

Dear Governor Sonny Perdue and Citizens of Georgia,

Even though naturalist John Muir spoke these words over one hundred years ago, they describe what we are experiencing in Georgia today. Georgians have strong connections with parks and natural resources, visiting them often to relax and participate in a variety of recreation activities. We also value our natural environment, parks and greenways because they help to sustain our quality of life. I am proud to report that these core values and fundamental principles have been substantiated through the update of Georgia's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

SCORP has also brought to light many serious challenges facing the well being of our state, our local communities and our parks and natural resources. Georgia's prosperity has resulted in rapid growth and development that has consumed thousands of acres of our natural environment. As a result, the open fields, creeks and woods where we once played and relaxed are being consumed by development. Because we have not been able to preserve natural areas at rates that counterbalance this development, many of our citizens no longer have access to a natural environment or places to play and relax.

Other realizations of our growth include the rapid influx of millions of new Georgians, shifting demographic trends and lifestyle changes that affect how we recreate. Demand for recreational services exceeds supply. Because of urban growth and increased cultural diversity, some traditional forms of recreation and natural resource use are giving way to new interests and recreational demands. And, our increasingly sedentary lifestyles have created serious health concerns for both Georgia adults and children.

The ultimate declaration of SCORP 2008-2013 is that Georgia is at a critical crossroad. The preservation of our state's priceless natural resources and the provision of accessible and affordable public outdoor recreation opportunities are now, more than ever, important responsibilities that we – as a state and as a society – must forthrightly address. Our actions today will dictate the health and vitality of communities tomorrow. The time has come when we must recognize the major role that parks have in promoting public health, livable communities, economic vitality and conserving our irreplaceable natural resources.

While the window of opportunity still exists to turn these trends around, our federal, state and local governments must work with our citizens, non-profit support organizations, businesses and service delivery partners to efficiently and responsibly address the threats facing our natural environment. We must work together in new and innovative ways to maximize the opportunities to ensure a healthy and prosperous Georgia with abundant green spaces and recreation opportunities for future generations to enjoy.

By enacting the recommendations of Georgia SCORP 2008-2013, we can ensure that future Georgia residents and visitors are able to prosper from our natural resources and experience the sheer joy of the outdoors that we have grown to love so much.



Becky Kelley

LWCF State Liaison Officer

Director, Parks, Recreation and Historic Sites Division

Georgia Department of Natural Resources