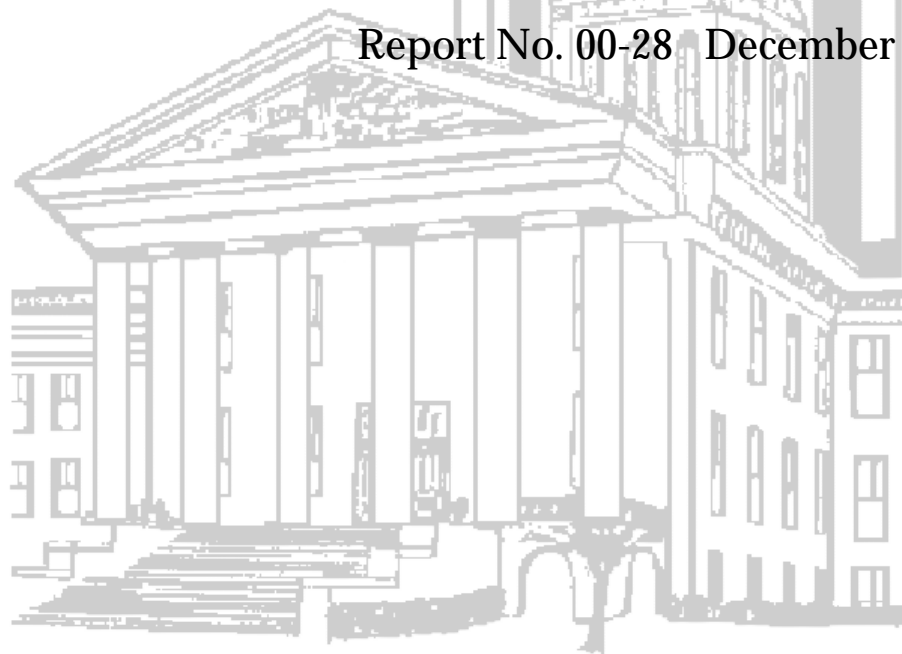


oppaga

Justification Review

Recreation and Parks Program
Department of Environmental Protection

Report No. 00-28 December 2000



*Office of Program Policy Analysis
and Government Accountability*

an office of the Florida Legislature

OPPAGA provides objective, independent, professional analyses of state policies and services to assist the Florida Legislature in decision making, to ensure government accountability, and to recommend the best use of public resources. This project was conducted in accordance with applicable evaluation standards. Copies of this report in print or alternate accessible format may be obtained by telephone (850/488-0021 or 800/531-2477), by FAX (850/487-3804), in person (Claude Pepper Building, Room 312, 111 W. Madison St.), or by mail (OPPAGA Report Production, 111 W. Madison St., Tallahassee, FL 32399-1475).

The Florida Monitor: <http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/>

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John W. Turcotte, OPPAGA Director*



The Florida Legislature

OFFICE OF PROGRAM POLICY ANALYSIS AND GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY



John W. Turcotte, Director

December 2000

The President of the Senate,
the Speaker of the House of Representatives,
and the Joint Legislative Auditing Committee

I have directed that a program evaluation and justification review be made of the Recreation and Parks Program administered by the Department of Environmental Protection. The results of this review are presented to you in this report. This review was made as a part of a series of justification reviews to be conducted by OPPAGA under the Government Performance and Accountability Act of 1994. This review was conducted by Shunti Houston and Nathan Lassila under the supervision of Larry Novey.

We wish to express our appreciation to the staff of the Department of Environmental Protection for their assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John W. Turcotte".

John W. Turcotte
Director

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Justification Review of the Recreation and Parks Program

Purpose

This report presents the results of OPPAGA's program evaluation and justification review of the Department of Environmental Protection's Recreation and Parks Program. The 1994 Government Performance and Accountability Act directs OPPAGA to conduct justification reviews of each program during its second year of operating under a performance-based program budget. OPPAGA is to review agency performance measures, evaluate program performance, and identify policy alternatives for improving services and reducing costs.

Background

The purpose of the Recreation and Parks Program is to anticipate and meet the outdoor recreation needs of the state's residents and visitors, to ensure that an adequate natural resource base is maintained to accommodate future demands and preserve a quality environment, and to preserve, enhance, and restore the natural functions of marine and estuarine environments. Staff in each of the program's three components (State Park Operations, Greenways and Trails, and Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas) work to meet specific goals established to accomplish the program's purpose.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection administers the Recreation and Parks Program. For Fiscal Year 2000-01, the Legislature appropriated \$212,920,528 and 1,167 positions to meet program operations and fixed capital outlay needs. The program accounts for 12% of the department's \$1.8 billion budget for Fiscal Year 2000-01.

Program Benefit, Placement, and Performance

Outdoor recreational opportunities would decline if the program is eliminated

The Recreation and Parks Program is beneficial and should be continued. The program provides beneficial services to the state's citizens and visitors and protects valuable resources that contribute to the public health, welfare, and economy of the state. Program lands provide the state's citizens and visitors with a variety of resource-based recreational opportunities through such activities as swimming, hiking, biking, and horseback riding. Program staff also preserve native ecosystems and historic and cultural resources for the enjoyment of future generations. Consequently, discontinuing the program could lead to the deterioration of the state's most valuable natural and cultural resources and limit public access to recreational opportunities.

Transferring the Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas would not improve its effectiveness

The Recreation and Parks Program should remain within the Department of Environmental Protection because this is the state's principal environmental and natural resource agency. We considered the placement of the Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas, but determined that transferring the office to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission would not improve its effectiveness.

Fully privatizing the state park system may not improve services

Privatizing the state park system may not be prudent unless the state adequately plans how to best develop particular areas and devote sufficient resources to control and properly manage the private contracts. Privatizing park services may produce unintended, adverse consequences because a contractor may be primarily focused on generating high net profits rather than providing high quality services. Therefore, careful oversight of contracted services is needed.

Program performance could be improved in some areas

Performance-based program budgeting measures are reasonable indicators of the program's progress in meeting its goals to enhance recreational opportunities. Fiscal Year 1999-2000 performance data shows that the program successfully met legislative goals to increase public recreation opportunities at state parks. However, the program did not meet legislative goals in developing trailheads and enhancing and restoring state buffer preserves. The program could improve its performance in these areas if contracts for trailhead development are secured in a more timely manner and the weather becomes more favorable for conducting controlled burns at buffer preserves.

Options for Improvement

Program could limit cost increases by delaying park development projects

The Recreation and Parks Program is the primary provider of recreational opportunities on state-owned lands, a key factor in its high land management costs. State park lands are more expensive to manage because they provide more intensive visitor services, resulting in increased labor, development, and maintenance costs. Program costs have increased since Fiscal Year 1998-99 because additional state park lands have been added to the state park system and due to the ongoing development of state parks. In reviewing the program's policies for developing state parks, we determined that the department should establish formal guidelines for determining priority park development projects to ensure that the state park system's most urgent needs are being met. There should be a relationship between the demand for services and the development of state parks. By delaying development projects at low attendance state parks, the department could avoid an estimated \$3.5 million in construction costs and \$69,000 in annual maintenance expenses. Development of new parks should also be limited to "starter kits" until their levels of usage warrant construction of more permanent facilities and the funding situation becomes more certain.

Program could generate additional revenue to support growing expenditures

A strategic issue facing the Recreation and Parks Program is a projected shortfall in state funds to support land management activities. This shortfall will likely affect the Recreation and Parks Program more than other state land management programs due to the level of services it provides. The program has some potential to increase its revenues, but cannot feasibly become self-supporting from user fees. However, in light of future funding shortfalls and the program's increasing costs, it is critical that the program identify ways to reduce the widening gap between revenues and expenditures. To generate additional revenue, the department should

- continue its efforts to expand the availability of overnight accommodations, including campsites and cabins;
- charge higher fees at state parks that are frequently overcrowded with visitors;
- continue to target its marketing efforts to state parks that are underused, as well as parks that are close to generating net profits; and
- install "honor boxes" in locations throughout the statewide trail system being implemented by the Office of Greenways and Trails and at parks that currently do not have admission fees.

Agency Response

The Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection provided a written response to our preliminary and tentative findings and recommendations. (See Appendix D, page 54, for his response.)

Introduction

Purpose

This report presents the results of OPPAGA's program evaluation and justification review of the Department of Environmental Protection's Recreation and Parks Program. The 1994 Government Performance and Accountability Act directs OPPAGA to conduct justification reviews of each program during its second year of operating under a performance-based program budget. OPPAGA is to review agency performance measures, evaluate program performance, and identify policy alternatives for improving services and reducing costs.

This report focuses on key issues related to the Recreation and Parks Program. Appendix A is a summary of our conclusions regarding the nine issue areas the law requires OPPAGA to consider in a program evaluation and justification review.

Background

The purpose of the Recreation and Parks Program is to anticipate and meet the outdoor recreation needs of the state's residents and visitors, to ensure that an adequate natural resource base is maintained to accommodate future demands and preserve a quality environment, and to preserve, enhance, and restore the natural functions of marine and estuarine environments. Staff in each of the program's three components (State Park Operations, Greenways and Trails, and Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas) work to meet specific goals established to accomplish the program's purpose.

State Park Operations

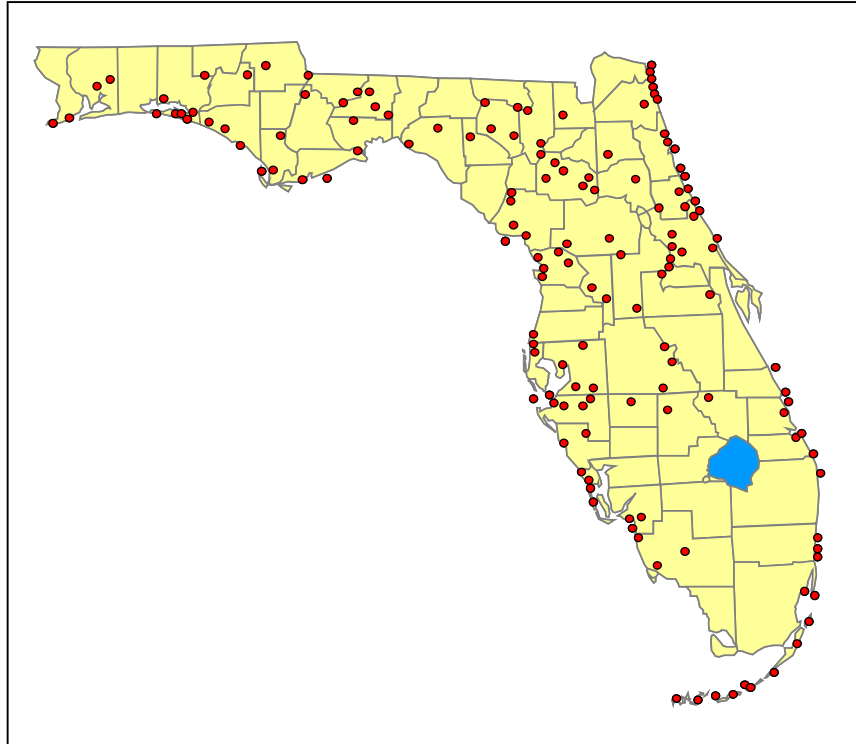
The Division of Recreation and Parks administers the state park system. Currently, 153 properties make up the state park system, covering 556,758 acres of upland and submerged areas. (See Exhibit 1.) Staff located in the division's central office in Tallahassee oversee the overall development and maintenance of recreation and conservation programs and provide overall coordination for the units that make up the state park system.

Introduction

Program staff in five geographic districts are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the state park system.

Exhibit 1

The Recreation and Parks Program Operates 153 State Parks



Source: Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Recreation and Parks.

The primary goal of the Division of Recreation and Parks is to increase the availability of recreation facilities and visitor services for the public's outdoor recreation needs and enjoyment. To achieve this goal, state park staff perform work in five primary areas of activity, including administration, visitor services, resource management, maintenance, and protection.

Administrative work includes registering campers, collecting and reporting revenue, preparing reports, and managing personnel. Visitor services include such activities as explaining the natural resources or the cultural significance of a park to visitors, conducting tours, giving presentations, and teaching recreational skills. Resource management tasks include removing exotic plants and animals, controlling erosion, and burning selected areas to restore an ecological balance. Maintenance work involves routine maintenance activities (i.e., cleaning restrooms, picking up trash, mowing the lawn), and preventive and corrective maintenance (i.e., repairing picnic tables, repairing plumbing and electrical systems, and painting facilities). Finally, protection work includes visitor safety and protection of park resources and facilities.

The division supports local recreational opportunities

Program staff also oversee the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program, which provides competitive grants to local governments for acquisition or development of land for public outdoor recreation use. Each year, the program establishes a maximum grant award based on the funding provided by the Legislature. For Fiscal Year 2000-01, the program was appropriated \$34 million and established a maximum award of \$200,000 per project. Grant recipients must provide local matching funds based on the total project cost.

Greenways and Trails

In 1995, the Legislature designated the department as the state's lead agency in greenways programs. The Office of Greenways and Trails was subsequently charged to facilitate the establishment of a statewide system of greenways and trails and to coordinate programs among government agencies and private individuals and organizations that could contribute to the greenways and trails system.¹ The Florida Greenways and Trails System is intended to provide open space benefiting environmentally sensitive lands and wildlife and providing people with access to healthful outdoor activities.

The goal of the Office of Greenways and Trails is to acquire, develop, maintain, and support land utilized to meet the public's outdoor recreation needs and for their appreciation of the natural and cultural assets. To achieve this goal, program staff perform a number of duties. They help prepare a plan to create a statewide greenways and trails system and are developing and maintaining a database associated with the planning effort.² In addition to taking the lead in the implementation efforts, program staff also serve as staff to the Florida Greenways and Trails Council; provide technical assistance to communities, developers, and landowners; provide information regarding recreational opportunities on greenways and trails in Florida; and develop information and publications to educate the public about the benefits of greenways and trails.³

¹ Greenways are corridors of protected open space that are managed for conservation and/or recreation. Trails are linear corridors on land or water with public access for recreation or transportation.

² Florida Department of Environmental Protection and Florida Greenways Coordinating Council, *Connecting Florida's Communities with Greenways and Trails*, September 1998.

³ The Florida Greenways and Trails Council replaces both the Florida Greenways Coordinating Council and the Florida Recreational Trails Council. It provides ongoing promotion of the statewide greenways and trails system. The Florida Greenways Coordinating Council and the Florida Recreational Trails Council worked with the department to develop the plan to create a statewide greenways and trails system.

Introduction

The office is primarily responsible for managing the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway

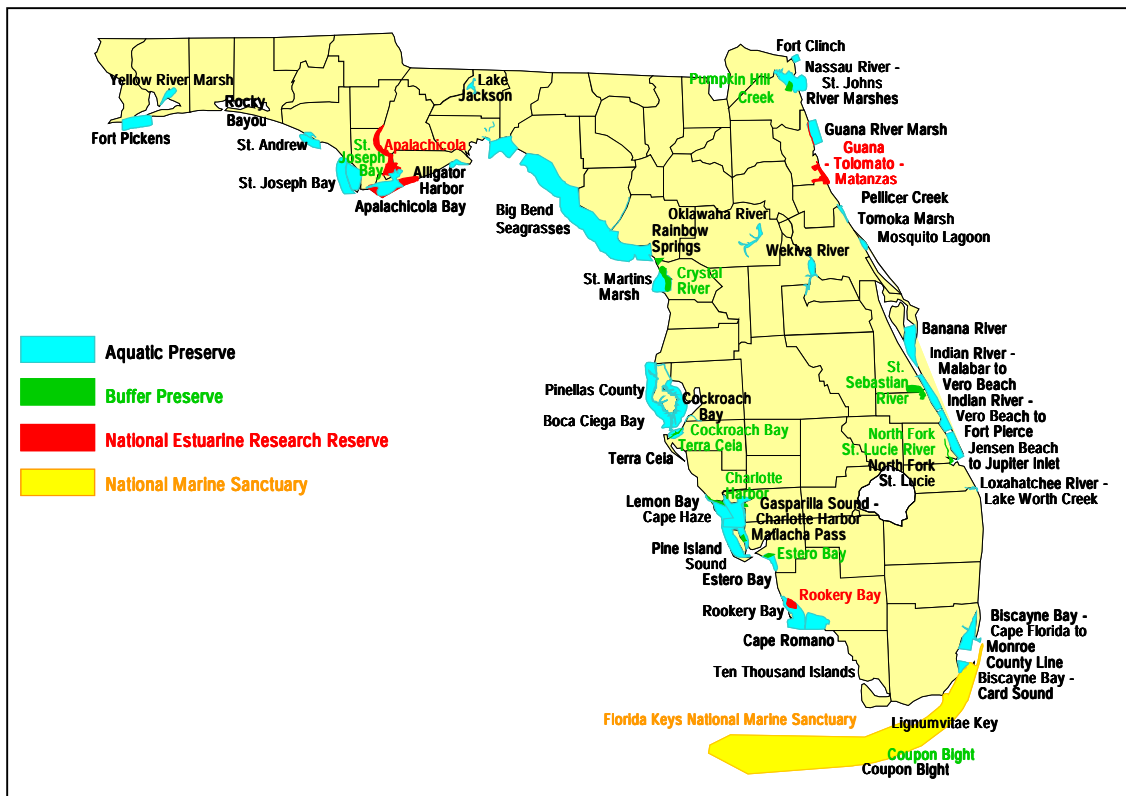
The Office of Greenways and Trails' land management responsibilities are currently limited to managing the 110-mile greenway corridor known as the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenways State Recreation and Conservation Area (the lands and canals associated with the former Cross Florida Barge Canal). Lands also are purchased through the Greenways and Trails acquisition program. These lands eventually will be subleased for management by local or state entities. Until these properties are subleased, the Office of Greenways and Trails assumes interim management responsibilities.

Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas

The goal of the Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas is to increase outdoor recreation opportunities while maintaining desirable natural functions and diversity of coastal and aquatic areas. As part of this effort, program staff manage 41 aquatic preserves, 10 state buffer preserves, 3 national estuarine research reserves, and 1 national marine sanctuary. (See Exhibit 2.)

Exhibit 2

A Significant Amount of Florida's Coastal and Aquatic Areas Are Protected



Source: Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas.

Aquatic preserves are submerged lands in areas that have exceptional biological, aesthetic, and scientific value which are to be maintained in their natural or existing conditions. The Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas maintains and improves existing resources within the aquatic preserves, such as aquatic plants, birds, and fish, so that the public can enjoy recreational opportunities available at these sites and to ensure their continued existence for future generations.

State buffer preserves are the natural lands surrounding aquatic preserves and other significant coastal waters which provide a protective upland buffer to the aquatic preserves. State buffer preserves are inhabited by a number of endangered species and also provide recreational opportunities.

The office manages some areas in concert with the federal government

Florida contains more national estuarine research reserves than any other state. These areas, through a cooperative effort between the federal and state governments, are established to provide opportunities for long-term research, estuarine education, and interpretive programs.

The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (2,800 square nautical miles) was created in 1990 to promote comprehensive management of the site's conservation, recreation, ecological, historical, research, educational, and aesthetic resources. As part of this effort, program staff manage, protect, and preserve the diverse plant and animal community and historic cultural resources (including shipwrecks and artifacts) of the Florida Keys.

Program Resources

The program accounts for 12% of the department's budget

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection administers the Recreation and Parks Program. For Fiscal Year 2000-01, the Legislature appropriated \$212,920,528 and 1,167 positions to meet program operations and fixed capital outlay needs. The program accounts for 12% of the department's \$1.8 billion budget for Fiscal Year 2000-01.

As shown in Exhibit 3, program funding has increased by 38% since Fiscal Year 1998-99. Program funding has increased because additional lands have been added to the state park system and parks are being developed to improve public access and to accommodate an increasing number of visitors to state parks. Funding for fixed capital outlay accounts for more than half the program's budget (64%) in Fiscal Year 2000-01.

**Exhibit 3
Program Appropriations Have Increased Since Fiscal Year 1998-99**

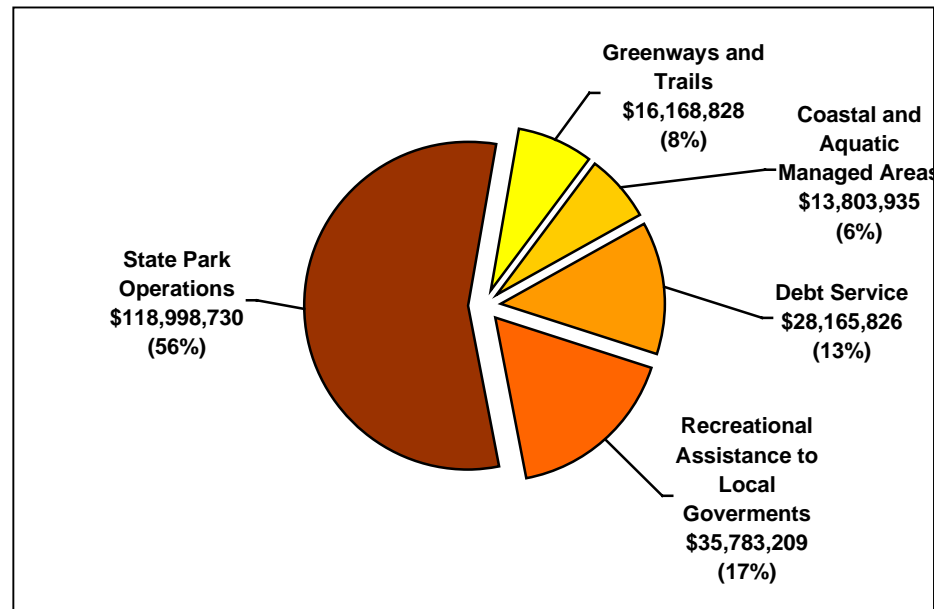
Program Appropriations	Fiscal Year		
	1998-1999	1999-2000	2000-2001
Positions	1,121	1,148	1,167
Program Operations	\$ 69,069,882	\$ 73,940,659	\$ 77,378,398
Fixed Capital Outlay	85,382,937	89,837,955	135,542,130
Total Funding	\$154,452,819	\$163,778,614	\$212,920,528

Source: Fiscal Year 1998-99 through 2000-01 General Appropriations Acts and Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Recreation and Parks.

Legislative appropriations primarily support state parks

Funding for state parks accounts for the majority of the program’s budget. As shown in Exhibit 4, legislative appropriations to support activities of the state park system account for 56% of the program’s Fiscal Year 2000-01 funding. Positions appropriated to the program are also primarily in support of state park operations. The Legislature appropriated 1,043 positions to carry out responsibilities related to the management of state park properties.

**Exhibit 4
State Park Funding Accounts for 56% of the Recreation and Parks Program’s Fiscal Year 2000-01 Budget**



Note: Appropriations figures for State Park Operations and Greenways and Trails include funding for operations, capital improvements, and land acquisition. Appropriations figures for Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas includes funding for operations and capital improvements.
Source: Fiscal Year 2000-01 General Appropriations Act and implementing legislation.

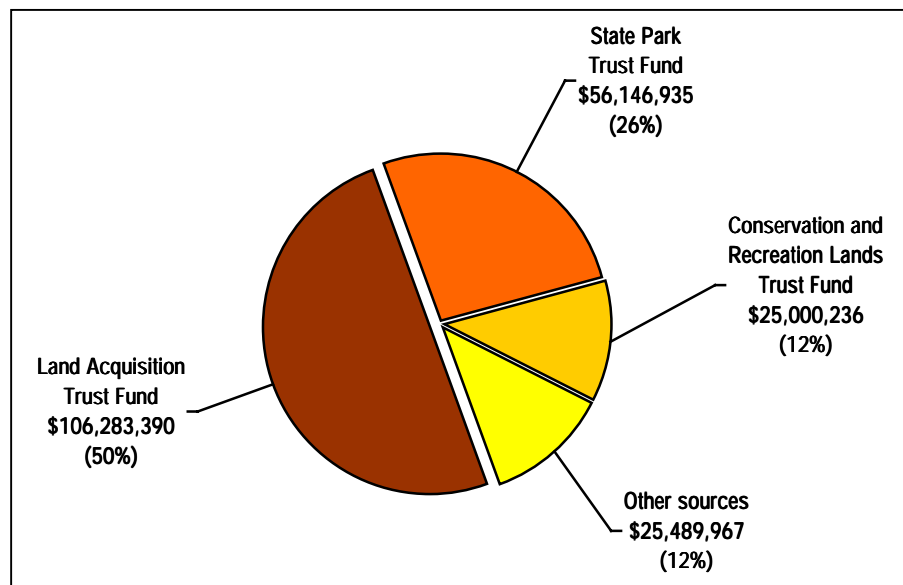
Together, Greenways and Trails and Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas account for 14% of the program's budget for Fiscal Year 2000-01. The program also provides funding to support recreational opportunities in local parks. Making up 17% of the program's budget, these funds are used to assist local governments in acquiring land and developing local parks. The Legislature specifically appropriated \$34 million to the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program, which provides funding to local governments for land acquisition or development for local parks. Legislative appropriations for debt service payments account for 13% of program funding. These funds are used to pay debt service on a number of outstanding revenue bonds that were sold to finance the acquisition of public lands for construction and recreational purposes.

The Land Acquisition Trust Fund is the program's primary funding source

The primary funding sources for the Recreation and Parks Program are the Land Acquisition Trust Fund, State Park Trust Fund, and Conservation and Recreation Lands Trust Fund. Exhibit 5 reflects the program's resources by source for Fiscal Year 2000-01.

The Land Acquisition Trust Fund is supported by funds from documentary stamps affixed to deeds in transfers of real property. In this way, Floridians and part-time residents who buy land or houses pay for the acquisition and development of state park lands, as well as subsidize park operating costs. These funds account for 50% of the program's budget in Fiscal Year 2000-01.

**Exhibit 5
Half of the Recreation and Parks Program's Fiscal Year 2000-01 Funding Is Derived from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund**



Source: Fiscal Year 2000-01 General Appropriations Act and implementing legislation.

Introduction

The second primary source of funding is derived from the State Park Trust Fund. These funds are generated from state park user fees, such as entrance fees, rental fees, and concession sales, and are primarily used to support state parks. For Fiscal Year 2000-01, 26% of program funding is derived from this source. Funds from the Conservation and Recreation Lands Trust Fund are the third source of revenue for the program and account for 12% of program funding.

Twelve percent of the program's Fiscal Year 2000-01 budget is supported by additional sources, including the Grants and Donations Trust Fund, the Florida Forever Trust Fund, and general revenue.

Program Benefit and Placement

Introduction

The Department of Environmental Protection established its Recreation and Parks Program under performance-based program budgeting in Fiscal Year 1998-99. The program provides areas of natural resource-based recreation, ensures the survival of native plant and animal species, and conserves finite and renewable natural resources.

Program Benefit and Impact of Abolition

The program is beneficial and should be continued

The Recreation and Parks Program provides beneficial services to the state's citizens and visitors and protects valuable resources that contribute to the public health, welfare, and economy of the state. Program staff manage state parks to ensure that future generations will have the ability to experience Florida's cultural and natural heritage firsthand. State parks provide the state's citizens and visitors with a variety of resource-based recreational opportunities, including such activities as swimming, hiking, biking, snorkeling, and tours of natural areas. More than 16 million visitors frequented state parks in Fiscal Year 1999-2000. Such nature-based tourism has become a more important segment within Florida's total economy, contributing nearly \$464 million to local economies throughout the state in Fiscal Year 1999-2000.⁴

Greenways and trails and coastal and aquatic managed areas also provide benefits to Florida's citizens and visitors and the ecological system. In addition to the recreational opportunities they provide, a system of greenways and trails helps conserve native ecosystems and landscapes and historic and cultural resources. Program staff report that 132,694 vehicles entered the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenways State

⁴ The figure reported is the direct economic impact of state parks, or the amount of new dollars spent in the local economy by non-local park visitors and park operations.

Program Benefit and Placement

Recreation Area in Fiscal Year 1999-2000.⁵ Coastal and aquatic managed areas preserve the state's coastal and aquatic ecosystems for the enjoyment of future generations. More than 130,000 acres of state buffer preserves serve as native habitat for wildlife. Buffer preserves also provide opportunities for outdoor recreational activities such as hiking, horseback riding, bicycling, and wildlife observation. Approximately 70,000 visitors attended these sites in Fiscal Year 1999-2000.

Outdoor recreational opportunities would decline if the program is eliminated

Discontinuing the program would not be desirable because it might lead to the deterioration of the state's most valuable natural and cultural resources and limit public access. If the state continues to own these lands, they must be managed. If the program were eliminated without another state land management program assuming responsibility for managing these properties, state parks and other program lands might be closed to public access. This would limit recreational opportunities and would likely lead to the deterioration of natural and cultural resources, as some of these facilities need active management. Abolishing the program would also be undesirable because it might lead to the endangerment and extinction of native plants and animals where program lands are not being managed to control the growth of exotic species.

The program is appropriately administered by the Department of Environmental Protection

OPPAGA did not identify any benefit to transferring the Recreation and Parks Program's functions and activities to another state agency. The program is appropriately placed in the Department of Environmental Protection because this is the state's principal environmental and natural resource agency. In addition to the services provided by the Recreation and Parks Program, the department performs duties and functions related to environmental permitting, environmental research and monitoring, and pollution control.

Transferring the Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas would not improve its effectiveness

Some persons question the placement of the Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas under the Recreation and Parks Program. Prior to the 1999-2000 fiscal year, the office was housed in the Department of Environmental Protection's former Division of Marine Resources. During this time, coastal and aquatic managed areas received administrative support and program direction primarily from the marine resources division, but its operations were largely independent of the division and its bureaus. After the division was transferred to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, coastal and aquatic managed areas

⁵ This figure is based on vehicle traffic counters at six locations on the Cross Florida Greenway. During the fourth quarter of the Fiscal Year 1999-2000, traffic counters at four of the six locations were broken. Therefore, the total number of vehicles entering the greenway during the year is likely greater than the 132,694 reported.

remained with the Department of Environmental Protection. This decision is consistent with the program's mission of habitat management rather than species-specific management, the commission's mission.

We believe that the Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas is logically placed in the Department of Environmental Protection and the Recreation and Parks Program. Through its aquatic preserves program, the office is strongly related to submerged lands management. The office also provides recreational activities and conserves natural and cultural resources. Program staff have indicated that their current placement has not hindered their ability to perform their responsibilities, and they continue to interact with various components of the Division of Marine Resources as needed.

Some program lands could be transferred to local governments. Since 1974, 17 state park properties have been transferred to city and county governments, and the vast majority of the statewide trail system is managed by local entities. However, it is questionable whether local entities would have the resources needed to develop and maintain state parks, greenways and trails, and state buffer and aquatic preserves on a more widespread basis. Therefore, transferring the program to local entities is not feasible.

Potential for Privatization

States partner with the private sector to generate revenue

Most states have entered into contracts with the private sector to provide some level of services at state parks. Many states contract for maintenance activities and use concessionaires to provide visitor services such as operating restaurants and conducting tours. Some states also have used innovative approaches to privatization. New York's state park system (196 units) is one that has partnered with major corporations as a way to generate additional revenue to support park costs. For example, New York partnered with the Saturn Corporation to build five new playgrounds at state parks worth more than \$240,000. Another partnership was with the Coca-Cola Corporation, which was given exclusive sale rights ("right to pour") at all parks, from which the state park system receives annual payments of \$200,000, plus 27% of annual vending machine sales.⁶ In Florida, such agreements on a statewide basis are problematic because the program allows concessionaires to negotiate their own vending contracts. Therefore, many concessionaires have individually entered into "right to pour" contracts.

⁶ State of New York Office of the State Comptroller, *Efforts to Encourage Public-Private Partnerships*, Report 97-S-24.

Program Benefit and Placement

States recognize advantages and disadvantages to privatization

Many of the advantages of privatization are similar across states. Park officials in other states note that privatization allows them to provide services that they could not provide with existing staff. Some states also found privatization to be cost-effective when faced with limited budgets. For example, the private sector's knowledge and equipment has resulted in cost savings in construction and maintenance contracts in several states. In North Carolina, using contractors to provide services like giving hang-gliding lessons and operating restaurants and marinas frees park staff to perform other key park activities. As a result, privatization could enhance visitor services and, in some cases, reduce the costs associated with operating state parks.

Disadvantages of privatization are often associated with a contractor's motivation to generate profits. Park officials can risk degradation of resources, overuse of facilities, over-commercialization of parks, reduced service quality, increased costs, and reduced control over the services provided when entering into contracts for services. For example, Alaska's park system contracts full management of eight campgrounds, a nature center, and two historic sites. Although the state reduced its costs of running these facilities, it reports that attaining an acceptable level of performance from some contractors has been problematic. Alaska park officials have had difficulty in getting some contractors to perform minimal activities at the sites they manage. Some contractors have also degraded park resources. State park staff are resuming management of these sites at the end of the contract periods. Such unintended, adverse consequences can result if the contractor is primarily focused on generating high net-profits rather than providing high quality services, and careful contract management is needed to control this problem.

Although privatizing some services in Florida has increased costs, it has generally worked well

Although privatization of some services in Florida parks has increased costs to date, it has produced other benefits. State parks contract with private entities for maintenance services such as grounds maintenance, facility cleaning, wastewater treatment, and other maintenance services. Program staff told us that despite increased program costs, outsourcing maintenance work has been successful. Contracting out routine maintenance work has allowed park staff to focus on providing more specialized activities, such as resource management. For Fiscal Year 2000-01, program staff approved maintenance contracts totaling \$939,375 for state parks. More maintenance activities at state parks could likely be privatized, and the program has requested additional funding to support more maintenance contracts for Fiscal Year 2001-02.

In response to the Governor's 25% staffing reduction initiative, program staff are proposing to privatize 254 state park staff positions through Fiscal Year 2005-06. However, staff estimate that privatizing these positions will require an additional \$1.4 million. Program staff told us that privatizing services will cost more because the contractors charge more for labor, materials, equipment usage, and overhead expenses.

The program generates revenue through its concessions contracts

Many of Florida's state parks use concessionaires to provide visitor services. At least 30 parks have contractors that operate gift shops and food stands, conduct tours, and provide other revenue-generating services. These partnerships allow the contractor to generate revenue and, in some cases, pay the program a percentage of annual profits (5% to 18%) or a flat fee for the use of park property. In Fiscal Year 1999-2000, the program collected \$4 million in concession revenue.

Of the 153 state park properties, one is fully privatized. The Skyway State Fishing Pier is operated by Pier Associates, Inc., which will operate the pier until 2005. Program staff are generally satisfied with pier operators, who are regularly monitored to ensure the property is properly maintained and that other contractual obligations are met.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Fully privatizing the state park system may not improve services

Although it is theoretically possible to fully privatize the program, it is uncertain whether moving public lands into private hands would result in better service and more efficiency at less cost to the state's citizens, given the experiences of other park systems. No other state has fully privatized its state park system and, given the nation's experiences in privatizing some services, fully privatizing the state park system may not be prudent unless the state adequately plans how to best develop particular areas and devote sufficient resources to control and properly manage the private contracts. Although using maintenance contracts has increased costs, program staff are satisfied with contractor performance. Thus, we recommend that the department carefully consider what additional services could be privatized to reduce costs and/or improve services.⁷

Although the Recreation and Parks Program is reasonably successful (see Chapter 3), issues and recommendations for reducing costs are discussed in detail in Chapter 4 and for increasing revenue in Chapter 5.

⁷ For suggested guidelines, advantages and disadvantages of privatization, see OPPAGA [Report No. 98-64](#), *Assessing Privatization in State Agency Programs*.

Program Generally Achieves Standards, But Needs Better Resource Protection Measures

Introduction

The primary purpose of the Recreation and Parks Program is to provide recreational opportunities for Florida's residents and visitors and to conserve the state's natural and cultural resources. As the recipient of the National Gold Medal State Park Award in 1999, Florida's park system was honored based on the number of acres it manages, its success in meeting visitor needs, and its commitment to environmental quality.

Performance-based program budgeting data shows that the program is increasing recreational opportunities: park visitation is up, and more acres of land are available for recreational purposes.

However, with the exception of a measure concerning the restoration of degraded areas in coastal and aquatic preserves, the program's performance measures do not provide information about the condition of the state's natural and cultural resources. In response to our survey, park managers rated most of the land in state parks and aquatic preserves as being in good or fair shape. Similarly, park managers rated most park facilities as being in good or fair condition.

State Park Operations

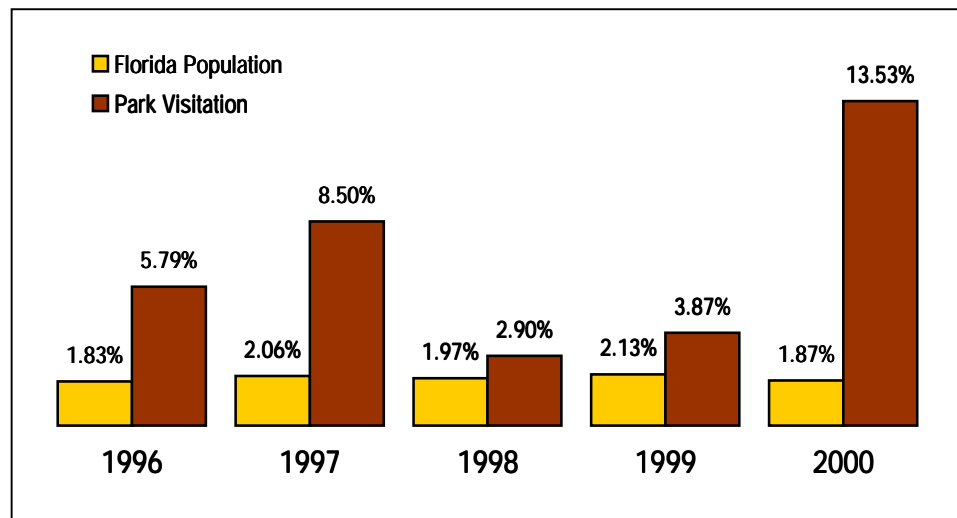
The primary goal of State Park Operations is to increase the available outdoor recreation facilities and visitor services for the public's outdoor recreation needs and enjoyment. The program's performance-based program budgeting (PB²) outcome measures for state parks include the percentage increase in attendance at state parks over the prior year and the increase in the acreage available for public recreation over the prior year.

*Program Generally Achieves Standards,
But Needs Better Resource Protection Measures*

Park attendance is increasing at a faster pace than the state's population

State Park Attendance. An important PB² measure of the success of state parks is the increase in the number of people visiting state parks or the frequency of these visits. ⁸ In Fiscal Year 1999-2000, state park attendance increased 13.5% over the prior year's attendance, which met the legislative performance standard of a 1.3% increase. Although the increase in the state's population may be one factor that explains the increases in park attendance, Exhibit 6 shows attendance at state parks is increasing at a faster pace than the number of Florida residents. For example, state park attendance grew by 13.53% from Fiscal Years 1998-99 to 1999-2000, compared to 1.87% estimated growth in population. Over the last five years, state park attendance has grown by 31.64%, while the state's population has increased by 8.28%.

Exhibit 6
Park Visitation Has Increased at a Faster Pace than Florida's Population



Source: Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Recreation and Parks, and Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research.

Recreational acreage increased 8.4% since Fiscal Year 1998-99

Acreage for public recreation. A second PB² measure of the state park system's impact on recreational opportunities is the number of acres of state park land available for public recreation. ⁹ In Fiscal Year 1999-2000, the amount of acreage available for public recreation increased by 8.4% from Fiscal Year 1998-99, exceeding the Legislature's goal of a 2% increase. The number of public recreation acres increased because the department

⁸ State park attendance is calculated monthly using both manual and automated systems. At larger parks, a park attendant counts the actual number of visitors entering the park. Smaller parks with unmanned entry points rely on estimates made by (1) using automated traffic counters to count the number of vehicles entering a park and (2) making periodic spot checks of the number of vehicles in the park.

⁹ After new conservation and recreation lands are acquired, information on the acreage associated with these acquisitions is input into the Florida State Parks Geographic Information System database, which contains information on all park properties. This information is analyzed, and the most reliable figures are included in the *Properties Under Jurisdiction of the Division of Recreation and Parks* report, which is published biannually.

*Program Generally Achieves Standards,
But Needs Better Resource Protection Measures*

acquired additional lands through the Conservation and Recreational Lands Program (CARL).

Greenways and Trails

The primary goal of Greenways and Trails is to acquire, develop, maintain, and support land for the public's outdoor recreation and appreciation. The program increases access to greenways and trails in two ways: by managing the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway and by acquiring and helping develop greenways managed by local governments. The program's PB² output measures for Greenways and Trails include the number of trailheads developed.

*Delays in securing
construction contracts
limited trailhead
development*

Trailheads. The program did not meet its PB² goals for trailhead development. In Fiscal Year 1999-2000, the program built six trailheads. These included developed trailheads that provide bathrooms, improved parking, kiosks, signage, and sometimes visitor centers, and access trailheads that provide a pickup or drop-off point, unimproved parking, fencing, and a kiosk. The legislative standard for number of trailheads to be developed during the year was 10. The program did not meet this standard due to delays in securing construction contracts. Program staff indicated that Fiscal Year 1999-2000 funding will be used to develop five additional trailheads by January 2001.

Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas

The primary goal of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas is to increase outdoor recreation opportunities while maintaining desirable natural functions and diversity of coastal and aquatic managed areas. To achieve this goal, the Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas conducts several types of restoration or enhancement activities, including hydrologic restoration, prescribed burning, exotic or invasive plant control, exotic or nuisance animal control, and revegetation or reforestation. The program's PB² outcome measure for Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas is the percentage of degraded acreage in state buffer preserves that has been enhanced or restored.

*PB² standard not met
because weather
conditions affect
resource management
activities*

Enhanced or restored acreage in state buffer preserves. For Fiscal Year 1999-2000, the Legislature established two standards for restoring degraded acreage at state buffer preserves (6.2% or 8,026 acres). The program exceeded one standard (6.2%) because it restored 8.8% of degraded acres. However, the program did not meet the second standard (8,026) because it only restored 6,681 acres of the 75,885 degraded acres identified. Often, severe weather conditions such as droughts negatively affect the program's ability to perform restoration or enhancement activities such as prescribed burning. In Fiscal Year 1999-2000, Florida

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experienced a severe drought. The approved standard for Fiscal Year 2000-01 has been revised to 7,778 degraded acres enhanced or restored.

Program measures need improvement

Current PB² measures do not assess the condition of state lands The program needs to develop better measures to track its progress in meeting resource protection goals. Current PB² and internal measures fail to provide the Legislature with an indication of whether the resources it provides to the department are helping to improve the condition of the lands and facilities the program manages. Measures that annually report the condition of program lands and facilities would require program staff to inventory its resources and monitor changes in their condition over time. This type of performance data would allow program staff to better determine whether the overall condition of the land and facilities it manages is improving, deteriorating, or remaining constant and better target resources to its most critical needs.

We asked program staff to compile preliminary estimates of natural resource and facility conditions at state parks and coastal and aquatic managed areas.¹⁰ Program staff used three classifications to rate the condition of resources and facilities: good, fair, and poor. Good condition indicates that no significant restoration is needed. Resources and facilities in fair condition are those where restoration conditions exist, but no immediate action is required. Poor condition refers to those resources and facilities where extensive restoration is needed, requiring immediate action.

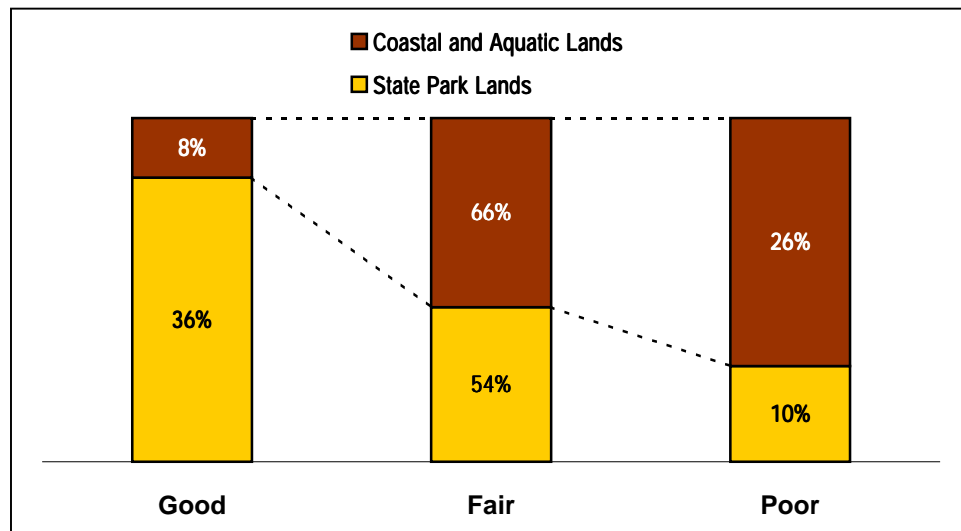
The department reports program lands are in good and fair condition The program reported that much of the land managed by the Recreation and Parks Program is in reasonably good shape. Data submitted by program staff shows that 90% of state park lands and 74% of coastal and aquatic areas are in good and fair condition. As shown in Exhibit 7, relatively few state park lands (10%) are reported to be in poor condition, while 26% of coastal and aquatic areas need more immediate attention.

Program staff noted several reasons why some of the parks and lands are not in better shape. At state parks, drought and fiscal constraints have limited staff's ability to conduct regular resource management activities, such as prescribed burning and removal of exotic plants. At aquatic and state buffer preserves, propeller scarring and shoreline erosion are the primary reasons why some of these areas are in fair and poor condition. Many of these factors are beyond the program's direct control.

¹⁰ We surveyed Florida state park managers and received information for 144 state parks. Program staff also provided us with information on natural resource condition for 54 areas managed by the Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas.

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**Exhibit 7
Most Program Lands Are in Good and Fair Condition**



Source: OPPAGA analysis.

PB² measures should assess facility condition

Better measures that monitor the performance of state parks in maintaining facilities are also needed. Currently, state parks contain more than 2,263 buildings.¹¹ State park facilities include ranger residences, maintenance shops, cabins, and bathhouses. As these facilities age, maintenance needs go beyond minor repairs to include more costly major repairs and renovations. Parks staff estimate that \$105 million is needed to repair park facilities, but only received \$4 million to address statewide park repairs for Fiscal Year 2000-01. Developing indicators that assess park facility conditions would help program staff better prioritize maintenance needs.

The department reports park facilities are in mostly fair condition

Based on the information we collected from state park managers, half of the 135 parks responding contain facilities in overall fair condition. One-third of the parks report that facilities are in primarily good condition. Fewer parks (16.3%) have a large number of facilities in poor condition. Park managers indicated that many park facilities are not in good condition because the parks have limited funding and staff to address facility maintenance issues.

¹¹ This number includes sheds, pole barns, and picnic shelters.

Conclusions and Recommendations —————

The program's measures are reasonable indicators of the program's progress in meeting its goals to enhance recreational opportunities. Fiscal Year 1999-2000 performance data shows that the program successfully met legislative goals to increase public recreation opportunities at state parks. The program did not meet legislative goals in developing trailheads and enhancing and restoring state buffer preserves. The program could improve its performance in these areas if contracts for trailhead development are secured in a more timely manner and the weather becomes more favorable for conducting controlled burns at buffer preserves.

The performance measures included in appropriations legislation for Fiscal Year 2000-01 should be changed to provide a concise list of reasonable measures. Exhibit 8 lists our recommendations for policy-level outcome and output measures to be included in the 2001-02 General Appropriations Act. These indicators provide information on how effective the program has been in achieving its outdoor recreation enhancement and resource protection goals.

The program should maintain additional performance measures internally for use in management decision making. For a complete list of the program's Fiscal Year 1999-2000 approved performance measures, see Appendix B.

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Exhibit 8

OPPAGA Recommends 12 Measures for Inclusion in Appropriations Legislation

Program Goals	Performance Measures	Comments
<i>State Park Operations</i>		
Recreation enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in attendance at state parks over prior year (outcome) 	Continue measure.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of recreational grants and funding to local governments for recreational facilities and land acquisition (output) 	Measure should be reworded to "number of recreational grants and funding awarded to local governments."
Resource protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of acres of native habitat in good condition (outcome) 	OPPAGA recommended measure.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of parks, acres, and miles supported by general administration, maintenance or minor repairs, protection, and all variations of visitor service activities (output) 	Measure should be reworded to include "facilities" instead of "miles."
<i>Greenways and Trails</i>		
Recreation enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in visitors at state greenways and trails over prior year (outcome) 	OPPAGA recommended measure.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of trailheads developed to provide public access on greenways and trails (output) 	Continue measure.
Resource protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of miles of greenways and trails in good condition (outcome) 	OPPAGA recommended measure.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage increase in miles added to the statewide trail system (outcome) 	OPPAGA recommended measure.
<i>Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas</i>		
Recreation enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of visitors to aquatic and state buffer preserves (output) 	Program will begin tracking this measure beginning in Fiscal Year 2000-01.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of acres managed (output) 	Continue measure.
Resource protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of state buffer preserve acreage in good condition (outcome) 	OPPAGA recommended measure.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of acres identified as degraded (output) 	Continue measure.

Source: OPPAGA analysis.

Land Management Costs Are High; Cost Reductions Are Feasible

Introduction

The Recreation and Parks Program is one of the primary stewards of conservation lands in the state and its primary focus of providing public recreational opportunities sets it apart from other state programs that manage land. The state park system has historically placed emphasis on providing a high level of services while keeping access to parks affordable for all citizens. As a result of this more unique mission, the cost to manage park lands is higher than other agencies that manage land. Given this high cost, we focused our review on

- examining the program's efforts to contain costs and
- identifying additional strategies that may be useful for further cost reductions.

We concluded that program staff have identified some effective strategies for reducing operating costs. However, developing park facilities is a primary factor driving the program's costs and expenditures. Consequently, more significant cost savings necessitate changing or modifying the current approach to developing parks.

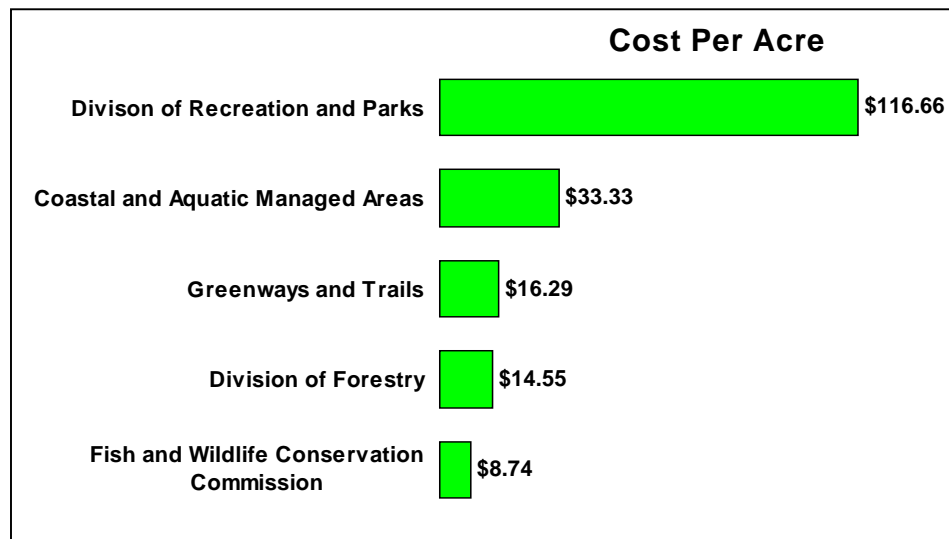
The program's high land management costs are largely driven by its mission

Providing outdoor recreation opportunities is a primary mission of the Recreation and Parks Program. The state acquires land to protect and enhance natural resource values and, in many cases, to provide recreational opportunities. State programs that manage land perform similar activities to accomplish resource protection and enhancement goals, including exotic species control, restoration of degraded habitats, and controlled burning. However, the extent to which land management agencies provide recreational opportunities varies. The Recreation and Parks Program is the primary provider of recreational opportunities on state-owned lands, a key factor in its high land management costs. As

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shown in Exhibit 9, land management costs range from \$8.74 per acre for the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to \$116.66 per acre for state parks.¹²

**Exhibit 9
State Park Land Management Costs Exceed Those of Other
Land-Managing Agencies**



Source: OPPAGA analysis.

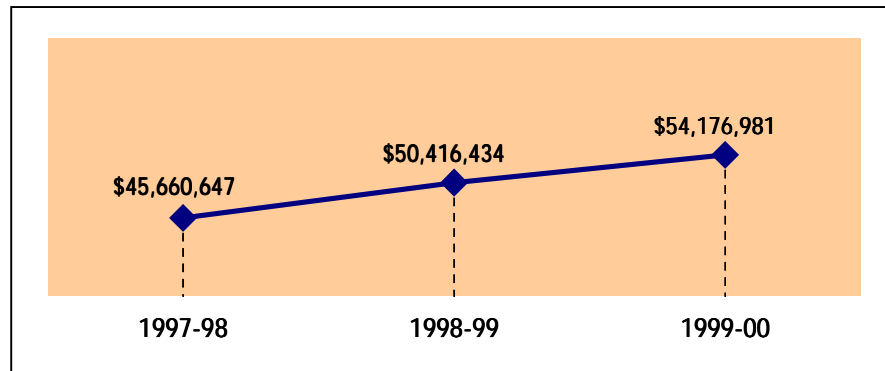
Managing state parks is costly due to degree to which visitors are served

Land management costs for state parks are higher than the program's Greenways and Trails and Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas components. State park lands are more expensive to manage because they provide more intensive visitor services, resulting in increased labor, development, and maintenance costs. Most (70%) of the program's Fiscal Year 2000-01 budget supports state park activities.

State park expenditures have increased. Since Fiscal Year 1997-98, the program's cost to operate state parks has increased 19%. (See Exhibit 10.) Park expenditures have increased largely because new lands have been added to the state park system. Since January 1990, 21 parks have been added to the state park system. The program received 12 additional full-time positions for Fiscal Year 2000-01 to assist in managing new or expanded state parks. State park costs will continue to increase as new lands are acquired, which is likely given that the Florida Forever Act, passed by the Legislature in 1999, authorizes an additional \$3 billion in bonds over the next 10 years for acquiring additional state lands.

¹² These dollar amounts are based on the number of upland acres managed (Florida Natural Areas Inventory) and Fiscal Year 1998-99 land management expenditures (Florida Senate Committee on Natural Resources, *Review of Funding Needs for Proper Management of Conservation and Recreational Lands and the Management Practices for All State-Owned Lands*, October 1999).

**Exhibit 10
State Park Operating Expenditures Have Increased 19%
Since Fiscal Year 1997-98**



Source: Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Recreation and Parks.

*Development is a
primary driver of state
park costs*

Another reason for the increase in program costs is the ongoing development of state parks. The development needs of each park are determined by their unit management plans. These plans include a description of a park's goals and objectives, an analysis of the park property, and an assessment of proposed facilities that can be added to the park. Program staff use the proposed facilities from each plan, which represent the optimal development of each park, to annually generate a list of park development needs.

Opening land as a new park requires capital investment. New state parks are typically outfitted with "starter kits" (including a paved road, a large picnic shelter, and a temporary restroom), which are relatively inexpensive (\$50,000) but provide immediate public access to the properties. Existing parks often also have development needs and gain more costly developments such as cabins, campgrounds, and visitor centers over time. For Fiscal Year 2000-01, the program received \$26.2 million to develop state parks.¹³ Program staff estimate that fully developing all existing parks will require \$309 million in additional funding.¹⁴

*Facility management is
a primary responsibility
of state park staff*

Park developments improve visitor services and enhance recreational opportunities, but increase park operating costs because they have to be staffed and maintained. At current staffing and funding levels, maintaining park facilities is difficult. As shown in Exhibit 11, most park managers indicate that facility management activities demand more than one-quarter of park resources. Additional park developments will likely demand that more staff time and fiscal resources be devoted to facility

¹³ Includes development funding for statewide park development and specific appropriations to individual state parks.

¹⁴ This figure is based on July 2000 preliminary cost estimates of state park development needs.

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management activities, which will result in less time being spent on other activities in support of the program’s core mission, such as natural resource management.

**Exhibit 11
State Park Managers Survey Responses Show Most Allocate Over 25% of Budget and Staff Time to Facility Management Activities**

Percentage of Budget	Number of Survey Responses			
	Facility Management	Natural Resource Management	Visitor Services	Other
0-25%	14	65	62	59
26%-50%	22	7	7	7
51%-75%	30	1	3	7
76%-100%	8	1	2	1
Total Responses	74	74	74	74

Percentage of Staff Time	Number of Survey Responses			
	Facility Management	Natural Resource Management	Visitor Services	Other
0-25%	27	58	43	63
26%-50%	34	13	23	12
51%-75%	14	5	10	1
76%-100%	1	0	0	0
Total Responses	76	76	76	76

Note: Of the 77 park managers who responded to the survey, 76 provided staff-time allocation information and 74 provided budget allocation information.
Source: OPPAGA survey of state park managers.

Program staff are using several strategies to reduce land management expenditures

Given the need to balance high operating and maintenance costs with available resources, program staff have taken steps to reduce expenditures. The program has implemented practices to help reduce costs, including

- assigning park staff to manage more than one park property;
- using inmate and volunteer labor to complete park projects; and
- piloting an incentive program to reward park staff for reducing expenditures and increasing revenue.

Grouping parks for management purposes saves resources

Managing multiple park properties. Program staff manage some state parks in groups to reduce costs. Below the district level, some parks are organized into “geoparks,” which consist of two or more parks within close proximity that are generally managed by one park manager and a group of staff. This practice has increased the program’s cost-efficiency by

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allowing some flexibility in the use of limited resources, including staff and equipment. Although they are unable to determine the savings that result from use of “geoparks,” program staff told us that they have saved money because they do not have to employ a park manager at every state park. “Geoparks” also allow program staff to purchase commodities and services in bulk. The National Park Service uses a similar strategy to manage national parks.¹⁵

Using volunteer and inmate labor. Use of volunteer hours and inmate labor has increased the program’s cost-efficiency. The program encourages volunteer support of the state park system. Volunteer groups such as boy and girl scouts and environmental groups perform a variety of activities at state parks, including helping to raise funds for park improvements, conducting guided tours and interpreting park resources, working in visitor centers, operating boats, trams, and other vehicles to transport visitors, operating staff entrances to state parks, serving as campground hosts, and building new facilities to make park resources more accessible to visitors with disabilities.

Volunteers contribute time and money to state parks

Volunteers organized into 66 citizen support organizations (including 65 organizations for individual state parks and one statewide support organization, Friends of Florida State Parks, Inc.) also support state parks. Citizen support organizations, which are non-profit, private organizations, are made up of volunteers who are dedicated to serving state parks. They provide a variety of services and expand the range of programs available to parks. Together with other volunteer groups, citizen support organizations contributed over 837,870 hours to state parks in Fiscal Year 1999-2000, the equivalent of over 402 full-time positions or \$6.3 million.

The Partnership in Parks Program was established in 1997 to challenge the private sector to contribute funds toward major park projects through citizen support organizations. The program matches private funds with public funds on a 60/40 basis. To date, five projects have been completed through Partnership in Parks at a total cost of \$673,182. Citizen support organizations contributed \$403,909 of these costs. For example, the citizen support organization for the Homosassa Springs State Wildlife Park supported the development of a “Birds of Prey” exhibit costing \$134,582, of which the citizen support organization contributed \$80,749; the state’s share of the project cost was \$53,833.

¹⁵ U.S. General Accounting Office, *National Park Service: Efforts to Link Resources to Results Suggests Insights for Other Agencies*, GAO/AIMD-98-113, April 1998. National parks in the same geographic area are organized into “clusters”. Superintendents representing each park in the cluster meet periodically to set priorities for park funding requests and to provide mutual operating support. For example, a manager of a park with a short-term resource need, such as for a specific technical skill or piece of equipment, could raise this issue at a cluster meeting and obtain temporary assistance from another park in the cluster

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Partnerships will save the state \$2.6 million in park development costs

Additional projects are planned or underway. In Fiscal Year 1999-2000, three Partnership in Parks projects totaling \$1.1 million were approved. Citizen support organizations are expected to contribute \$660,680, and the state will be responsible for the remaining \$440,380. After all the remaining projects are completed, citizen support organizations will have contributed \$2.6 million to park projects, as shown in Exhibit 12.

**Exhibit 12
Citizen Support Organizations Will Contribute \$2.6 Million for State Park Projects**

Park Name	Project Name	Project Cost	Private Donations	State Share	Project Status
Myakka River	Ranger Station	\$ 288,648	\$ 173,189	\$ 115,459	Commenced
Rainbow Springs	Ornamental Gardens	100,000	60,000	40,000	Commenced
Maclay Gardens	Irrigation System	100,000	60,000	40,000	Commenced
Oscar Scherer	Renovate Recreation Hall	123,200	73,920	49,280	Commenced
MacArthur Beach	Bridge Project	135,000	85,000	50,000	Commenced
Homasassa Springs	Cougar Exhibit	250,000	150,000	100,000	Approved
Homasassa Springs	People Mover	600,000	360,000	216,000	Approved
Homasassa Springs	River Ecosystem Project	183,750	110,250	73,500	Approved
Guana River	Education Complex	800,000	480,000	320,000	Approved
Ybor City	Heart and Soul of Tampa	901,060	540,680	360,380	Approved
Koreshan	Restoration/Planning	100,000	60,000	40,000	Approved
Olustee Battlefield	Museum /Visitor Center	100,000	60,000	40,000	Approved
Barrier Islands	Boca Grande Museum	138,600	83,160	55,440	Complete
Homasassa Springs	Birds of Prey Exhibit	134,582	80,749	53,833	Complete
MacArthur Beach	Park Improvements	200,000	120,000	80,000	Complete
Myakka River	Resource Management	100,000	60,000	40,000	Complete
Cape Florida	Lighthouse Keeper Cottage	100,000	60,000	40,000	Complete
Total Costs		\$4,354,840	\$2,616,948	\$1,713,892	

Source: Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Recreation and Parks.

Program staff also work with criminal justice programs to supply needed labor to perform certain park activities. The program has used inmate labor since 1947. Although they cannot be relied upon to provide some services needed to operate parks, such as providing information to park attendees at ranger stations or in visitor centers, inmates are able to perform large-scale manual labor tasks that do not have to be performed on a daily basis.¹⁶ For example, at Florida Caverns State Park, inmates participated in the construction of a bridge and had little or no contact with park patrons. Using inmate laborers to perform such tasks allows park staff to focus on providing visitor services or conducting resource

¹⁶ Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission of the Virginia General Assembly, *Review of the Department of Conservation and Recreation*, House Document No. 80, 1998.

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management activities. In Fiscal Year 1999-2000 inmates contributed 76,945 hours to park projects, saving the program an estimated \$577,856.

Rewarding park staff. The new Operational Incentives Program is intended to increase the program's cost-efficiency by rewarding park staff for reducing operating expenses and increasing revenues. The program requires that park staff reduce costs by 5%, increase revenue by 5%, or a combination of both totaling 5% (while maintaining resource management and visitor service standards). Parks that meet these criteria will be awarded \$5,000 and each park staff member will receive \$250. Each park's award may be applied toward its expense or operating capital outlay needs. For Fiscal Year 2000-01, the program received \$150,000 to fund this initiative, which is currently being piloted in 15 parks. Initial results of the pilot will be reported at the end of the fiscal year.

The program could realize greater cost avoidance by modifying its approach to developing parks

Different approaches to developing and maintaining park facilities offer options for realizing cost avoidances. Given that the expenses associated with building, maintaining, and staffing facilities is the greatest cost driver in managing park lands, deciding when and what to build is an important decision critically affecting current and future funding needs. When resources are limited, developing parks to expand the level of visitor services is best justified where the impact and demand for services is greatest.

Priorities for park development are intended to reflect the most critical needs

Given the state's limited fiscal resources, it is important to have reasonable priorities for considering and funding capital outlay budget requests. The program's process for determining which park projects will be funded begins at the park level. Park managers evaluate each park to determine its most urgent needs. Park managers then forward their priority lists to one of five district managers, who review the proposals and submit them to the central office, where funding decisions are made on the basis of the districts' descriptive information and suggested priorities. A formal evaluation and priority setting process has not been fully developed for statewide use.

Program staff consider key factors when establishing development priorities

Priority park developments are primarily based on estimates of need. District managers explained that a key factor in determining priority projects is whether a delay in the development of a particular project would pose a threat to public health and safety, such as a collapsing seawall. Developments that prevent damage to natural resources are also considered critical, such as boardwalks that protect sensitive sand dunes.

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District managers told us that development projects needed to improve public access also take precedence over other development needs. State parks that are frequently overcrowded are given priority for developments to adequately accommodate these visitors. For example, John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park frequently attracts more visitors than it can allow. In Fiscal Year 1999-2000, an average of 2,794 visitors attended the park daily, exceeding the limit on the number of visitors the park can handle each day (carrying capacity) by 1,648 people.¹⁷ The program's park development plan proposes \$2.9 million in park improvement projects to better accommodate visitors at John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park. These improvements will increase the park's capacity, but will still not be enough to meet the level of demand the park is experiencing.

The program receives funding for non-critical development projects

The program received funds for development projects that are not critical for improving public access, protecting natural resources, or reducing the danger to public health and safety. Projects that have strong political support are likely to be funded, and some appropriations are designated for specific parks. For Fiscal Year 2000-01, \$16.2 million in development funding is earmarked for specific parks. When submitting their priority lists, park districts often include projects that are less urgent in the hope that funding will be available to meet some of those needs after more significant needs are met. These projects are typically funded through the statewide park development appropriation category. For Fiscal Year 2000-01, \$10 million is allocated to assist the program in meeting park development needs statewide.

*Non-critical projects
have been funded*

Consequently, some park development projects that are undertaken by the program appear to have low impacts and could be postponed to better balance park needs and funds. For example, the program obtained funding (\$601,000) needed to build a visitor center at Windley Key Fossil Reef State Geological Site despite the fact that relatively few visitors attend the park. In Fiscal Year 1999-2000, 9,573 people (26 visitors per day) visited the park. Program staff told us that the new visitor center is rarely used because visitation at the park is so low.

In addition to other factors, park attendance should be a primary consideration when deciding how to use limited funds to expand park developments. The program's development plan proposes that 38 additional visitor centers be built at various state parks. Attendance rates at these parks range from 1 to 2,394 visitors per day (See Appendix C for annual park visitation levels). Five of these parks have reported visitation

¹⁷ State park carrying capacities are estimates of the number of users a recreation resource or facility can accommodate and still provide a high quality recreational experience and preserve the natural values of the site. The existing capacity for the John Pennekamp Coral Reef State park is 1,146 visitors per day.

*Land Management Costs Are High;
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levels lower than Windley Key and six draw fewer than 100 people per day. The program plans to request \$12.9 million over the next several years to build proposed visitor centers. We believe such projects should be postponed until more critical needs are met.

**Exhibit 13
Visitors Centers Are Proposed for Parks with Low Attendance**

Park Name	Average Visitors Per Day ¹	Facility Cost	Maintenance Cost
Fort Mose	1	\$300,000	\$ 6,000
Troy Springs	1	155,000	3,100
Kissimmee Prairie	3	300,000	6,000
Indian Key	13	300,000	6,000
Camp Helen	18	300,000	6,000
Fort Cooper	50	250,000	5,000
Torreya	59	345,150	6,900
Dade Battlefield	64	100,000	2,000
Van Fleet ²	77	400,000	8,000
Van Fleet ²	77	400,000	8,000
Falling Waters	78	300,000	6,000
Fort George Island	79	300,000	6,000
Olustee Battlefield	104	300,000	6,000
Koreshan	136	875,000	17,500
Topsail Hill	143	500,000	10,000
Tomoka Basin	148	300,000	6,000
Cayo Costa	153	300,000	6,000
Gold Head Branch	156	200,000	4,000
Fakahatchee Strand	157	625,000	12,500

Park Name	Average Visitors Per Day ¹	Facility Cost	Maintenance Cost
Alfred Maclay	171	\$300,000	\$ 6,000
Egmont Key	301	300,000	6,000
Lover's Key	397	375,000	7,500
Henderson Beach	399	200,000	4,000
Guana River	404	300,000	6,000
Big Lagoon	405	500,000	10,000
Withlacoochee	427	300,000	6,000
Fort Pierce Inlet	441	450,000	9,000
Jonathan Dickinson	465	350,000	7,000
Fort Clinch	467	200,000	4,000
Skyway Fishing Pier	583	200,000	4,000
Fanning Springs	715	200,000	4,000
Fort Zachery Taylor	724	500,000	10,000
Oleta River	868	90,000	1,800
St. Andrews	1,788	200,000	4,000
Honeymoon Island	1,996	375,000	7,500
Cape Florida	2,394	500,000	10,000
Tarkilin Bayou	NA	685,000	13,700
Long Hammock	NA	300,000	6,000

¹ Average daily visitor figures are based on Fiscal Year 1999-2000 attendance data.

² Two visitor centers are proposed for Van Fleet State Trail.

Source: Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Recreation and Parks.

Future appropriations will be needed to maintain new park development projects

The program will incur additional costs to maintain new park developments that are carried out and will need additional funding to support these costs. As shown in Exhibit 13, the cost to maintain proposed visitor centers range from \$1,800 to \$17,500; if these centers are subsequently built, the program will need an additional \$257,500 each year to maintain these facilities. These costs include routine maintenance expenses, such as cleaning, and do not include the cost of unexpected repairs.

*Land Management Costs Are High;
Cost Reductions Are Feasible*

*Adequately maintaining
existing park facilities is
difficult*

The need to maintain new facilities will likely increase the program's current maintenance backlog at state parks. Program staff estimate that \$105 million is needed for minor and major repairs to park facilities. For Fiscal Year 2000-01, the program was appropriated \$4 million for statewide park repair projects, which represents only 4% of the estimated funding needed for park repairs.

It is unclear whether program staff fully consider future recurring and non-recurring maintenance needs of park facilities when developing parks. This should be a primary consideration when establishing priorities for park development.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Given the program's mission to enhance recreational opportunities, its cost to manage state park lands is relatively high. The program has developed strategies to reduce park operating costs. However, costs in general are unlikely to be significantly reduced without a change in the way program staff approach the development of state parks.

*Formal guidelines
needed to evaluate park
development projects*

We recommend that the department establish formal guidelines for determining priority park development projects. Formal guidelines for determining priorities would help to ensure that the state park system's most urgent needs are being met.

*Postponing visitor
centers at low visitation
parks would avoid
\$3.5 million in costs*

We also recommend that the department delay development projects that are not based on strong public demand. There should be a relationship between the demand for services and the development of state parks. Outfitting state parks that are not highly used with developments like visitor centers is not cost-effective, given that such facilities lack revenue-generating potential and are costly to build and maintain. Currently, the program has future plans to build visitor centers in 37 various state parks at an estimated cost of \$12.9 million. Eleven of the state parks with planned visitor centers are frequented by fewer than 100 visitors per day. We recommend that such projects should be delayed until the demand for them is shown through increased visitation levels. The program could avoid an estimated \$3.5 million in construction costs and \$69,000 in annual maintenance expenses if it delays construction of visitor centers at parks visited by fewer than 100 people per day.

*Starter kits should be
adequate development
for new state parks*

Finally, we recommend that the department delay development of new state parks. A primary reason for the increase in program cost is new lands being added to the state park system. Program staff estimate that \$309 million is needed to develop existing state parks; this amount will increase as new lands are acquired through the Florida Forever Program and added to the state park system. With current budgetary constraints and the state's primary funding source for managing state lands

*Land Management Costs Are High;
Cost Reductions Are Feasible*

(Conservation and Recreation Lands Trust Fund) facing a shortfall, it is important that the program limit its costs where possible. (See Chapter 5.) We recommend that the department limit development of new parks to starter kits. This approach to development will allow the parks to remain in their natural state and be accessible to the public. We believe this level of development at new parks would be sufficient until their levels of usage warrant construction of more permanent facilities and the funding situation becomes more certain.

In Chapter 5, we describe the projected funding shortfall that will make it more critical for the program to increase the amount of revenue it generates.

Funding Shortfall Likely; Revenue Generation Possibilities Are Limited

A strategic issue facing the Recreation and Parks Program is a projected shortfall in state funds to support land management activities. This shortfall will likely affect the Recreation and Parks Program more than other state land management programs due to the level of services it provides. The program has some potential to increase its revenues, but cannot feasibly become self-supporting from user fees.

Program relies heavily on three trust funds to support its costs

The program is primarily supported by state funds, which provided 59% of program funding.¹⁸ This is similar to park systems in other states, which are typically supported largely by state funding rather than park-generated revenues. Primary sources of state funding include the Land Acquisition Trust Fund and the Conservation and Recreation Lands Trust Fund. The Land Acquisition Trust Fund provided \$106 million to the program in Fiscal Year 2000-01, or 50% of its budget. This trust fund is supported by funds from documentary stamp taxes affixed to deeds in transfers of real property. The Conservation and Recreation Lands (CARL) Trust Fund provided \$25 million to the program during the year, accounting for 12% of its budget. This trust fund is supported by \$10 million in phosphate severance tax revenues and a percentage (currently 5.8%) of documentary stamp tax proceeds.¹⁹

¹⁸ This percentage is based on the program's \$70.8 million Fiscal Year 1999-2000 operating budget and \$28.8 million in revenues generated by the Division of Recreation and Parks, the Office of Greenways and Trails, and the Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas during Fiscal Year 1999-2000.

¹⁹ The State Park Trust Fund is also a primary funding source, accounting for 26% of the program's budget.

Reductions in state funding to support land management activities are projected

Recent changes to the CARL Trust Fund will reduce the level of funding available to all state programs that manage state lands, including the Recreation and Parks Program. The Florida Forever Act reduces the proportion of documentary stamp tax revenues that will be deposited into the CARL Trust Fund from 5.84% to 3.8010% beginning on July 1, 2001.²⁰

The CARL Trust Fund may enter a deficit by Fiscal Year 2002-03

As a result of this reduction, the state faces a potential shortfall in funding for land management activities. Statutes provide that up to 1.5% of the cumulative total of funds ever deposited into the Florida Preservation 2000 Trust Fund and the Florida Forever Trust Fund may annually be provided from the CARL Trust Fund and distributed to agencies that manage state lands, which includes the Recreation and Parks Program.²¹ As shown in Exhibit 14, statewide land management costs, if fully funded at the 1.5% level, are projected to exceed available revenues in the CARL Trust Fund by Fiscal Year 2002-03.

Exhibit 14

Projections Show the CARL Trust Fund Entering a Deficit in Fiscal Year 2002-03 if Land Management Is Funded at the 1.5% Level Provided by Law

Fiscal Year	Estimated 2000-01	Requested 2001-02	Requested 2002-03	Requested 2003-04
Beginning Fund Balance	\$ 20,733,219	\$ 26,774,515	\$ 14,625,547	\$ (2,156,013)
Total Receipts	76,660,000	54,104,500	54,052,500	55,591,000
Total Funds Available	97,393,219	80,879,015	68,678,047	53,434,987
Total Expenditures Budget	(70,618,704)	(66,253,468)	(70,834,060)	(75,534,914)
Ending Fund Balance	\$26,774,515	\$14,625,547	\$(2,156,013)	\$(22,099,927)

Source: Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

This shortfall is significant because the state is facing substantial land management needs as a result of its aggressive land acquisition initiative funded by the Preservation 2000 and Florida Forever programs. (For more information on these programs and land management issues, see OPPAGA's soon-to-be-released Justification Review of the State Lands Program.) A 1999 study by the Senate Committee on Natural Resources reported that state land management agencies (including the Recreation

²⁰ Section 201.15, *F.S.*, provides that 9.5% of the 4.2% of taxes deposited in the Conservation and Recreation Lands (CARL) Trust Fund be transferred to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's State Game Trust Fund for land management purposes. This effectively provides 0.399% for the State Game Trust Fund and 3.801% for the CARL Trust Fund.

²¹ Section 259.032(11)(b), *F.S.*

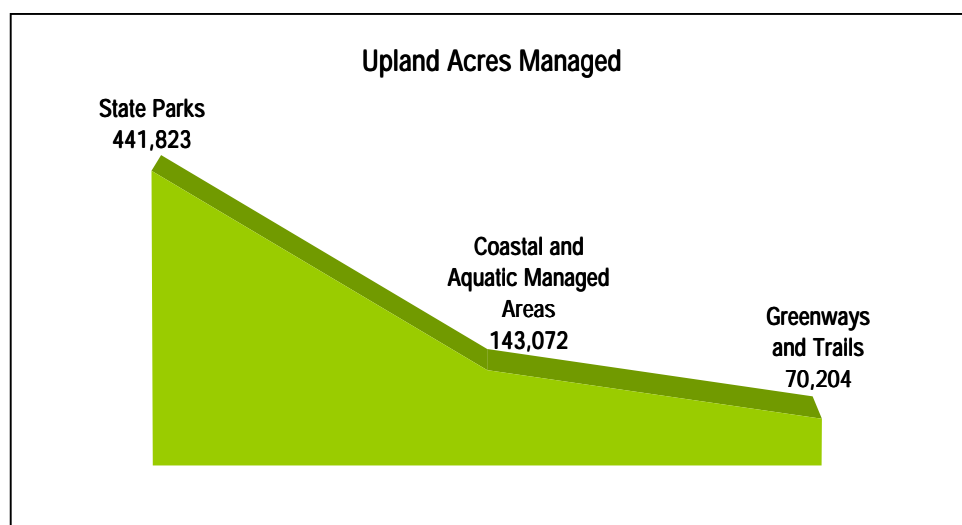
*Funding Shortfall Likely;
Revenue Generation Possibilities Are Limited*

and Parks Program) would require \$440 million to fully implement their land management plans.²² While it is unlikely that the state could ever fund all of these identified needs, the amount required to fund land management will continue to increase as the state begins another 10 years of land acquisition through the Florida Forever Program.

The program's land management responsibilities are increasing

Since the initiation of Preservation 2000 in January 1990, the amount of land managed by the Recreation and Parks Program has significantly increased, growing by 146,802 acres. As shown in Exhibit 15, most of the land currently managed by the program is under the jurisdiction of the State Parks component, followed by the Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas and Greenways and Trails components.

Exhibit 15
Most State Land Managed Through the Program Is State Park Land



Source: Florida Natural Areas Inventory.

New funding sources are possible, but have drawbacks

It may be possible to create new funding sources to support for land management costs. The 1999 Senate report recommended that the Legislature consider two options for meeting land management funding needs. First, the report indicated that the Legislature could channel a portion of unobligated documentary stamp tax revenues from the General Revenue Fund to provide additional support for land management activities. However, this would reduce the amount of general revenue funds available for other purposes. Second, the report indicated that the Legislature could designate more Florida Forever bond proceeds for limited, non-recurring land management activities. However, this option

²² Florida Senate Committee on Natural Resources, *Review of Funding Needs for Proper Management of Conservation and Recreation Lands and the Management Practices for All State-Owned Lands*, October 1999. Land management plans assess the conditions of state-owned lands and what needs to be done to manage these tracts for the purposes for which the lands were acquired.

*Funding Shortfall Likely;
Revenue Generation Possibilities Are Limited*

would not be a permanent solution to the funding problem because bond proceeds would not cover recurring costs of routine management activities after the bond funds are spent.

State parks' ability to generate revenue is constrained by its mission to preserve natural conditions

The projected funding shortfall in land management funding makes it increasingly important for the program to maximize its revenues while maintaining its mission. The Recreation and Parks Program generates approximately 41% of its funding through user fees and other revenues, but is still largely supported by other state funding. This is typical for state park systems, which are generally not self-supporting due to concerns that high user fees could limit citizen access to parks and the desire to preserve these lands in relatively undeveloped conditions.²³ Only New Hampshire generates sufficient revenues to cover 100% of state park operating expenditures, and only 14 other state park systems generated revenue to support at least 50% of their operating expenditures.²⁴

Park missions primarily drive revenue generation

The varying percentage of operating costs recovered by user fees nationwide is largely due to the differing missions of the states' park systems. Some states have assigned a high priority to revenue generation and actively develop their parks through hotels and lodging, golf courses, recreational boating, water parks, and other similar facilities. For example, the Colorado legislature has directed its state park system to strive for self-sufficiency. As a result, Colorado state park officials plan for maximum revenue generation when developing parks. In contrast, other state park systems, like Florida's, emphasize natural resource protection and providing public access to conservation and recreation lands in their mission. These states give priority to preserving the natural state of park lands and often avoid development projects that could produce revenues but degrade native habitats. This philosophy will help preserve state lands for future generations, but will limit the state park systems' ability to generate revenues.

²³ We surveyed state park officials in other states and received information about 42 state park systems.

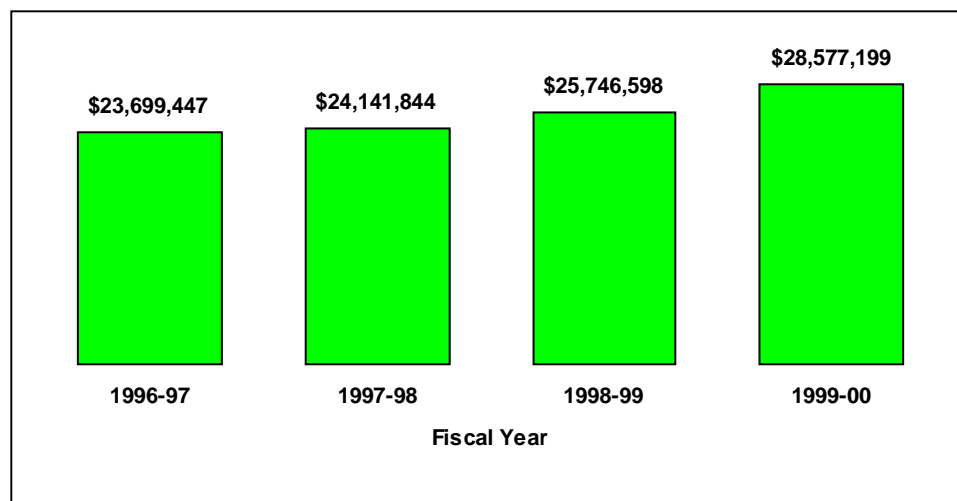
²⁴ The National Association of State Park Directors, *The 2000 Annual Information Exchange*, Volume 22, February 2000.

*Funding Shortfall Likely;
Revenue Generation Possibilities Are Limited*

State parks generate more revenue than other state land management agencies

The Recreation and Parks Program generated \$28.8 million in user fees and other revenues in Fiscal Year 1999-2000. Most of these revenues (\$28.6 million) were derived from the 153 state parks, of which 101 collect some form of user fees. As shown in Exhibit 16, revenues collected from state park visitor fees have increased 21% since Fiscal Year 1996-97. The Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas and Greenways and Trails components of the Recreation and Parks Program generated relatively little revenue, \$6,200 and \$234,000, respectively, during Fiscal Year 1999-2000.²⁵ As discussed on page 40, these lands generally have multiple public access points and collecting entrance fees is problematic.

**Exhibit 16
State Park Revenues Have Steadily Increased Since Fiscal Year 1996-97**



Source: Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Recreation and Parks.

Opportunities for generating increased revenue

Florida's state parks have earned revenue by charging several types of fees to visitors, including entrance fees, annual pass fees, and user fees associated with particular activities, including camping, and interpretive tours. Entrance fees were the single largest revenue source, accounting for 36% of revenues collected during the year. Nationwide, state park systems collect similar types of fees, and obtain the largest proportion of their revenues from camping fees (which accounts for nearly one-third of revenues).²⁶ The national park system also collects entrance and related

²⁵ Revenues reported by the Offices of Greenways and Trails and Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas are primarily generated from sales of goods and services and mitigation banking fees.

²⁶ The National Association of State Park Directors, *The 2000 Annual Information Exchange*, Volume 22, February 2000.

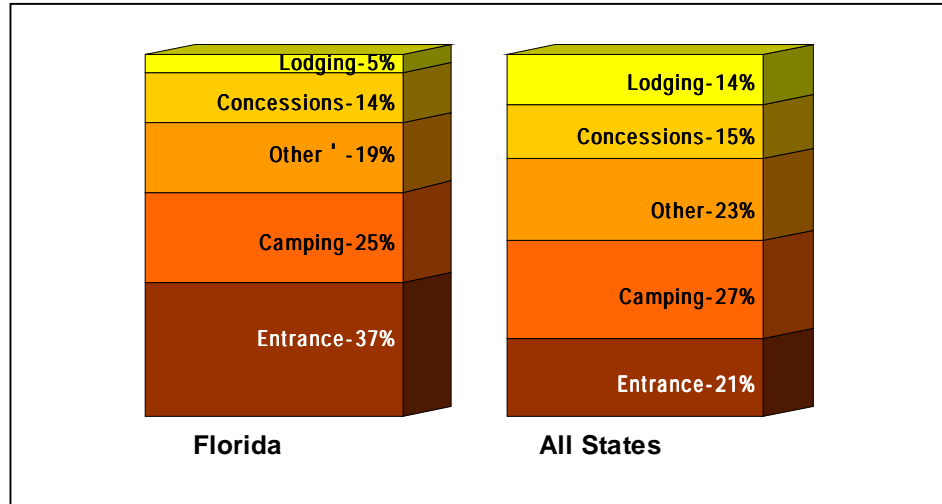
*Funding Shortfall Likely;
Revenue Generation Possibilities Are Limited*

user fees. Exhibit 17 shows the primary sources of revenue for state park systems in Florida and other states.

*Most state parks
operate at a loss*

Overall, most of Florida's state parks operate at net losses when total expenditures and revenues are considered. In Fiscal Year 1999-2000, only 18 state parks generated profits and 44 received half of their costs through park fees. (See Appendix C.)

Exhibit 17
State Park Systems Generate Revenue from a Variety of Sources



¹ "Other" includes fees from golf, beaches and pools, and group facilities.

Source: The National Association of State Park Directors, *The 2000 Annual Information Exchange*, Volume 22, February 2000.

The program's mission limits what can be done to generate revenue. Generating substantially more revenue than the program currently collects would require a change in the program's mission and increased commercialization of state parks. However, the state acquired these lands to protect them from the adverse effects of such developments as golf courses. Therefore, the program's revenue-generating activities are primarily limited to what is allowable by law.

We identified four options the program should pursue to increase revenues. These are increasing park entry fees, increasing the number of cabins in state parks, increasing marketing for the parks and recreational lands, and increasing the use of honor fee stations in areas where it is impractical to collect direct entry fees.

*Park fees can be
increased*

Fee increases are possible. The program is planning to increase some park fees. The program will increase the range of fees it charges in several categories, including park and museum entry, camping, cabin and facility rental, boat launching, fishing piers, swimming pools, and tours. In 2001, park managers will be authorized to increase these fees up to

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Revenue Generation Possibilities Are Limited*

their maximum ranges, depending on the level of services provided and visitation rates. For example, park entry fees currently range from \$2 to \$4 per vehicle, depending on the location. Once the fee revisions take effect, park managers may charge visitors up to \$5 to enter state parks. Park staff estimate that anticipated entry fee adjustments will increase revenues generated at state parks by more than \$2 million.²⁷ Program staff indicate that fee increases in other areas such as camping, cabins, and tours also will generate substantial revenues. However, the program has not formally established the range of fees it will charge for these services, and staff are unable to determine the total amount of additional revenue the program will generate after the fee revisions are implemented.

Park attendance may initially decrease following fee revisions

Some initial decrease in attendance may occur when fees are increased, as occurred when fees were last adjusted in May 1996, but this effect will likely be temporary. Park visitation, which initially fell after the 1996 fee increase, subsequently grew 21% between Fiscal Years 1996-97 and 1999-2000. This pattern has also been experienced by other states and the federal parks service, which have also raised fees in recent years to increase revenues.²⁸ Florida's state park fee levels are comparable to those in other states.

Increasing the number of cabins would produce revenue

Increasing the number of cabins is possible. A second revenue option is to increase the number of cabins in state parks. Generally, parks with overnight accommodations generate a higher proportion of revenues than parks without overnight accommodations. For example, Bahia Honda State Park, which had 490,727 visitors in Fiscal Year 1999-2000 and has six cabins, generated \$1.5 million in revenue during the year. In contrast, Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park, which does not have cabins, had 873,654 visitors during the year, but generated 43% less revenue (\$841,985) than Bahia Honda. In Fiscal Year 1999-2000, almost a third (30.4%) of total revenues collected at Florida's state parks were from camping and cabin rental fees, and cabin rentals accounted for 4.5% of total revenues.

Constructing cabins at additional state parks would generate extra revenue. Prior to Fiscal Year 2000-01, there were 55 vacation cabins and 32 primitive cabins for visitors at 10 of the parks.²⁹ In 1999, the department determined that cabins would be feasible at an additional

²⁷ The department based its estimate on vehicle entrance fee revenues for Fiscal Year 1999-2000.

²⁸ United States General Accounting Office, *Demonstration Fee Program Successful in Raising Revenues but Could Be Improved*, GAO/RCED 99-7, November 1998. The federal park system has implemented the Recreational Fee Demonstration Program, which authorizes certain federal sites to experiment with new or increased fees and to use these new revenues to meet local site needs. The federal park system has determined that new or increased fees had no overall adverse effect on visitation and that visitors generally support the need for fees.

²⁹ Vacation cabins are self-contained, with restrooms and a kitchen, and are fully furnished. Primitive cabins do not include a bathroom and are furnished with bunk beds and a table only; bathrooms are provided in a shared central facility.

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eight parks.³⁰ The 2000 Legislature subsequently appropriated \$9.5 million of the \$19.3 million requested by the department to fund this initiative.

The program plans to use the private sector to build and manage cabins

The department will obtain private investment for cabin development. Through the “invitation to negotiate” process, the program has requested proposals for 143 cabins that would be funded, built, and operated by a private vendor who would give the state a percentage of the gross cabin receipts. The program has received packages from 12 qualified companies outlining their financial abilities, experiences, and general business plans. These bidders will have until February 2001 to submit business plans that will extensively outline their proposals. Until this process is finalized, program staff are unsure of how many cabins will be built and their locations, although most of the bidders are interested in the 50 cabins proposed for Lake Louisa State Park. A portion (\$3.5 million) of the \$9.5 million appropriation will be used to provide infrastructure for the cabins and the remaining funds will be used to build any cabins that cannot be successfully contracted for construction and management. If all 143 proposed cabins are built, program staff estimate that they will produce an estimated \$3 million in new revenue annually, of which the program will receive a percentage. The program did not request funding for cabins in its Fiscal Year 2001-02 budget request.

Program managers are also considering advertising for bids for a similar project to construct and operate 10 cabins on the Silver Run Connector portion of the Greenways State Recreation Area.

Most state parks are underutilized

Increased marketing of parks needed. While visitation to parks has increased in recent years, most state parks are underutilized and have visitation levels that are below their capacity limits. Effective advertising and marketing can promote park usage. While program staff have increased their marketing efforts, more could be done to increase visitation at state parks.

Marketing efforts are focused on low use parks

To expand the public’s knowledge of nature tourism experiences in the state (ecotourism), program staff organized a marketing group in 1996 to increase the awareness, visitation, and enjoyment of state parks as major tourism destinations. As part of their ongoing marketing approach, program staff have attended trade shows, developed videos, expanded state park websites, and increased advertising in newspapers and environmental publications. These marketing efforts have primarily been geared toward increasing visitation at underutilized state parks.

However, many parks remain underused. For example, Stephen Foster State Folk Culture Center at White Springs is considered highly underutilized. Program staff primarily attribute the park’s low visitation

³⁰ Program staff proposed that cabins be built in the following eight state parks: Big Lagoon, Grayton Beach, Camp Helen, Lake Louisa, Lake Kissimmee, Blue Spring, Fort Pierce Inlet, and Oleta River.

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Revenue Generation Possibilities Are Limited*

(61,203 visitors in Fiscal Year 1999-2000) to the remoteness of the location. However, prior to the construction of surrounding interstates, the park had approximately 250,000 visitors annually. While the park's attendance has increased, it has risen at a slower rate than the overall state park system.

The program has initiated projects to increase visitation levels at the park, including developing a new campground facility and constructing the Florida Nature and Heritage Tourism Center. The center is intended to increase public awareness of nature-based tourism opportunities in the state and allows local businesses to advertise their services. Program staff hope that the center will draw more businesses to the area and more visitors to the Stephen Foster State Folk Culture Center. A kayak and canoe rental shop recently opened near the center. Program staff will continue to market the park to increase visitation.

Honor fees are difficult to enforce, but yield important revenues

Honor boxes could be used to collect fees for trail use. A fourth opportunity to collect additional revenues would be to increase the use of self-service fee stations ("honor boxes") at trails and other sites that do not currently collect entrance fees. The program manages more than 200 miles of trail space (including the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway), and many state parks also contain hiking, biking, and equestrian trails. While the program collects entrance fees at many sites, it does not collect them on the greenway and some other locations. Currently, there are 47 state park properties without entrance fees. Collecting fees on trails is difficult given the lack of controlled access. The trails often cross several access points such as roads, and people can join the trail at any of these points. It is impractical to station program staff at all of these points to collect fees, and in some cases this could be counterproductive as people could then try to create new access points to avoid the fees, which could result in parking on roadsides and damage to the resource.

Ideally, collecting fees for park and trail use should be convenient for visitors and efficient for the program. Placing honor boxes at the sites would be feasible. At such sites, visitors would be directed to put the admission fee in an envelope that is deposited into a box and to place a tear-off receipt on their car. The program currently uses honor boxes at some locations, such as the Lake Jackson Mounds Archaeological Site and the Overstreet Trail in Tallahassee. Program staff estimate that about 40% of visitors comply with the requirement to pay entry fees at the honor boxes. The program collected \$590,000 from honor entrance fees in Fiscal Year 1999-2000. Placing honor boxes at other trails and sites would produce additional revenues for the park system. Program staff have also launched an annual campaign to sell \$30 (individual) and \$60 (family) passes for the use of state park trails. These passes have been available for nearly 30 years, but they have not been marketed effectively much of the

*Funding Shortfall Likely;
Revenue Generation Possibilities Are Limited*

time. Program staff should consider initiating a similar effort for trails that are a part of the statewide trail system.

Some revenue-generating opportunities have been met with local opposition

Local opposition has forced the program to cancel some revenue projects

The Recreation and Parks Program has encountered local resistance to revenue projects that has impeded park development efforts. Controversies have developed when certain groups have opposed specific developments in state parks, primarily those located in or near their local communities. These protests have delayed or cancelled projects, thus hindering the program's ability to increase revenue. Exhibit 18 illustrates three projects that were cancelled due to local opposition. While these projects would have increased park visitation and revenues, and program staff believed the projects would have increased recreational opportunities without a significant adverse impact on the parks' natural resources, they have been abandoned. Together, these projects could have generated an additional \$602,000 to help support program costs. While local input should always be considered in park development plans, the program should continue its efforts to pursue reasonable and feasible development plans.

**Exhibit 18
Opposition Has Led Program Staff to Cancel or Delay Revenue-Generating Projects**

Curry Hammock State Park	Prior to the park's acquisition in 1991, a portion of the property had been prepared for a residential development. Needed infrastructure was also in place, including roads, water, and electric lines. The program's draft unit management plan recommended that a 30-site campground be developed in the affected area. However, Monroe County would not issue a permit for the campsites due to the development's inconsistencies with the county's comprehensive plan and the fact that it would exacerbate problems with hurricane evacuation. The program is continuing its negotiations with the county and the Florida Department of Community Affairs, but has not yet been able to obtain the necessary approvals for the campground. Program staff estimate that the project would generate \$163,205 annually in camping revenues.
Honeymoon Island State Recreation Area	Program staff considered vacation cabins an appropriate development at this park due to their compatibility with other park facilities, the additional services they would provide, and their potential for generating revenue. During the 1999 revisions of the park's unit management plan, program staff proposed that six cabins be built in the western portion of the park. However, residents of an adjoining condominium opposed the project due to their belief that the cabins would obstruct their views. After considerable controversy and input from local elected officials, program staff abandoned the idea. These cabins would have generated an estimated \$197,100 annually.
Topsail Hill State Preserve	In 1997, program staff proposed development of three beach access areas, each providing parking for 100 recreational vehicles, and a picnic area providing an additional 100 parking spaces at this RV park. The plan required construction of paved roads across the preserve for access to these areas. The plan was strongly opposed by the environmental groups. The plan was conditionally approved, subject to program staff obtaining further approvals for all detailed construction plans and designs. Since this was not a practical alternative, program staff never implemented the plan and, instead, revised the plan to eliminate most of the proposed facility development. Program staff estimated that implementing the initial plan would have generated more than \$241,500 annually in rental fees.

Source: Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Recreation and Parks.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Recreation and Parks Program needs to maximize its ability to generate revenue by continuing current strategies for revenue generation and adopting new ones. Without a change in mission, it is unlikely that the program will ever become self-supporting. However, in light of future funding shortfalls and the program's increasing costs, it is critical that the program identify ways to reduce the widening gap between revenues and expenditures.

Revenue-generating developments should be pursued

We encourage the department to continue its efforts to expand the availability of overnight accommodations, including campsites and cabins. Although such developments have been controversial in some areas, fees collected from cabin and campsite rentals account for more than 30% of the revenue collected at state parks in Fiscal Year 1999-2000. When considering revenue generation, such developments have considerable impact and should be developed in parks when feasible and should have priority over developments such as visitor centers that are unlikely to generate revenues to help offset the costs associated with their construction and maintenance. This would help the program address the current and future funding shortages to support land management costs.

High visitation parks should have higher fees, when feasible

By increasing the range of fees, state parks that are frequently overcrowded with visitors should, when feasible, charge more than parks that are underused. This will enable the parks to increase their revenues, and some visitors may be diverted to other less popular parks, which would help prevent overuse and damage to parks. We recommend that the department strongly consider this when establishing the maximum ranges in each of the categories in which fee revisions will occur.

The department should continue marketing low visitation parks

We support the department's marketing efforts. We believe the department should continue to target its marketing efforts to state parks that are underused, as well as parks that are close to generating net profits. We recommend that the department continue this approach to increasing park visitation.

"Honor boxes" should be installed on all state trails

We also recommend that the department install "honor boxes" in locations throughout the statewide trail system being implemented by the Office of Greenways and Trails and at parks that currently do not have admission fees. "Honor boxes" are currently located at trails and other sites managed under the state park system and, despite relatively low compliance, the program collected nearly \$600,000 at these locations in Fiscal Year 1999-2000. For example, we estimate that the program could generate an additional \$265,000 by installing "honor boxes" at the

*Funding Shortfall Likely;
Revenue Generation Possibilities Are Limited*

Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenways State Recreation Area (a 110-mile stretch of the statewide trail).³¹

³¹ This dollar amount is based on traffic recorded at the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway in Fiscal Year 1999-2000 (132,694 vehicles) and the current minimum fee for vehicle entry into honor parks (\$2).

Appendix A

Statutory Requirements for Program Evaluations and Justification Reviews

Section 11.513(3), *Florida Statutes*, provides that OPPAGA program evaluation and justification reviews shall address nine issue areas. Our conclusions on these issues as they relate to the Recreation and Parks Program are summarized below.

Table A-1
Summary of the Program Evaluation and Justification Review of the Recreation and Parks Program

Issue	OPPAGA Conclusions
The identifiable cost of the program	For Fiscal Year 2000-01, the Legislature appropriated \$212.9 million and 1,167 positions for the Recreation and Parks Program. Program funding has increased by 38% since Fiscal Year 1998-99 because additional lands have been added to the state park system, and parks are being developed to improve public access and to accommodate an increasing number of visitors to state parks. Funding for state parks accounts for 56% of the program's Fiscal Year 2000-01 funding.
The specific purpose of the program, as well as the specific public benefit derived therefrom	<p>The program's major purposes are to meet the outdoor recreation needs of the state's residents and visitors and to preserve, enhance, and restore Florida's natural resources. Staff in each of the program's three components (State Park Operations, Greenways and Trails, and Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas) work to meet specific goals established to accomplish the program's purposes.</p> <p>State parks provide the state's citizens and visitors with a variety of resource-based recreational opportunities, including such activities as swimming, hiking, biking, snorkeling, and tours of natural areas. State parks contributed nearly \$464 million to local economies throughout the state in Fiscal Year 1998-99.</p> <p>Greenways and Trails help conserve native ecosystems and landscapes and historic and cultural resources. Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas preserve the state's coastal and aquatic ecosystems for the enjoyment of future generations. More than 130,000 acres of state buffer preserves serve as native habitat for wildlife; buffer preserves also provide opportunities for outdoor recreation activities such as hiking, horseback riding, bicycling, and wildlife observation.</p>
Progress towards achieving the outputs and outcomes associated with the program	<p>Performance-based program budgeting data shows that the program is increasing recreational opportunities; park visitation is up, and more acres of land are available for recreational purposes.</p> <p>However, the programs performance measures do not provide information about the condition of the state's natural and cultural resources. We have recommended measures to address this problem. The program met or exceeded 15 of its 24 performance standards for the level of services it provides.</p>

Issue	OPPAGA Conclusions
An explanation of circumstances contributing to the state agency's ability to achieve, not achieve, or exceed its projected outputs and outcomes, as defined in s. 216.011, <i>F.S.</i> , associated with the program	The program increased recreational opportunities at state parks because the department acquired additional lands through the Conservation and Recreational Lands Program (CARL). However, the program did not meet legislative goals in developing trailheads and enhancing and restoring state buffer preserves because contracts for trailhead development were not secured in a timely manner and the weather was not favorable for conducting controlled burns at buffer preserves.
Alternative courses of actions that would result in administering the program more efficiently and effectively	<p>Organizational Responsibility. OPPAGA did not identify any benefit to transferring the Recreation and Parks Program's functions and activities to another state agency. The program is appropriately placed in the Department of Environmental Protection because this is the state's principal environmental and natural resource agency. In addition to the services provided by the Recreation and Parks Program, the department performs duties and functions related to environmental permitting, environmental research and monitoring, and pollution control.</p> <p>Privatization. It is uncertain whether moving public lands into private hands will result in better service and more efficiency at less cost to the state's citizens, given the experiences of other park systems. No other state has fully privatized its state park system and, given the nation's experiences in privatizing some services, fully privatizing the state park system may not be prudent unless the state adequately plans how to best develop particular areas and devote sufficient resources to control and properly manage the private contracts. The program currently uses contracted services for maintenance work at state parks, but privatizing these services are more expensive. The program should carefully consider what additional services could be privatized to reduce costs and/or improve services.</p> <p>Options for Improvement</p> <p>Reducing Program Costs. The program has developed strategies to reduce park operating costs. However, costs in general are unlikely to be significantly reduced without a change in the way program staff approach the development of state parks. The department should</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ establish formal guidelines for determining priority park development projects, ▪ delay development projects that are not based on strong public demand, and ▪ limit development of new parks to starter kits. <p>Increasing Program Revenues. To maximize revenues, the program should continue current strategies for revenue generation and adopt new ones. The program can increase revenues in five ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the department should continue efforts to expand the availability of overnight accommodations, including campsites and cabins; ▪ the department should strongly consider high use parks when determining maximum fee ranges for park entry and activities; ▪ the department should continue targeting underutilized state parks and parks that are close to generating net profits in its marketing efforts, and ▪ the department should install "honor boxes" where possible at state trails and parks.

Appendix A

Issue	OPPAGA Conclusions
The consequences of discontinuing the program	If the state continues to own program lands, they must be managed. If the program were eliminated without another state land management program assuming responsibility for managing these properties, state parks and other program lands might be closed to public access. This would limit recreational opportunities and would likely lead to the deterioration of natural and cultural resources, as some facilities need active management.
Determination as to public policy; which may include recommendations as to whether it would be sound public policy to continue or discontinue funding the program, either in whole or in part	<p>The program generates approximately 41% of its funding through user fees and other revenues, but is still largely supported by other state funding. This is typical for state park systems, which are generally not self-supporting due to concerns that high user fees could limit citizen access to parks and the desire to preserve these lands in relatively undeveloped conditions. Overall, most of Florida's state parks operate at net losses when total expenditures and revenues are considered. In Fiscal Year 1999-2000, only 18 state parks generated profits and 44 received half of their costs through park fees. (See Appendix C.)</p> <p>With current budgetary constraints and the state's primary funding source for managing state lands (Conservation and Recreation Lands Trust Fund) facing a shortfall, it is important that the program limit its costs and maximize revenues where possible. We have made recommendations to increase revenues to help the program reduce the gap that currently exists between its expenditures and revenues, but the department should ensure that fee increases do not limit access to low-income persons.</p>
Whether the information reported pursuant to s. 216.03(5), <i>F.S.</i> , has relevance and utility for the evaluation of the program	<p>The program should develop better performance-based program budgeting (PB²) measures to track its progress in meeting resource protection goals. Current PB² and internal measures fail to provide the Legislature with an indication of whether the resources it provides to the department are helping to improve the condition of the lands and facilities the program manages.</p> <p>Measures that annually report the condition of program lands and facilities would require program staff to inventory its resources and monitor changes in their condition over time. This type of performance data would allow program staff to better determine whether the overall condition of the land and facilities it manages is improving, deteriorating, or remaining constant and better target resources to its most critical needs.</p>
Whether the state agency management has established control systems sufficient to ensure that performance data are maintained and supported by state agency records and accurately presented in state agency performance reports	<p>The department's inspector general has validated the reliability of the process used to collect data for performance measurement purposes. The inspector general determined that for most performance measures, program staff have adequate controls over the data used to determine performance results.</p> <p>However, some measures have a low probability of being valid or reliable, and the inspector general has recommended actions the program should take to improve the reliability and validity of these measures.</p>

Source: OPPAGA analysis.

Appendix B

Performance-Based Program Budgeting Measures

Table B-1
The Program Met 15 of 24 of Its Performance-Based Program Budgeting Measures

Performance Measures	1998-99 Performance	1999-00 Standard	1999-00 Performance	Met Standard?
<i>State Park Operations</i>				
Outcomes				
Increase in attendance at state parks over the prior year	14,645,202	1.3%	16,323,063	Yes
Increase the acreage available for public recreation over prior year	513,425	2%	556,758	Yes
Outputs				
Number of state park sites managed	151	151	153	Yes
Number of parks, acres, and miles supported by general administration, maintenance/minor repairs, protection, and all variation of visitor service activities	151 parks 513,425 acres	152 parks 534,387 acres 380 miles	153 parks 556,758 acres	Yes
Private/public partnerships utilized to assist operation of state parks	1,847	900	2,000	Yes
Number of recreational facilities built, repaired, or restored by type compared to plan development need	175 facilities (estimate) 57 projects	174	150 facilities 50 projects	No
Number of cultural/historical sites restored/maintained compared to need	1	1	0	No
Number of acres managed for secondary use/multiple use	555	500	720	Yes
Percentage of management plans completed in compliance with Florida Statutes	100%	100%	100%	Yes
Percentage of lands acquired by P2000 money that meet at least three criteria of the program	100%	100%	100%	Yes
Number of state parks additions/in-holdings land acquisitions	13	10	12	Yes
Number of recreational and natural/cultural additions and inholdings acquisitions for existing parks by type as related to available funding	0	1	0	No
Acres of native habitat successfully maintained as natural areas in state parks compared to need	60,604/ 527,187	57,176/ 532,217	33,364/ 556,755	No

Appendix B

Performance Measures	1998-99 Performance	1999-00 Standard	1999-00 Performance	Met Standard?
<i>State Greenways and Trails</i>				
Outcomes				
Number of additional greenways, recreational trails, or trail systems acquired to provide or enhance access to public lands while ensuring that the ecological integrity of the land is not compromised	10	5	11	Yes
Outputs				
Number of state greenways and trails managed	2	4	14	Yes
Number of miles of recreational facilities built, repaired, or restored by type compared to plan development needs	13 trails/ 68.5 miles	21.5 miles/ 17 facilities	102 miles/ 19 facilities	Yes
Number of trailheads developed to provide public access on greenways and trails	4	10	6	No
<i>Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas</i>				
Outcomes				
Percentage of degraded acreage identified in state buffer preserve enhanced or restored	5,948 acres	6.2%/ 8,026 acres	6,681 acres	No
Outputs				
Number of acres managed	129,493 upland	129,493 upland/ 4,758,913 submerged	137,260 upland	Yes
Number of acres with invasive or undesirable plants controlled	1,359	2,255	1,725	No
<i>Recreational Assistance to Local Governments</i>				
Outcomes				
Increase in technical assistance and grant related services to local governments over prior year	410,040	2%	450,000	Yes
Outputs				
Number of recreational grants and funding to local governments for recreational facilities and land acquisition	202/ \$23,143,796	330/ \$34.6 m	149/ \$12,243,007	No
Number of technical assistance consultations, meetings, calls, and publications (workload)	582	350	1,079	Yes

Source: Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

Appendix C

Fiscal Year 1999-2000 State Park Revenue and Expenditure Recap

Table C-1
Eighteen State Parks Generated Profits in Fiscal Year 1999-2000 ¹

State Park Name	Expenditures	Revenues	Profit/Loss	Attendance
District 1				
Alfred B. Maclay	\$ 528,176	\$ 49,986	\$ (378,190)	62,365
Bald Point	1,593	0	(1,593)	Not Reported
Big Lagoon	520,499	230,271	(290,228)	147,721
Blackwater Heritage State Trail	27,415	0	(27,415)	13,541
Blackwater River	175,530	58,587	(116,943)	44,478
Constitution Convention	45,029	1,563	(43,466)	1,951
Dead Lakes	47,028	7,257	(39,771)	8,855
Falling Waters	149,742	52,469	(97,273)	28,370
Florida Caverns	624,764	473,477	(151,287)	112,722
John Gorrie	38,128	4,634	(33,494)	5,824
Lake Overstreet	35,373	0	(35,373)	Not Reported
Letchworth Mounds	56,480	0	(56,480)	Not Reported
Ochlockonee River	159,943	61,383	(98,560)	38,107
Perdido Key	169	21,857	21,688	34,229
Ponce de Leon	62,328	20,495	(41,833)	34,428
St. Andrews/Shell Island	660,799	1,344,969	684,170	714,270
St. George Island	419,780	423,042	3,262	209,350
St. Joseph	541,973	621,844	79,871	145,627
Tarkiln Bayou	5,741	0	(5,741)	Not Reported
Three Rivers	168,656	34,058	(134,598)	19,498
Topsail Hill	779,738	876,181	96,443	52,139
Torreya	157,160	46,886	(110,274)	21,703
Choctaw Geopark				
Rocky Bayou	\$ 163,624	\$ 72,936	\$ (90,688)	46,905
Henderson Beach	281,617	140,414	(141,203)	145,554
Navarre Beach	42,597	58,377	15,780	Not Reported
Gulf Dunes Geopark				
Camp Helen	\$ 69,564	\$ 0	\$ (69,564)	6,572
Deer Lake	69,433	0	(69,433)	25,277
Eden	73,728	38,061	(35,667)	51,665
Grayton Beach	405,377	189,256	(216,121)	62,061

¹ Parks that generated profit are shown lightly shaded.

Appendix C

	State Park Name	Expenditures	Revenues	Profit/Loss	Attendance
District 1					
Tallahassee /St. Marks Geopark	Econfina River	\$ 28,986	\$ 15,191	\$ (13,795)	11,093
	Hernando DeSoto	40,536	86	(40,450)	1,514
	Lake Jackson Mounds	91,599	3,345	(88,254)	57,931
	Lake Talquin/River Bluff	68,032	5,495	(62,537)	19,085
	Natural Bridge Battlefield	7,196	0	(7,196)	19,696
	San Marcos de Apalache	73,809	9,578	(64,231)	21,089
	Tallahassee/St. Marks Trail	163,925	3,102	(160,823)	285,848
	Wakulla Springs ²	\$ 2,532,624	\$ 2,161,346	\$ (371,278)	212,924
District 1 Total		\$ 9,318,691	\$ 7,126,146	\$(2,192,545)	2,662,392
District 2					
	Big Shoals	\$ 180,045	\$ 0	\$ (180,045)	Not Reported
	Cedar Key Scrub	3,389	0	(3,389)	11,572
	Cedar Key	47,442	27,565	(19,877)	20,408
	Crystal River	145,292	21,878	(123,414)	23,321
	Devil's Millhopper	85,552	23,902	(61,650)	42,373
	Forest Capital	67,099	7,327	(59,772)	26,137
	Fort Clinch	599,876	543,749	(56,127)	175,848
	Gold Head Branch	412,881	249,799	(163,082)	56,992
	Homosassa Springs	1,894,994	2,393,553	498,559	263,575
	Ichetucknee Springs	477,701	630,405	152,704	219,447
	Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings	112,866	18,581	(94,285)	20,609
	Olustee Battlefield	68,072	4,655	(63,417)	38,101
	Paynes Prairie	610,176	140,859	(469,317)	125,674
	Peacock Springs	50,529	38,027	(12,502)	10,117
	Rainbow Springs	398,646	127,350	(271,296)	164,589
	San Felasco	136,590	16,359	(120,231)	27,372
	Stephen Foster	702,465	117,524	(584,941)	61,203
	Suwannee River	142,793	66,697	(76,096)	30,858
	Troy Springs	1,516	0	(1,516)	487
	Van Fleet State Trail	50,575	509	(50,066)	28,183
	Wacasassa Bay	113,135	17,900	(95,235)	27,127
	Withlacoochee State Trail	113,786	340	(113,446)	155,925
	Yulee Sugar Mill Ruins	0	0	0	37,945
Sante Fe Basin Geopark	Dudley Farm	\$ 127,856	\$ 10	\$ (127,846)	2,782
	O'Leno	447,259	171,535	(275,724)	60,766
	River Rise	21,925	0	(21,925)	1,938
Suwannee Basin Geopark	Fanning Springs	\$ 169,624	\$ 65,036	\$ (104,588)	261,010
	Manatee Springs	440,995	309,836	(131,159)	117,917
	Nature Coast State Trail	70,543	0	(70,543)	Not Reported

¹ Parks that generated profit are shown lightly shaded.

² This includes the lodge and restaurant.

	State Park Name	Expenditures	Revenues	Profit/Loss	Attendance
District 1					
Talbot Islands Geopark	Amelia Island	\$ 159,575	\$ 52,104	\$ (107,471)	165,854
	Big Talbot Island	77,095	25,172	(51,923)	61,699
	Fort George Island	71,458	0	(71,458)	28,687
	Little Talbot Island	357,771	182,539	(175,232)	106,109
District 2 Total		\$ 8,359,521	\$ 5,253,211	\$(3,106,310)	2,374,625
District 3					
	Addison Blockhouse	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	371
	Anastasia	720,287	819,916	99,629	927,295
	De Leon Springs	393,468	253,821	(139,647)	255,775
	Flagler Beach	360,657	174,268	(186,389)	85,058
	Fort Mose	4,947	0	(4,947)	422
	Green Mound	0	0	0	1,561
	Guana River	208,484	72,525	(135,959)	147,442
	Haw Creek	0	0	0	2,605
	Kissimmee Prairie	165,419	0	(165,419)	1,250
	Lake Griffin	214,583	88,079	(126,504)	34,400
	Lake Louisa	162,683	16,564	(146,119)	28,573
	North Peninsula	0	0	0	29,786
	Ravine Gardens	403,350	95,672	(307,678)	108,194
	Sebastian Inlet	900,561	840,639	(59,922)	700,663
	Silver River	340,656	14,176	(326,480)	41,326
	Tosohatchee	188,687	167,490	(21,197)	10,378
Lake Wales Ridge Geopark	Catfish Creek	\$ 132,122	\$ 0	\$ (132,122)	1,298
	Lake Kissimmee	405,327	131,842	(273,485)	49,029
Matanzas River Geopark	Faver-Dykes	\$ 132,774	\$ 45,261	\$ (87,513)	27,736
	Washington Oaks	387,813	61,875	(325,938)	60,035
St. Johns River Geopark	Blue Spring	\$ 567,296	\$ 608,367	\$ 41,071	300,835
	Hontoon Island	191,293	47,606	(143,687)	23,274
Tomoka Basin Geopark	Bulow Creek	\$ 62,797	\$ 0	\$ (62,797)	27,081
	Bulow Plantation Ruins	47,136	10,545	(36,591)	22,889
	Tomoka	555,720	224,546	(331,174)	54,104
Wekiva Basin Geopark	Lower Wekiva River	\$ 36,573	\$ 2,815	\$ (33,758)	4,054
	Rock Springs Run	103,971	10,815	(93,156)	6,464
	Wekiwa Springs	621,350	513,200	(108,150)	212,283
District 3 Total		\$ 7,307,954	\$ 4,200,022	\$(3,107,932)	3,164,181

¹ Parks that generated profit are shown lightly shaded.

Appendix C

State Park Name	Expenditures	Revenues	Profit/Loss	Attendance
District 4				
Collier-Seminole	\$ 334,720	\$ 243,579	\$ (91,141)	61,365
Dade Battlefield	178,553	19,399	(159,154)	23,204
Delnor-Wiggins Pass	444,079	453,064	8,985	532,757
Egmont Key	198,110	30	(198,080)	109,829
Fakahatchee Strand	204,653	70	(204,583)	57,480
Fort Cooper	175,825	17,370	(158,455)	18,320
Highlands Hammock	445,666	268,681	(176,985)	183,918
Koreshan	436,286	233,564	(202,722)	49,859
Lake June Scrub	31,941	517	(31,424)	Not Reported
Lover's Key	410,881	219,219	(191,662)	144,854
Mound Key	402	0	(402)	2,923
Myakka River	920,003	776,448	(143,555)	243,638
Oscar Scherer	466,935	456,049	(10,886)	97,080
Paynes Creek	135,605	8,971	(126,634)	32,102
Port Charlotte Beach	0	0	0	61,786
Skyway State Fishing Pier	212	148,330	148,118	212,807
Barrier Islands Geopark				
Cayo Costa	\$ 369,618	\$ 130,571	\$ (239,047)	55,803
Don Pedro Island	35,542	4,744	(30,798)	33,824
Gasparilla Island	190,491	62,605	(127,886)	454,621
Stump Pass Beach SRA	25,123	\$0	(25,123)	Not Reported
Gulf Islands Geopark				
Anclote Key	\$ 63,423	\$ 0	\$ (63,423)	279,821
Caladesi Island	295,197	93,239	(201,958)	147,105
Honeymoon Island	687,846	783,645	95,799	728,393
Heritage Rivers Geopark				
Alafia River/Cytec	\$ 297,846	\$ 9,969	\$ (287,877)	3,469
Hillsborough River	960,018	539,935	(420,083)	150,747
Little Manatee River	176,023	74,908	(101,115)	26,349
Ybor City	91,862	28,308	(63,554)	16,941
Manatee River Basin Geopark				
Beker	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	2
Gamble Plantation	166,107	38,463	(127,644)	37,723
Lake Manatee	186,122	128,611	(57,511)	44,395
Madira Bickel Mound	0	0	0	2,721
District 4 Total	\$ 7,929,089	\$ 4,740,289	\$(3,188,800)	3,813,836

¹ Parks that generated profit are shown lightly shaded.

State Park Name	Expenditures	Revenues	Profit/Loss	Attendance
District 5				
Avalon	\$ 46,160	\$ 0	\$ (46,160)	90,019
Bahia Honda	811,211	1,473,714	662,503	490,727
Cape Florida	770,281	841,985	71,704	873,654
Curry Hammock	104,725	98	(104,627)	104,565
Fort Pierce Inlet	393,413	192,159	(201,254)	161,041
Fort Zachary Taylor	505,512	661,251	155,739	264,112
Hugh Taylor Birch	512,175	232,777	(279,398)	265,008
Indian Key	0	0	0	4,629
Jack Island	0	0	0	46,413
Jonathan Dickinson	739,544	535,867	(203,677)	169,768
Lignumvitae Key	308,833	20,937	(287,896)	5,470
Lloyd Beach	712,459	744,692	32,233	619,537
Long Key	498,901	366,548	(132,353)	62,366
Loxahatchee Wild and Scenic River	28,776	0	(28,776)	Not Reported
MacArthur Beach	495,911	110,923	(384,988)	86,778
Oleta River	503,304	406,198	(97,106)	316,685
San Pedro	0	0	0	856
Savannas	97,133	0	(97,133)	Not Reported
Seabranck	73,628	0	(73,628)	10,616
St. Lucie Inlet	151,283	2,239	(149,044)	16,614
The Barnacle	122,353	12,059	(110,294)	22,394
Windley Key	188,717	5,743	(182,974)	9,573
Key Largo Islands Geopark				
Coral Reef	\$ 923,525	\$ 1,562,476	\$ 638,951	1,019,717
Key Largo Hammock	138,157	0	(138,157)	16,135
District 5 Total	\$ 8,126,001	\$ 7,169,666	\$ (956,335)	4,656,677
TOTAL ²	\$41,041,256	\$28,489,334	\$(12,551,922)	16,671,711

¹ Parks that generated profit are shown lightly shaded.

² Total figures do not include headquarters and district office expenditures (\$13,135,725) and revenues (\$87,865).

Source: Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Recreation and Parks.

Response from the Department of Environmental Protection

In accordance with the provisions of s. 11.45(7)(d), *Florida Statutes*, a draft of our report was submitted to the Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection for his review and response.

The Secretary's written response is reprinted herein beginning on page 55.



Jeb Bush
Governor

Department of Environmental Protection

Twin Towers Office Building
2600 Blair Stone Road
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-2400
December 21, 2000

David B. Struhs
Secretary

Mr. John W. Turcotte, Director
Office of Program Policy Analysis
And Government Accountability
Post Office Box 1735
Tallahassee, Florida 32301

Dear Mr. Turcotte:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) draft justification review of Recreation & Parks Program. We are pleased with the review and offer the attached comments for your review and consideration. If you have questions or need additional information in this regard, please feel free to call Joseph Aita, Director of Auditing at 488-2287.

Sincerely,

/s/
David B. Struhs
Secretary

DBS/ja/la

cc:

Bob Ballard Deputy Secretary, Land and Recreational Services
Fran Mainella, Director, Division of Recreation and Parks
Debbie Parrish, Director, Office of Greenways and Trails
Anna Marie Hartman, Director, Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas
Pinky G. Hall, CIG, Inspector General

"More Protection, Less Process"

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Appendix D

Mr. John Turcotte
December 21, 2000
Page Two

Comments on Background Information

- The Cross Florida Greenway should be referred to as the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway throughout the document.

Chapter 1

- The first paragraph on page, 5 refers to the interim management role of our office. Sentences 2 through 4 refer to specific projects. We believe it would be more appropriate to replace those sentences with: "Lands are purchased through the Office of Greenways and Trails' Acquisition Program. These projects will eventually be subleased for management by local or state entities. Until these properties are subleased, OGT assumes interim management responsibilities."

Chapter 3

- The measures reported in Exhibit 8, page 20 seem to be for the statewide greenway and trail system. Since DEP only actively manages the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway, the measures should be specific to it and not the entire greenway system. Measures, such as designated greenways and trails and entire acquired greenways and trails should be used for the entire system.

Chapter 4

- Exhibit 9 Page 22-State Park Land Management Costs Exceed Those of Other Land-Managing Agencies. Our division's total of \$116.66 per acre looks high in comparison to the other agencies, but while the others' cost per acre is mainly for resource management, our Division's costs are for resource management, facility management, visitor services and other administrative costs. This is somewhat represented on your Exhibit 11, but the review does not capture the fundamental difference of the state park system from other land management agencies. Our Division utilizes a cost measure that is more representative of our land management responsibilities related to maintaining facilities and recreation opportunities for over 16,000,000 park visitors a year. Since maintaining our state park facilities and providing all aspects of visitor services to park visitors is the main difference of the state park's mission from other land management agencies' mission, we look at our cost per park visitor as a more reliable measure of our unique land management responsibilities. In fiscal year 1999-2000, the Division incurred \$56,422,734 in operating expenses and had 16,544,060 park visitors for a cost of \$3.41 per park visitor. Other southern states such as Kentucky with a cost of \$9.24 visitor, Louisiana with a cost of \$9.22 per park visitor, Alabama with a cost of \$4.86 per park visitor or Georgia with a cost of \$2.85 per park visitor can be used for comparisons, taking into account the type of recreation their state park systems have.

Mr. John Turcotte
December 21, 2000
Page Three

Chapter 2—Program Benefit and Placement

Recommendation:

Program should carefully consider what additional services could be privatized to reduce costs and/or improve services.

Response:

We agree that the State Park System should not be totally privatized. However, we will continue to explore appropriate privatization opportunities while maintaining our service level standards and remaining cost effective.

Chapter 3—Program Generally Achieves Standards, But Needs Better Resource Protection Measures

Recommendation:

The program needs to develop better measures to track its progress in meeting resource protection goals.

Response:

The Division will develop the following resource management measures to better enable it to meet its goals:

1. Percent of fire-dependent habitat in maintenance condition.
2. Percent of native habitat in maintenance condition with respect to exotic plants.
3. Percent of native habitat known to require hydrological or other restoration that has been restored.

Chapter 4—Land Management Costs are High; Cost Reductions Are Feasible

Recommendation:

Establish formal guidelines for determining priority park development projects.

Response:

We agree that the current process can be more formalized. The Division will develop a formal guidelines process for the FY2002-2003 LBR to ensure that our highest development needs are identified. The privatization process will include the availability of funding, cost effectiveness, resource protection, public demand, and outdoor recreational opportunities of our many park development needs.

Appendix D

Mr. John Turcotte
December 21, 2000
Page Four

Recommendation:

Delay development projects that are not based on strong public demand.

Response:

We agree that projects that do not help meet an identified public demand should receive lower priority than those that do and will include this factor in the formal guidelines. Historically, facilities such as visitor centers have been considered as a lower priority than roads, utilities, day use areas, overnight facilities and other basic amenities and are commonly provided in later phases of a park's development.

Recommendation:

Limit development of new parks to starter kits.

Response:

We agree that starter kits are a cost effective way to provide basic public access facilities at low attendance state parks. We have constructed 37 starter kits at state parks primarily to provide the public access and basic amenities to all out state parks. We do not agree, however, that all new parks should be limited to this level of development. Some new parks will have a high demand for new facility construction because of their location or other factors. In other cases, construction of facilities would increase attendance and revenue far higher than would be possible if only starter kit facilities were provided. Rather than establishing blanket policies such as this, we need to treat each park on an individual basis. If facility development at a particular new park is a lower priority than other development needs, then it should be deferred until the other needs are met. This would be a function of the priority-setting process recommended by OPPAGA.

Chapter 5—Funding Shortfall Likely; Revenue Generation Possibilities are Limited

Recommendation:

Continue efforts to expand the availability of overnight accommodations including campsites and cabins.

Response:

The Division anticipates entering into one or more contracts with the private sector this spring to construct and operate 143 cabins in eight state parks. The Division will continue to identify, through its unit management planning process parks where cabins and campsites are needed to serve the public. While additional cabins and campsites will increase revenues, we agree with the OPPAGA report that the state park system “cannot feasibly become self-supporting from user fees.”

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Recommendation:

Strongly consider high use parks when determining maximum fee ranges for park entry activities.

Response:

The Division is in the process of adjusting state park fees. We agree with the OPPAGA report regarding entrance fee increases at parks. We are planning to increase entrance fees from the current charge of \$4.00 to an increase of \$5.00 at parks with 140,000 visitors or more. We also plan to increase the current \$3.25 entrance fee at parks with under 140,000 visitors to \$4.00 with the exception of honor fee parks. With these increases to our standard per vehicle entrance fees, we estimate an additional two million dollars in entrance fee revenue. We also agree with OPPAGA that fee ranges should be established so adjustments may be based on market analysis. The Division also plans to increase several other park specific fees including overnight accommodations. The total fee increase for all adjustments (entrance, camping, etc.) is estimated to be \$4 million.

Recommendation:

Continue targeting underutilized state parks and parks that are close to generating net profits in its marketing efforts.

Response:

The Division operates under a comprehensive plan to market/promote all Florida State Parks to bring to the attention of our citizens and visitors the natural, cultural, historical and recreational assets our system offers. While we market the entire system to increase "brand" identity of Florida State Parks, we do target through commonly accepted marketing strategies underutilized properties. Our cooperative advertising program is a good example of a strategy that was suggested by the Division and funded by the Legislature under the premise of helping to promote economic development in Florida's rural counties (many of our parks are located in Florida's rural areas). While some underutilized parks are due to the delicate nature of their ecosystems, most could benefit from an increase in visitation which would generate additional revenue. Parks close to generating net profits are certainly a target in our marketing efforts since our overall mission is providing recreational opportunities while sustaining the resource. Other properties may never, nor should they, generate a net profit. With the addition of revenue generating activities and facilities such as expanded campgrounds and cabins, coupled with a strong marketing/promotion effort, many of our parks close to a net profit could approach break-even and beyond.

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Recommendation:

Install honor boxes in locations throughout the statewide trail system being implemented by the OGT and at parks that currently do not have admission fees.

Response:

We agree with OPPAGA's recommendation that honor fee stations should be established at rail trail units. We also agree with OPPAGA that it is impractical to station staff at all trail points to collect fees. The Division will take action to implement honor fee stations at major trailheads for rail train units and parks that do not collect honor fees, where appropriate.