

SCORP 2020

LOUISIANA STATEWIDE COMPREHENSIVE OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN



*Louisiana
Department of
Culture, Recreation,
and Tourism*

*Division of Outdoor
Recreation*



Office of the Governor
State of Louisiana

JOHN BEL EDWARDS
GOVERNOR



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August 20, 2020

Gwenevere P. Smith
Chief, Recreation Programs Branch
National Park Service
Southeast Regional Office
100 Alabama Street, SW 1924 Bldg.
Atlanta, GA 30303

Dear Ms. Smith:

I am pleased to endorse the 2020-2025 Louisiana Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). The Louisiana SCORP identifies the important outdoor recreational choices across our state and provides vital information to decision makers as they move forward to develop facilities for our residents and guests.

The Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism (DCRT) under the Office of the Lieutenant Governor secured consultant services to assist in updating Louisiana's SCORP 2020. Under the guidance of the Division of Outdoor Recreation within the Office of State Parks and DCRT, the consultant launched a website, WWW.PLAYOUTDOORSLA.COM, to host the entire SCORP update process. Promotion of the SCORP update and the website was done through social media platforms, newspaper advertisements, links on agency websites, Association e-blasts, a Lieutenant Governor press release, direct mailers and phone calls. Drafts of the SCORP were posted on the website for public comment periods. Therefore, in accordance with federal law, I, as Governor of the State of Louisiana, certify that ample opportunity for public participation has taken place in the development of the Louisiana SCORP 2020.

I urge favorable consideration of our SCORP and look forward to our state's continued partnership with the National Park Service.

Thank you

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Bel Edwards".

John Bel Edwards
Governor

cc: Billy Nungesser, Lieutenant Governor
Brandon Burris, Interim Assistant Secretary, Office of State Parks

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Louisiana SCORP 2020 was prepared for the Louisiana Division of Outdoor Recreation, Office of State Parks to evaluate the outdoor recreation needs and opportunities while establishing a framework for the goals and priorities for outdoor recreation throughout Louisiana.

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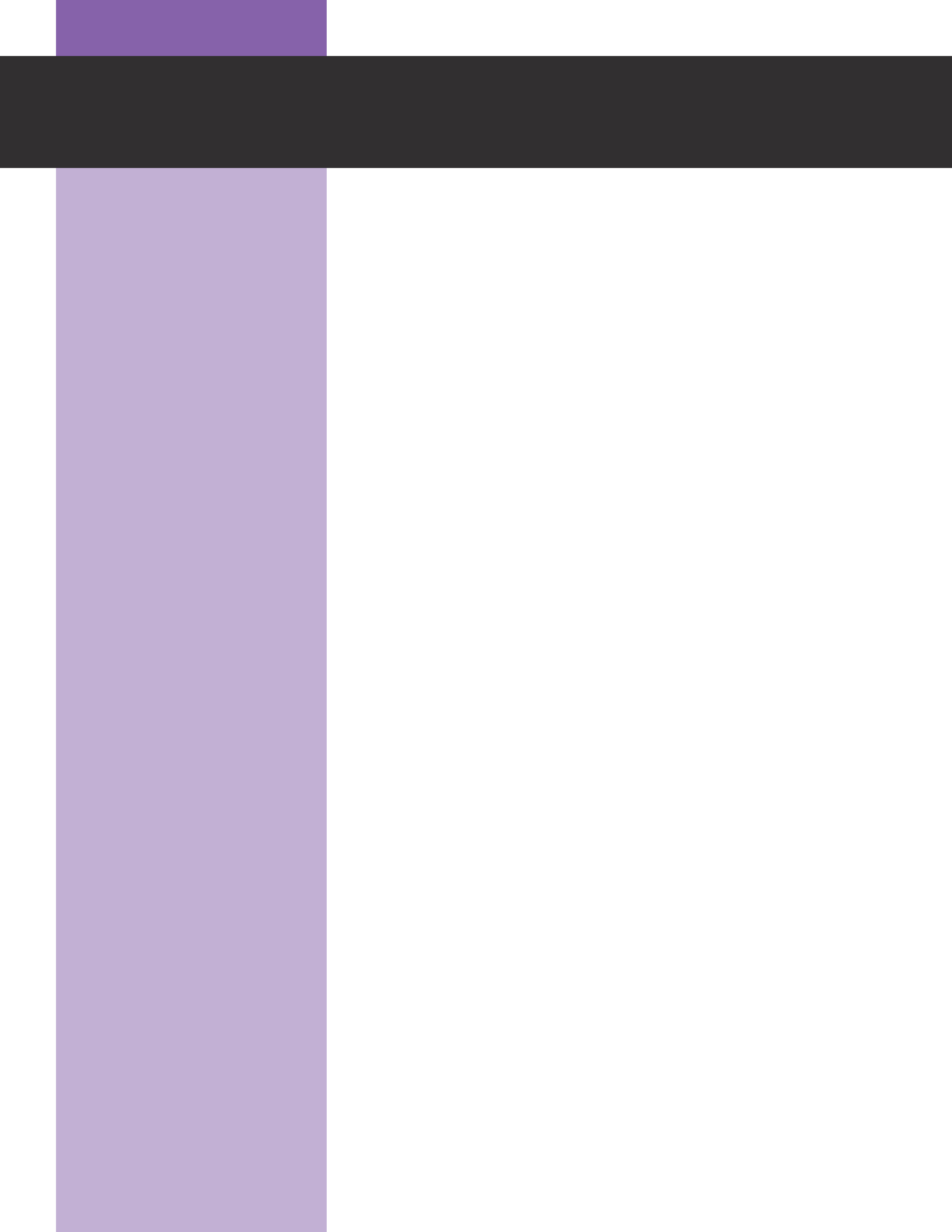
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CREDIT: TYLER DOMINGUE (VIA UNSPLASH) LAKE MARTIN, BREAUX BRIDGE, LA

What is the **SCORP**?

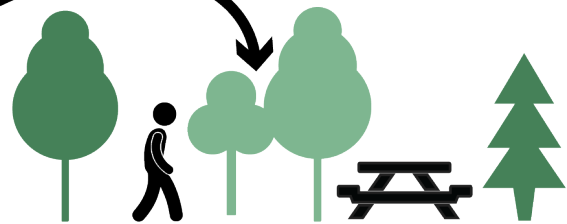
**Statewide
Comprehensive
Outdoor
Recreation
Plan**



Statewide
evaluation of
supply and
demand



Determine
LWCF Funding
Priorities



Improve outdoor
recreation in
Louisiana!

WITH A RICH CULTURAL HISTORY DEEPLY TIED TO PLACE, LOUISIANANS ENJOY AN ABUNDANCE OF OUTDOOR RESOURCES FOR LEISURE, GATHERING, AND RECREATIONAL USE.

BREAKING DOWN THE PROCESS:

The Louisiana Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is prepared every five years to evaluate the demand for and supply of outdoor recreation resources and facilities throughout the State and to help guide federal funding priorities through the use of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). For the past fifty-five years, LWCF has been an instrumental piece of federal legislation that has endowed communities across

America to preserve and develop outdoor recreational facilities and open space to ensure access to these resources for all citizens. Closer to home, LWCF has provided funding to over 231 agencies delivering outdoor recreational opportunities to Louisiana’s diverse cultural and ecological communities. The State recognizes eight regions that converge around geography, ecology, and culture to better understand subtle distinctions that identify with that locale, thus discovering each of their different outdoor recreation needs.

LISTENING TO LOUISIANA:

A state-wide survey of outdoor recreation users garnered a response from 1,622 Louisiana residents and 59 Louisiana recreation providers on a variety of outdoor recreation topics. While supplementary data is available in the full report and appendices, we have synthesized the data down to a ranked list of recommended priorities at both the state-wide and regional perspectives. Refer to Chapter 4 for more information, and to read more about your region.

TOP PRIORITIES FOR LOUISIANA’S OUTDOOR RECREATION

OUTDOOR CONNECTIVITY:

Expand trail networks and connect facilities. Add trails and multi-use pathways, as well as support facilities like water fountains, trailheads, and wayfinding signage.

ENGAGE WITH NATURE:

Preserve natural areas and create engaging recreation opportunities. Nature play areas are encouraged, as well as introducing educational signage, overlooks and observation areas, and outdoor classrooms.

FISHING AND WATER ACCESS:

Increase access and incorporate more use at the water’s edge. Focus on opportunities for bank finishing and new boat launches, as well as waterway trailheads, and support facilities like fish cleaning stations and boat or equipment rentals.

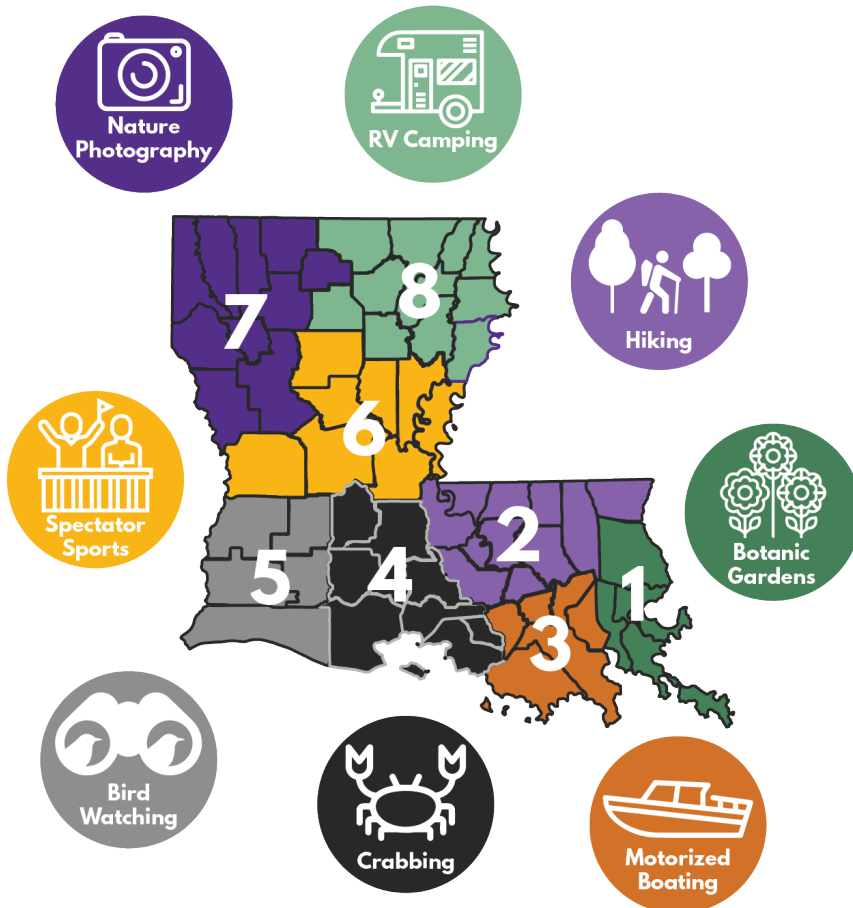
PICNICKING, GATHERING, AND CREATING MEMORIES:

Incorporate interactive moments for groups of all ages and sizes. Create a range of gathering spaces for large or small groups, interactive play spaces, and accessible support facilities, like pavilions and bathrooms so that the whole family can enjoy.

EMBRACE REGIONAL DISTINCTIONS:

Tailor your solution to your region’s needs. Each region has developed a distinct personality and while the above priorities apply across the state, individualized attention should be paid to each. Chapter 4 has further information on these distinctions.

Regional Outliers



Regional Outliers are the activities that stood out when compared to the state average. Generally, the region does this activity more than anyone else.

UNDERSTANDING THE REGIONS:

Region 1: New Orleans Area:
Let's go outside!

Region 2: Baton Rouge Area:
Let's take a hike!

Region 3: Houma-Thibodaux Area:
Let's go fishing!

Region 4: Lafayette Area:
Let's go hunting!

Region 5: Lake Charles Area:
Let's do it all in one place!

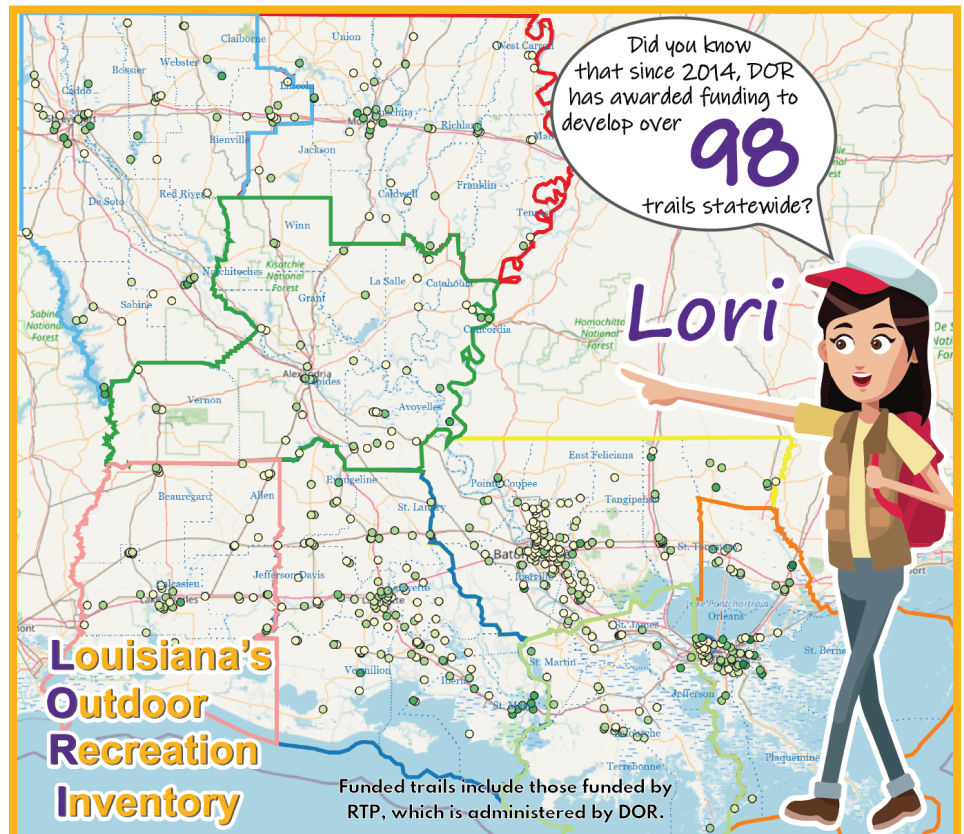
Region 6: Alexandria Area:
Let's do something new!

Region 7: Shreveport Area:
Let's go and do something fun!

Region 8: Monroe Area:
Let's get away for a while!

SAY HELLO TO LORI:

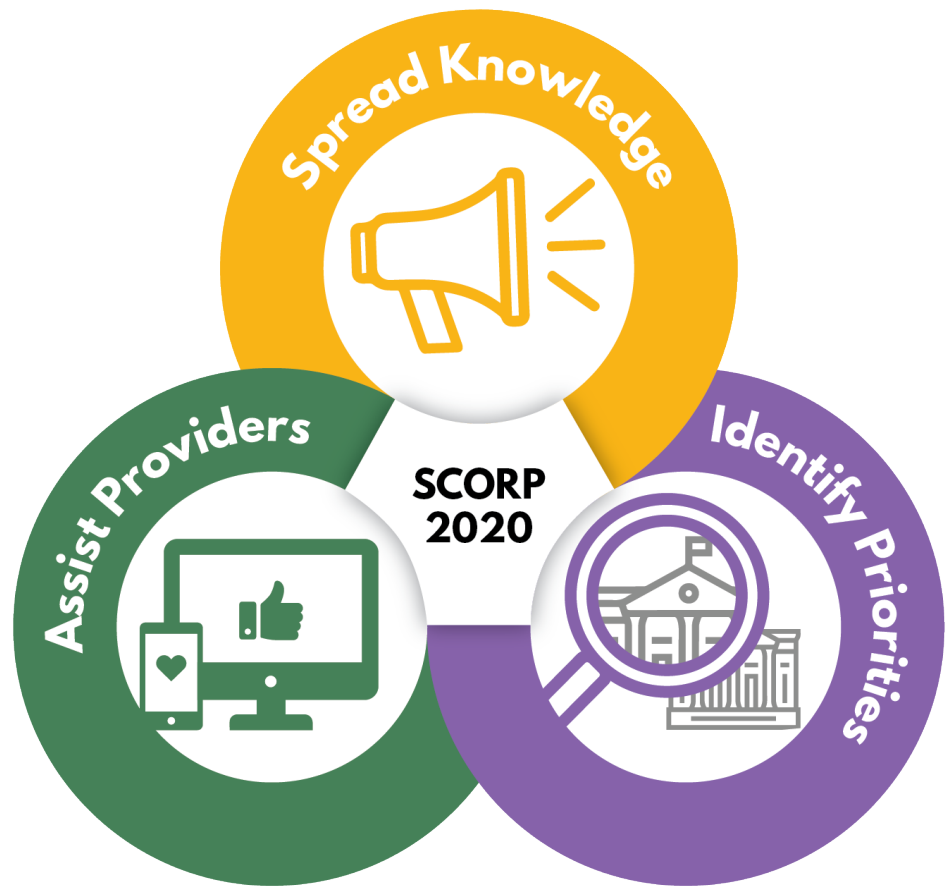
Outdoor recreation providers assisted the Louisiana Division of Outdoor Recreation (DOR) by providing geospatial data on outdoor recreation facilities to establish a robust Geographic Information System (GIS). From this information, an open data system referred to as "LORI" (Louisiana Outdoor Recreation Inventory) was developed to assist planners and the public in finding outdoor recreation opportunities! This resource is ever growing and gives recreation providers an opportunity to share their inventory data on this statewide platform. Visit www.PlayOutdoorsLA.com for more information.



USING THIS RESOURCE:

Ultimately, this SCORP document intends on leaving behind some strategic initiatives that can be achieved with teamwork and partnership for all concerned to evolve the outdoor recreation arena within Louisiana.

The SCORP is a powerful tool for the Division of Outdoor Recreation, as well as recreation planners statewide, for implementing recreation improvements across Louisiana. Use it to improve your communities and to bring new recreation opportunities to your region! Find this and other planning tools on the Division of Outdoor Recreation's website, and on PlayOutdoorsLA.com.



INITIATIVES TO ADVANCE OUTDOOR RECREATION:

Several strategic initiatives are presented in Chapter 5 as an approach to advance the outdoor recreation arena throughout Louisiana.

- 1. BROADEN OPPORTUNITIES** – As a collective, we all can amplify our efficiency and capabilities in an alliance with shared goals. These mutual aspirations will strengthen the reach and service of each community involved and should be viewed as opportunities to better serve the public.
- 2. FOSTER EXCELLENCE** – Organizations should commit to innovation by periodic reevaluation of its goals, objectives, and methods to serve its community. Assessment that is focused both internally and externally will assist with the achievement of quality.
- 3. STRENGTHEN ENGAGEMENT** – Offering a transparent method for participation, and building relationships will enable ownership, respect, and pride by the community.

In all, we trust that these strategic objectives, if employed, will offer a renewed sense of purpose and enthusiasm throughout your agency and community.

If we all focus on these tactics, the outdoor recreation space will be healthier for it, and the citizens of Louisiana will be better for it.



CREDIT: ANNE CATHRINE JENSEN (VIA UNSPLASH) NEW ORLEANS, LA

INTRODUCTION

“I’m not going to lay down in words the lure of this place. Every great writer in the land, from Faulkner to Twain to Rice to Ford, has tried to do it and fallen short. It is impossible to capture the essence, tolerance, and spirit of Louisiana in words, and to try is to roll down a road of clichés, bouncing over beignets and beads and brass bands, and it just is what it is.” – Chris Rose

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Signed into law on September 3, 1964, the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (LWCF) established the mandate to preserve, develop, and assure that all citizens have access to outdoor recreation resources. The LWCF also requires each State to prepare a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) that evaluates the demand for and supply of outdoor recreation resources and facilities in the State. The SCORP offers policy recommendations and establishes state priorities to assist with the determination of project funding through the LWCF program. The Division of Outdoor Recreation (DOR) implements the findings of the SCORP thru the OPSP scoring criteria, which guides the LWCF grant

funding decision process, as well as the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), a federal grant program also administered by DOR. On a state level, DOR offers direction via the agency website, providing resources like the SCORP, planning tools, and other guides for recreation providers. Ultimately, DOR cooperates and partners with other state and federal agencies, as well as recreation providers across the state, that look to the department for federal funding or for sharing experiences and expertise.

Administered by the National Park Service (NPS) specific requirements are stipulated when preparing the SCORP:

- Identify outdoor recreation issues of importance to the citizens,
- Evaluate the demand for and supply of outdoor recreation resources and facilities,
- Develop criteria on priorities for the Open Project Selection Process (OPSP) for project selection and funding through the LWCF,
- Provide ample opportunity for public participation,
- Describe the process and methodology in establishing the SCORP,
- Contain a reference to the State’s priorities on wetlands, consistent with Section 303 of the Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986 (EWRA),
- Certification by the Governor that ample opportunity of public participation has taken place during the development of the plan, and
- Update the plan every 5-years to maintain LWCF grant funding eligibility.

In Louisiana, the SCORP and project funding through the LWCF program is managed by Louisiana’s Division of Outdoor Recreation (DOR), an agency within the Department of Culture, Recreation & Tourism, Office of State Parks. Up to this point, the LWCF has afforded at least 231 Louisiana agencies over \$80 million of federal funding to facilitate the acquisition and development of outdoor recreation facilities and resources in all but two¹ (96.9%) Louisiana Parishes.



HOW WE WORK TOGETHER

The LWCF program offers financial assistance to states in the form of planning grants. The Division of Outdoor Recreation utilizes this grant to facilitate the creation and development of the SCORP document. Having limited staff at DOR, grants assist in expanding the SCORP team and contracting with outside professionals to develop the past five SCORP documents.





This continuing partnership adds expertise in survey development, administration and data interpretation, web design, public outreach, authorship and document design, and results in both an impressive physical document as well as an interactive web version of the SCORP, accessible to users across the state. The SCORP development team also includes GIS professionals who have advanced

the State’s GIS database capacity. The state retains an open dialogue with the NPS regional program officer and also the designated compliance officer for federal guidance on NPS requirements for the state plan development, grant awards, post completion and stewardship requirements for grant recipients. NPS annually reviews projects applications that advance to the federal level and provide valuable input into all program compliance concerns.

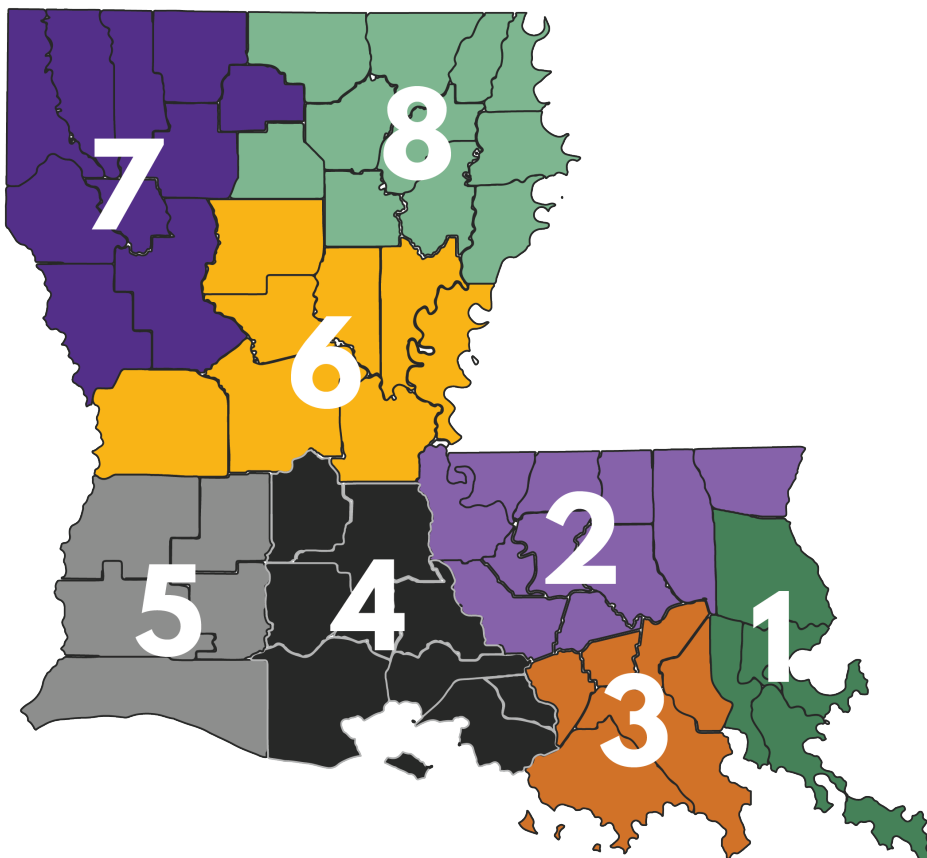
ARTICULATING LOUISIANA’S CULTURE AND PEOPLE

Nearly 4.65 million people call the Bayou State home, that’s 1.73 million households in 64 individual Parishes representing a diverse culture with a deep history that is tied to its people and place. This diversity can draw a parallel to Louisiana’s legendary cuisine that attracts visitors from across the globe. While these bold, distinctive ingredients can stand on their own, it’s the blend of these cultures which offer a taste of Louisiana that is transparent through its food, music, communities, places, and traditions we embrace our rich outdoor recreation heritage.

PLANNING REGIONS OF LOUISIANA

To better understand the nuances and variations of Louisiana, we often divide various areas into regions that might interpret cultural commonality, natural ecosystems, or geographic, political divisions. In this exercise, we have partitioned the State into the following eight regions:

- Region 1: New Orleans Area
- Region 2: Baton Rouge Area
- Region 3: Houma-Thibodaux Area
- Region 4: Lafayette Area
- Region 5: Lake Charles Area
- Region 6: Alexandria Area
- Region 7: Shreveport Area
- Region 8: Monroe Area





CREDIT: KEN LUND. BARATARIA PRESERVE

REGION 1: NEW ORLEANS AREA

(ORLEANS, JEFFERSON, ST. BERNARD, PLAQUEMINES, ST. TAMMANY PARISHES)

Home to just over 420,750 households and 24.3% of the population.

This Region encompasses the historic City of New Orleans, the brackish estuary known as Lake Pontchartrain, and the Mississippi River delta leading to the confluence of the Gulf of Mexico. These distinctive ecosystems define much of the area's abundant outdoor recreational culture that is purely Louisiana. The five parishes encompassing Region 1 offer something for every outdoor enthusiast. From hiking or biking the Tammany Trace, chartering a boat for an offshore fishing trip, or exploring one of the nine nature and birding trails of the Barataria Preserve in Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve, Region 1 will leave you looking for more.



CREDIT: DUPLANTIS DESIGN GROUP. HOWELL COMMUNITY PARK

REGION 2: BATON ROUGE AREA

(ASCENSION, EAST BATON ROUGE, EAST FELICIANA, IBERVILLE, LIVINGSTON, POINTE COUPEE, ST. HELENA, TANGIPAHOA, WEST BATON ROUGE, WEST FELICIANA, & WASHINGTON PARISHES)

Home to just over 363,130 households and 21% of the population.

The area between New Orleans and Baton Rouge along the Great River Road is Region 2, referred to as Plantation Country because of the many antebellum plantations along the way. Predominantly flat agricultural land along the river leading to bottomlands constitutes a backdrop for a variety of outdoor recreational uses. Lying east of the Mississippi River, the vastly distinctive landscape of the "Florida Parishes" includes the uplands with the Tunica Hills Wildlife Management Area, being a special treat.



CREDIT: BTNEP. BAYOU CHEVREUIL

REGION 3: HOUMA-THIBODAUX AREA

(ASSUMPTION, LAFOURCHE, ST. CHARLES, ST. JAMES, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST, AND TERREBONNE PARISHES)

Home to roughly 126,000 households and 7.3% of the population.

This Region is uniquely positioned along the coast of Louisiana in the heart of the wetlands between the Mississippi River and Atchafalaya Basin. With an abundance of waterway access, boating activity is within reach, and a way of life evident by the shipbuilding, maritime, and fishery industries. Even though fishing is a significant source of income for some, they also enjoy the more competitive aspects by participating in the many fishing rodeos held along coastal Louisiana each year. Nestled in Region 3 is the Terrebonne Loop of America's Wetland Birding Trail.

2



CREDIT: ATCHAFALAYA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

REGION 4: LAFAYETTE AREA

(ACADIA, EVANGELINE, IBERIA, LAFAYETTE, ST. LANDRY, ST. MARTIN, ST. MARY, AND VERMILLION PARISHES)

Home to 243,135 Louisiana households and 14% of the population.

The common name “Cajun” is associated with the people of South Louisiana whose ancestors migrated from Canada in the late 17th century. Region 4 is often identified as “The Heart of Cajun Country”³ and has given rise to a unique and lively genre of music and the savory flavors of traditional Cajun-Creole food. This area is inundated by bodies of water that are ripe for both fresh and saltwater fishing and include several paddle trails such as the Bayou Teche National Water Trail⁴. Home to the most extensive wetland and swamp in the United States, the Atchafalaya Basin⁵ contains a segment of America’s Wetland Birding Trail.



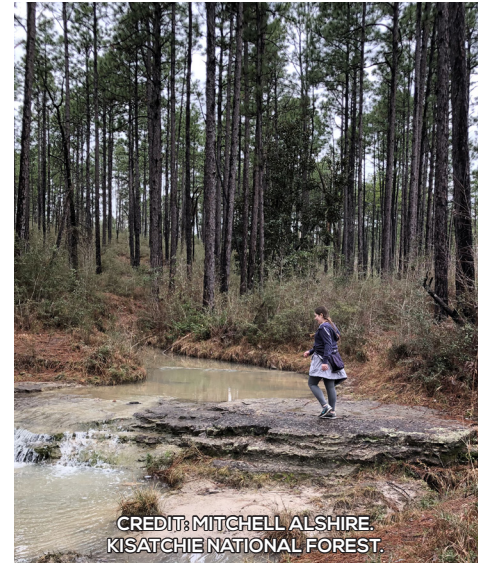
CREDIT: BY USFWS. LACASSINE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

REGION 5: LAKE CHARLES AREA

(ALLEN, BEAUREGARD, CALCASIEU, CAMERON, AND JEFFERSON DAVIS PARISHES)

Home to just under 111,500 households and 6.5% of the population.

Extending westward along the gulf coast, Region 5 embodies the same Cajun flair. The area hosts many annual festivals, the most popular being the Louisiana Pirate Festival. The Lake Charles Region’s outdoor recreation is as abundant as its festival lifestyle. “Known as Louisiana’s Outback, the Creole Nature Trail is a journey into one of America’s ‘Last Great Wildernesses,’⁶ where visitors can get an up-close look into the rich world of the marsh. “There are 28 species of mammals, more than 400 different birds, 35 amphibians and reptiles, 132 species of fish and thousands of migrating butterflies in the spring and fall.”



CREDIT: MITCHELL ALSHIRE. KISATCHEE NATIONAL FOREST.

REGION 6: ALEXANDRIA AREA

(AVOUELLES, CATAHOULA, CONCORDIA, GRANT, LASALLE, RAPIDES, VERNON, & WINN PARISHES)

Home to just over 114,380 households and 6.6% of the population.

Region 6 is known as the “Crossroads Region” because it’s where “the cultures of north and south Louisiana collide.”⁷ Dividing the woods of North Louisiana from the swamps and marshland of the south, this rural Region is identified by its gently rolling hills and forests full of long-leaf pines. Louisiana’s only national forest, Kisatchie National Forest, spans seven Louisiana parishes and is divided into five Ranger Districts, three are included in Region 6.

A diverse source of recreation: trail exploration by foot or horseback, swimming, fishing and boating in the lakes, birdwatching at the Little Cypress Recreation area⁸, or getting up close to wildlife at The Catahoula Hummingbird and Butterfly Garden⁹.



CREDIT: TIM MUELLER.
TOLEDO BEND RESERVOIR

REGION 7: SHREVEPORT AREA

(BIENVILLE, BOSSIER, CADDO, CLAIBORNE, DE SOTO, LINCOLN, NATCHITOCHEs, RED RIVER, SABINE, AND WEBSTER PARISHES)

Home to 320,420 Louisiana households and 13.5% of the population.

Region 7 is considered a “Sportsman’s Paradise,” along with Region 8. Considering the many lakes, rivers, streams, and bayous along the Toledo Bend Reservoir and the world-class fishing along the Red River, this moniker is well earned. If you are a “stop and smell the roses” kind of person, The Gardens of the American Rose Center in Shreveport is the United States’ largest park dedicated to the rose.¹⁰ The Red River is a significant recreation opportunity with a wide array of activities as it flows southward to Louisiana’s oldest permanent settlement, Natchitoches. This historically preserved city is home to the Cane River Creole National Historic Park, which aims to tell the story of the local Creole culture. After the visitors tour the two plantations, among many other historic structures, they can enjoy all the recreation that Cane River Lake has to offer.



CREDIT: BART EVERSON. POVERTY POINT
WORLD HERITAGESITE

REGION 8: MONROE AREA

(CALDWELL, EAST CARROLL, FRANKLIN, JACKSON, MADISON, MOREHOUSE, OUACHITA, RICHLAND, TENSAS, UNION, AND WEST CARROLL PARISHES)

Home to 117,565 households and 6.8% of the population.

Perhaps the most distinguished feature of Region 8 is Poverty Point World Heritage Site. Dedicated in 2014, the Monumental Earthworks of Poverty Point is an ancient architectural wonder, built hundreds of years before the great Mayan cities of Machu Picchu was constructed.¹¹ This site, which dates to [1750-1150 BC], is an outstanding example of landscape design and monumental earthwork construction by a population of hunter-fisher-gatherers.¹² South of this magnificent archaeological site is Poverty Point Reservoir, a 2,700-acre human-made lake set against a backdrop of the wide, flat Mississippi Delta bottomlands. It’s a haven for anglers, birdwatchers, families, weekend adventurers.¹³ Embodying this Sportsman’s Paradise, the Upper Ouachita National Wildlife Refuge contains more than 53,000 acres of cypress swamps and forests for hunting a wide variety of wildlife, exploring by foot or ATV and plenty of creeks and lakes for fishing. Since it’s establishment in 1978 to provide habitat for migratory birds, this Refuge is an excellent destination for bird watching and wildlife photography.¹⁴

LOUISIANA IS A GUMBO OF DIVERSE PEOPLE,
INTERESTING LANDSCAPES, AND UNIQUE CULTURES.
“GUMBO IS AN ART FORM IN LOUISIANA. THERE ARE AS
MANY RECIPES AS THERE ARE COOKS¹⁵”

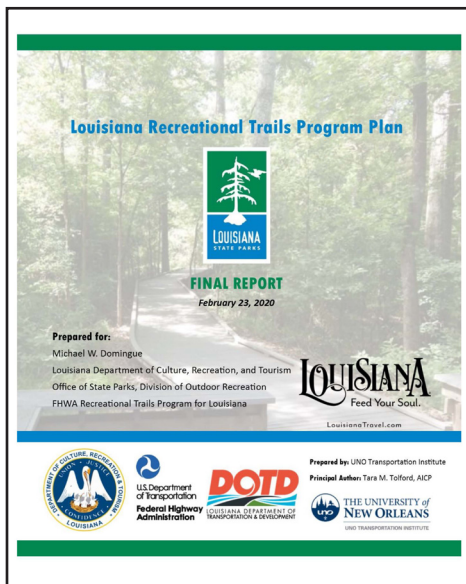
PROMOTING TEAMWORK AND PARTNERSHIP

Numerous studies and research have demonstrated the inherent value that outdoor recreation offers a community. With the vast diversity in culture throughout the State of Louisiana, our citizens deserve the same richness that avails them in our outdoor recreation opportunities. Often, the lack of information on facilities and programs, shortage of safe walkable/bikeable pathways from neighborhoods to parks, and a misunderstanding of the community needs are the reasons why we fall short of meeting significant outdoor recreation goals. Park and recreation providers, especially those in rural parishes, towns, and villages across Louisiana, are left to their own devices to “figure it out.”

The theme of this SCORP, “Promoting Teamwork and Partnership,” offers the notion of collaboration in the pursuit of advancing outdoor recreation throughout Louisiana with an approach that leverages partners to achieve success. Regardless of the role, we take cooperation, shared learning, networking, and unity between public and private recreation providers, industry service, product representatives, and the planning and design profession, together we will institute advancement in the outdoor recreation space.

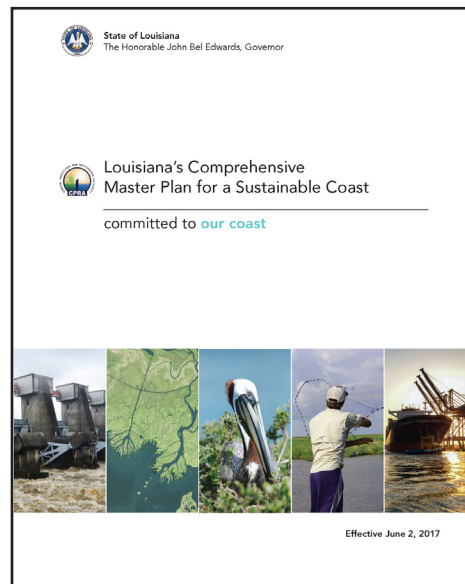
In this spirit, we offer other agency planning efforts as a reference for cooperation and insight as a way to advance outdoor recreation throughout Louisiana.

**IF EVERYONE IS
MOVING FORWARD
TOGETHER, THEN
SUCCESS TAKES CARE
OF ITSELF.¹⁶
- HENRY FORD -**



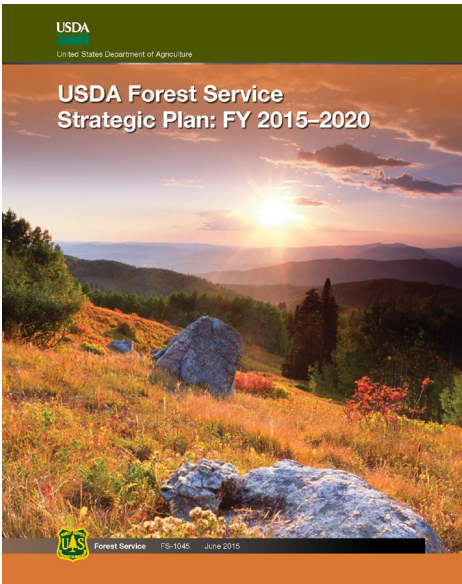
LOUISIANA RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM PLAN

February 23, 2020 – A strategic plan for the Louisiana Recreation Trails Program (LRTP) summarizes the program’s priorities, opportunities, and constraints in advancing the development of motorized, non-motorized, and paddle trails in Louisiana.



LOUISIANA'S COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN FOR A SUSTAINABLE COAST

2017 – Louisiana’s coastal protection and restoration framework strategy for a \$50 billion investment that will rebuild and fortify land, reduce community flood risk, and establish habitat to support coastal ecosystems. While this is the State’s Coastal Master Plan utilizing federal and State funding for coastal Louisiana, it does share the common goal of the Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986 (EWRA) in that of wetland conservation within the coastal zone.

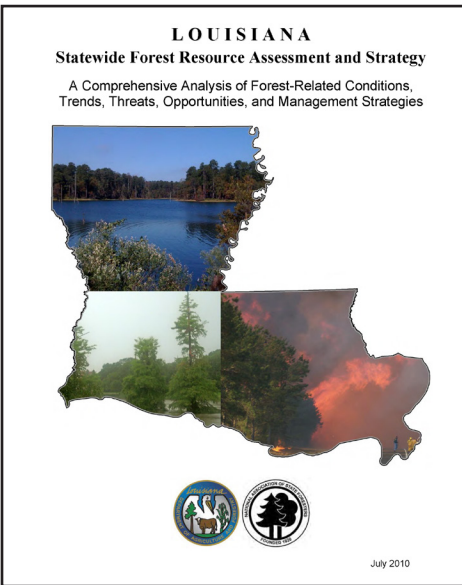


USDA FOREST SERVICE STRATEGIC PLAN

FY 2015-2020 , 2015 – While Kisatchie National Forest has a specific management plan, the Forest Service’s Strategic Plan is a valuable resource to understand better USDA’s strategy of sustaining forests and grasslands while providing benefits to the public. Additional goals of the Forest Service strive for high-performance and transfer of knowledge to others.

MASTER PLAN FOR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS AND REFUGES

2014 – This plan is a strategy for managing Louisiana’s 1.6 million acres of public lands that offer citizens the use of abundant resources for hunting, fishing, and birding opportunities.



LOUISIANA STATEWIDE FOREST RESOURCE ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGY

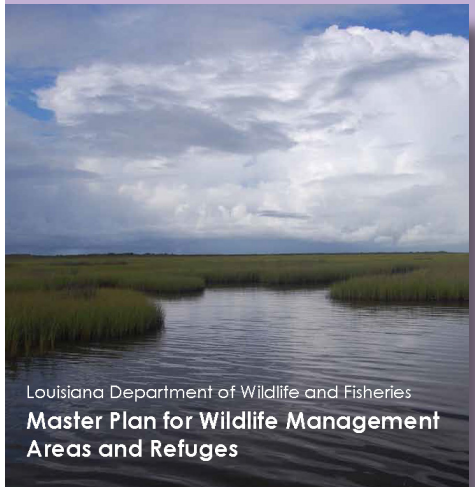
July 2010 – A report by the Louisiana Office of Forestry that addresses conservation and protection of forest within the State while enhancing it for public benefit.

STATUS AND TRENDS OF WETLANDS IN THE CONTERMINOUS UNITED STATES

2004 to 2009 , 2010 – This is a report to Congress by the US Fish & Wildlife Service depicting the trends around wetland loss/gains as required by the Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986 (EWRA).

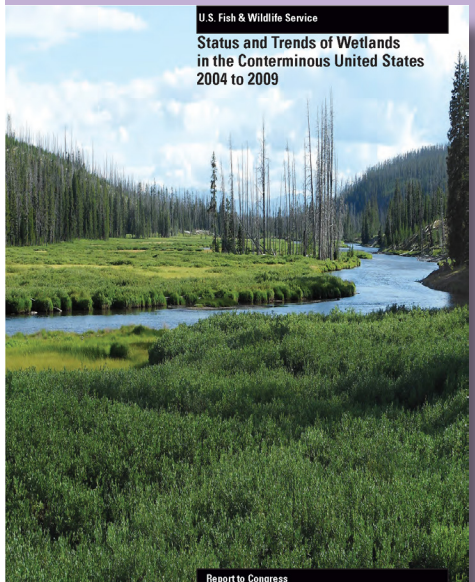
LEFT TOP
Cover of the USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan

LEFT BOTTOM
Cover of the Louisiana Statewide Forest Resource Assessment And Strategy



RIGHT TOP
Cover of the Master Plan for Wildlife Management Areas and Refuges

RIGHT BOTTOM
Cover of the Status and Trends of Wetlands in the Conterminous United States



PLANNING PROCESS

As prescribed in the SCORP requirements by the National Park Service, the planning and eventual implementation of this document requires a description of the process and methodology employed.

PROJECT PLANNING:

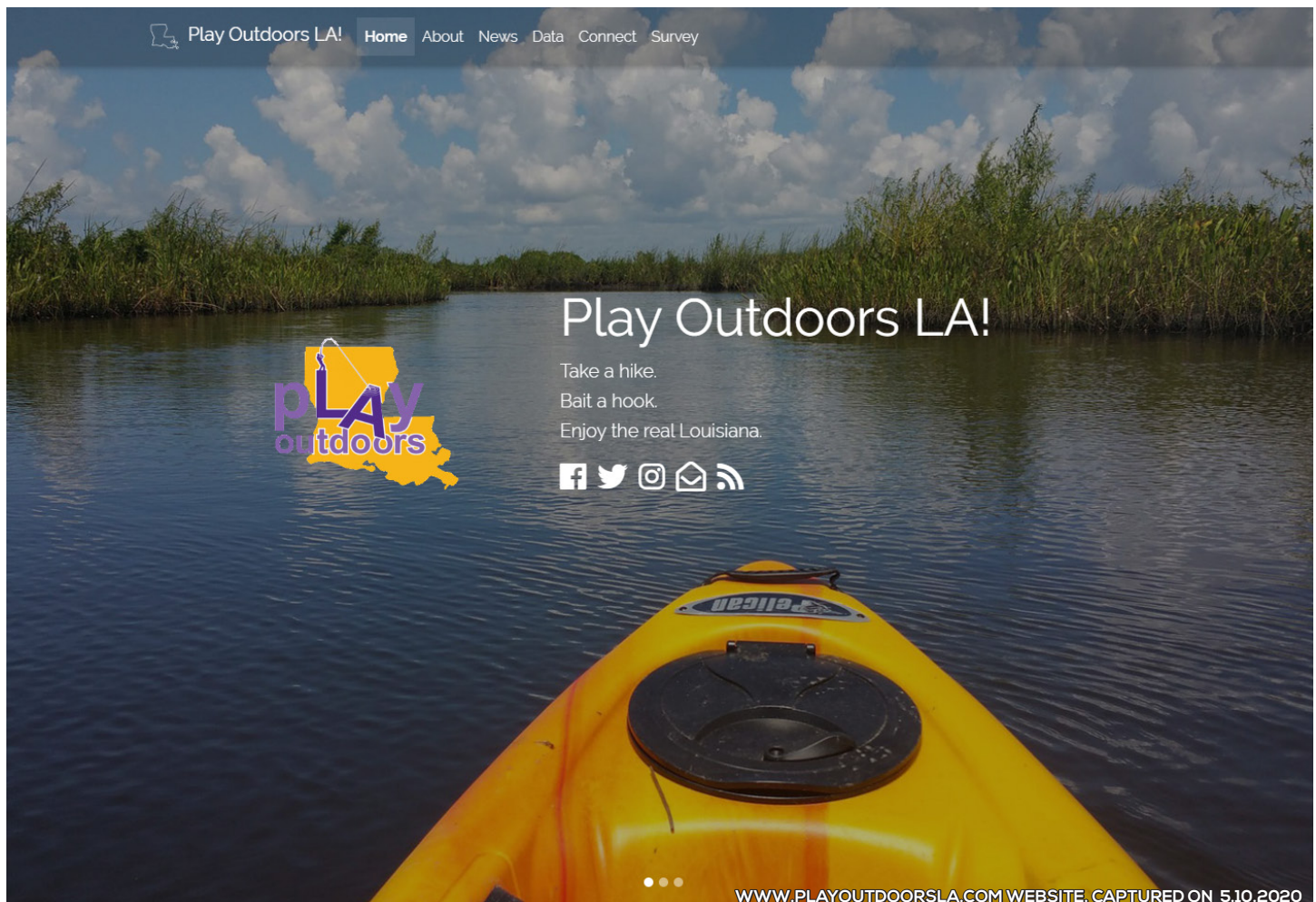
A strategic work plan outlined the process in preparing the 2020 Louisiana SCORP. Two online portals were established to provide efficient project communications, 1) between the consultant team and DOR, and 2) between the consultant team, DOR, Task Force Committee (TFC), and the SCORP Advisory Team (SAT).

WEB-BASED PUBLIC FORUM:

The website, www.PlayOutdoorsLA.com, was established as a forum to collect data and disseminate information regarding outdoor recreation and the SCORP. At the time of publication, the site has generated over 440 unique visitors, and will be maintained by DOR as an independent clearinghouse of outdoor recreation data.

SURVEYS:

Surveys were prepared and distributed to recreation providers and users around the State with publicity on social media, newspaper advertisements, press releases, and solicitation through an acquired mail list. The data collected from 1,622 survey responses provided valuable insights on outdoor recreation and are summarized within this document.



GET YOUR PARK ON THE MAP
SEND IN YOUR INFO

Comite River Park Trail System

Comite Acquisition

Parish: East Baton Rouge

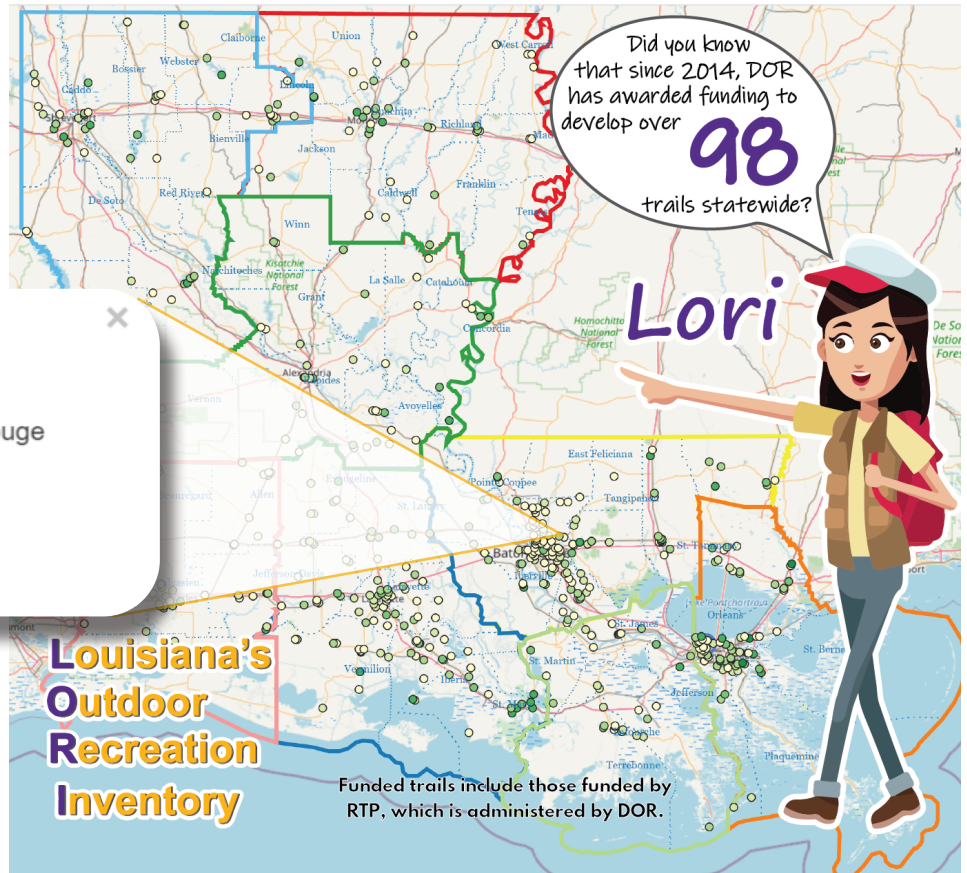
Nearest City: Central

Sponsor: BREC

Project Number(s): 22-00492

Quality teamwork and partnerships are only as good as the data. As we improve the database of recreation opportunities and facilities across the state, we need your help!

Click the link or head to www.PlayOutdoorsLA.com to find out more about how you can help and how to submit your facility information.



GIS MAPPING:

A long-term goal of DOR is to provide a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) platform to assist with location-based open data associated with outdoor recreation facilities throughout Louisiana. The consultant team petitioned recreation providers for new data to augment existing records previously collected by DOR. Maps and datasets of LWCF funded projects are now available for public use/download on the website at no cost with an aspiration of additional data being populated in both a mobile-friendly and robust desktop analysis platform.

PREPARE AND SUBMIT SCORP 2020:

The development of the SCORP 2020 document includes an evaluation of numerous datasets (demographic, public opinion and desires, trends, and inequalities) associated with outdoor recreation in Louisiana. This analysis identifies recommendations, goals, and priorities to fulfill the needs of Louisiana outdoor enthusiasts. The manuscript was written to appeal to a variety of audiences and include 1) a highly graphic, easy to reference executive summary, 2) a magazine quality, concise report that provides relevant information and detail for ease of reading, and 3) appendices that offer additional technical information for the devoted researcher, all of which are Web ADA compliant and easily downloadable from www.PlayOutdoorsLA.com.



CREDIT: BREC

INVESTIGATING LOUISIANA NEEDS

METHODS OF OUTREACH

Community outreach is essential to understanding the needs of all people affected by one's planning effort. Our multi-tiered approach of public engagement used numerous methods with mixed results to drive participation to the user survey and are described here:

NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENTS:

Eight full-color ¼-page ads were published in newspapers within each region to achieve a distribution to 198,300 Louisiana citizens on November 17, 2019.

- Region 1: The Times-Picayune | The New Orleans Advocate is distributed in Orleans Parish plus seven surrounding Parishes with a distribution of 80,000.

- Region 2: The Advocate is distributed in East Baton Rouge Parish plus the 11 surrounding Parishes with a distribution of 54,000.

- Region 3: The Houma Courier is distributed in Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes with a distribution of 5,000.

- Region 4: The Acadiana Advocate has distribution in Lafayette Parish plus the 10 surrounding Parishes with a delivery of 7,500.

- Region 5: The American Press is distributed in Calcasieu Parish plus the seven surrounding Parishes with a distribution of 5,000.

- Region 6: The Town Talk was distributed in Rapides Parish plus the six surrounding Parishes with a distribution of 10,098.

- Region 7: The News-Star was distributed in Ouachita Parish plus the 11 surrounding Parishes with a distribution of 13,691.

- Region 8: The Shreveport Times was distributed in Caddo Parish plus the 11 surrounding Parishes with a distribution of 23,034.



playoutdoorsla.com

Please complete the survey at the above website to help us better understand your outdoor recreation needs. We're striving to make Louisiana Outdoor Recreation better for everyone, and we need your voice to be heard.

The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is a federally required

planning effort to identify the needs and priorities of outdoor recreation throughout the State. This 5-year plan establishes the criteria for funding made available to Louisiana communities for outdoor recreation projects through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program.

WITH SUPPORT FROM



FULL COLOR 1/4 PAGE ADS

RESULTS:

The newspaper advertisement approach yielded a total of eighteen survey responses (1% of total responses) from 198,300 Louisiana residents with a 0.009% response rate at the cost of \$267 per response.

TAKE-AWAY:

The transition from print to digital formats has responded to changing readership patterns. While feature stories continue to be read, the public tends to see ads because of online searches. Legal notices in newspapers seem to be an ineffective means of sharing a message except for those searching for keywords in your topic.

POSTCARD DISTRIBUTION:

We acquired a list of 10,000 Louisiana residents with postal and email addresses. The file was proportional to Louisiana's household population, evenly distributed by zip code. Subsequently, we professionally printed 10,000 4-1/4" x 6" postcards with a graphically appealing invitation to participate in the online user survey. Also included was a toll-free phone number for participation by individuals without internet access or a computer. Our efforts can be summarized below:

- Postcard design, mail list acquisition, and printing occurred during October and November 2019.
- Emailed Notice: On November 26, 2019, an email notice was distributed to the 10,000 residents

notifying them that they would be receiving a postcard in the mail to participate in the user survey. A link to the online survey offered the opportunity to participate immediately. This initial email realized a 5% open rate and a 0.1% click-thru rate yielding 10 survey responses.

- Postcards Mailed: That same day, a mailing of 10,000 postcards via the U.S. Postal Service (99.2% verified delivery) yielded 27 survey responses.
- Emailed Reminder: On December 18, 2019, a subsequent email was distributed to the 10,000 residents reminding them to participate in the User survey. A link to the online survey offered the opportunity to participate immediately. This reminder email realized a 5% open rate and a 0.1% click-thru rate yielding 10 survey responses.

RESULTS:

In all, the postcard distribution approach yielded a total of 56 survey responses (3.12% of total responses) from 10,000 Louisiana residents with a 0.56% response rate at the cost of \$96 per response.

TAKE-AWAY:

The mailboxes of many recipients are crammed with junk mail, most of which are immediately discarded. Email marketing campaigns to a "cold" list is challenging. Techniques exist to improve open rates, but email messages sent to "warm" or presumably interested lists – in this case, persons regularly participating in some form of outdoor recreation – will produce better results.



**HELP LOUISIANA
PLAN FOR
PLAY**

SCORP 2020

Louisiana's Division of Outdoor Recreation needs your help! Outdoor recreation planners across the state are gearing up for their next improvements and they need your input to make that happen! Take the survey today.

PLAYOUTDOORSLA.COM

USER POSTCARD

On the left is the postcard that was mailed to residents across the state to publicise and encourage them to participate in the SCORP 2020.

COMMON DEFINITIONS AND USAGES

TRAFFIC: Traffic, in an online context, is made up of individual users that visit websites. It is useful for understanding how people move around the internet.

REFERRAL: A referral is when someone finds a link posted or shared on a site or platform, clicks it, and travels to a secondary site. The secondary site considers this a referral and can count how many referrals come from different sites.

RESPONSE RATE: The number of people answering the survey divided by the number of people invited to the survey, conveyed as a percentage. If a group of 10 people was asked to complete a survey, and only five did, the response rate for that group would be 50%.

USERS: How social media platforms describe the people that use their platform on a daily or monthly basis. Higher user counts means the platform is more popular.

ENGAGEMENT: Engagement is an interaction a user has with a post or other online content. Common methods of engagement are: views, shares, and comments.

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR'S PRESS RELEASE:

On November 16, 2019, Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser issued a press release to newspapers, news websites, radio, and television stations around the State publicizing the online survey and the opportunity for the public to voice their opinion on the future of Outdoor Recreation throughout Louisiana. As a result of the press release, the following outlets picked up the notice.

- **Radio / Television Stations:** KATC in Lafayette, WWL in New Orleans, and WVLA-TV in Baton Rouge televised or reported the press release, which resulted in 239 referrals.

RESULTS:

As a result of the Lieutenant Governor's press release, a total of 239 identified referrals were made to the online portal with a subsequent 85 completed surveys or a 35.6% response rate at the cost of \$0.14 per response.

TAKE-AWAY:

Circulating your message through established communication channels generates the most cost-effective and positive results.

AGENCY WEBSITE POSTING:

After the Lieutenant Governor's press release, several agencies helped promote the online survey through their website. The

following top traffic referrals are noted.

- **RAOutdoors.com:** Reserve America, the online reservation platform for State Parks led the promotion of the online survey and resulted in 364 survey referrals.

- **PlayOutdoorsLA.com:** Our own SCORP website, www.PlayOutdoorsLA.com, followed with 348 survey referrals.

- **CRT.state.LA.us:** Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism's website drove 233 referrals.

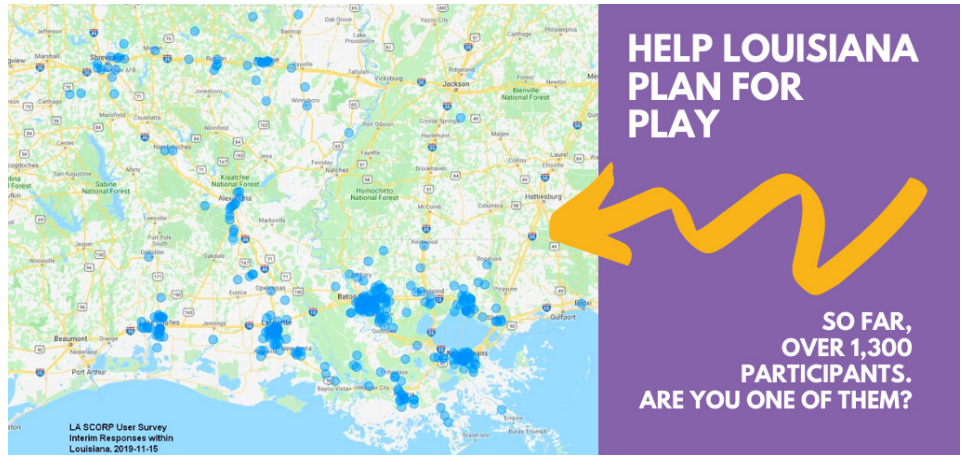
- **WLF.Louisiana.gov:** Louisiana's Department of Wildlife and Fisheries rounded out the top-performing websites with 78 survey referrals.

RESULTS:

In all, a total of 1,075 referrals were made to online portals of other sites resulting in 633 completed surveys or a 58.9% response rate at the cost of \$0.02 per response.

TAKEAWAY:

Advertising and piggybacking on existing communication channels to receptive audiences are highly effective and efficient from a cost standpoint. Cross-linking and referrals from established sites to your new "authoritative" site is beneficial to build your brand and generate traffic to your site.



SOCIAL MEDIA:

Networks of online digital communities evolved over the past twenty years to approximately 2.95 billion users¹⁷ worldwide in 2019¹⁸. These technological advances have achieved substantive value and productivity in the sharing of information¹⁹. The Louisiana SCORP 2020 established a social media marketing campaign to garner public engagement through a variety of platforms.

- Facebook: With 248 million monthly users in North America²⁰, at an average age of 40.5²¹, Facebook is currently the largest platform in use.
- Instagram: Focusing on photograph and video content, nearly 107.2 million Instagram users are from the United States²². 35% of users are between 25 and 34 years old, with 21.7% in the 18 to 24 age group²³.
- Twitter: Home to 68 million US users that are generally viewed as younger, Twitter is like a free speech platform for real-time information and reactions to current events in the world²⁴.

RESULTS:

Our social media marketing campaign, posts, and friend referrals drove 1,440 hits to the online portal with a subsequent 928 completed surveys or a 64.4% response rate at the cost of \$0.22 per response while utilizing existing networks to promote the campaign. Exponentially higher results could have been achieved with a pre-established and fully engaged association of social media networks.

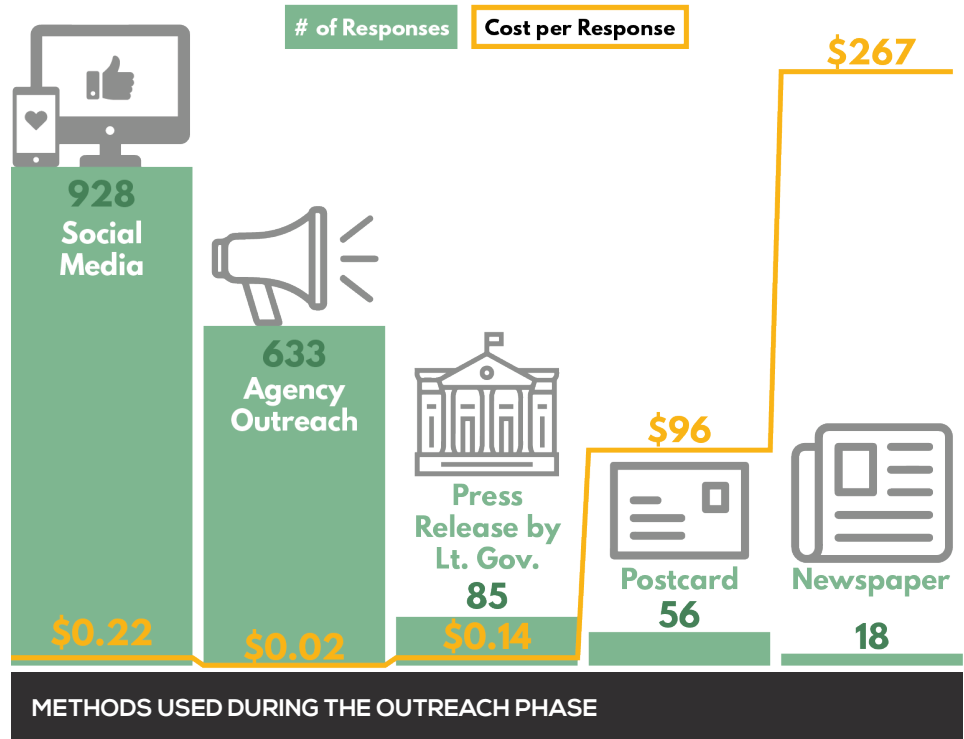
TAKEAWAY:

Today, people are staring at their phones. Social media is by far the most effective method of promotion to a broad audience. The process cannot be rushed, and you will not likely experience immediate success from a brand-new social media presence. The strategy is to capitalize on other established streams and sites to distribute your message and strengthen your brand. Paid social media advertising can also be useful in reaching geographically specific audiences who are not being reached through organic methods.

MORE DEFINITIONS AND USAGES

TARGETING – The online marketing practice of identifying a specific audience based upon their unique geography, behavior, or demographics, to deliver a message that is relevant to that visitor in relation to the trait pursued.

Effective Outreach Methods



The above graph compares the various outreach methods used during the process and their relative reach. Methods were considered more successful, the lower the cost of each response.



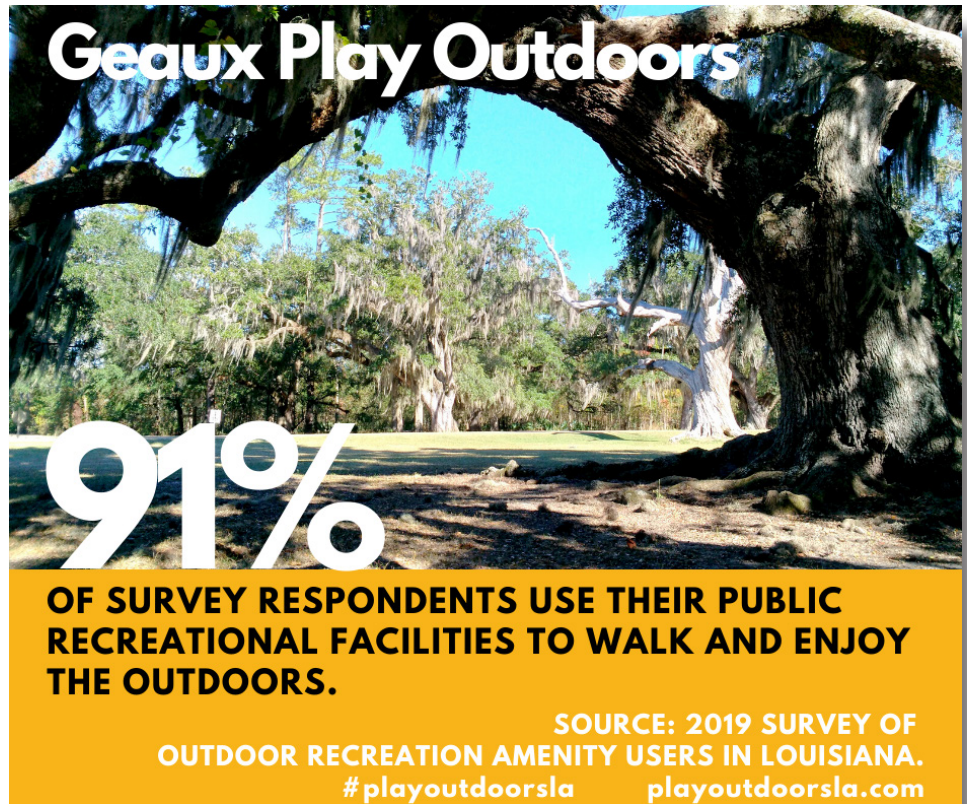
SHIFTS IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The shifts in messaging from traditional media to social platforms over the past decade have intensified in recent years due to the widespread availability of cellular phones, the expansion and speed increases of mobile data networks, and the lowering costs of both. Once a luxury, powerful smartphones with unlimited data plans are now seen as a necessity by many. Nearly all age groups and income levels can be reached through this mode of communication.



The public outreach efforts undertaken in this study reinforced the notion that social media is the most effective and efficient method of reaching a large and broad audience. One challenge is that the audience reached may not be sufficiently diverse or the viewer may tend to follow channels of like-minded personalities having similar interests. Targeted social media ads are one method of mitigating this challenge. A second is intentionally cross-posting into demographically different interest groups. The success this project enjoyed from social media and website promotion is almost entirely due to distributing the messages through well-established websites and social media channels, thereby benefiting from existing audiences.

Obtaining a statistically valid, and geographically distributed response is becoming challenging to achieve as two trends continue. First is the decline in land-line home telephones. Calls are much more easily screened (and not answered) when received on a cellular phone. Secondly, most homes are inundated with “junk” mail, so the pieces of mail sent on behalf of a project need to stand out visually to be noticed. In today’s competitive marketplace, it’s becoming increasingly necessary to offer incentives and rewards to motivate persons to provide a response. Types and values of prizes may vary and should be tailored to the intended audience. Identify what motivates your target audience to follow your call to action, or provide their information.

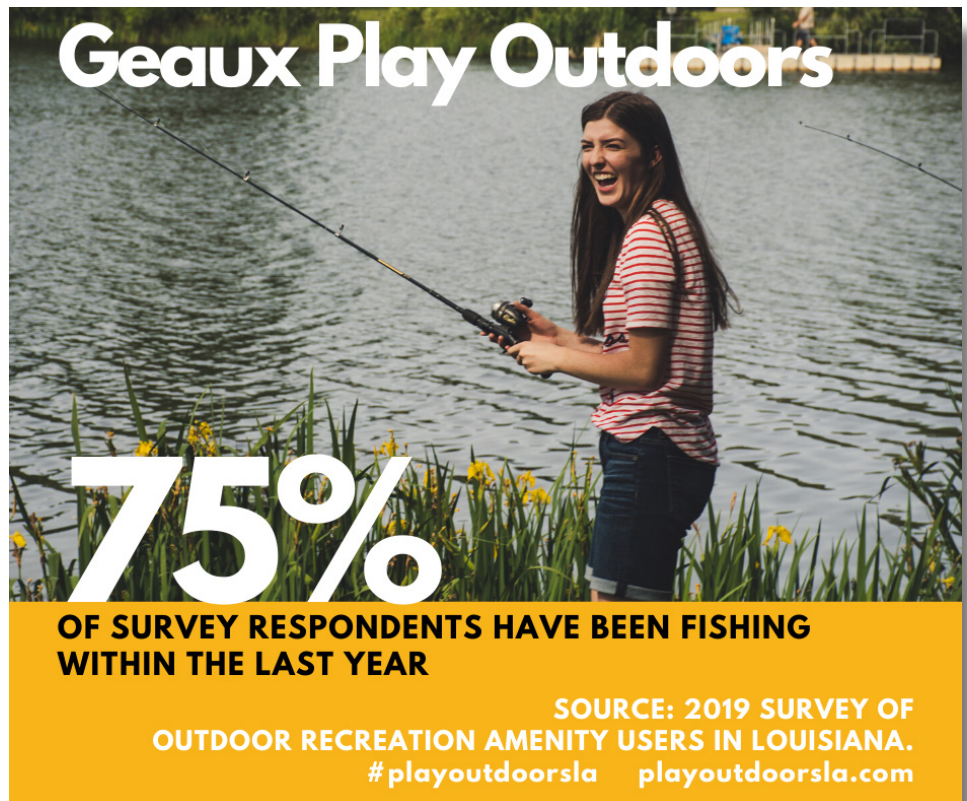


Geaux Play Outdoors

91%

OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS USE THEIR PUBLIC RECREATIONAL FACILITIES TO WALK AND ENJOY THE OUTDOORS.

SOURCE: 2019 SURVEY OF
OUTDOOR RECREATION AMENITY USERS IN LOUISIANA.
#playoutdoorsla playoutdoorsla.com



Geaux Play Outdoors

75%

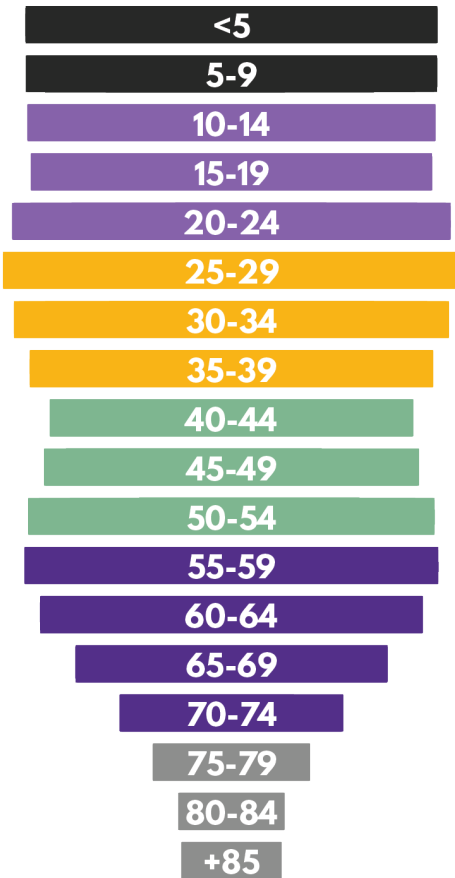
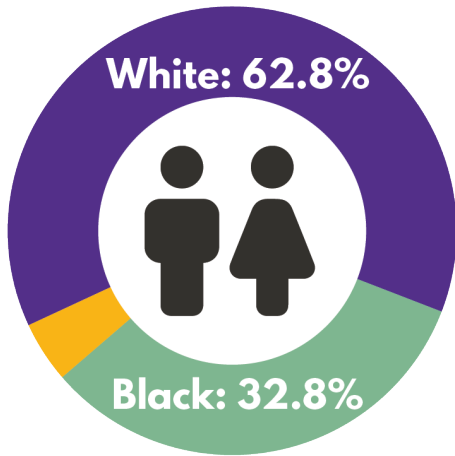
OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS HAVE BEEN FISHING WITHIN THE LAST YEAR

SOURCE: 2019 SURVEY OF
OUTDOOR RECREATION AMENITY USERS IN LOUISIANA.
#playoutdoorsla playoutdoorsla.com

SOCIAL MEDIA WAS USED TO PUBLICLY SHARE EARLY USER SURVEY RESULTS ABOVE GRAPHICS PRODUCED BY: FRANKLIN ASSOCIATES

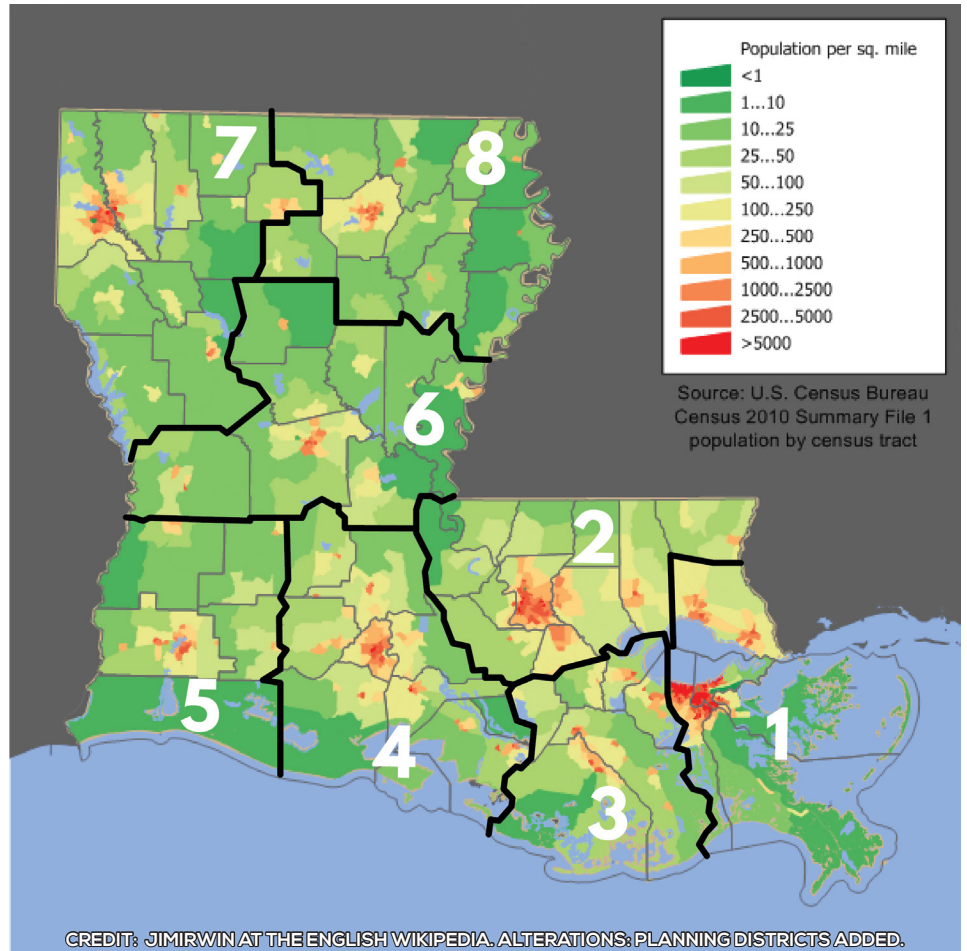
Louisiana Households:
1,728,360

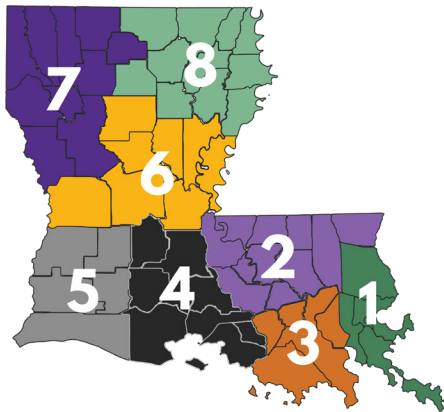
Louisiana Population:
4,670,724



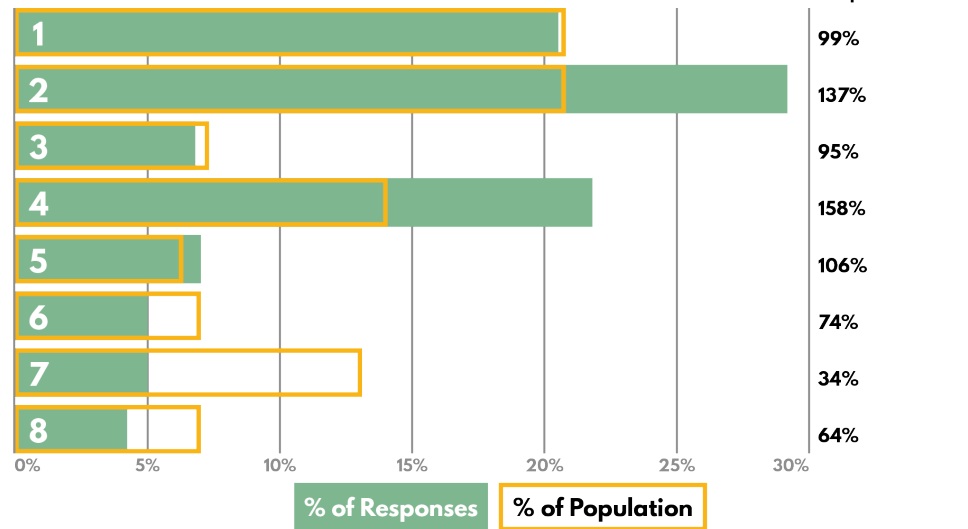
LOUISIANA DEMOGRAPHICS

The graphic on the right represents overall Louisiana demographics using the most up-to-date information available at the point of publication. It does not represent the demographics of survey responses. The user survey did not mandate that participants complete the demographic portion, therefore an accurate comparison is impossible. Of those that did choose to complete the demographic portion of the survey, the response rate for black families was under-represented, while white families and other minority families were over-represented.





Response Rate Per Region

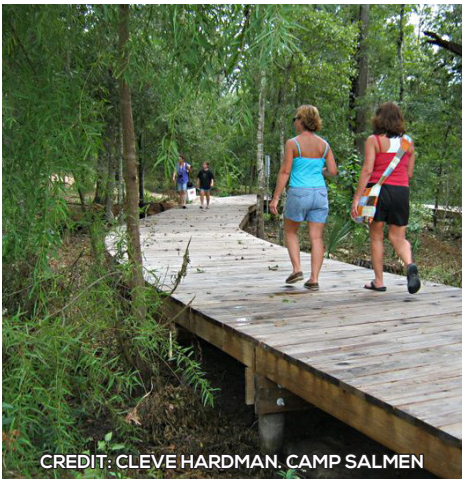


RECREATION USERS SPEAK

Following a multi-pronged outreach approach, discussed in detail earlier in this chapter, the Outdoor Recreation User Survey received 1622 distinct user responses from across the state. The survey asked participants various questions about the activities they partake in, as well as their feelings about multiple public outdoor recreation priorities and attempted to gather user sentiments towards outdoor recreation.

The graph above compares each region’s population with it’s response rate for the survey. Regions 2 and 4, the Baton Rouge and Lafayette areas, are over-represented in the findings, with Regions 7 and 8, the Shreveport and Monroe areas, being under-represented.





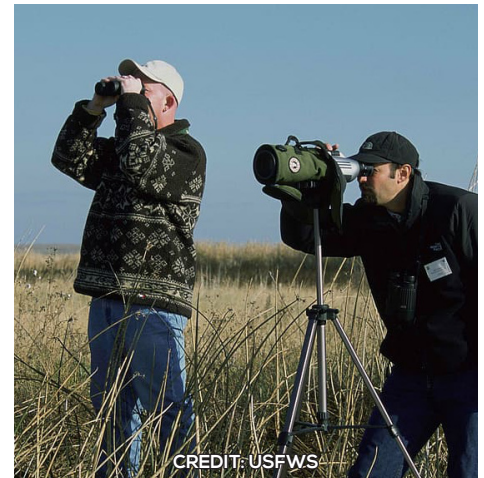
CREDIT: CLEVE HARDMAN. CAMP SALMEN



CREDIT: JAMES TAYLOR. BREC PERKINS ROAD PARK



CREDIT: JAMES TAYLOR. BAYOU MANCHAC



CREDIT: USFWS

STATEWIDE TOP 10 ACTIVITIES:

Users were asked how frequently they participated in a list of various activities ranging from walking to jet-skiing. Top activities were determined by how many total users participated in the last 12 months.

1. WALKING/NATURE WALKS:

An overwhelming majority of users reported that their top activities included both walking and going on nature walks. These two options were consolidated as they had considerable overlap and few distinctions. This category could include activities like walking on a sidewalk within a park, walking in a neighborhood, or walking on a trail within a natural or undeveloped forested area.

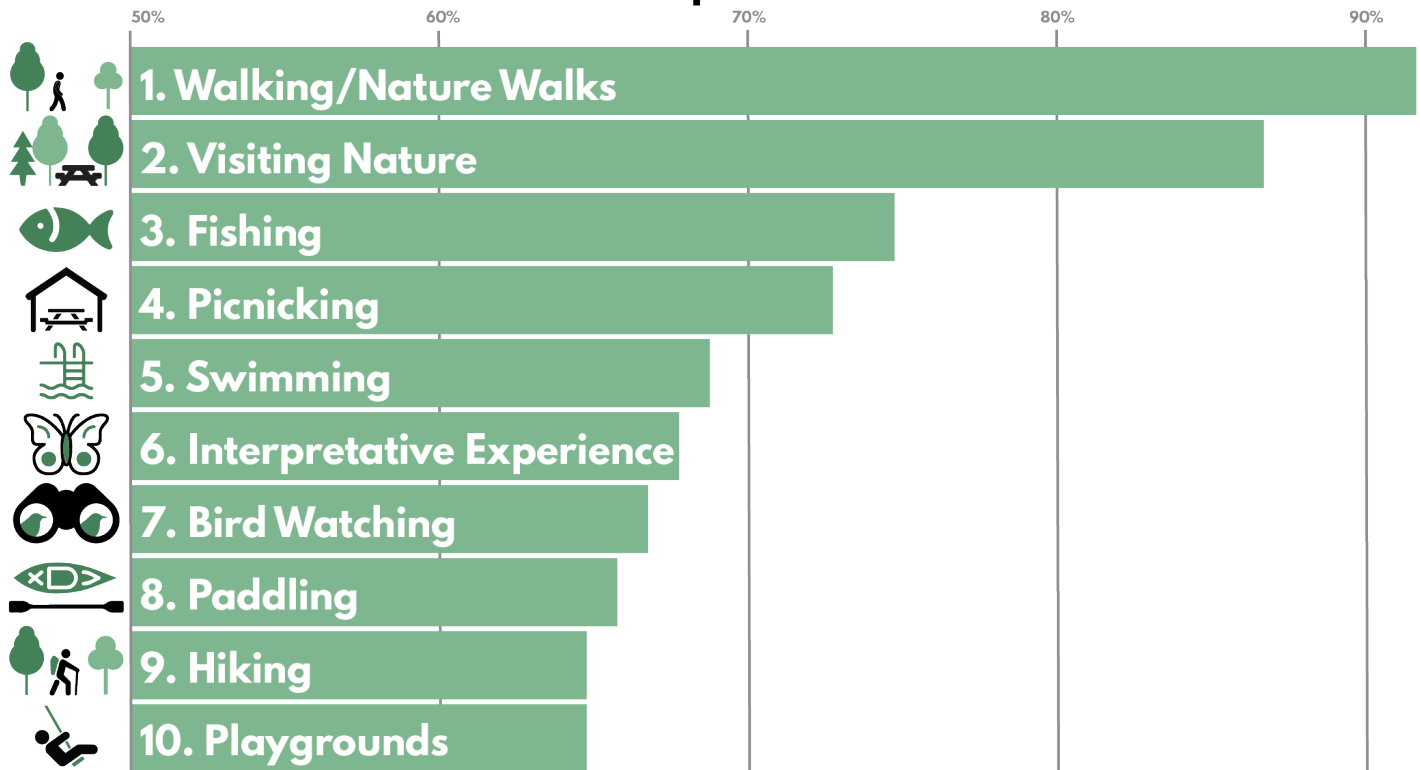
2. VISITING NATURE: The activity of visiting natural areas ranked highly among participants. It could be as simple as sitting on a park bench under a tree, or visiting a nature preserve, or hiking in Kisatchie National Forest. Responders simply enjoy getting out and experiencing natural, undeveloped spaces.

3. FISHING: Louisiana is known as the Sportsman’s Paradise for a reason, and the strong fishing community illustrates that here. Fishing, as described in the survey, could include bank fishing along any number of rivers or bayous, taking a boat out to a launch site, kayak fishing, or being a part of a guided offshore fishing excursion.

4. PICNICKING: Included in the Outdoor Park Activities section, picnicking can encompass a range of settings. From getting the kids out of the house with a simple bag lunch at the park to a large family gathering with all the fixings, Louisianans look forward to eating, meeting, and creating memories outdoors.

5. SWIMMING: Swimming outdoors, as included in this survey, is understood to mean swimming in outdoor public facilities, swimming in natural bodies of water, and may consist of visiting splash pads and other water-play features.

Statewide Top 10 Activities



TOP 10 ACTIVITIES

Top activities were calculated by the total number of residents who reported partaking in that activity at least once a year. Results are weighted to remove slight variations in total responses.

6. INTERPRETATIVE EXPERIENCE (NATURE PROGRAMS / SELF-GUIDED TOURS): Visiting a nature center and arboretums are sure bets to describe this priority. However, providing designated trails and boardwalks through one of Louisiana’s distinctive ecosystems with interpretative signage is another example.

7. BIRD WATCHING: With a vocal bird watching community in the state, this activity refers to the specific action of visiting a natural, generally protected, and undisturbed outdoor space, to identify local bird populations and to view migratory birds species.

8. PADDLING: Paddling includes canoeing, kayaking, rafting, and stand-up paddleboarding. Canoe campers and kayak fishers may have included this activity in their responses as well, as these groups have a small but dedicated following.

9. HIKING: Hiking/backpacking can consist of anything from a quick 1-hour hike through a local natural area, a robust group trip through Tunica Hills, or multi-day backpacking and camping excursion through Kisatchie National Forest.

10. PLAYGROUNDS: Worded in the survey as “visiting playgrounds” and included in the Park Activities section, this activity is mostly straightforward. It could involve visiting age-appropriate play features at a large city park, or a simple swing set down the street. Not included in playgrounds are unprogrammed open spaces that could be used for a variety of free-play activities.

STATEWIDE RECREATION ATTITUDES:

The following questions gauged user ideals and attitudes towards outdoor recreation, using a sliding scale from zero to 100.

How well do you think state and local outdoor recreation areas and programs current meet you and your household needs?

Responses were clustered in the 20-80 point range, with few users feeling very strongly, positively or negatively. Region 5, reported the highest satisfaction and was also the only area to out-perform the statewide average on every question.

How satisfied are you with the amount and quality of public access to bodies of water near your home?

Results were evenly dispersed along the scale and an average of 52 points is representative of feelings state wide. Region 3 reported the lowest satisfaction of their water access of any region. This could be related to the fact that they partake in water-based activities more than anyone else, and as such, they may have the highest standards.

How important is access to a trail network that connects outdoor recreation opportunities?

Trails have been an important component in past SCORPs and this edition is no different. Well connected facilities benefit communities at large.

How important to you and your household is the availability of parks, trails, and outdoor recreation facilities?

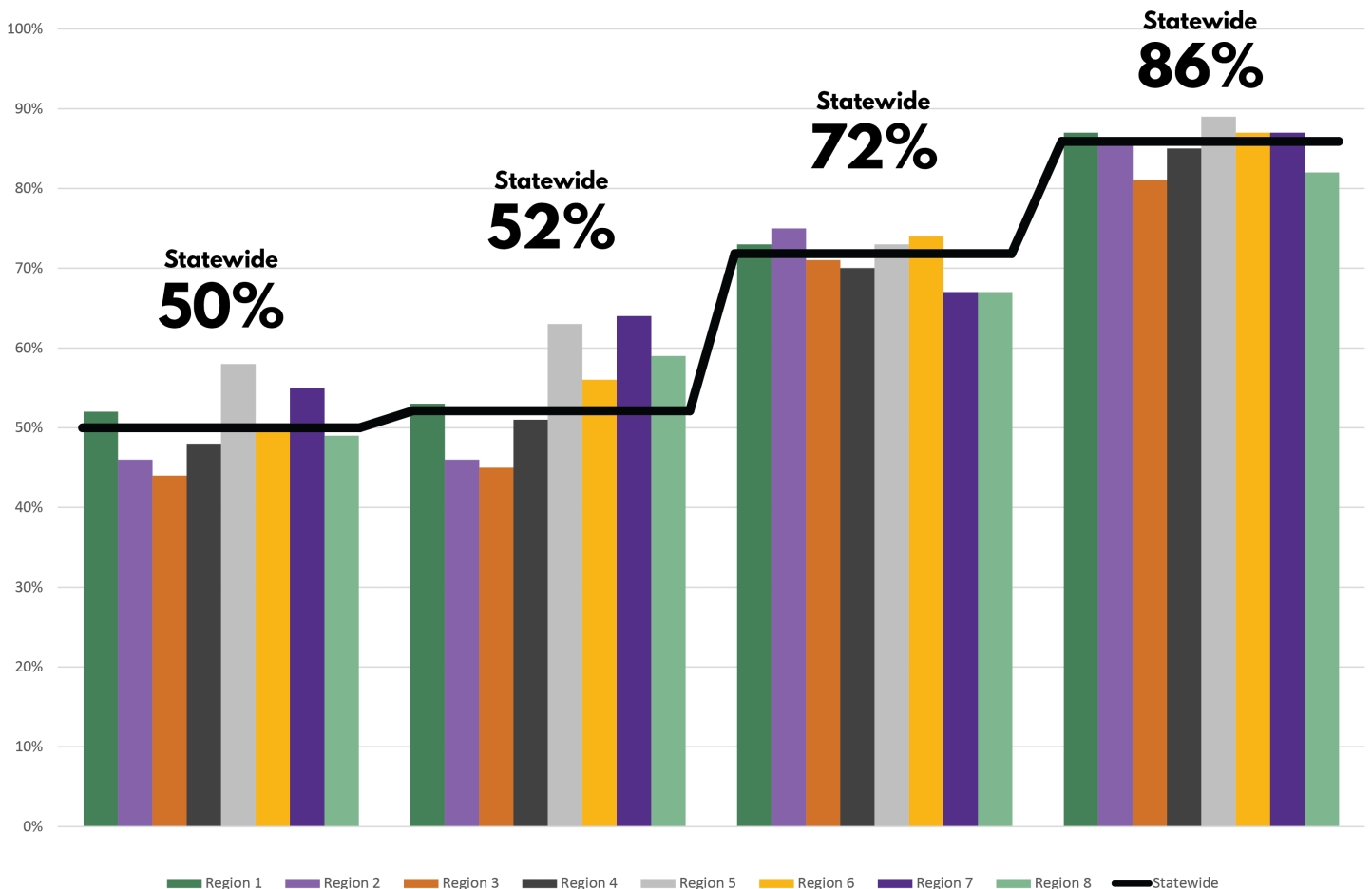
This high result was expected given the self-selected nature of the majority of responders, who feel strongly about the benefits of outdoor recreation.

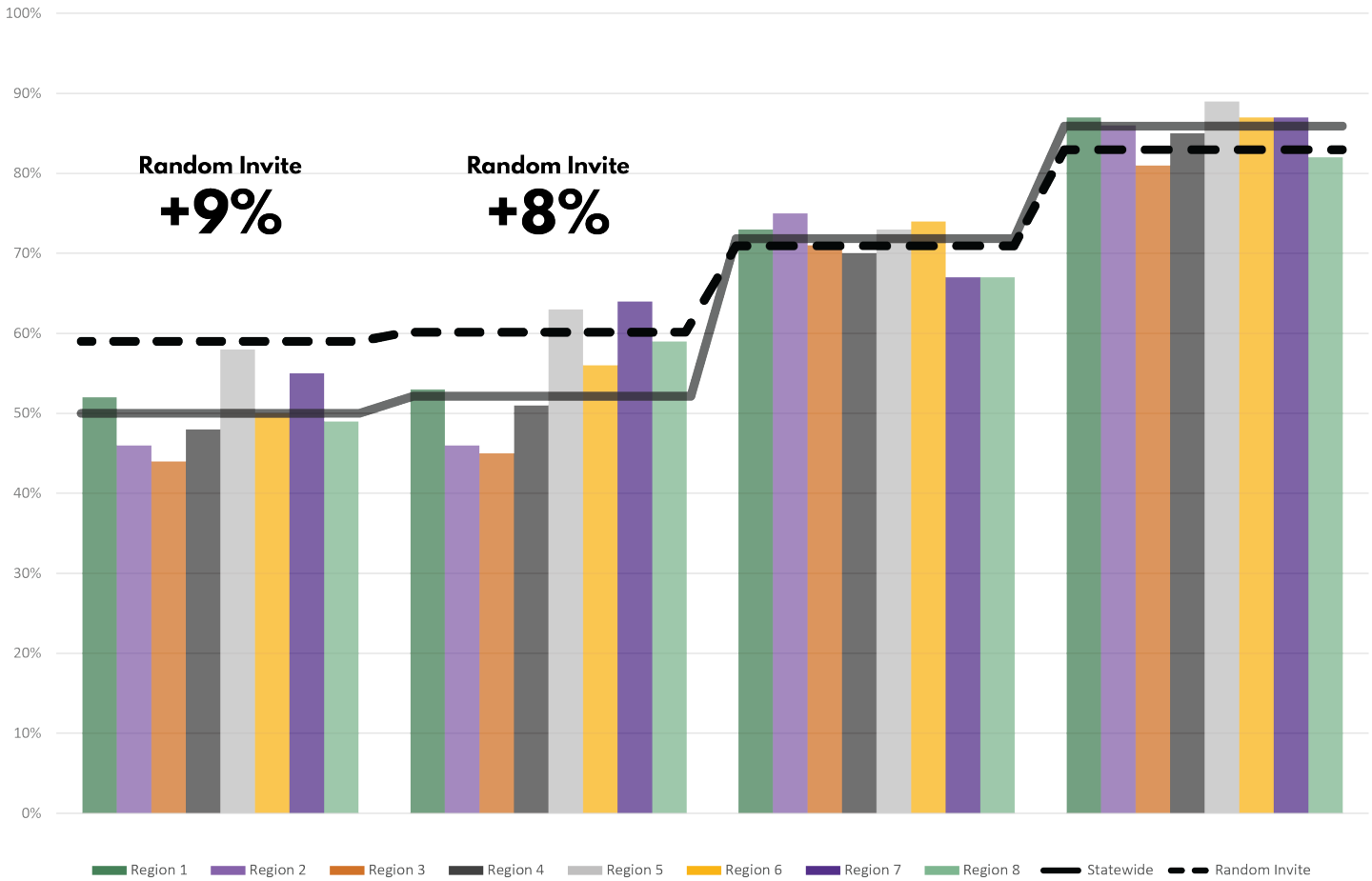
ARE YOUR OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL NEEDS BEING MET?

ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH YOUR ACCESS TO WATER?

HOW IMPORTANT IS CONNECTIVITY TO OUTDOOR RECREATION?

HOW IMPORTANT ARE OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL FACILITIES?





RANDOM HOUSEHOLD INVITATION:

Postcard invitations to 10,000 homes were sent across the state evenly distributed to zip codes by percent of the population. While a strong push was made, only 53 survey responders said they received a postcard. As a result of this small sample size, the findings are not representative. However, comparing the random invitation group to the targeted group does shed light on the bias inherent in the rest of the surveyed participants.

On average, random invitation responders felt just as strongly about the importance of park availability and trail networks. However, in contrast with the rest of the responders, they also felt a higher satisfaction with their parks system (+9 points over the statewide average) and higher satisfaction with their access to water (+8 points).

The top activities of Postcard responses also varied from the norm, providing a broader cross-section of outdoor public recreation offerings. They are listed as follows. Items marked with an asterisk* are not on the statewide top 10 list.

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Walking/Nature Walks | 6. Playgrounds |
| 2. Fishing | 7. Swimming |
| 3. Picnicking | 8. Motorized Boating* |
| 4. Spectator Sports* | 9. Botanic Gardens* |
| 5. Visiting Natural Areas | 10. Organized Team Sports * |



CREDIT: BTNEP. ELMER'S ISLAND, GRAND ISLE, LA

BENEFITS OF LAND CONSERVATION AND OUTDOOR RECREATION

Users were asked to rank several benefits of land conservation and outdoor recreation. Elmer's Island (above) provides beach access to the public while also serving as crucial nesting habitat to migratory shorebirds. Coastal areas in Louisiana can co-exist with the needs of the natural world while providing recreation to visitors. In one day, a family can enjoy the beach, fish in the surf, and see migratory birds nesting and feeding on the same beach, all without needing a boat or any special permits.

1 Protecting the environment

2 Connecting people with nature

3 Improving quality of life

4 Promoting healthy, active lifestyles

5 Preserving cultural and historic spaces



CREDIT: LDWF. CANE BAYOU



CREDIT: JAMES TAYLOR. HIGHLAND ROAD PARK

OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITY PREFERENCES

There are various outdoor recreation areas that serve a variety of functions and users. Users were asked to think about planning for the future and the investments in outdoor recreation throughout Louisiana. With that consideration, they were asked to rank the recreation types that would most benefit them.

- 1 Forests, and/or lakes/ivers with established trails, dispersed camping, boating, and fishing opportunities**
- 2 Wilderness areas or open lands with little to no development, and opportunity for solitude**
- 3 Development of public access to natural bodies of water**
- 4 Small parks in neighborhoods that can be safely walked to**
- 5 Large staffed parks with amenities**



CREDIT: MITCHELL ALSHIRE. CAMP SALMEN NATURE PARK



CREDIT: LDWF. SABINE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

Let's ask Lori



Lori is the Louisiana Outdoor Recreation Inventory!

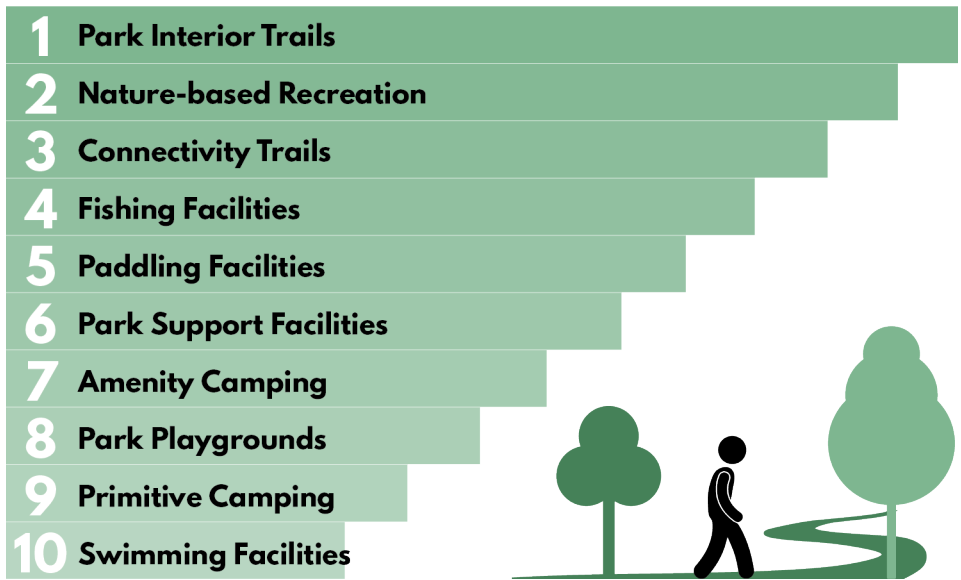
Quality teamwork and partnerships are only as good as the data. As we improve the database of recreation opportunities and facilities across the state, we need your help!

Click the link or head to www.PlayOutdoorsLA.com to find facilities in your area!



IMPORTANCE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION TYPE

Users were provided with an list of 17 potential outdoor recreation amenities/facilities that are available, or potentially could be available, in their communities. Users were asked to rank them in the order that would most benefit them, if they were available in their neighborhood. They did not have to include all 17 options in their ranking.



These results reinforce the conclusion that trails, connectivity, and walkable facilities are desired among users and households statewide. Other notable inclusions are the high rankings of both amenity camping and primitive camping facilities. The remainder of the top list corresponds well with the top activities by users reported on earlier.





CREDIT: BREC. HOWELL PARK

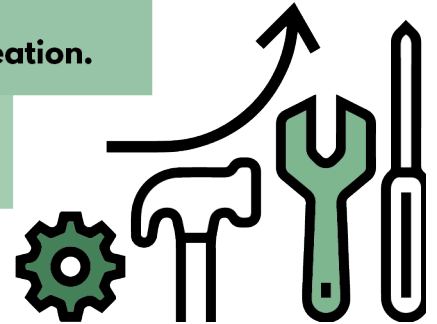


CREDIT: LDWF



CREDIT: JAMES TAYLOR, FONTAINBLEAU STATE PARK

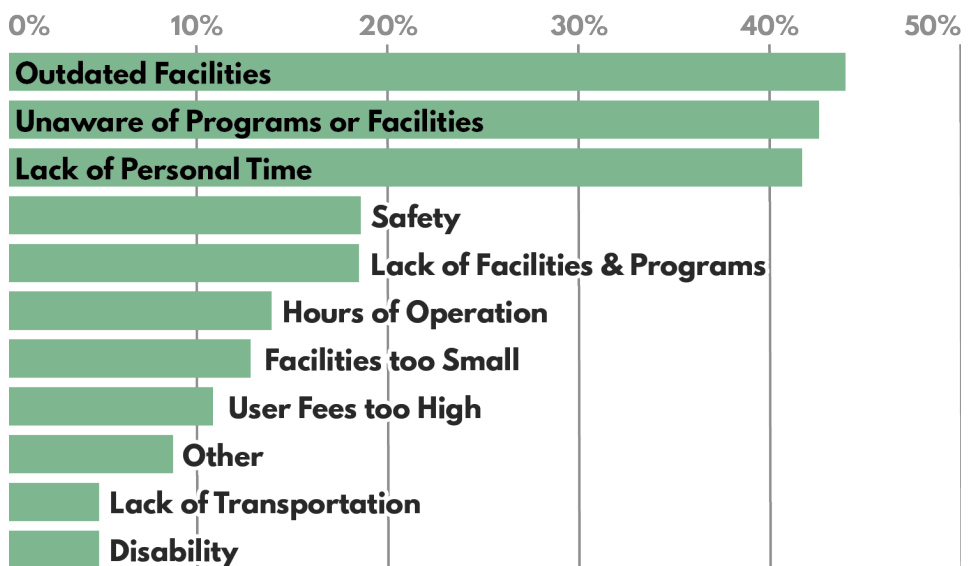
- 1 Better operation and maintenance of existing infrastructure and facilities.
- 2 Development of local, regional, and statewide trails.
- 3 Long-term planning and management of outdoor recreation.
- 4 Acquisition of new parks and open space.
- 5 Development of new facilities.



PRIORITIES FOR RECREATION PROVIDERS:

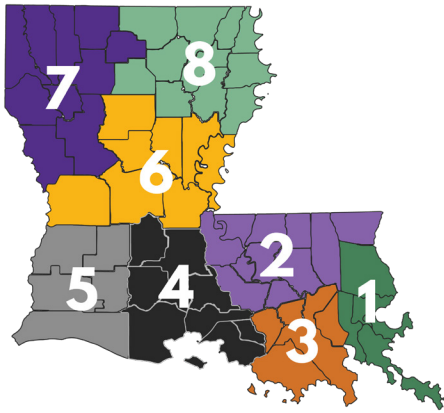
Outdoor recreation providers often need to prioritize their efforts to meet the greatest needs of their community. Users were asked to think about planning for the future of outdoor recreation investments in Louisiana, and to rank the efforts that would benefit them most.

According to users, better operation and maintenance of existing infrastructure and facilities were most prominent for recreation providers to offer.



BARRIERS TO OUTDOOR RECREATION:

When asked what the biggest obstacles to participating in outdoor recreation were, users were definitive in their answers, with the top three making up almost 60% of the total responses.



REGIONAL DISTINCTIONS

This section highlights the key areas in which each region is distinct and different from the statewide average. Most regions did align in critical ways with the larger group, but their subtle differences are essential to understanding their place within the broader public recreation picture.

Activities marked with an asterisk (*) are variations from the Statewide findings. Descriptions of activities with an asterisk can be found at the end of this section.



REGION 1: NEW ORLEANS AREA: LET'S GO OUTSIDE!

Somewhat unique to this region, limited hours of access limited public recreation participation. Respondents desire more opportunities to be active and expressed the importance of nature play, nature-based recreation, nature programs, and self-guided tours. Coupled with the need for a more connected parks system with additional on-road biking opportunities, leads to the conclusion that region one is searching for opportunities to divert their leisure from their urban centers to actively experience nature in a way that is engaging and therapeutic.

Top 10:

1. Walking/Nature Walks
2. Visiting Nature
3. Picnicking
4. Nature Programs/Self-Guided Tours
5. Botanic Gardens*
6. Bird Watching
7. Paddling
8. Fishing
9. Playgrounds
10. Swimming



REGION 2: BATON ROUGE AREA: LET'S TAKE A HIKE!

Region 2 is searching for methods to expand with its outdoor recreation opportunities. Their priorities of increasing the network and broaden their connections with walking, hiking, jogging, running, and biking will allow for more outdoor recreation opportunities. The highly active running community here has indicated that there remains a lack of adequate, safe facilities to fill the needs. Expanding upon the existing pathway and trail systems across the region will provide a more comprehensive, integrated system connecting park facilities, natural features, and other destination centers that will vastly improve those opportunities.

Top 10:

1. Walking/Nature Walks
2. Visiting Nature
3. Fishing
4. Picnicking
5. Hiking
6. Swimming
7. Paddling
8. Nature Programs/Self-Guided Tours
9. Bird Watching
10. Playgrounds



REGION 3: HOUMA-THIBODAUX AREA: LET'S GO FISHING!

No surprises here, region 3 loves its water-based recreation. This region was the only one to report that they traveled by boat more than they walked to their recreational opportunities. They were also the least satisfied with their water access opportunities, and they felt their needs were being the least met by their recreation providers. This region was one of only two to mention that the size of their local facilities limited their participation. This region would benefit from more access and more options by expanding park support facilities and creating waterfront “trailheads” that would serve multiple user groups.

Top 10:

1. Fishing
2. Walking/Nature Walks
3. Motor Boating*
4. Visiting Nature
5. Playgrounds
6. Picnicking
7. Swimming
8. Crabbing*
9. Bird Watching
10. Paddling

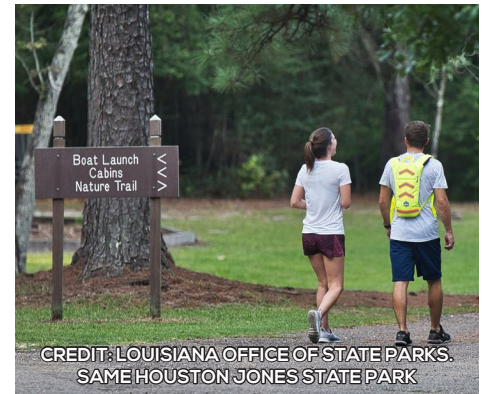


REGION 4: LAFAYETTE AREA: LET'S GO HUNTING!

The perspective embraced by this region continually searches for more ways to get out and catch or hunt something. They are the most interested in nature recreation, including crabbing, hunting, fishing, and shooting sports. Though a region well known for having numerous sports complexes for organized play, an outdoor recreation focus on improvement and promotion of opportunities to engage with, to protect, and to expand access to natural areas would assist in meeting this demand.

Top 10:

1. Walking/Nature Walks
2. Visiting Nature
3. Fishing
4. Swimming
5. Nature Programs/Self-Guided Tours
6. Picnicking
7. Paddling
8. Bird Watching
9. Motor Boating*
10. Playgrounds



REGION 5: LAKE CHARLES AREA: LET'S DO IT ALL IN ONE PLACE!

This region was one of the two that stated that facility size was inhibiting their participation in public recreation. They were also the only region to partake in individual or open play sports (basketball, tennis) more than team sports (baseball, soccer). Overall, they were the most content with their public recreation opportunities and with their access to water. They are willing to travel to someplace with a variety of recreation opportunities. Expanding opportunities and features at existing facilities would benefit this region, adding additional amenity camping facilities, adding more areas to fish along a paddling trail, adding paved pathways connecting multiple activity centers.

Top 10:

1. Visiting Nature
2. Walking/Nature Walks
3. Fishing
4. Nature Programs/Self-Guided Tours
5. Bird Watching
6. Picnicking
7. Playgrounds
8. Swimming
9. Hiking
10. Paddling



CREDIT: JAMES TAYLOR. PERKINS ROAD PARK

REGION 6: ALEXANDRIA AREA: LET'S DO SOMETHING NEW!

Region 6 is looking for something new. Although home to the Kisatchie National Forest with a plethora of natural areas with conventional outdoor recreation activities, it's not entirely surprising that this region is looking for contemporary approaches to get out and play. Look to expand extreme or non-traditional play opportunities like wakeboarding and off-road biking/mountain biking. Like region 1, region 6 was looking for more ways to experience nature and claimed that limited hours at public facilities were a barrier for them.

Top 10:

1. Walking/Nature Walks
2. Visiting Nature
3. Fishing
4. Picnicking
5. Swimming
6. Playgrounds
7. Hiking
8. Motor Boating*
9. Spectator Sports*
10. Bird Watching



CREDIT: SHREVEPORT-BOSSIER CONVENTION & TOURIST BUREAU, AMERICAN ROSE CENTER

REGION 7: SHREVEPORT AREA: LET'S GO AND DO SOMETHING FUN!

This region had a higher than average participation in private facilities and is reflected in their desire to participate in more non-traditional, specialized, or individual activities. They are searching for a range of outdoor recreation opportunities at facilities that cater to a variety of user groups. Think amenity camping areas at a facility with off-road vehicle trails and self-guided nature tours or hiking/paddling trails with educational bird watching signage as potential possibilities for meeting the region's unmet needs.

Top 10:

1. Visiting Nature
2. Walking/Nature Walks
3. Fishing
4. Picnicking
5. Paddling
6. Swimming
7. Bird Watching
8. Nature Programs/Self-Guided Tours
9. Spectator Sports*
10. Nature Photography*



CREDIT: TIM MUELLER, TOLEDO BEND

REGION 8: MONROE AREA: LET'S GET AWAY FOR A WHILE!

Another region that benefits from the abundant natural resources, the love for camping, and the desire to get away for a long weekend at the cabin or camp are deeply valued. Users expressed the appeal for additional cabin facilities, campsites with amenities, and other opportunities for nature programs or self-guided excursions to be offered in a variety of natural landscapes. Region 8 is searching for ways to be immersed within and fully experience nature as an outdoor recreational goal.

Top 10:

1. Visiting Nature
2. Walking/Nature Walks
3. Fishing
4. Swimming
5. Picnicking
6. Paddling
7. Nature Programs/Self-Guided Tours
8. Hiking
9. Bird Watching
10. RV/Trailer Camping*

UNIQUE ACTIVITIES BY REGION AND ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTION:

BOTANIC GARDENS: Visiting Botanic Gardens is generally understood to mean visiting a specific facility with the intent of observing planted materials.

MOTOR BOATING: Motorized boating could include travel activities relating to fishing or hunting trips or could involve taking the boat out to the lake just to enjoy the weather. It does not include sailing, water skiing, wakeboarding, or jet skiing, as those were mentioned and tallied separately.

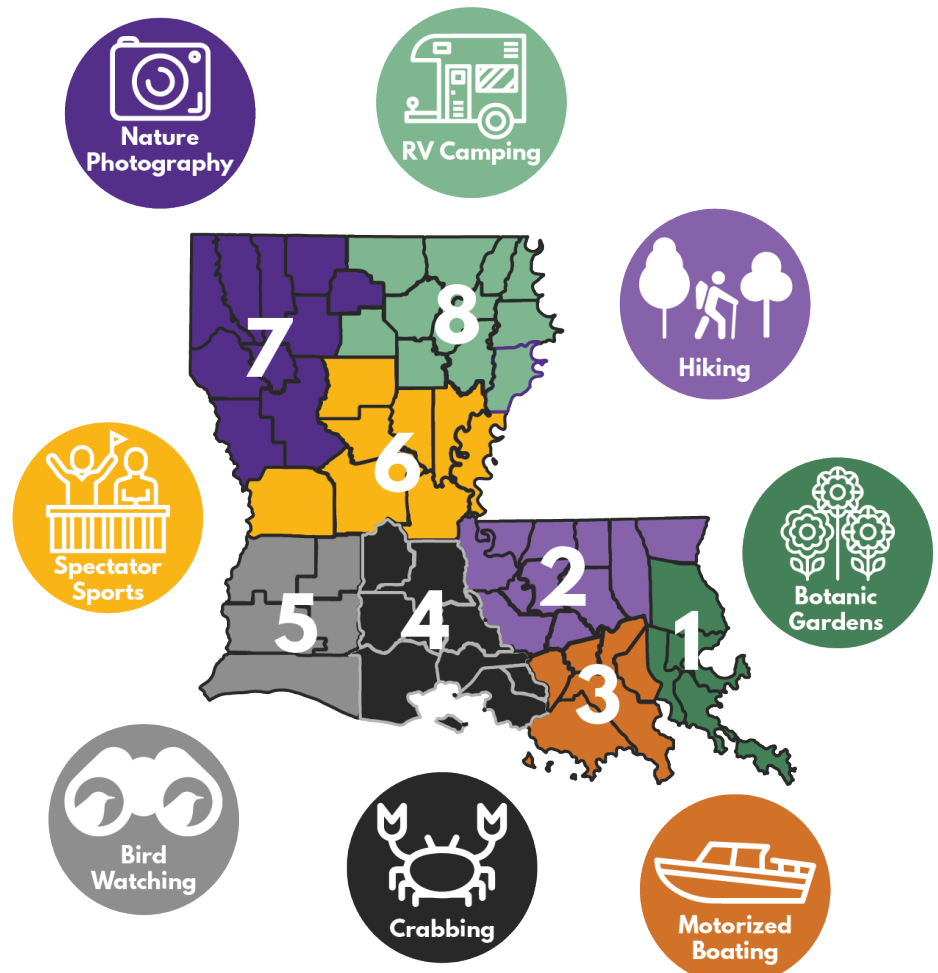
CRABBING: Crabbing is considered the act of setting a baited crab trap, net, or line, or casting a net to catch blue crabs or stone crabs. It may be done solely or in conjunction with a day out fishing. Crabbing is generally a very passive and laid-back activity.

SPECTATOR SPORTS: Spectator activities are understood to be the act of watching an organized team sport or an open play individual sport. These users may include the family of someone playing in a Rec League or an organized weekend tournament. They may also be more casual observers watching their neighbors play a pick-up game of basketball. Generally, these users are looking for more park features, like clean bathrooms, good lighting, and even concession stands or vending machines.

NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY: Nature photography is understood to be the action of going to a natural, usually undeveloped, or “wild” area to photograph or documenting the landscape. Many people obtain beautiful photos with just their camera phone.

RV/TRAILER CAMPING: As described in the survey question, RV/Trailer Camping is camping in a motorhome, van, recreational vehicle, 5th wheel, trailer, pop-up camper, or other portable structure at a facility that includes electric and water hookups for users. While not the intention of this question, the responses may also include a small number of users that tent camp at facilities with electric and water hookups, or RV/Trailer camp at sites without utilities. These two similar options were left in the comments section for this question and may have had some overlap with this response.

Regional Outliers



Regional Outliers are the activities that stood out when compared to the state average. Generally, the region does this activity more than anyone else.

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

Improving maintenance and providing information about existing facilities would have the most significant impact on increasing participation numbers. Providers should focus on enhancing the quality and building a devoted base of fans.

USERS CRAVE BETTER CONNECTED PUBLIC RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

Build a transparent trail system between multiple facilities for the most significant impact.

THE MOST UNDERSERVED USER GROUPS ARE THOSE WHO GO THE DISTANCE

Runners, joggers, and on-road bikers make up the bulk of users who were unsatisfied with their current recreation opportunities. Find ways to incorporate longer trails within and around existing recreation centers, while also making these paths safe for all users.

RESPECT THE REGION

Each region has distinct preferences that should be considered when planning outdoor recreation improvements.

UNDERSTANDING THE HEALTH BENEFITS

As verified by the results of the survey, nature and the outdoors represent our human need to connect to natural spaces for personal well-being and the reduction of stressors found in today's ever-busy society. Scientific evidence²⁵ has confirmed the importance and benefits of spending time outdoors. Interacting with nature lowers heart rate, reduces stress levels, and can increase creativity. Parents are experiencing the benefits of outdoor nature play themselves and are looking to expose their families to the advantages as well. "Child advocacy expert Richard Louv directly links the lack of nature in the lives of today's wired generation—he calls it nature-deficit—to some of the most disturbing childhood trends, such as the rises in obesity, attention disorders, and depression."²⁶

Anecdotally, parks, open space, and trails during the "shelter-in-place" orders of the COVID-19 pandemic have proven to be a safe-haven for people to get fresh air and be with nature while practicing social distancing. In most instances, playgrounds, ball fields, courts, public restrooms, and other traditional outdoor recreation facilities were closed in an abundance of caution for public safety. Open spaces, green spaces, and trails, however, remained open with some restrictions for public use during that time. Needless to say, this pandemic is expected to transform the design of our parks and public spaces in a manner that will allow for easier cleaning and sanitization of high-touch surfaces, wider trails and pathways, and better defined spatial boundaries throughout our public spaces.



CREDIT: KIRK THORNTON (VIA UNSPLASH)



CREDIT: CAJUN CLASSIC WHEELCHAIR TENNIS



CREDIT: KELSEY DODY (VIA UNSPLASH)

QUANTIFYING SUPPLY

THE GAP IN INFORMATION SHARING

Louisiana is fortunate to have vast acreages of lands set aside for wildlife habitat, stormwater management, and

outdoor recreation. Most are owned and managed by federal or state agencies, including National and State Forests, Wildlife Management Areas and Refuges, or Conservation Areas. Collectively, these are discussed below under the “Public Lands” topic. As custodians of these lands

and resources, most of these agencies have developed and maintain geographic information systems – GIS – which provide research and analysis capability in addition to storing data about their properties and sites. Yet outdoor recreation amenities – parks, trails, playgrounds, ball



CREDIT: ATCHAFALAYA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA. LORI CHARACTER ADDED.

fields, and boat launches – that the urban and suburban public use most often are managed by local entities, including Parishes, cities or towns, and recreation districts. These local entities are frequently operating on tight budgets, prioritizing their financial resources on sports and recreation programs, staff, and maintenance of existing facilities. Data management and sharing are often underfunded, and records are maintained in a variety of formats. For this reason, it is difficult to obtain complete inventories of outdoor recreation facilities from all jurisdictions in a concise and cohesive form. The SCORP’s goal of building a comprehensive inventory of all outdoor recreation facilities statewide is challenging. Response to the study’s online poll of recreation providers was poor despite promotional efforts such as postcards, emails, phone calls, an exhibitor booth at the 2020 Louisiana Recreation & Parks Association (LRPA) annual

conference in Baton Rouge, and a lecture covering the SCORP process and park planning methods delivered at the same event.

In conducting research and collecting data for this 2020 version of Louisiana’s SCORP, the problem was approached with the understanding that data collection will not be 100%, but that an online service providing access to the place-specific information would be developed, and this service was built with ease of access and ease of maintenance in mind. This system is branded as “LORI”, the Louisiana Outdoor Recreation Inventory²⁷. Efforts were focused upon online mapping services that efficiently display the data rather than static maps contained in a report. It is hoped that LORI will become a resource of statewide outdoor recreation data for recreation users, for data researchers, and agencies interested in public outdoor recreation lands and amenities.

WHAT’S OUT THERE?

Louisiana has an abundance of outdoor recreation opportunities, which were categorized into three groups. First, are facilities and improvements intended for both active and passive outdoor recreation. These include public parks, campgrounds, managed trails, boat launches, and similar. Second is public lands – expanses of land set aside for habitat preservation and possibly offering limited improvements for human access and use. Lastly are Louisiana’s wetlands, which are vast, often inundated areas, primarily offering wildlife habitat and providing opportunities for sportsman activities and nature-based activities.

INVENTORY OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

The catalog of outdoor recreation is an effort to develop a user-friendly spatial database of publicly available sites throughout Louisiana. GIS technology utilizes real-world location data and descriptive attributes of outdoor recreation sites bound together as one record. While commonplace, recent innovations in web-based GIS mapping technology allow the aggregated data to be “set free” to the public through a website in a cost-effective manner.

The purpose of conducting the inventory is to analyze the spatial distribution of outdoor recreational facilities and their proximity to the population. This data allows one to answer questions like “How far away is the nearest park with a tennis court?” or “Where can I launch my kayak?”

The classes of outdoor recreation sites will be grouped according to the governmental level of the entity charged with their care.

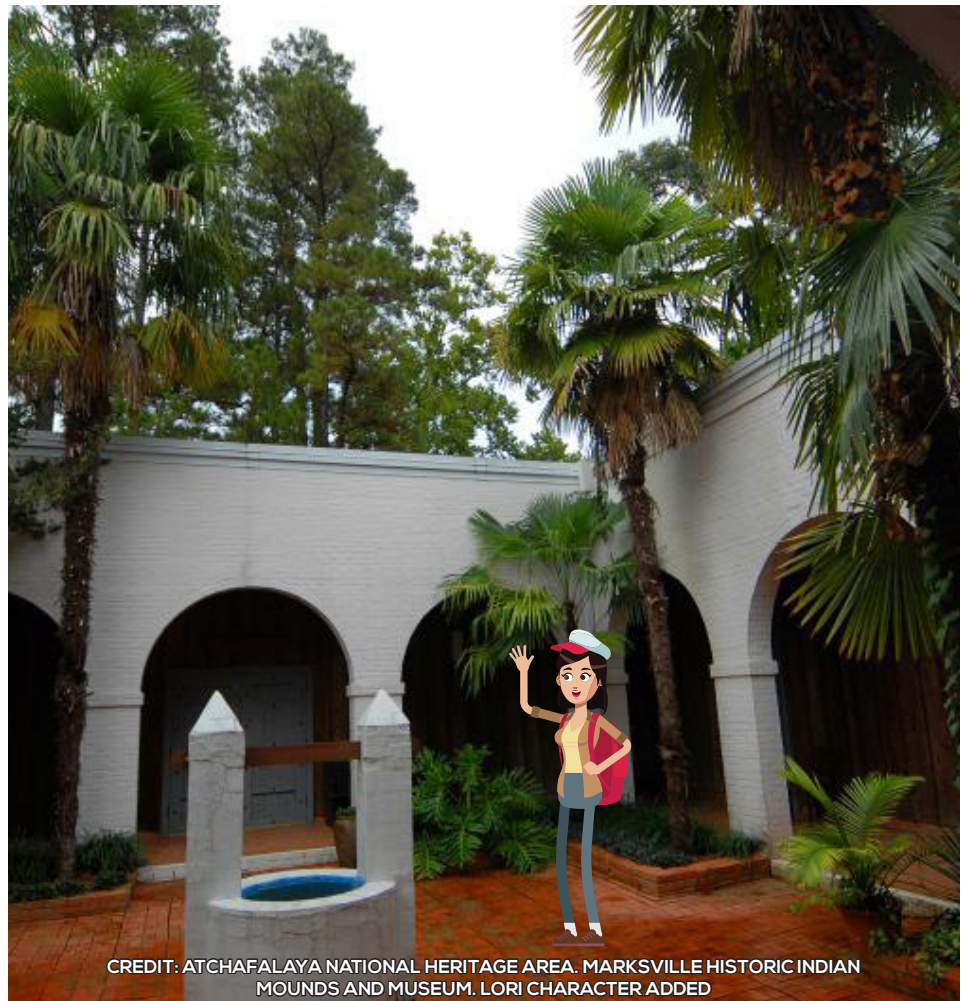
Federally managed outdoor recreation sites include those campgrounds, trails, boat launches, cultural resources and facilities within Kisatchie National Forest, within Louisiana’s two National Parks - Cane River Creole National Historical Park in Natchitoches Parish and Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve in Jefferson Parish, and within U.S. Fish and Wildlife Refuges, Military Reservations

and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers lands.

Louisiana also has two National Heritage Areas (NHAs), the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area and the Cane River National Heritage Area. NHAs are large lived-in landscapes that may include large recreation components, but is not considered official property of a park system, but rather programs of the National Parks Service. NHAs are designated by Congress as places where natural, cultural, and historic resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally important landscape. Through their resources, NHAs tell nationally important stories that celebrate our nation’s diverse heritage.

The State of Louisiana-owned and managed outdoor recreation sites include the State Parks and Historic Sites under the authority of the Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism, a State Forest managed by the Department of Ag and Forestry, and the lands of the Sabine River Authority²⁸. Also led by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries are Wildlife Refuges and Wildlife Management Areas, but these latter two are included under Public Lands below.

Local parks, trails, and preserves are owned and managed by Parishes, municipalities, or recreation districts, which generally serve several communities within a portion of a parish.



CREDIT: ATCHAFALAYA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA. MARKSVILLE HISTORIC INDIAN MOUNDS AND MUSEUM. LORI CHARACTER ADDED



CREDIT: AMELIA RUSBAR. FRENCHTOWN ROAD CONSERVATION AREA

Lori needs you!

GET YOUR PARK ON THE MAP
SEND LORI YOUR INFO

Quality teamwork and partnerships are only as good as the data. As we improve the database of recreation opportunities and facilities across the state, we need your help!

Click the link or head to www.PlayOutdoorsLA.com to find out more about how you can help and how to submit your facility information.

INVENTORY OF PUBLIC LANDS

Louisiana's Department of Wildlife & Fisheries manages more than 1.6 million acres of Louisiana's land and waterways as wildlife management areas, refuges, and conservation areas. Similarly, the State and National Forests contain much-undeveloped land, some of it managed for forestry products but most also available for outdoor recreation activities. Many of these lands do require a valid hunting or fishing license, a Wild Louisiana Stamp, or a permit to access and utilize, but they are otherwise free for public use. Similarly, the State and National Forests contain much-undeveloped land, some of it managed for forestry products but most also available for outdoor recreation activities

Military Reservations offer controlled public access to some areas and some recreational amenities primarily intended for service members and their families. Most military reservation lands are reserved for training activities, buffer zones from the public, and for wildlife habitat.

Not-for-profit organizations also have been active in acquiring, managing, and preserving critical tracts of land as wildlife habitats. Among these are The Nature Conservancy, The Trust for Public Land, the Wisner Foundation, and others. These quasi-public lands are often available for passive recreation pursuits such as hiking and birding. More consumptive activities such as hunting, camping, or ATV riding usually are not permitted.

Some local agencies, including parish and municipal parks and recreation agencies, hold and manage tracts of land expressly for habitat conservation. Examples are BREC's Frenchtown Road Preserve along the Amite River in East Baton Rouge Parish and Shreveport's Clyde Fant Parkway along the batture of the Red River in Caddo parish.

LOUISIANA'S WETLANDS

SIGNIFICANCE

It is estimated that Louisiana contains up to 40% of the continental U.S. wetlands²⁹ and is the largest contiguous coastal wetland in the lower 48 states. It is also well documented that this resource is at risk. A USGS study estimated a rate of land loss of one American football field every 100 minutes³⁰. Louisiana is home to five distinct wetland types: freshwater swamps, freshwater marshes, intermediate marshes, brackish marshes, and saline or saltwater marshes.

Coastal wetlands are nurseries for sea life, and their loss adversely impacts commercial and recreational fisheries. Industries which provide significant economic value to the state, nutrition on the table, and recreation to sport fishers. These overlapping user-groups mean that every wetland type is valuable

to the people of Louisiana, and one type is not prioritized over another.

THREATS / LOSS

Work is ongoing to protect and rebuild Louisiana's coastal wetlands in response to subsidence, erosion, and other land loss triggered by human impacts and natural forces. This work in Louisiana is guided by the Coastal Master Plan of 2012 & 2017, presently being updated as the 2023 edition³¹.

Land development and drainage for housing, commercial development, transportation infrastructure, and agriculture also threaten wetlands. In Louisiana, this threat is most significant in freshwater wetlands along streams, bayous, rivers, lakes, and sloughs. Protection of these freshwater wetlands is governed by local land development ordinances, by state law, and by federal regulations, including section 404 of the Clean Water Act through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

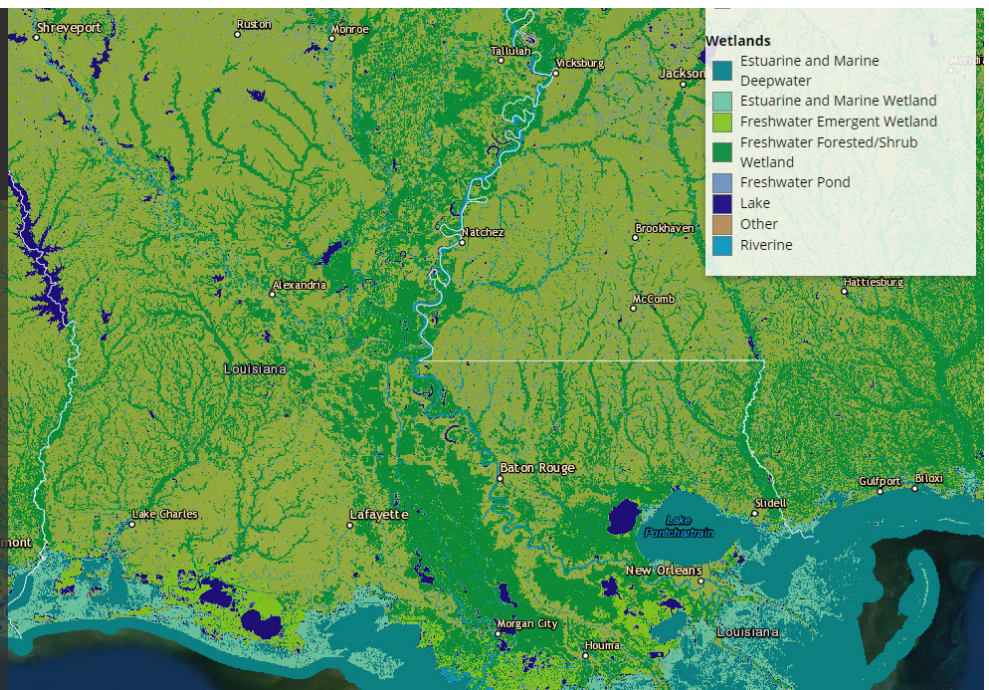
(EPA). Wetland permitting – the authorization to develop within a wetland – is managed by both the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) and regional offices of the United States Army Corps of Engineers. In Louisiana, the New Orleans District covers most of south Louisiana; the Vicksburg district is responsible for most of central and north Louisiana. The western border of the state encompassing the Sabine River / Toledo Bend Reservoir is divided between the Galveston District and the Fort Worth District. Coastal wetlands throughout Louisiana fall within the jurisdiction of the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (LDNR) and the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA).

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has created and maintains the National Wetland Inventory (NWI) spatial database. This detailed information is viewable through their Mapper portal at <https://www.fws.gov/wetlands/data/Mapper.html>

US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE NATIONAL WETLAND INVENTORY LOUISIANA REGION

What is clear is that wetlands – either fresh or saltwater – are prevalent across Louisiana, and much is in private ownership.

Wildlife has access even where the public does not, providing a benefit in sustaining wildlife populations that swim, fly, walk or crawl into publicly accessible lands.





Who is Lori?

Lori is the Louisiana Outdoor Recreation Inventory! You can explore this interactive database and more at www.PlayOutdoorsLA.com.

We need your help to improve the database of recreation opportunities and facilities across the state!

RESTORATION & PRESERVATION

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through Section 303 of the Federal Emergency Wetland Act, encourages the purchase of wetlands with LWCF monies based upon a state established priority plan. The State established the Louisiana's Wetlands Priority Conservation Plan (LWPCP) that includes a priority listing of wetlands for Louisiana. The plan includes a system for prioritizing wetlands with a review team consisting of personnel from the following agencies:

- Louisiana Dept. of Urban & Cultural Affairs
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries
- Louisiana Dept. of Natural Resources
- Louisiana Dept. of Culture, Recreation and Tourism
- Louisiana Dept. of Transportation and Development

WHERE IS IT? LORI

The Louisiana Outdoor Recreation Inventory (LORI) is a geospatial computer system that uses GIS layers of information concerning outdoor recreation (latitude/longitude location, street address, ownership data, boundaries, recreation components, et al.). The LORI data is intended to help inform and assist park planners and operators with decision making on outdoor recreation needs. Federal and State data are available and included in the LORI model.

Data on local outdoor recreation facilities is an identified gap with limited data and a component that DOR will continue to gather from local recreation providers. The following data sets are either secured or being solicited.

So that obtained data for use with LORI is provided in a common language, a dictionary has been prepared to identify the data set name, source, agency contacts, and other information. This dictionary is provided in the Appendix.

FEDERAL DATA

While federal agencies account for fewer outdoor recreation areas, they encompass more extensive tracts of land, thus accounting for a more significant percentage of acreage in the supply of outdoor recreation facilities available to Louisiana citizens. Agency data includes:

U.S. Forest Service (USFS)

- Kisatchie National Forest encompasses 1,022,713 acres with five ranger districts within Louisiana. Outdoor recreational opportunities include areas to fish and hunt, trails for walking, ATVs, biking, and hiking, camping areas, and public scenic areas.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

- With 23 National Wildlife Refuges on 716,212 acres in Louisiana, the USFWS offer Louisiana citizens many “things to do” and “things to see” that represent the Louisiana outdoors.

National Park Service (NPS)

- Situated on 1,125 acres, the National Park Service manages two historical park units, Cane River Creole National Historical Park and Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve in addition to two national heritage areas, 1 world heritage site, 1,472 National Register of Historic Places listings, 54

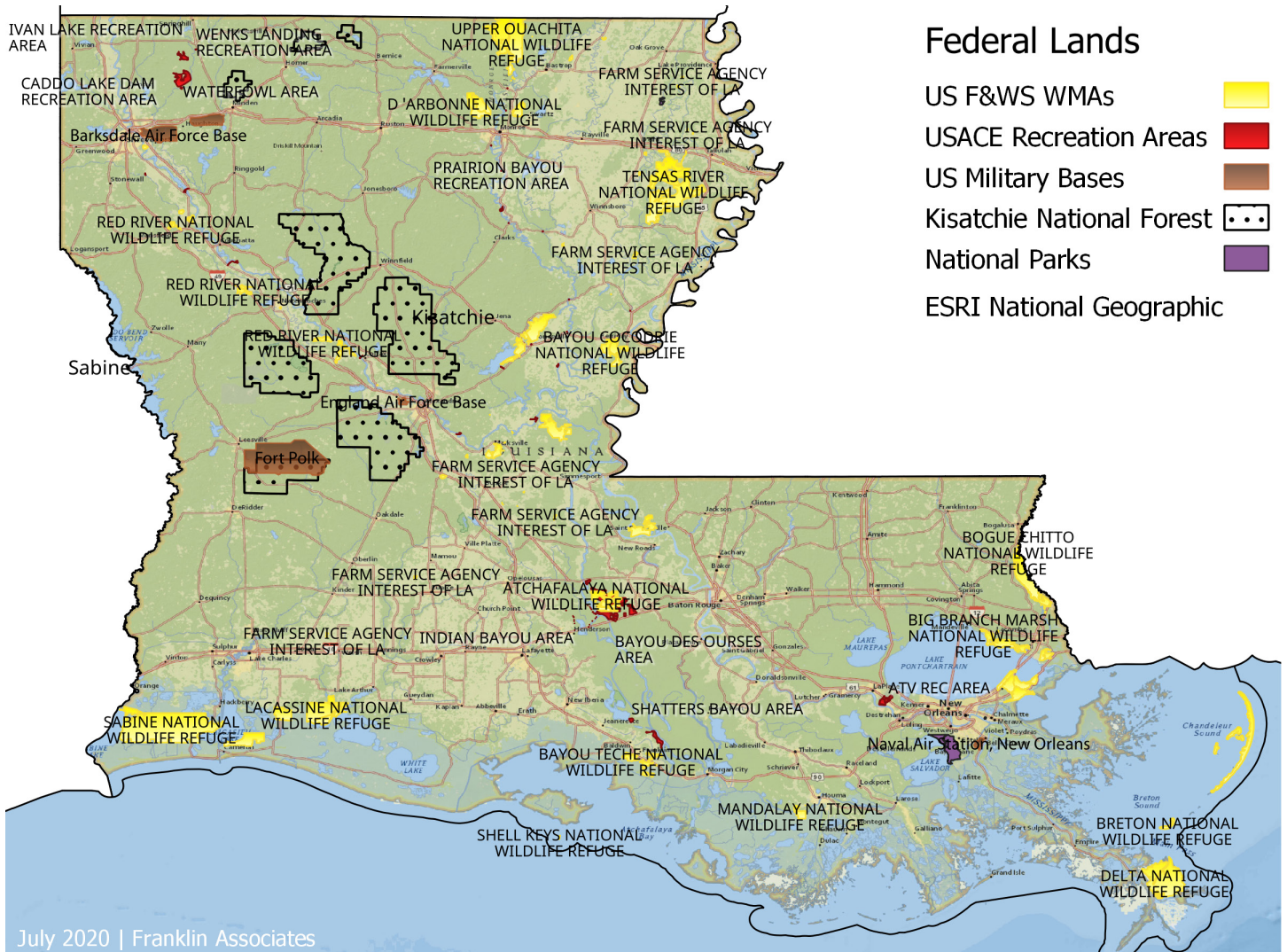
National Historic Landmarks, and 1 National Trail.

Department of Defense (DoD)

- Three Federal military installations are located in Louisiana residing on 183,099 acres. Barksdale Air Force Base, Fort Polk, and the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base. These installations have numerous outdoor recreation facilities.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USCOE)

- The US Army Corps of Engineers manages outdoor recreation opportunities on 39,559 acres in three districts with eleven locations.



Federal Lands

- US F&WS WMAs (Yellow)
- USACE Recreation Areas (Red)
- US Military Bases (Brown)
- Kisatchie National Forest (Dotted pattern)
- National Parks (Purple)
- ESRI National Geographic (Light Blue)

STATE DATA

Various state agencies have jurisdiction on public lands and outdoor recreation areas available to Louisiana citizens and include:

Louisiana Office of State Parks (LOSP)

- Located on 29,157 acres, Louisiana boasts 21 State Parks, one golf course, one arboretum, and 19 historic sites, all offering a variety of outdoor recreational activities. In 2001, the State established the Audubon Golf Trail by identifying 17 top-notch golf courses covering all areas of the State.

Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF)

- The lone State owned and maintained forest, Alexander State Forest located in Central Louisiana is 8,000 acres including the Indian Creek Recreation Area.

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF)

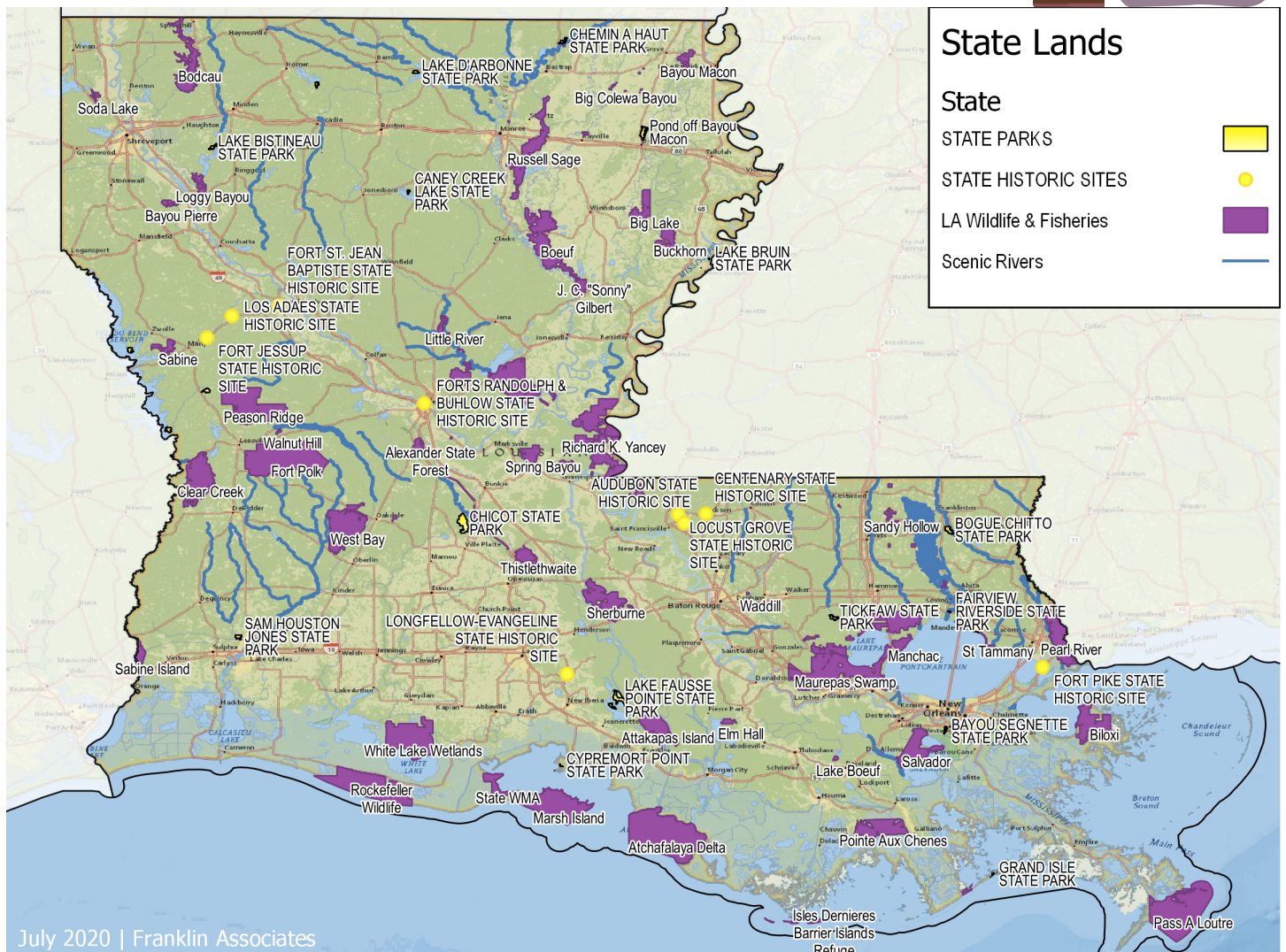
- LDWF maintains more than 1.6 million acres of Louisiana's land and waterways as wildlife management areas (49), refuges (8), and conservation areas (2). These natural habitats provide the public with a variety of outdoor recreational

opportunities that include hunting, fishing, hiking, ATV riding, and birding.

Sabine River Authority (SRA)

- The Sabine River Authority of Louisiana provides public recreation on the Sabine River, its tributaries, and The Toledo Bend Reservoir. The SRA manages seven recreation sites on 877 acres.

Look at what Lori can do!





CREDIT: JAMES TAYLOR.
GLOBAL WILDLIFE CENTER



CREDIT: JAMES TAYLOR.
BREC BURBANK SOCCER COMPLEX

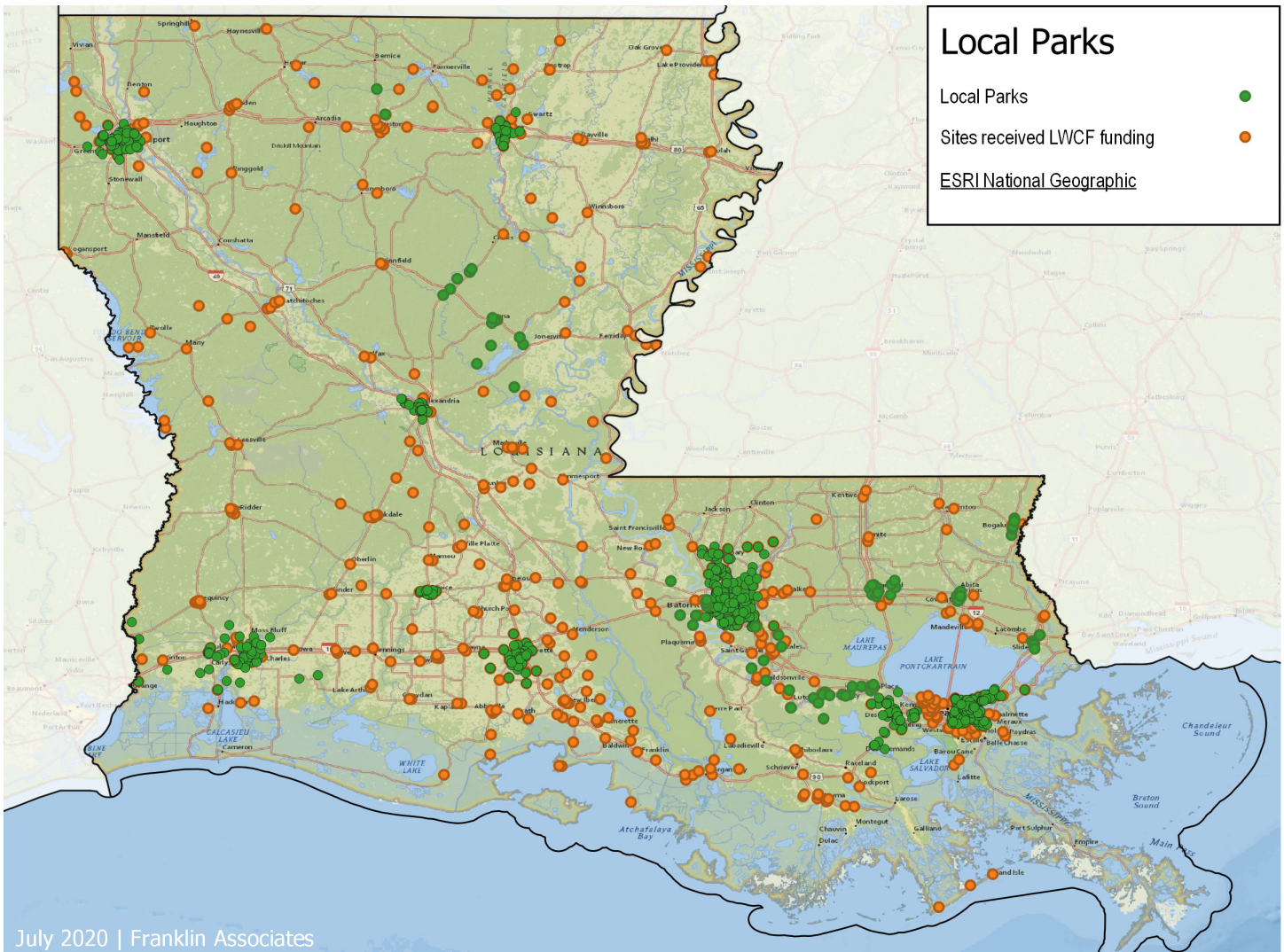
LOCAL DATA

Municipal and Parish governments account for the most significant number of facilities being managed by local agencies with a variety of unique organization structures. Since there is no central authority, gathering data for these facilities statewide is especially difficult, and required ongoing relationship building.

Data featured on the map below includes facilities that have previously received LWCF funding, and Municipal and Parish governments who provided locational data for their facilities. This is just the tip of the proverbial iceberg, as there are more outdoor recreation opportunities across the state.

Information not received but still desired includes Municipal and Parish Parks departments who have not provided location-based data, Non-For-Profit facilities, Outdoor Recreational facilities at Schools (public and private) which are available for public use, and Outdoor Recreational facilities operated by private businesses.

Obtaining additional data will help expand the network of recreation opportunities across the state, and paint a more accurate picture.



RECREATION PROVIDERS SPEAK

OUTREACH METHODS

After compiling a list of over 500 public recreation providers across the state, the team used a variety of tactics to illicit responses from the providers.

POSTCARDS

- 500 postcard invitations were mailed to Louisiana public and private agencies known or suspected of providing outdoor recreation to Louisiana citizens. The postcard design, shown below, guided providers directly to the survey, and discussed how their participation is critical for the future of Louisiana outdoor recreation.

PHONE CALLS

- Phone calls were made by members of the team, as an introduction to the SCORP and its importance for Outdoor Recreation funding. Team members reached out to providers directly.

LOUISIANA RECREATION AND PARK ASSOCIATION

- An email newsletter with a short introduction to the SCORP and its importance for Outdoor Recreation funding, along with an invitation to the online survey, was sent to all LRPA Members.
- An exhibit booth was on display with team members on hand to discuss the SCORP and survey with LRPA participants for two days during the LRPA annual meeting. Digital and paper copies of the survey were available for participants.
- A presentation titled “Maximizing the SCORP with Planning and Public Engagement” was presented during the LRPA annual conference in Baton Rouge.

LOUISIANA MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION

- An email newsletter with a short intro to the SCORP and its importance for Outdoor Recreation funding to agencies, along with an invitation to the online survey was sent out to all LMA members.

OUTREACH RESULTS

Even after this targeted and active outreach to recreation providers, ultimately, only 59 agencies responded to the survey. Therefore, while the following data is useful in understanding overall outdoor recreation trends and attitudes, is not a complete resource for new facilities across the state.



THE POSTCARD THAT WAS MAILED TO OVER 500 RECREATION PROVIDERS.

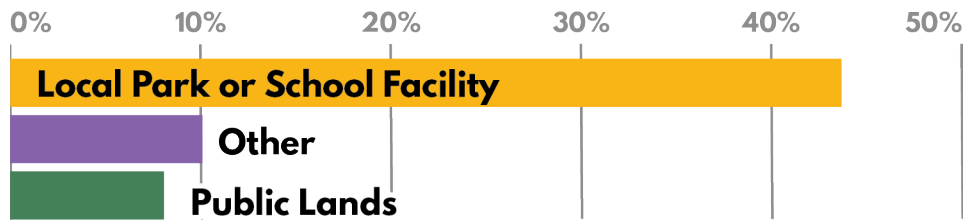
NEW FACILITIES

Providers were asked if they added any of the following types of facilities in the last five years. They were provided a range of facility types in seven distinct categories and were asked if they had added any facilities of each type since the last SCORP was conducted. Their results are as follows.



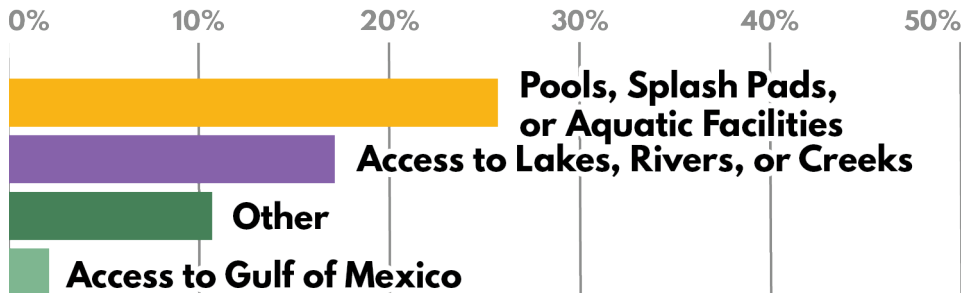
HIKING/JOGGING:

52% of providers reported adding new hiking, walking, jogging, or running facilities at one or more of the following locations, in the last five years. No new facilities were reportedly added at any commercial facilities.



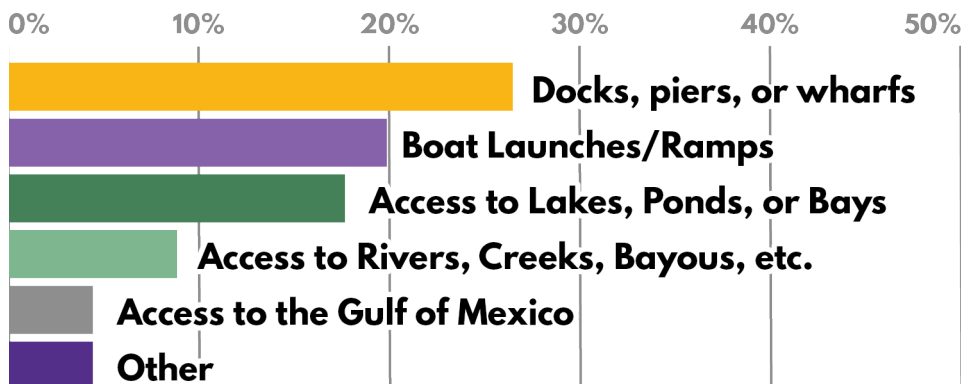
WATER-RELATED:

40% of providers added one or more of the following new water-related facilities in the last five years. Facility examples given included scuba diving, snorkeling, swimming, and water play.



FISHING:

33% of providers reported adding one or more of the following new fishing facilities or waterway access specifically for fishing, in the last five years. Activity examples given included shrimping, seining, crabbing, crawfishing, and trolling. Access included docks, piers, banks, and boat ramps.

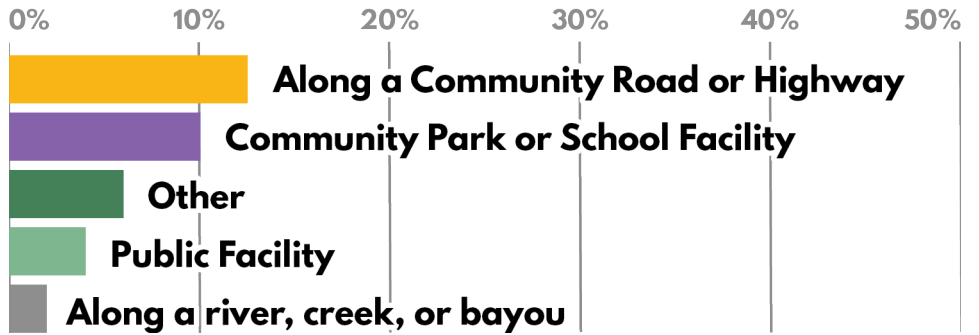




CREDIT: CHAD DANOS. BATON ROUGE

BICYCLING:

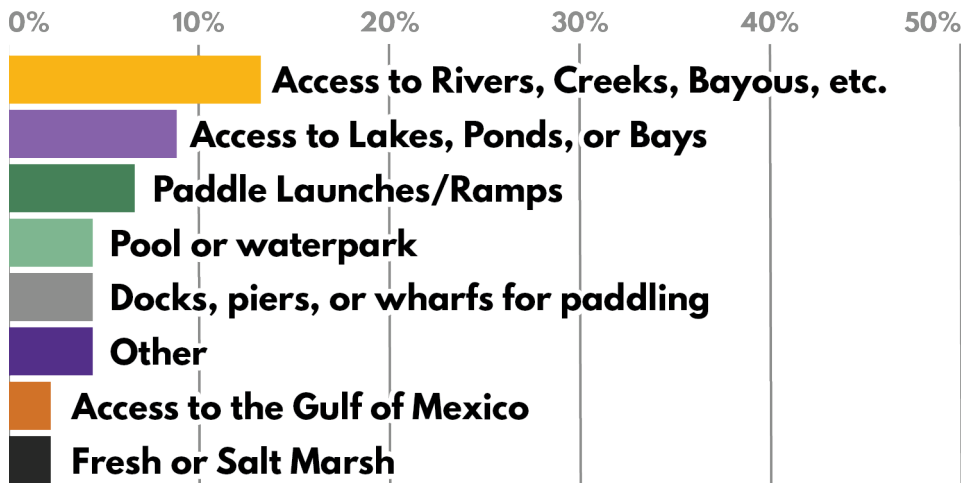
27% of providers reported adding one or more designated bicycling area at one of the following locations, in the last five years. Examples given included trails, BMX, and trike loops. Bicycling included all non-motorized vehicles. No areas were reportedly added at commercial facilities.



CREDIT: JAMES TAYLOR. LSU LAKES

PADDLING:

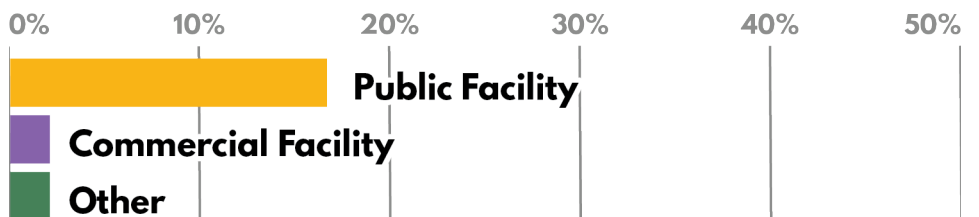
24% of responders reported adding paddling facilities or waterway access specifically for paddling, at one or more of the following locations, in the last five years. Paddling examples given included canoeing, kayaking, and stand up paddleboarding.



CREDIT: JAMES TAYLOR. TICKFAW STATE PARK

CAMPING:

21% of providers reported adding new camping facilities or made substantial improvements to existing camping facilities at one or more of the following locations in the last five years.

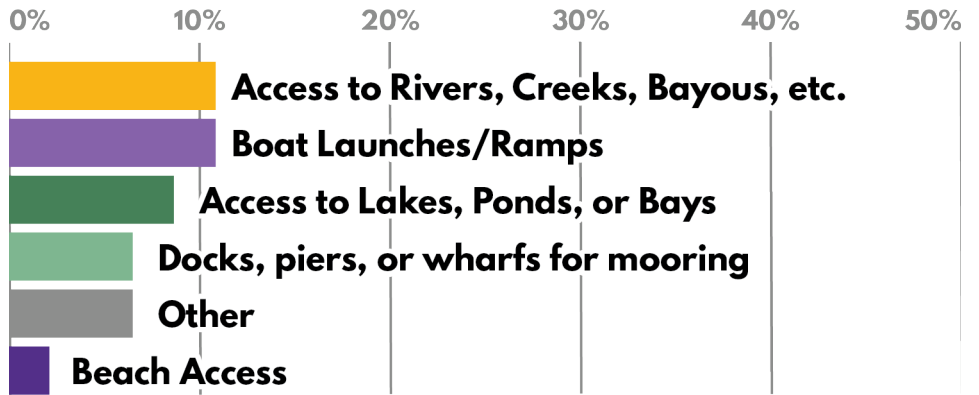




CREDIT: ANHA, CYPREMORT POINT

AQUATIC SPORTS:

17% of responders reported new aquatic sport facilities or waterway access specifically for aquatic sports, at one or more of the following locations in the last five years. Examples given include boating, powerboats, jet skis, sailboards, water-skiing, and windsurfing. This category did not include canoeing, kayaking, or other paddle sports as they were included in a separate question. No access was added to the Gulf of Mexico, or to fresh and salt water marshes.



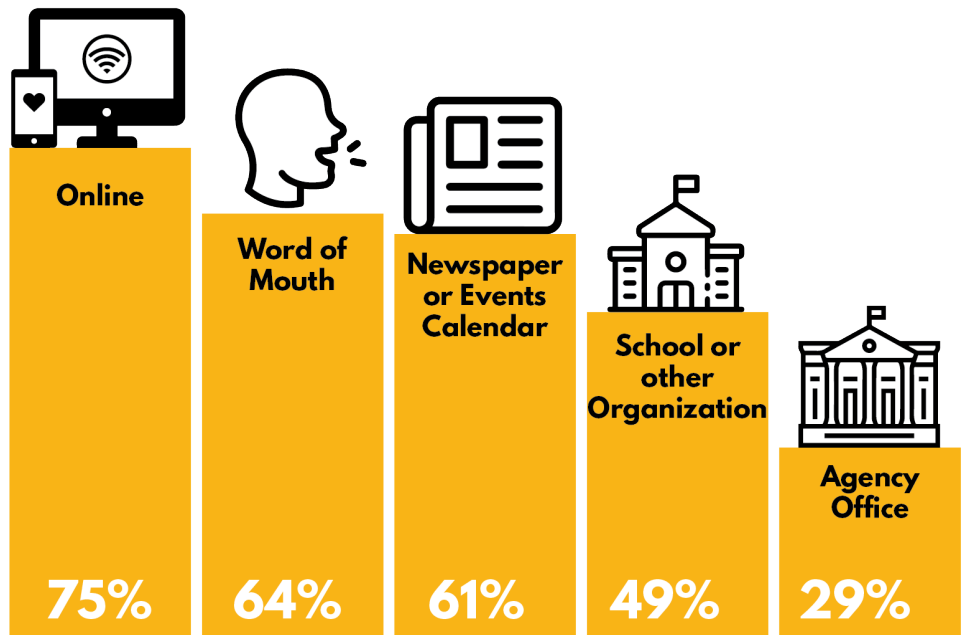
GETTING THE WORD OUT

Recreation providers have the difficult task of not only running a public recreation agency but also handling all promotion for the agency. When asked about how their community hears about recreation opportunities, the results were precise: agencies must put forth a dedicated effort on spreading the word via online and social media.

Based on the results and trends utilized for SCORP outreach, it is recommended that a robust online engagement strategy will realize the most effective return. Agencies cannot rely on word-of-mouth to spread their message. While word of mouth is generally the most trusted channel to

receive information, public recreation needs to focus on building awareness rather than building trust. Our outreach, along with national trends, indicates that online interaction and creating social media channels need to be a provider's single most significant outreach effort. Time and energy must be spent on this medium and can be started for a minimal amount of upfront investment.

Informing Your Community



The chart above depicts the breakdown of responses received from providers when asked how their community hears about their various recreation opportunities.

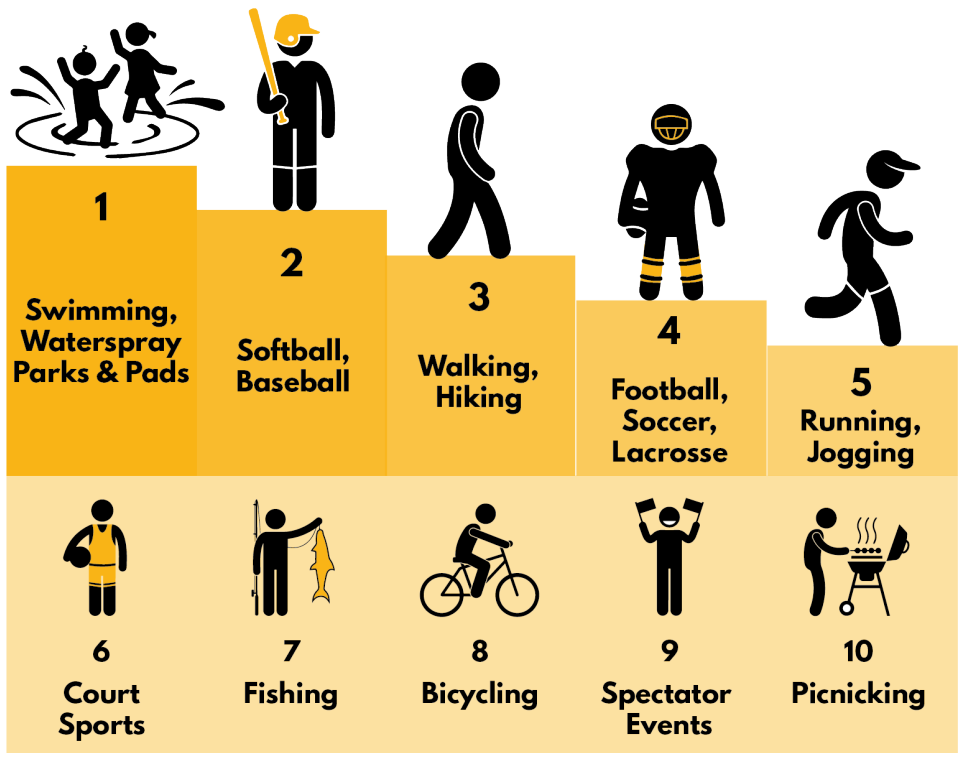


CREDIT: BREC. JACKSON COMMUNITY PARK

POPULAR ACTIVITIES

Providers were asked: Rank the most popular activities in your community. Results are weighted based on rank and total mentions.

1. Swimming, Waterspray Parks & Pads
2. Play Field Sports (Diamond Fields; softball and baseball)
3. Walking or Hiking
4. Play Field Sports (Rectangle Fields; football, soccer, lacrosse)
5. Running or Jogging
6. Play Court Sports or Games (basketball, volleyball, tennis)
7. Fishing, Crabbing, Crawfishing
8. Bicycling
9. Spectator (Cultural events, competitions, tournaments, festivals, presentations)
10. Picnicking

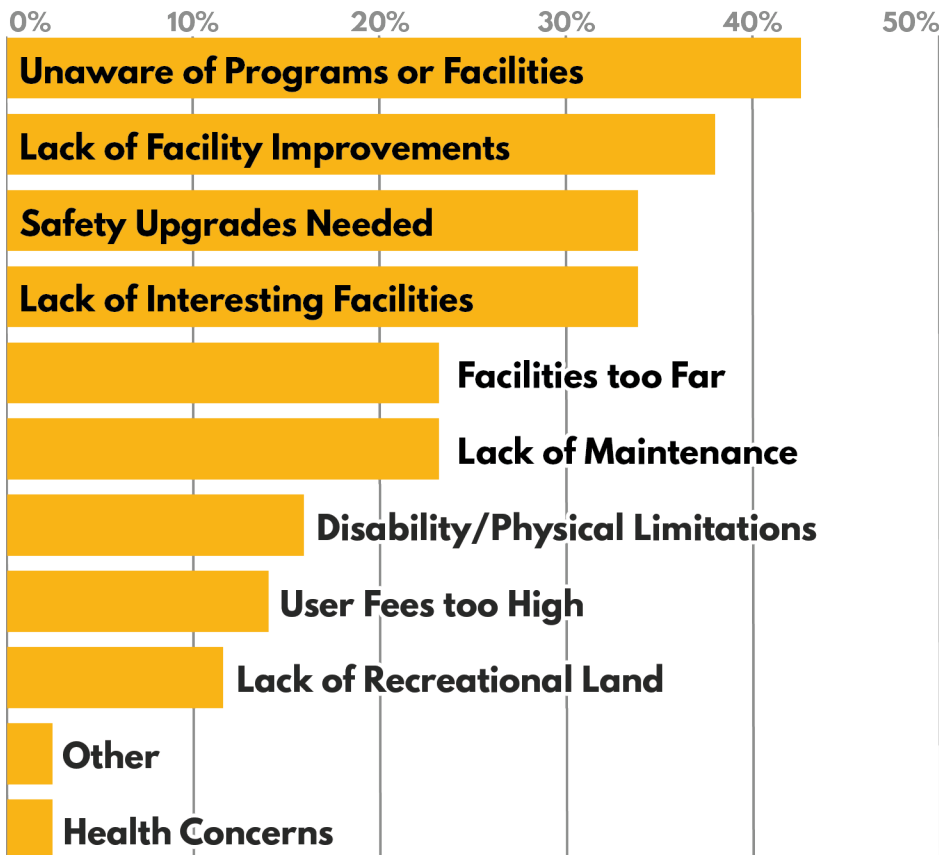


When comparing these to the user responses, a few contrasts are evident. Organized sport and spectating ranked 15th overall in the popular activities statewide but are classified among providers as the most popular. The fact that organized sports facilities take up a disproportionate amount of an agency’s time and human resources to run and maintain could be the reason for the higher agency ranking. Walking activities placed 1st and 3rd, which is reflected in the provider responses. Running and jogging ranked 18th by users, but seeing that it ranks highly among providers does mirror users’ desire for more nature trails as well as more connective trails. Additional detailed survey findings from trail operators can be found in the recently published Louisiana Recreational Trails Program Plan³².

POPULAR FACILITIES

Providers were asked: Of all your agency’s facilities, please rank the three most frequently used.

The very clear cut winner was local community parks, with three times the mentions as the next closest facility. All of these correspond with reports from users as to their most used or most desired facility.



BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Providers were asked: What reasons do you think prevent visitors from participating more in outdoor recreation?

These closely aligned with what users reported were their barriers to public recreation, with the top two reasons from providers also being the top two reasons from users (outdated facilities, and unaware of programs or facilities).

This correlation implies that agencies know what needs to happen but are having trouble with implementation. These barriers require consistent attention and an agency-wide plan to resolve.

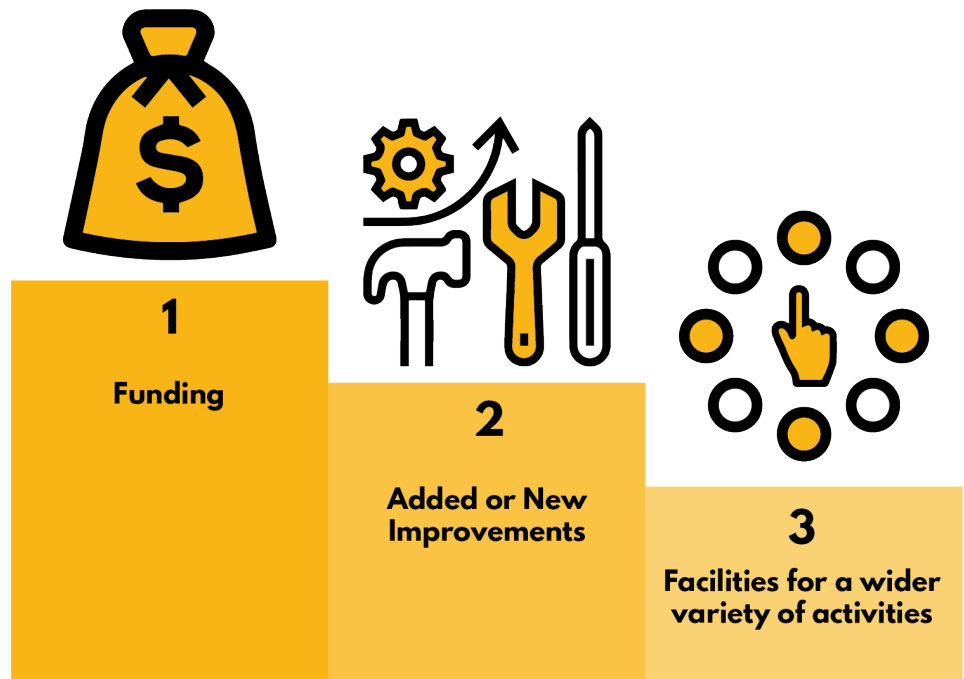
AGENCY FOCUS TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION

Providers were asked: "What do you feel are your community's top three priorities to focus on to increase participation?"

Funding is at the front of most providers' minds, as it's something they deal with on a daily basis, so it was unsurprising for it to rank so highly.

While not completely consistent with the user responses, these findings could correspond with users' reported barriers to participation. Increased funding

could be put towards updating or improving maintenance of facilities. Improving existing facilities was the #1 user barrier as well as #1 user stated priority for providers. Increased funding could also be used to create a dedicated outreach department to expand awareness of facilities. Users felt their #2 barrier to activity was that they were unaware of their opportunities. Only 18% of users reported that lack of facilities or programs were a barrier for them.



KEY TAKE-AWAYS

MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENTS

Providers understand what keeps users away from participating in outdoor recreation, but they seem to struggle with where to focus their efforts to improve participation. Improving maintenance and updating existing facilities are clear user suggestions.

ENGAGE YOUR COMMUNITY

Recreation providers should be actively engaging in their social media channels and cultivating a community. Users are migrating to social and online modes of information, and agencies need to be willing to meet their users where they are.

KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

The response rate for recreation providers to the survey was roughly 11%. There needs to be a continual dialog between agencies and the state so that when it comes time to audit the system, providers understand the inherent value to them and are excited to share information on their progress.



CREDIT: AREK ADEOYE (VIA UNSPLASH)

PRIORITIES

“I guess I feel that I was following my instincts, and at the same time being guided by the best. I became totally intrigued with Louisiana - the people, the food. It is a part of my life. Everything that has happened for me since moving here has just been icing on the cake.” – Emeril Lagasse

After considering attitudes on outdoor recreation needs from both users and providers, this section integrates these necessities and identifies the focus toward future opportunities to direct resources and effort. This concentration is generalized so that it reaches a broad application yet meets the specific need of the local community being served.



CREDIT: USFWS

LOOKING BACK

Previous SCORP's have resulted in a series of priorities for the State to focus on in the following years. One crucial priority, identified by multiple SCORP's, has been to increase and expand access to trails. Since 2014, LWCF along with the Recreation Trails Program (RTP) has funded 69 Trails or Boardwalks; connecting and bringing communities closer to nature, 47 Alternative Transportation Trails; providing nature experiences, transportation, and exercise value, and over 100 miles of paddle trails and boat launches along Bayou Teche; connecting communities from Port Barre near Opelousas, down to Morgan City.

When the SCORP identifies a priority for the State to focus on, it doesn't always mean it's successfully addressed. There are roadblocks, unexpected hurdles, and constant funding shortages that can derail even the most committed organization. Below is an excerpt from the 2014-2019 Priority Progress document which details a particularly difficult implementation process, but one that was finally able to be successfully addressed with the SCORP 2020. **A full and detailed review of all past SCORP priorities and the progress made on them can be found in the appendix.**

Priority: Connect people with the trails in their communities

Vision: Build a system for community generated GIS data collection

Progress:

- Requested but failed to receive support from agency leadership to develop data collection system, obtain GIS license, etc. due to budget and staff limitations
- Collected regional and vicinity maps, recreation inventory lists are required for LWCF application process, staff provides planning assistance in project development
- DOR coordinates with RTP program giving priority to develop trails that connect residential areas to parks, schools and community resource
- DOR encouraged & coordinated with RTP program to develop the trails master plan & identify gap analysis (UNO 2020)

Current Status: SCORP 2020 is providing the framework for this type of GIS data collection, and information sharing using cost effective means. In an continuing effort to build the state's database of outdoor recreation, Recreation Providers are encouraged to maintain their recreation facility inventory in LORI. Facilities funded by LWCF are maintained by the state. The information will be available to the public and accessible to the National Park Service.



CREDIT: JAMES TAYLOR. LOCATION: ST. TAMMANY TRACE

TREKING FORWARD

After reflecting on the findings from previous SCORP's, reviewing the progress made and the stumbling blocks encountered, and honoring the voice of both the people of Louisiana and those in the outdoor recreation space, the following set of top statewide priorities were compiled to guide the development of outdoor recreation for the next five years.

TOP PRIORITIES

OUTDOOR CONNECTIVITY:

Expand trail networks and connect facilities.

ENGAGE WITH NATURE:

Preserve natural areas and create engaging recreation opportunities.

FISHING AND WATER ACCESS:

Increase access and incorporate more use at the water's edge.

PICNICKING, GATHERING, AND CREATING MEMORIES:

Incorporate interactive moments for groups of all ages and sizes.

EMBRACE REGIONAL DISTINCTIONS:

Tailor your solution to your region's needs.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUTDOOR CONNECTIVITY

Past SCORP's have identified the trend towards increased connectivity and emphasized building a robust trail network. This principle is supported by the recent survey and publication of the 2020 "[Louisiana Recreation Trails Program Plan](#)."³³ Users understand the inherent value in a robust trails system, and providers are continuing to add new trails and walkways within their facilities. According to the findings of the LRTP plan: while the benefits are well documented, the challenges of maintenance, safety, universal access, and the capacity to plan and coordinate these trail networks often limit trail providers in fully meeting the community needs.

GUIDELINES:

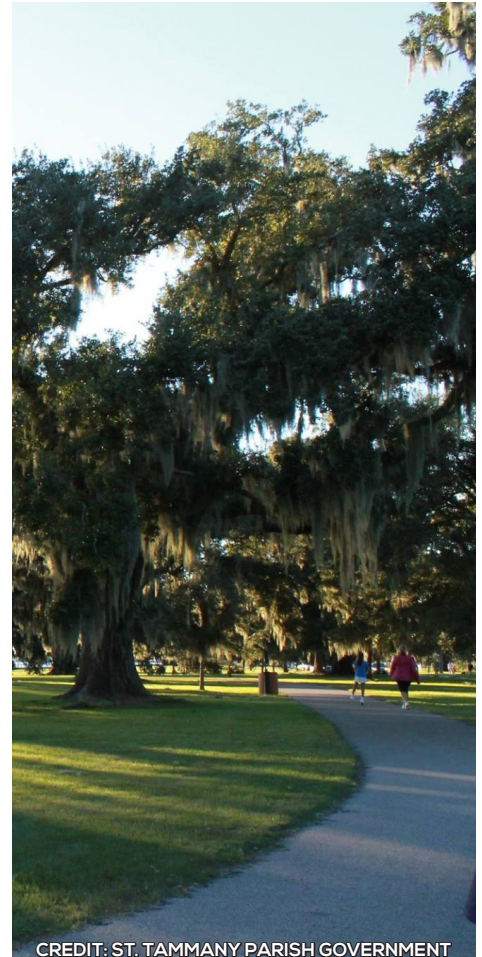
Trail networks should focus on connecting multiple existing public recreation opportunities or connecting a new facility to an existing trail network. Distances longer than a half-mile should be encouraged as they engage those looking to travel further, such as runners and bikers, who are underserved across the state recreation landscape.

OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE WITH NATURE

Users are continually looking for ways to exist in nature. From simply walking around a park or spending three days camping in the middle of a forest, the residents of Louisiana place a high value on getting outside and enjoying natural places with others. Across Louisiana, users reported high numbers of visiting natural areas, while many others reported partaking in passive, mentally restorative activities like birdwatching, hiking, and nature photography.

GUIDELINES:

Natural areas within urban or populated areas should be preserved and planned with opportunities for both passive solo-recreation, as well as engaging and novel activities for the whole family. Projects should be beyond playgrounds, include educational signage, opportunities for self-learning and natural observations, and provide areas for nature play.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR FISHING AND WATER ACCESS

In the last two SCORPs, fishing was among the most popular activities across the State, and that trend continues. Louisiana is a unique landscape for fishing, with almost 5,000 miles of navigable waterways³⁴, countless bayous and marshes and over 1.6 million acres of public land and waterways managed by the State for wildlife management areas, refuges, and conservation areas³⁵, the attraction is undeniable. Along with fishing, residents are increasingly enjoying outdoor swimming and paddling. We can expect to continue to see an increase in kayak fishing users. Kayak fishing nationwide has grown 22% over the last five years and 142% since 2010³⁶. Despite the State's vast natural resources, residents are not satisfied with access to water and facilities available to them in support of their outdoor recreation activities.

GUIDELINES:

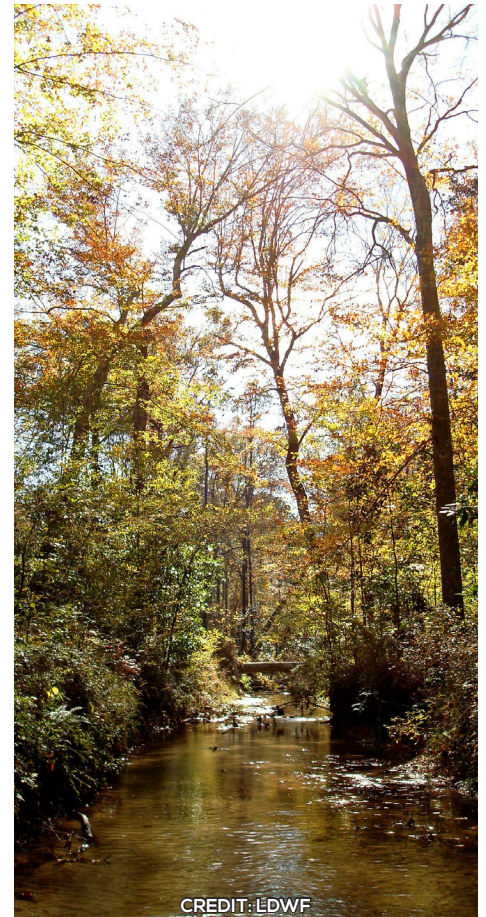
Creating opportunities for bank fishing and boat launches should be prioritized. Projects that inject more use at the water's edge should be considered, such as waterway trailheads with multiple activities and program support facilities. The simple mindset that water is all about fishing should be expanded to include more events for a broader range of users.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PICNICKING, GATHERING, AND CREATING MEMORIES

Louisiana is a uniquely social state. We share food and celebrate everything together, it's baked into our culture, and it's reflected in the SCORP user survey findings. Picnicking ranked highly across the State and can include anything from a simple bag lunch at a boat launch, to a large family crawfish boil in the park. As the Baby Boomer generation matures, a considerable amount of recreation opportunities will have to cater to both senior populations with limited mobility, and the growing segment of young families associated with the expansion of the Millennial generation³⁷. Outdoor recreation providers will need to adapt. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the public will be looking for safe, clean, well-maintained areas where meaningful memories can be made.

GUIDELINES:

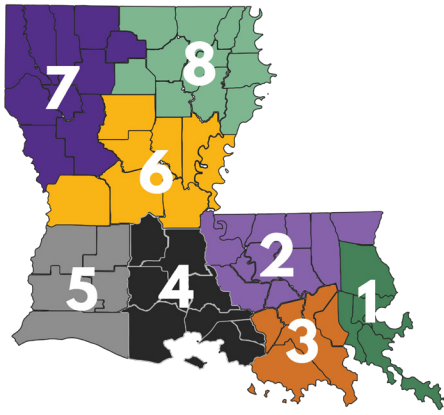
Projects should incorporate interactive play, appropriate for multiple age groups and skill levels, as well as nature play spaces. Providers should think about creating a range of gathering and eating areas for groups of all sizes, including individuals and couples looking to relax and unwind. Safety will continue to be a priority for all, so clean, easily maintainable, well-lit public areas should be incorporated.



CREDIT: EDWF



CREDIT: JAMES TAYLOR,
FELICIANA RETREAT CENTER



REGIONAL DISTINCTIONS

Region 1: New Orleans Area:
Let's go outside!

Region 2: Baton Rouge Area:
Let's take a hike!

Region 3: Houma-Thibodaux Area:
Let's go fishing!

Region 4: Lafayette Area:
Let's go hunting!

Region 5: Lake Charles Area:
Let's do it all in one place!

Region 6: Alexandria Area:
Let's do something new!

Region 7: Shreveport Area:
Let's go and do something fun!

Region 8: Monroe Area:
Let's get away for a while!



OPPORTUNITIES TO EMBRACE REGIONAL DISTINCTIONS

While state-wide opinions are consistent across the eight planning regions, work was done to understand each planning Region independently. As a result of this concentrated effort, eight regional identities were uncovered that should be considered when planning and proposing new recreation in each area. What makes sense in one Region may be entirely out of place in another. New planning or proposed projects should reflect the needs of the community it serves.

REGION 1 GUIDELINES:

Projects should create more ways to experience nature. Incorporation of nature play, educational programs and signage, self-guided tours, and other forms of nature-based recreation should be employed. Sites that connect to a more extensive system or are dispersed throughout a community should be prioritized.

REGION 2 GUIDELINES:

Projects should prioritize connectivity and trail networks above anything else. Include on-road bike trails, trails within extensive existing facilities, and multi-use running/biking trails that connect multiple communities.

REGION 3 GUIDELINES:

Projects in this Region should focus on increasing access to waterways and incorporating new ways to play in and around the water. Defining waterway trailheads as places communities can gather and celebrate together should also be a focus. Families want to spend the day out on the water and need the facilities to support this level of dedication.



CREDIT: SANDERS TAYLOR. BAYOU MANCHAC

REGION 4 GUIDELINES:

This Region has prioritized sportsman activities, and the focus should be on obtaining and expanding undisturbed natural areas for public use. Recreation opportunities should focus on hunting, fishing, paddling, crabbing, shooting sports, and other low impact nature recreation activities.

REGION 5 GUIDELINES:

Future recreation projects in this Region should focus on expanding programs or adding features to existing established facilities. Users in this Region are willing to travel further than most but want to have plenty of activities once they get there. Overall, this Region is the most content, so agencies should also make sure not to let the maintenance and quality of their facilities start to slip as they expand and improve. During the development of this SCORP, this region was deeply affected by natural disasters and Hurricane Laura, so restoration of damaged facilities is critical to reestablishing outdoor recreation opportunities for the region.



CREDIT: CHAD DANOS. CAJUN PRIDE SWAMP TOURS

REGION 6 GUIDELINES:

Surrounded by natural features, this Region is interested in non-traditional recreation. Look to expand extreme or non-traditional play opportunities like wakeboarding and off-road biking/ mountain biking, and other forms of active nature recreation.



CREDIT: BREC. HOWELL COMMUNITY PARK

REGION 7 GUIDELINES:

This Region wants proper ways to connect with nature and the outdoors. Proposed projects should focus on improving the supporting infrastructure of existing facilities and providing new and novel outdoor activities.

REGION 8 GUIDELINES:

Long weekends spent in nature are a staple of life in region 8. Public outdoor recreation should look to improve campsite amenities and provide users with more activities for entertaining the entire family.



CREDIT: TIM MUELLER. LAKE D'ARBONNE STATE PARK

SO, WHAT DOES THAT ALL MEAN?

IT MEANS THAT ADDING OR IMPROVING CERTAIN FACILITIES OR ACTIVITIES CAN ADDRESS SPECIFIC NEEDS IN THE COMMUNITY:

Priorities:	Facilities:						
	Interior Park Trails	Boat Launch	Accessible Playground	Nature Play Area	Natural Area Preservation	Pavilion	
Outdoor Connectivity	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	
Engage with Nature	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Fishing & Water Access	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	
Picnicking, Etc.	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	
Regional Distinctions	[Greyed out]						
Region 1	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	
Region 2	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	
Region 3	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	
Region 4	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	
Region 5	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	
Region 6	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	
Region 7	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	
Region 8	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	

*THIS IS A PARTIAL EXHIBIT. A FULL FACILITY MATRIX CAN BE FOUND IN THE APPENDIX.



CREDIT: TIM MUELLER

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

**"WE CANNOT BECOME WHAT WE
WANT BY REMAINING WHAT WE ARE."** ³⁸

- MAX DE PREE -

Findings of the SCORP and the implementation of the top priorities, are carried out by Louisiana’s Division of Outdoor Recreation using the Open Project Selection Process (OPSP). This is the specific grading criteria DOR uses to determine if projects are furthering the outdoor recreation priorities determined by the SCORP, and if projects will receive LWCF funding. A copy of the OPSP can be found in the Appendix.

Understand the priorities in the SCORP and the criteria in the OSPS is critical, because when reflecting on the value of a comprehensive plan, we realize that the process of devising a blueprint involves attaining a deeper understanding of the wants of the group it is meant to serve. The result of delving into the evaluation of the needs and aspirations to chart a path forward is expressed in the form of policies, priorities, and choosing deliberate actions to incite positive changes to make a difference for the future.

We began with the theme of “Promoting Teamwork and Partnership” for this SCORP as to effectively advance outdoor recreation in Louisiana, a shared approach to implementing change will be required. Changing the attitude constitutes a change in how we collectively work together to achieve our result. No doubt, everyone engaged in outdoor recreation aspires for continual improvement. The challenge, however, when each is left to our inclination, we will gravitate to working on items that either serve our best interest or with things we are more comfortable.

Highly effective organizations employ a strategic plan that is calculated and focused on specific items that all involved are headed in the same direction and utilize common tactics to maximize results. Identified are three strategic objectives to leave as a challenge to all in devoting our collective energy. Should we as a cooperative invest in these strategies, our outdoor recreation landscape throughout Louisiana will flourish and mature.

“CAPACITY BUILDING HAS GIVEN US THE CAPABILITY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF GREAT OPPORTUNITIES, STRENGTHEN OUR VISION, AND GROW IN NEW DIRECTIONS.”³⁹
- MELANIE SCHEETZ -



BROADEN OPPORTUNITIES

As Ms. Scheetz quoted, increasing your capabilities as an organization will offer you opportunities you never imagined. As a collective, we must search for ways to not only introduce outdoor recreation but foster an understanding of the values and benefits associated with ensuring that all people have access to these opportunities.

One approach would be to endorse and enact the three pillars of the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA).⁴⁰ These core principles are the essence of outdoor recreation, 1) Health and Wellness, 2) Conservation and 3) Social Equity. Utilizing the foundation of these pillars, if committed to by every park agency, would transform the landscape of outdoor recreation itself, thus build capacity in a meaningful way.

NRPA’s issue brief on physical activity and its relationship to good health and reducing obesity⁴¹ not only makes a case for the health benefits of parks and recreation but also identifies strategies and policies that park agencies can employ. It also cites several case studies to assist with providing evidence-based research to defend this belief.

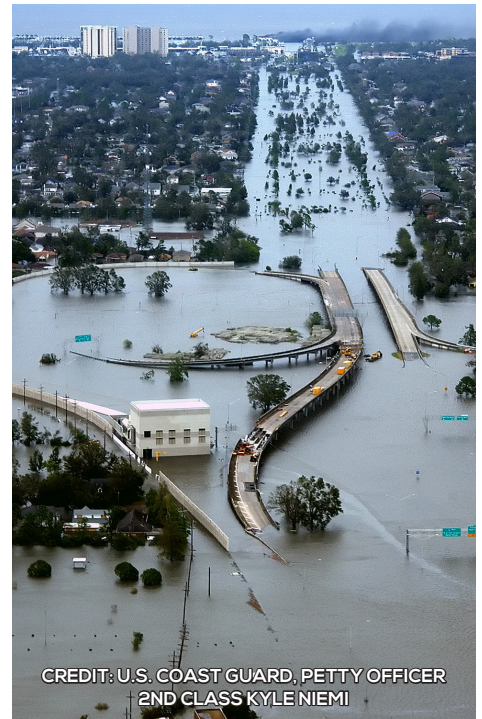


CREDIT: USGS. BRENTON ISLAND

In an age of Climate Change concerns and a heightened interest in conservation, we have an unprecedented opportunity to guide outdoor recreation development into places where people can unplug and reconnect to the land, water, trees, open space, and wildlife. These initiatives need to be “place-based,” specific to the locale that is appropriate for the community it serves. The 2016 Louisiana floods⁴² demonstrated the notion that parks can serve a multi-functional, resilient role for our communities. The historic twenty-inch rain event affected numerous southeastern parishes with floodwaters impacting an estimated 146,000 homes. While scientists expect a higher frequency of these events, designing parkland as “Floodable Parks”⁴³ may prove to be a natural-based solution that could be employed in vulnerable communities as a method to lessen the impact of future flood events.

Louisianians are accustomed to natural disasters such as tornadoes, hurricanes, and ice storms, but the rate of recurrence is something where park systems should have a contingency plan in place. NRPA has some fantastic resources and conservation initiatives worth considering; climate-resilient parks, water management and conservation, parks for pollinators, and wildlife explorers are just a few worthy of consideration.⁴⁴

Equal access to all people of outdoor recreational opportunities available within each community is NRPA’s third principal⁴⁵. All people, regardless of color, age, income, or ability, should have access to the facilities and programs that encompass the outdoor recreation realm of a community. This subject matter compels us to ask ourselves tough questions around racial inequities and homelessness issues within our communities that are easy to “turn a blind eye.” The unfair treatment along racial lines that have occurred for decades affect the use of our parks and open spaces that are often indiscernible to those not adversely affected. To reveal this inequity, landscape architect and professor Lake Douglas, Ph.D., recently submitted an Op-Ed essay to The New York Times titled, “Adding Accessible Public Open Space to What We Need to Talk About.” That essay is included in this appendix, and discusses the value of open space, both historically and more recently with a renewed appreciation for it during the COVID-19 pandemic. Douglas cites an example of New Orleans’ Audubon Park and how the commercialization and privatization of green space as a result of reductions in public funding have caused public open spaces to become disenfranchised from all members of the community.



CREDIT: U.S. COAST GUARD, PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS KYLE NIEMI



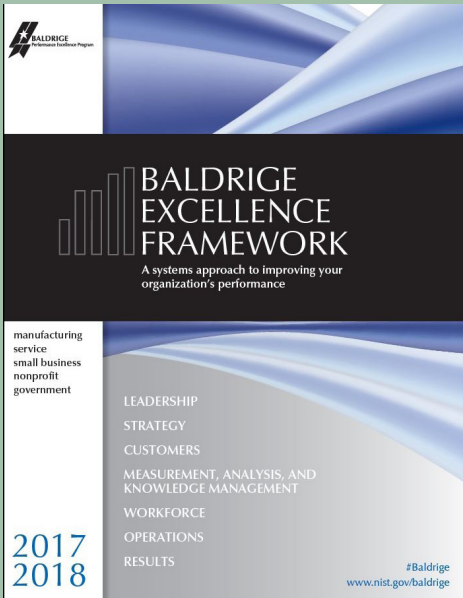
CREDIT: U.S. EPA



CREDIT: KEVIN ANDRE (VIA UNSPLASH)



CREDIT: DENNIS VON WESTBURG (VIA UNSPLASH)



FOSTER EXCELLENCE

We often hear stories from our elders about how things were in “the good ole’ days,” or perhaps we are the ones recounting stories to our children before the advent of the internet, on-demand services, and a global economy. The world has changed and will continue to improve. So why do agencies assume that providing the same outdoor recreation services, facilities, and delivery methods used in the past is “good enough” today and into the future?

Organizations are tasked with providing outdoor recreation to communities and must continue to challenge and improve their methodology and delivery processes in a strategic way. Several programs can contribute to the self-evaluation of performance and efficiency within an organization. The consultant offers these tools for consideration and further research on the appropriateness of your agency.

[Baldrige Excellence Framework](#) is a performance excellence program is managed by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), an agency of the US Department of Commerce. Baldrige provides an outline to enable organizations to self-assess their management systems with a focus on helping you innovate and improve.



[NRPA’s Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies \(CAPRA\)](#) affords park agencies assets of National Standards for self-assessment tools that can then be used for submittal for peer review and verification of compliance of the standards for subsequent accreditation. Though recognition may not be the goal of an agency, the process and self-evaluation of the criteria is an excellent approach to assisting your agency in assessing your capacity for change and innovation.



[Foresight First](#) is a unique approach that, instead of looking back at the systems an organization has established and evaluated that to current standards, it takes a visionary examination of what is to come. Foresight First confronts our conventional beliefs that influence our decisions in organizational governance. It advocates that we utilize intentional learning to understand better what the future holds and how to better position our organization for that emerging opportunity.

Regardless of the methods employed, continual evaluation of the methods and systems utilized within an agency, or the programs and facilities offered are critical to long-term success. Learning from these assessments then reformulating the approach and role as an agent of community outdoor recreation organizations will help cultivate growth.



CREDIT: FRANKLIN ASSOCIATES.
BREC IMAGINE YOUR PARKS 2



CREDIT: FRANKLIN ASSOCIATES.
BREC IMAGINE YOUR PARKS 2



CREDIT: FRANKLIN ASSOCIATES.
BREC IMAGINE YOUR PARKS 2

The following three examples are offered as inspiration on redefining agency, each illustrating a variety of capacity and organizational structure for one's consideration.

“Imagine Your Parks” is the Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge (BREC) ten-year strategic vision and action plan for a park system that serves its citizens with outdoor recreational offerings in 182 parks encompassing 6,624-acres. The strategic plan initially developed in 2004 and subsequently reassessed in 2015 as “Imagine Your Parks 2” has allowed BREC to involve the community with public engagement to ensure that the strategic direction of the organization is aligned with the community desires. As an agency within the outdoor recreation arena, BREC has a longstanding reputation of leadership in excellence in parks and recreation administration. In 1975 and 1991, BREC was awarded the prestigious Gold Medal Award by NRPA and was a national finalist for this award more than 13 other times.

Iberville Parks and Recreation Framework Guide is another example of a park system taking a look at itself and engaging the community in dialogue to understand better their needs and the necessary changes to the park system to make vital improvements. Though a smaller park system with 25 parks on nearly 110-acres, the assessment included an online public survey, 6 Town Hall meetings, 25-park audits for safety, accessibility, and improvements needed to meet community needs and an evaluation of operating policies. The effort concluded with 46 recommendations for strategic improvements to move the park system forward.



CREDIT: FRANKLIN ASSOCIATES.
BREC IMAGINE YOUR PARKS 2



CREDIT: DDG. IBERVILLE PARKS AND RECREATION FRAMEWORK GUIDE - TOWN HALL



CREDIT: DDG. IBERVILLE PARKS AND RECREATION FRAMEWORK GUIDE - AUDITS



CREDIT: DDG. IBERVILLE PARKS AND RECREATION FRAMEWORK GUIDE - TOWN HALL



CREDIT: DDG. IBERVILLE PARKS AND RECREATION FRAMEWORK GUIDE - TOWN HALL



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The final example is a different case study that began in 2005 when a 100-acre land parcel in the heart of Lafayette, Louisiana, was threatened by development. Students at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette leaped into action to preserve the space of the University's former Equestrian Center. They began a community-wide movement to save the "Horse Farm," later named Moncus Park. After seven years of negotiations and an outpouring of community support, the City of Lafayette purchased the property. To ensure that the land would be developed and operated as a world-class community park, Lafayette Central Park, Inc., a 501(c)3 non-profit organization (LCP) was established. As a non-profit, the critical role of LCP in fundraising is something that traditional public agencies are not in a position upon which to capitalize. The result of this private foundation being responsible for the planning, design, funding, implementation, operations, and management of this public space presents unique opportunities for the community's benefit.



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STRENGTHEN ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder engagement is an intentional effort that is paramount to an agency’s success. Long gone are the days of “build it, and they will come.” Engagement with patrons, collaborators, and the public itself requires commitment and focus on a continual relationship with these parties. It was evident in our outreach and engagement for this SCORP that we experienced a hesitancy to share and participate in the process, especially amongst local agencies. Understandably, our team did not have an established relationship with organizations such as LRPA, LMA, and PJAL. In this environment of cybersecurity and confidentiality, we were unable to establish those relationships in such short order. Moving forward, capitalizing on these initial efforts and continuing the dialogue while amplifying the energy of collaboration between these organizations and expanding the conversation with LCASLA, APALC, and other organizations with similar interests to build a coalition in advancing outdoor recreation throughout Louisiana is the key to success.

As discussed in chapter 2, transforming our methods of public outreach will require a more robust approach that exploits social media and the various platforms to target an assortment of audiences. While Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are the leading platforms, a growing number of alternative networks such as Nextdoor, Snapchat, TikTok, and Reddit should be considered for creating a well-populated, active online presence. We witnessed that the most significant success was through consistent engagement. Doing so establishes trust and results in greater participation. Online websites must be designed for mobile-friendly devices like smart-phones, and electronic pads are more readily available than traditional desktop and laptop computers.

The same argument can be made for robust community engagement when contemplating new or proposed improvements to facilities or programs. While change is not always easy to accept, those impacted are much more accepting of these impacts if they have genuine opportunities to be part of the process in identifying the issues, potential solutions, and their needs during the process.



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In all, we trust that these strategic objectives, if employed, will offer a renewed sense of purpose and enthusiasm throughout your agency and community.

If we all focus on these tactics, the outdoor recreation space will be healthier for it, and the citizens of Louisiana will be better for it.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Red River and Plaquemines Parishes have not received LWCF funding for outdoor recreation projects.
- 2 <https://visitolouisianacoast.com/blog/americas-wetland-birding-trail>
- 3 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cajuns>
- 4 <https://www.louisianatravel.com/paddle/trail/bayou-teche-paddling-trail-entire-bayou>
- 5 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atchafalaya_Basin
- 6 <https://www.visitlakecharles.org/creole-nature-trail/>
- 7 <https://www.deep-south-usa.com/Louisiana/regions-of-louisiana>
- 8 <https://www.tourlouisiana.com/destinations/30>
- 9 <https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/kisatchie/recarea/?recid=34775>
- 10 <https://www.tourlouisiana.com/destinations/shreveport-bossier>
- 11 <https://www.povertypoint.us/monumental-earthworks-day-trip>
- 12 <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1435/>
- 13 <https://www.louisianatravel.com/articles/poverty-point-reservoir-state-park>
- 14 https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Upper_Ouachita/about.html
- 15 From the book: Stir the Pot: The History of Cajun Cuisine.
- 16 Henry Ford was the founder of the Ford Motor Company. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Ford
- 17 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/>
- 18 <https://www.statista.com/topics/1164/social-networks/>
- 19 http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/high_tech_telecoms_internet/the_social_economy
- 20 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/247614/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/>
- 21 <https://smallbusiness.chron.com/breakdown-facebook-users-age-63280.html>
- 22 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/293771/number-of-us-instagram-users/>
- 23 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/398166/us-instagram-user-age-distribution/>
- 24 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/274564/monthly-active-twitter-users-in-the-united-states/>
- 25 <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/07/180706102842.htm>
- 26 Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder. Last Child in the Woods is the first book to bring together a new and growing body of research indicating that direct

exposure to nature is essential for healthy childhood development and for the physical and emotional health of children and adults. More than just raising an alarm, Louv offers practical solutions and simple ways to heal the broken bond—and many are right in our own backyard.

[http:// richardlouv.com/books/last-child/](http://richardlouv.com/books/last-child/)

27 LORI is modeled after a system developed by the State of Florida’s Department of Environmental Protection named “FORI” – the Florida Outdoor Recreation Inventory:

<https://floridadep.gov/parks/florida-outdoor-recreation-inventory>

28 <http://www.srala-toledo.com/>

29 Southeastern University website: <https://www2.southeastern.edu/orgs/oilspill/wetlands.html>

30 Couvillion, B.R., Beck, Holly, Schoolmaster, Donald, and Fischer, Michelle, 2017, Land area change in coastal Louisiana 1932 to 2016: U.S. Geological Survey Scientific Investigations Map 3381, 16 p. pamphlet, <https://doi.org/10.3133/sim3381>.

31 Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) website: <http://coastal.la.gov/our-plan/2023-coastal-master-plan/>

32 https://www.crt.state.la.us/Assets/Parks/grants/RTPL/Louisiana_Recreational_Trails_Program_Plan.pdf

33 https://www.crt.state.la.us/Assets/Parks/grants/RTPL/Louisiana_Recreational_Trails_Program_Plan.pdf

34 “Louisiana: History of the American State” Anne Campbell, 2nd Edition.

35 https://www.wlf.Louisiana.gov/assets/Resources/Publications/Wildlife_Management_Areas_and_Refuges/LDWF_Master_Plan_for_Wildlife_Areas_and_Refuges_2014.pdf

36 “2019 Outdoor Participation Report” Outdoor Foundation

37 <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/03/01/millennials-overtake-baby-boomers/>

38 Quote by Max De Pree, an American businessman and author of “Leadership is an Art”.

39 Quote by Melanie Scheetz, Executive Director, Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition.

40 <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/Three-Pillars/>

41 <https://www.nrpa.org/contentassets/f768428a39aa4035ae55b2aaff372617/obesity.pdf>

42 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Louisiana_floods

43 <https://www.urbangreenup.eu/solutions/floodable-park.kl>

44 <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/Three-Pillars/conservation/>

45 <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/Three-Pillars/social-equity/>

DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act; is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals and ensures that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as all others. The ADA imposes accessibility requirements on public accommodations, including parks.

ANHA - The Atchafalaya National Heritage Area; is made up of 14 parishes in south-central Louisiana. It was designated by Congress in 2006 as a region with significant natural, scenic, cultural, historical and recreational resources and offers a unique blend of European, African, Caribbean and Native American cultures.

APALA – American Planning Association, Louisiana Chapter, is a state-wide chapter of a national organization whose mission is to promote the practice of community and regional planning in Louisiana by enhancing the effectiveness of planners in impacting public policy.

BREC – The Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge; BREC is a political subdivision of the State of Louisiana and does not operate under the City-Parish Government.

BTNEP - Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program; is partnership of government, business, scientists, conservation organizations, agricultural interests, and individuals for the preservation, protection, and restoration of the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary in southeast Louisiana.

CRT – Culture, Recreation, and Tourism; a Department under the responsibility of Louisiana’s Lieutenant Governor.

DOR – Division of Outdoor Recreation is an agency responsible for the stewardship of Louisiana’s outdoor recreation opportunities while administering federal grants associated with outdoor recreation.

Engagement – Engagement is an interaction a user has with a post or other online content. Conventional methods of engagement are views, shares, and comments.

EWRA – Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986 is a federal law allocating funds from the LWCF for the purchase of wetlands and requires states to include wetlands as part of their SCORP.

GIS – Geographic Information System; a computer system that utilizes layers of spatial data with “real-world” coordinates to visualize the way these various information compliments or conflicts with each other.

LCASLA – Louisiana Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects; is a state-wide chapter of a national organization whose mission is to advance landscape architecture through advocacy, communication, education, and fellowship.

LDWF - Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. LDWF is the state agency responsible for management of the state's renewable natural resources including all wildlife and all aquatic life.

LMA – Louisiana Municipal Association; is a unified voice for Louisiana's municipal governments, with a mission to advocate, educate, and empower local governments to efficiently and effectively serve the citizens of Louisiana.

LRPA – Louisiana Recreation and Park Association; is an organization whose mission is to enhance the quality of life in Louisiana by uniting those engaged in the park and recreation profession.

LWCF – Land and Water Conservation Fund; is a Federal program that supports the protection of federal public lands and waters – including national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and recreation areas – and voluntary conservation on private land. LWCF investments secure public access, improve recreational opportunities, and preserve ecosystem benefits for local communities.

NPS – National Park Service is a bureau of the U.S. Department of the Interior that is entrusted with the care of national parks and the responsible agency stipulated by Congress with the administration of the LWCF program.

NRPA – National Recreation and Park Association; is the leading non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of public parks, recreation, and conservation.

OPSP – Open Project Selection Process; is an implementation framework that includes priorities established in the SCORP and a detailed action plan on evaluation criteria necessary in project selection for LWCF funding.

PJAL – Police Jury Association of Louisiana; is an organization created to improve parish government in Louisiana and is open to each of the 64 parishes for membership.

Referral – A referral is when someone finds a link posted or shared on a site or platform, clicks it, and travels to a secondary site. The secondary site considers this a referral and can count how many references come from different websites.

Response Rate – The number of people answering the survey divided by the number of people invited to the survey, conveyed as a percentage. If a group of 10 people was asked to complete a survey, and only five did, the response rate for that group would be 50%

RTP – Recreational Trails Program; a funding program administered through the Division of Outdoor Recreation that coordinates with the LWCF program. Both LWCF & RTP programs benefit local, state, and federal outdoor recreation in Louisiana.

SAT – SCORP Advisory Team is a varied group of citizens with interest in outdoor recreation to assist with outreach during the formulation of the SCORP 2020.

SCORP – Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

Targeting – In internet marketing, the practice of identifying the specific audiences based upon geography, behavioral, or demographics to adapt a message that is relevant to the visitor concerning the trait pursued.

TFC – Task Force Committee is a group of Louisiana recreational professions who have volunteered to serve as a working group offering perspective and feed-back during the formulation of the SCORP 2020.

Traffic – Traffic, in an online context, is made up of individual users that visit websites. It is useful for understanding how people move around the internet.

Users – This is how social media platforms describe the people that use their platform on a daily or monthly basis. A higher user counts mean the platform is more popular.

USFWS - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; is an agency of the US federal government within the US Department of the Interior dedicated to the management of fish, wildlife, and natural habitats.

USGS – U.S. Geological Survey; is a scientific agency of the United States government. The scientists of the USGS study the landscape of the United States, its natural resources, and the natural hazards that threaten it.

