	37.8%	46.7%	34.1%	4.9%
Target Shooting	27.9%	18.9%	23.9%	35.7%	36.1%	29.6%	11.8%
Hunting	26.8%	20.0%	21.9%	34.1%	32.1%	28.7%	13.4%
Nature interpretive center	25.6%	25.7%	25.4%	26.6%	26.4%	26.5%	14.8%
Paddling	22.7%	13.5%	19.7%	31.6%	29.3%	24.7%	6.4%
Arts outside	22.3%	26.4%	22.5%	20.8%	19.4%	23.2%	16.9%
Cycling	21.9%	14.0%	18.9%	26.4%	31.7%	22.1%	16.6%
Running	19.7%	13.6%	15.7%	24.6%	31.0%	19.5%	21.8%

Benefits of Outdoor Recreation: Gender and Age

	TOTAL	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55-74	75+
Health/fitness benefits	77.2%	74.9%	79.6%	85.1%	85.0%	73.2%	52.3%
Emotional/mental/mood	73.1%	71.7%	74.6%	82.0%	79.4%	68.2%	49.8%
Quality time with friends/family	68.1%	70.6%	65.9%	87.0%	82.3%	49.5%	34.9%
Ability to unplug	61.5%	63.5%	60.1%	74.3%	72.2%	49.6%	29.1%
Quiet / solitude / contemplation	51.1%	53.0%	49.6%	60.0%	54.5%	48.5%	37.0%
Sense of adventure/exploration	50.3%	54.1%	46.7%	72.6%	58.7%	36.6%	20.1%
Sense of achievement/accomplishment	37.9%	38.9%	36.6%	49.7%	42.5%	31.9%	21.9%
Social interaction	35.0%	37.0%	33.4%	34.6%	42.7%	31.5%	20.1%
Sense of competition	16.1%	18.5%	13.6%	25.5%	16.5%	13.1%	13.9%

Barriers to Outdoor Recreation: Gender and Age

	TOTAL	Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55-74	75+
Finding time	56.3%	57.4%	55.5%	72.0%	69.9%	45.9%	16.1%
It's too far or takes too long to get to	18.4%	16.2%	20.8%	33.3%	22.3%	10.3%	4.8%
Not sure where to go	18.1%	11.3%	24.7%	31.7%	22.8%	9.3%	3.0%
Disability, impairment, condition	16.5%	15.9%	17.0%	5.5%	9.1%	24.4%	37.5%
Lack of gear or equipment	12.7%	9.0%	15.9%	30.9%	12.9%	8.6%	2.6%
No one to go with	12.1%	5.1%	18.4%	17.9%	10.7%	11.7%	8.2%
Not interested	9.6%	9.6%	9.3%	4.6%	9.2%	12.5%	11.7%
Concerned about safety	9.0%	4.9%	13.1%	6.0%	9.8%	8.2%	7.8%
Need to learn more and develop skills to do the activity	8.1%	5.4%	10.2%	15.7%	10.0%	5.2%	1.6%
Not willing to pay for gear, etc.	7.4%	6.2%	8.6%	15.2%	6.2%	6.9%	3.2%
Concerned about injuries	7.2%	5.6%	8.8%	3.3%	6.4%	10.5%	3.5%
Inadequate access for people with disabilities	2.5%	2.2%	2.9%	0.6%	0.9%	4.0%	3.9%
Don't feel welcome or included based on identity	1.8%	0.8%	2.9%	3.0%	1.2%	1.3%	1.3%
Other reasons	13.1%	15.3%	11.3%	16.5%	15.8%	7.5%	15.0%

Benefits of Outdoor Recreation: Household Income and Race/Ethnicity

	TOTAL	<\$30k	\$30k-\$50k	\$50k-\$100k	\$100k+	White	African American
Health/fitness benefits	77.2%	69.0%	78.1%	81.5%	84.9%	77.2%	75.9%
Emotional/mental/mood	73.1%	61.3%	77.1%	78.3%	85.6%	73.9%	65.9%
Quality time with friends/family	68.1%	56.3%	67.9%	73.0%	84.0%	68.4%	59.0%
Ability to unplug	61.5%	51.8%	59.4%	66.6%	75.9%	63.2%	47.9%
Quiet / solitude / contemplation	51.1%	42.6%	50.0%	59.1%	55.6%	53.5%	32.4%
Sense of adventure/exploration	50.3%	39.8%	50.6%	54.9%	63.7%	53.3%	18.6%
Sense of achievement/accomplishment	37.9%	30.1%	33.5%	43.8%	48.3%	39.2%	22.3%
Social interaction	35.0%	25.0%	37.8%	35.0%	46.0%	35.7%	29.4%
Sense of competition	16.1%	11.5%	14.1%	18.6%	21.4%	16.9%	9.2%

Barriers to Outdoor Recreation: Household Income and Race/Ethnicity

	TOTAL	<\$30k	\$30k-\$50k	\$50k-\$100k	\$100k+	White	African American
Finding time	56.3%	40.6%	55.9%	64.8%	71.9%	56.2%	59.0%
It's too far or takes too long to get to	18.4%	16.9%	13.9%	22.5%	24.6%	18.9%	10.4%
Not sure where to go	18.1%	24.3%	19.1%	16.3%	14.7%	16.5%	30.4%
Disability, impairment, condition	16.5%	27.2%	16.7%	11.0%	7.5%	16.7%	14.6%
Lack of gear or equipment	12.7%	15.2%	13.4%	11.8%	11.0%	11.7%	21.1%
No one to go with	12.1%	19.5%	14.5%	6.5%	7.9%	11.4%	17.9%
Not interested	9.6%	11.3%	7.6%	9.6%	7.9%	9.1%	12.1%
Concerned about safety	9.0%	13.3%	8.9%	6.0%	6.3%	7.9%	21.3%
Need to learn more and develop skills to do the activity	8.1%	7.1%	10.8%	5.8%	10.4%	6.1%	23.7%
Not willing to pay for gear, etc.	7.4%	10.0%	9.1%	6.4%	4.1%	6.4%	12.8%
Concerned about injuries	7.2%	9.9%	6.9%	5.4%	3.5%	6.6%	11.1%
Inadequate access for people with disabilities	2.5%	4.3%	3.4%	1.3%	0.7%	2.3%	3.9%
Don't feel welcome or included based on identity	1.8%	4.8%	1.4%	0.2%	0.6%	1.2%	4.8%
Other reasons	13.1%	13.0%	12.8%	14.1%	9.8%	13.4%	8.0%

Appendix D:

Recreation Provider Survey

A survey invitation was sent via email and telephone to representatives at various agencies across the state who manage outdoor recreation parks, properties, or facilities. This Outdoor Recreation Provider Survey collected information about the organizations and properties being managed, the providers' perception of outdoor recreation priorities, as well as their own assessment of how their own organizations are performing across a variety of measures. In total, 156 different outdoor recreation providers participated in some or all of the online survey.

Participation came from a range of local, state, and federal agencies as well as a few private entities. The largest participation came from local (city or municipal) and county parks or park systems (69.2%), but also included state level agencies (11.1% from Arkansas State Parks and the Arkansas Game & Fish Commission), and representatives from federal agencies (17.1% from Army Corps of Engineers, National Park Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife, and U.S. Forest Service).

The outdoor recreation providers who answered the survey reported being involved in a wide range of responsibilities for their parks or properties: overall management, planning, bookkeeping, capital improvements, maintenance, grant writing, interpretation, and programming.

Mean Proportion of Visitors by Agency Type

	Local Agencies Net	State Agencies Net	Federal Agencies Net
Local community members	69.60%	25.18%	37.06%
Members of the surrounding region (adjoining counties)	18.56%	22.00%	23.53%
Statewide visitors	7.33%	29.09%	16.18%
Out-of-state visitors	4.51%	23.73%	23.24%

While most (70%) of our survey participants said they didn't have a way of counting visitors to their park or property, of those who did have counts, our survey responders represented properties serving anywhere from 2,000 to 9,999 visitors a year, all the way up to 1 million visitors or more per year in the case of the Buffalo National River, the nation's first national river and truly one of the preeminent jewels in Arkansas's outdoor recreation crown. Participants also described their visitor composition, which varied from municipal and county parks serving a majority-local constituency, to state and federal agencies which are more likely to see statewide, out-of-state, and even international visitation.

In terms of online presence, State and Federal agencies are more likely to have a website (77% and 85%, respectively) than local organizations (43%), while a little more than half of outdoor recreation organizations at all three levels reported a social media presence (57% Local, 62% State, and 55% Federal).

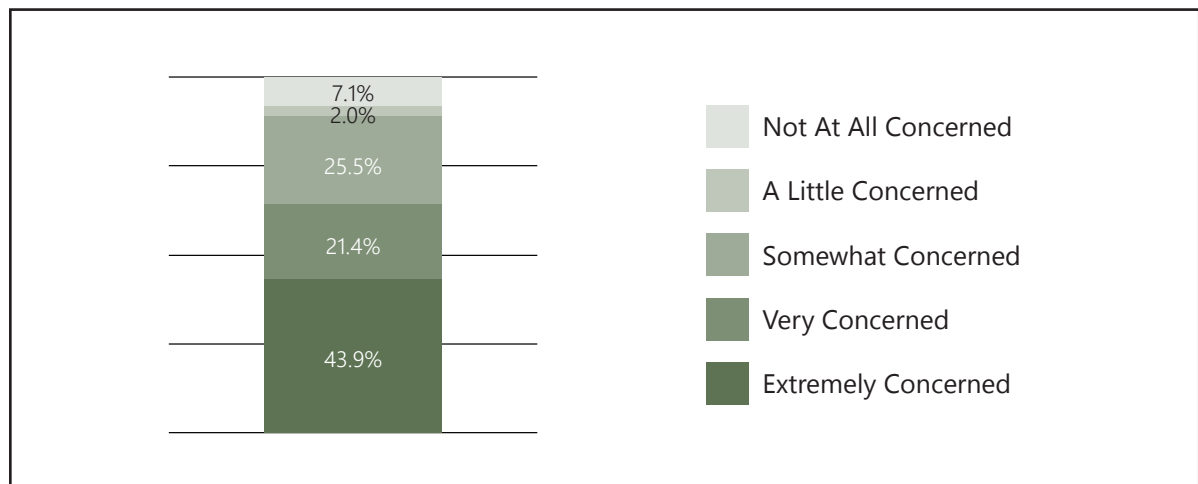
Since having access to gear/equipment was measured both as a barrier and solution for greater outdoor recreation participation, we asked our outdoor recreation providers if they offer equipment at their sites. We found that only 13% of our participating providers make this offer to visitors.

More than half of the outdoor recreation providers responded that they apply for grants either once a year (31%) or multiple times a year (27%). About one-quarter (26%) said they apply for grants infrequently. Only 7% said they never apply for grants.

The grants that our participants were most likely to have applied for were grants administered by the Arkansas Rural Services program, and the RTP (Recreational Trail Program) and TAP (Transportation Alternatives Program) grants administered by the Arkansas Department of Transportation; however, a small number also had applied for LWCF (Land & Water Conservation Fund), FLAP (Federal Lands Access Program) and TIGER (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) grants. Those providers with application experience at the time of the survey had submitted an average of 3.8 grant applications, and had been awarded an average of 1.9 grants. 36% had received a grant within the last full year, and another 17% within the calendar year of our survey.

We asked outdoor recreation providers to what degree they were concerned about Federal de-funding of grant programs, and 44% said they were extremely concerned and another 21% were very concerned. Only 9% said they were either only a little or not at all concerned about de-funding.

Concern About Federal De-Funding Among Outdoor Recreation Providers



Park Assessment

Outdoor Recreation Providers rated their parks or properties on a range of measures. The items with the strongest agreement (strongly agree/agree) were that their park provides a safe place to enjoy the outdoors, their park is valued by the local community, their park helps the community to connect to nature and for community members to lead an active lifestyle.

Items with moderate agreement included offering recreational activities for persons of varying age and levels of mobility, providing the outdoor recreational opportunities that are most popular, having a strategic plan to stay relevant/current to outdoor recreation trends, meeting the outdoor recreation needs of the community, and uses online/social media to promote their park and share information effectively.

Items with lower agreement included providing programming or outreach to schools and school-aged kids and teaching the community about nature and conservation. The item with the lowest agreement of all statements was that their park receives the investment and resources needed.

Priorities and Park Performance

Outdoor Recreation Providers were asked to rank the top 5 priority needs for their park or property. Based on the #1 ranking, the top priorities were New Facility Development, Adequate Staffing, and New Trail Development (tied with Updating/Renovating Facilities). Based on the priorities they ranked in their Top 5, the top priorities were New Facility Development, Updating/Renovating Facilities, Maintenance (buildings, roads, infrastructure), Adequate Staffing, and ADA.

When we compare and contrast the ranked priorities with how the Outdoor Recreation Providers rated their performance on the same areas, we find two priorities in particular had low performance ratings: Adequate Staffing and New Trail Development.

Although Outdoor Recreation Providers did not rank Interpretation/Programming as a top need or priority, this was assessed as an area of the low performance. Based on the feedback from the Arkansas Resident Survey, having special programming is an important way to help under-served populations to increase their participation in Outdoor Recreation.

Outdoor Recreation Providers rated their performance on priorities related to Facilities (new, updates, as well as maintenance) as moderate to high, even though they also considered these top future priorities.

Top Needs or Priorities for Your Park

Rated #1

	Rated #1
New Facility Development	13.5%
Adequate Staffing	10.3%
Updating/Renovating Facilities	8.3%
Maintenance (buildings, roads, infrastructure)	3.8%
Accessibility Improvements	5.8%

Rated in Top 5

	Rated Top 5
New Facility Development	35.9%
Updating/Renovating Facilities	35.3%
Maintenance (buildings, roads, infrastructure)	32.7%
Adequate Staffing	26.9%
ADA	26.9%

Park Assessment - Top 2 Box Agreement (Strongly Agree/Agree)

Our park provides a safe place to enjoy the outdoors	94.4%
Our park is valued by the local community	88.8%
Our park helps the community to connect to nature	71.0%
Our park helps our community members to lead an active lifestyle	63.2%
Our park provides recreational activities for persons of varying age and levels of mobility	59.8%
Our park offers the outdoor recreation opportunities that are most popular	55.7%
Our park has a strategic plan so that we stay relevant/current to outdoor recreation trends	53.3%
Our park meets the outdoor recreation needs of the community	52.3%
Our park uses online/social media to promote our park, our activities and to share info	51.9%
Our park provides programming and outreach to schools and to school-aged kids	49.1%
Our park helps to teach the community about nature and conservation	40.2%
Our park receives the investment and resources needed	32.7%

Top Needs or Priorities for Your Park (TOTAL Rated #1 or in Top 5)

	Rated #1	Rated Top 5
New Facility Development	13.5%	35.9%
Updating/Renovating Facilities	8.3%	35.3%
Maintenance (buildings, roads, infrastructure)	3.8%	32.7%
Adequate Staffing	10.3%	26.9%
ADA	5.8%	26.9%
Maintenance (landscaping, trash removal, etc.)	1.9%	26.9%
New Trail Development	8.3%	22.4%
New Property Acquisition	2.6%	16.7%
Interpretation/Programming	1.9%	16.7%
Wayfinding	1.3%	15.4%
Security	1.9%	14.7%
Recycling Bins/Service	0.6%	5.8%

Park Performance on Priority Areas (Top 2 Box Rating - Excellent/Good)

	Excellent/Good
Maintenance (landscaping, trash removal, etc.)	80.8%
Maintenance (of buildings, roads, infrastructure)	71.2%
Security	68.9%
ADA Access	62.1%
Updating/Renovating of Facilities	47.6%
New facility development	45.5%
Recycling Bins/Service	42.2%
Way-finding Signs	40.2%
New property acquisition	29.4%
New trail development	28.7%
Interpretation/Programming	25.8%
Adequate staffing	24.5%

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