

Image courtesy of the Louisiana Office of State Parks



Section III: **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

A. INTRODUCTION

Louisiana's abundant natural resources and outdoor recreation assets provide unique recreation experiences for residents and visitors to enjoy. From public lands rich with wildlife to some of the largest coastal wetlands in America, Louisiana's outdoor resources serve as a nature lover's paradise, a vital contributor to the state and local tourism economy, and a key component in providing opportunities to pursue a healthy, active lifestyle.

To create an implementable plan to sustain and improve outdoor recreation opportunities in Louisiana for the next five years (2014-2019), the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism, Office of State Parks, Division of Outdoor Recreation embarked on a year-long process to review and update the **Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)**. The **2014-2019 Louisiana SCORP**

fulfills the objectives of the National Park Service Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) for federal funding for outdoor recreation facilities and open space land acquisition, and includes a statewide inventory and evaluation of supply and demand for water and land based activities and outdoor recreation facilities in Louisiana.



Cypress swamp (Image courtesy of MW Domingue/FWHA Recreational Trails for Louisiana)

The overall objectives of the **2014-2019 Louisiana SCORP** are to:

- i. To identify the available outdoor recreation infrastructure statewide
- ii. To identify the outdoor recreation priorities and trends for Louisiana residents
- iii. To evaluate the unfilled outdoor recreation infrastructure needed for development to meet the priorities and trends
- iv. To prioritize plans for future development needed to match infrastructure needs
- v. To identify all required actions necessary to provide for outdoor recreation priorities for the state

The **2014-2019 Louisiana SCORP** has a strong focus on safe access to recreation opportunities, promoting healthy and active lifestyles, and wise stewardship of Louisiana's natural resources, parks, trails, and cultural sites for future generations. Preserving and enhancing outdoor resources in Louisiana is closely aligned with national efforts to balance outdoor recreation land use with natural and cultural resource protection. America's Great Outdoors (AGO), a federal initiative created by President Barack Obama, promotes connecting people to the outdoors, conserving natural and cultural resources, and developing partnerships within the following conservation and outdoor recreation initiatives¹:

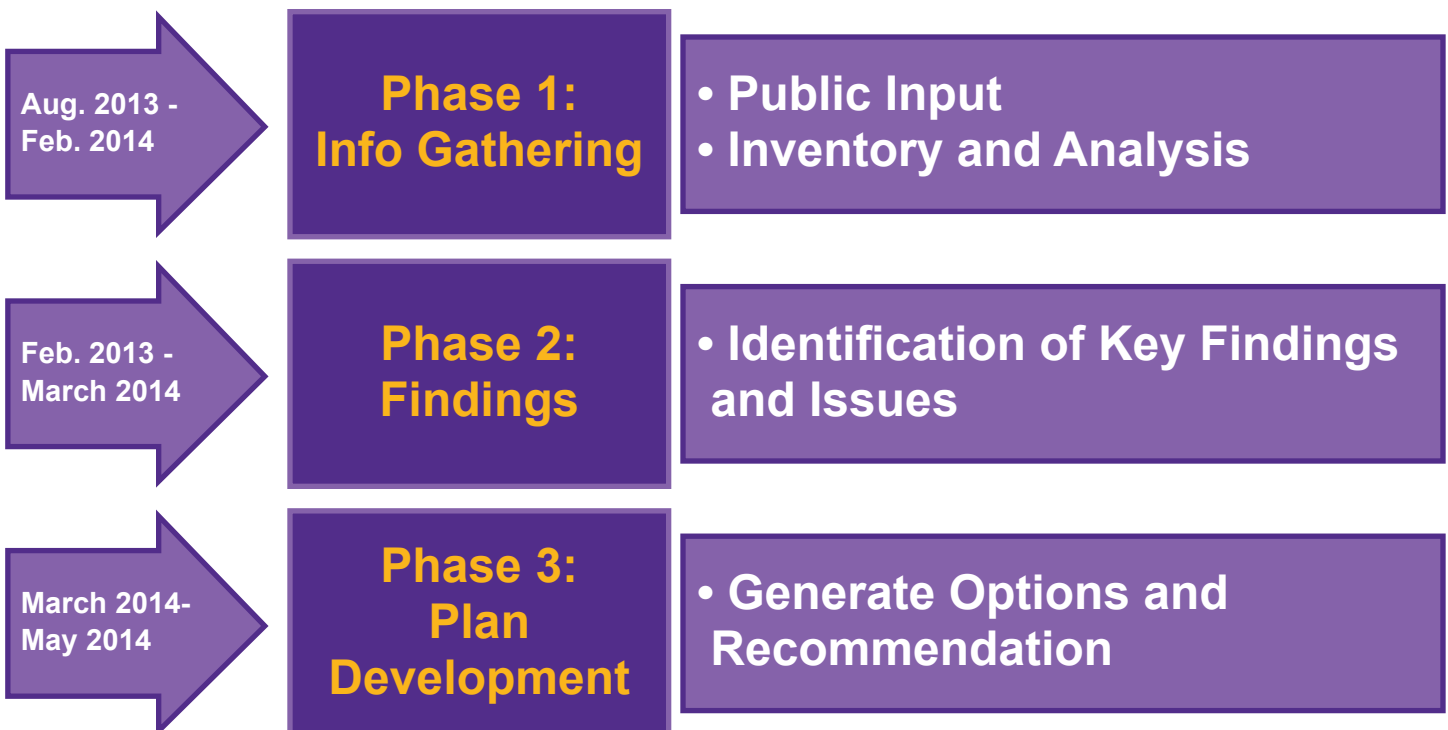
- Protection of America's large, rural landscapes
- Support of outdoor recreation access opportunities
- Restoration of our country's rich legacy of rivers and waterways
- Connecting city dwelling Americans to urban parks and green spaces
- Developing youth as the next generation of environmental stewards

¹ America's Great Outdoors. <http://www.doi.gov/americasgreatoutdoors/whatwedo/index.cfm>. Accessed April 12, 2014.

B. PLANNING CONTEXT

The **2014-2019 Louisiana SCORP** was developed with a collaborative, open public process. The planning effort was led by the Louisiana State Parks, Division of Outdoor recreation staff, along with the consultant team, the Task Force Committee (TFC) and SCORP Advisory Team (SAT). The plan was informed utilizing various public input methodologies, along with a review of past Louisiana SCORPs, other state SCORPs for relevant trends, census data, and various other relevant documents and studies. **Appendix G** includes a document log of compiled, reviewed information.

C. PLANNING PROCESS AND TIMELINE



D. KEY FINDINGS

- Approximately half of respondents indicated that the availability of parks, trails, and outdoor recreation facilities were extremely important; however, only one-quarter indicated that their needs are being met
 - Trails (paved and unpaved)
 - Water Access
 - Land Acquisition for Preservation/Protection
 - Awareness of Outdoor Recreation Opportunities
 - Camping Areas
- Safety and security was a concern at regional meetings, but wasn't indicated as a barrier to participation in surveys
- Louisiana's health ranking is 48th, yet promoting healthy, active lifestyles received the highest average importance rating by survey respondents
- There appears to be support for use of public funds to acquire land for outdoor recreation and natural resource conservation

E. KEY STRATEGIES

Key strategies, actions, and an implementation plan are found in Chapter 5. These are based on a combined analysis of stakeholder meeting highlights, survey results, and the mapping analysis. The strategies focus on findings from visioning sessions held during these meetings, and expand on the five broad headings from the 2009-2013 SCORP: economic tourism, trails, innovation, community outdoor recreation, and cooperation and coordination. Strategies for the **2014-2019 Louisiana SCORP** include:

- GIS
- Communication
- Access
- Sustainability
- Economic Development

F. LOUISIANA SCORP CHAPTER SUMMARY

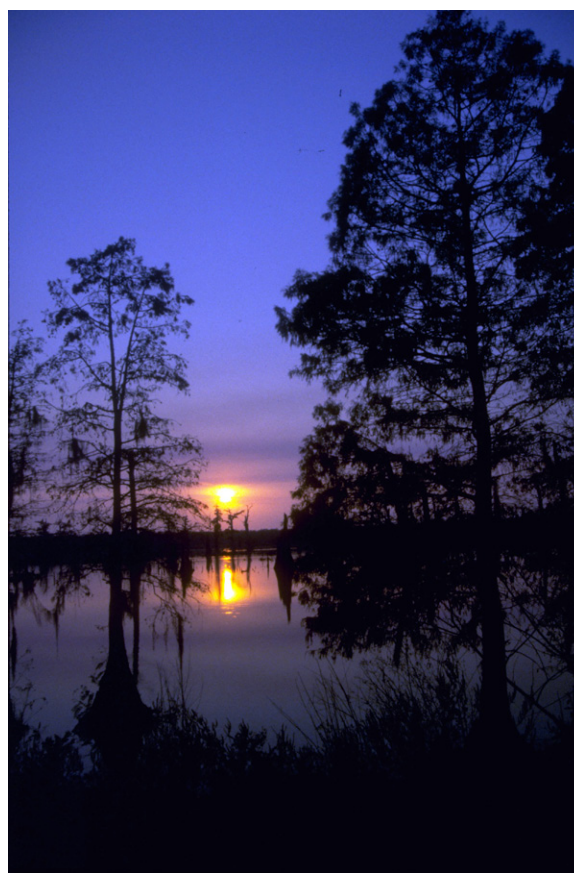
Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the project, providing the reader with all of the purpose and background information necessary to understand the document. It covers the vision for outdoor recreation in Louisiana, highlights of the top ten priorities of the 2009-2013 SCORP, describes how the **2014-2019 Louisiana SCORP** aligns with President Obama’s America’s Great Outdoors Initiative, and illustrates the value of outdoor recreation in Louisiana, Louisiana State Parks visitation history and demographics, and outdoor recreation impacts on health and livability.

Chapter 2 covers Louisiana’s outdoor recreation demand. This chapter describes the planning methodology and results of the public input methods utilized during the planning process. National and local outdoor recreation trends that influence the SCORP planning process are also discussed.

Chapter 3 provides an inventory of Louisiana’s outdoor recreation providers. This chapter summarizes the agencies that promote and provide the outdoor recreation opportunities throughout the state, covering both the public and private sectors.

Chapter 4 covers Louisiana’s outdoor recreation supply. It provides an overview of where the Geographic Information System (GIS) data used to develop the maps was obtained. The maps in this section graphically depict the distribution of all mapped outdoor recreation opportunities in the state, as well as specific depictions of picnicking, playgrounds, walking/hiking, and water access. Data used to create these maps is still missing from large areas of the state. Collection of this missing data is ongoing. Proximity of the population to these opportunities is shown in 5, 10, and 30 mile buffers. A discussion on Louisiana’s wetlands concludes this chapter.

Chapter 5 is the strategies and actions chapter. The Key Issues Analysis Matrix summarizes data collected during the planning process. It provides an overview of the issues identified during the planning process and sets the reader up for the recommendations and an implementation plan that concludes the SCORP.



Sun setting on the swamp (Image courtesy of the Louisiana Office of Tourism)