The Future of Outdoor Recreation in Georgia 2017-2021

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> Good afternoon!

Session Overview

• Parks, trails, greenspace and outdoor recreation
• Local, regional and statewide planning
• The Georgia Plan for Outdoor Recreation 2017-2021
• Interactive Focus Group
Session Associates

Eric VanDeGenachte
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The Power of Parks...
> Healthy, Happy Communities

Parks, trails, open spaces and recreation are core elements of vibrant and sustainable communities

• One of top 3 reasons businesses cite in making relocation decisions
• Access to parks strongly linked to reduced crime and juvenile delinquency
• Home-buyers willing to pay more to live close to parks

> But Wait, There’s More…

Parks and protected public lands proven to:

• Improve water quality, protect ground water and prevent flooding
• Improve the quality of air we breathe
• Provide vegetative buffers to development and produce essential habitat for wildlife
• Trees in cities save $400 Billion in storm water retention facility costs
> But Wait, There’s Even More…

Parks, trails and recreation amenities:
• Provide places for children and families to connect with nature and recreate outdoors together
• Strengthen community ties and bring diverse populations together
• People who live near parks exercise more and report better mental health, even if they don’t actually exercise there

Outdoor Recreation is BIG Business in Georgia
GA Economic Benefits are HUGE!

$23.3 BILLION per year in tourism economic activity

231,000 jobs connected to outdoor recreation

$7 Billion in wages and salaries

$1.4 Billion in state and local taxes

WOW! Economic Benefits Per Activity

• Golf = $15 Billion
• Canoeing, Kayaking & Rafting = $11.3 Billion
• Boating = $2.7 Billion
• Camping/RV = $3.2 Billion
• Hunting & Fishing = $2.3 Billion
• Silver Comet Trail = $120 Million
• Wineries/Vineyards = $39 Million
> Economic Impact of GA State Parks

- 7.9 million visitors in FY 2015
- Supported 6,044 jobs
- Economic impact of $610 Million
- Most direct benefits realized at the host community / local level

> Local and Regional Park Impacts

- Annually, local and regional parks create $140 Billion in economic activity per year and support almost 1 million jobs nationwide.
- Local park events and tournaments generate both direct revenue and indirect economic activity
The Future of Outdoor Recreation

The Georgia Plan for Outdoor Recreation

- A statewide blueprint for maintaining and sustaining public outdoor recreation resources to meet the demands of Georgia’s diverse and growing population

- The plan, which is updated every five years, keeps Georgia eligible for federal grant support through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
Key Elements:

• Inventory of local, state & federal outdoor recreation resources (SUPPLY)

• Public opinion survey, input meetings and focus groups to determine attitudes, needs and priorities for outdoor recreation (DEMAND)

• National and statewide TRENDS analysis

GOAL: Statewide direction and action plan with defined outdoor recreation priorities for future LWCF grant cycles

Input and Engagement:

Public & Professionals
> Advisory Committee

Assn. County Commissions of GA, Todd Edwards  
Federal Lands, Melissa Memory  
Georgia Conservancy, Robert Ramsey  
GA Municipal Association, Catherine Fleming  
GA Recreation & Park Association, Jimmy Gisi  
Georgia Recreation Trails Adv. Board, Greta DeMayo  
GA Dept Community Affairs, Elizabeth Smith  
GA Dept Economic Development, Beda Johnson  
GA Dept Natural Resources, Mary Kathryn Yearta  
Quasi-Public Lands, Mike Phillips

> Input & Engagement

• Statewide survey*  
• Public meetings*  
• Focus groups*  
• Website accepting comments  
• Media: Electronic, Social & Print  
• Advisory Committee meetings  
• DNR Board meetings

* Carl Vinson Institute of Government
> Input & Engagement

- **Statewide survey:** 1,100 respondents
- **Local Parks Professionals:** Webinar, series short surveys
- **State & Federal Parks Professionals:** Webinar, surveys
- **Focus groups:**
  1) Millennials, 2) African-Americans
  3) Outdoor Plan Advisory Committee, &
  4) Local & Regional Planners (GARC)

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> Input & Engagement

**Public Engagement Opportunities:**

**Public Meetings:**
- Tifton: October 22
- Dalton: November 2
- Perry: November 16

**Public Comment Website:**
- gastateparks.org/scorp
Statewide Survey

Telephone Survey of 1,100 respondents
• 63% engaged in O.R. in last 12 months
• 71% visited public outdoor recreation area

Top Activities:
• Walking, jogging or running ~90%
• Picnic, social gathering ~80%
• Swimming ~70%
• Nature study ~70%
Statewide Survey

Generalities
Participants vs Non-participants
- White
- Higher education
- Higher income
- ~10% Spanish, Hispanic or Latino

Statewide Survey

Reasons to Recreate - Participants
- To have fun ~80%
- To be with family (children) or friends ~80%
- Relaxing ~80
- Health & Exercise ~70%
- Experience Nature ~70%
> Statewide Survey

Where Non-Participants Recreate

- Home ~80%
- Indoor facilities (e.g., gym) ~50%
- Theme parks (40%)

> Statewide Survey

Barriers to Recreation

- Lack of time (~60% p / ~50% np)
- No one with shared interests (~50% p / ~40% np)
- No programming (~40% p & np)
- Parks too crowded (~40% p & np)

p = Participant in outdoor recreation
np = Non-participant in outdoor recreation
> Statewide Survey

Fees
• “About right” ~80%

Willing to pay more?
• ~50% Yes (Very willing, Willing)
• ~30% No (Unwilling, Not at all willing)

> Statewide Survey

Problems: Most significant

1) Limited public funding for outdoor recreation
2) Lack of facilities for O.R. activities
3) Lack of information
4) Poor security at parks
Inventory of Recreation Areas

- Distribution
- Amenities
- Demographic Responsiveness
- Online updating / editing by local practitioners
- Accessible by planners
> Discussion: 
Incorporating Parks in Planning

Public Meeting Mini-Survey

1. How often do you engage in some type of outdoor recreation?
2. What is your most preferred outdoor activity?
3. Where are you most likely to engage in this activity?
4. Why are you most likely to visit a state park?
5. Why are you most likely to visit a city or county park?
6. What prevents you from engaging in outdoor recreation more often?

> Discussion: 
Incorporating Parks in Planning

Public Meeting Discussion

1. Why is outdoor recreation important to you and your family?
2. What should be done to improve outdoor recreation?
3. What obstacles will keep these improvements from being made?
4. What other message or comments about outdoor recreation in Georgia do you have?
Discussion: Incorporating Parks in Planning

GARC Discussion Questions

1. How do you engage with Park and Recreation in your region?
2. What can DNR do with DCA to get you information about recreation resources and/or needs?
3. How can GRPA (Georgia Recreation and Park Association) engage with Regional Commissions?
4. How do we collaborate?

For More Information

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Thank you!