



## CHAPTER

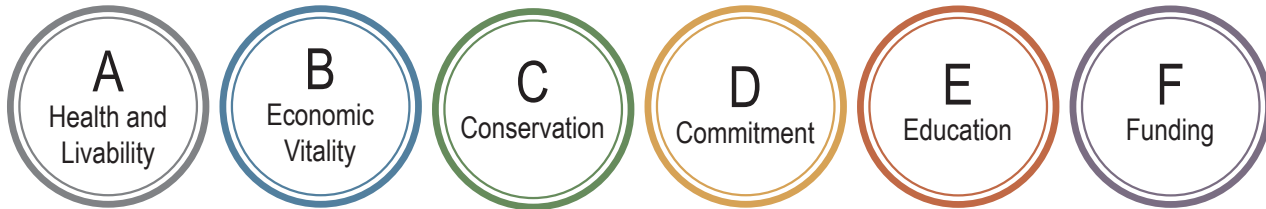
# 4

## STRATEGIC ACTIONS

*The future of outdoor recreation in Georgia can be positive if the major challenges facing our state are addressed forthrightly. Critical issues such as rapid population growth, loss of natural resources, growing cultural diversity, urbanization, increases in obesity and other chronic diseases, and contrasts of recreation preferences between regions of the state deserve our immediate attention - before there is little to no opportunity to effectively respond.*

**STRATEGIC  
ACTIONS OF  
SCORP  
2008-2013**

This SCORP 2008–2013 provides a framework for collective action by providing a solid vision, based on data and public input, and offering recommendations for making that vision a reality. Its recommendations are grouped into six strategic actions which, for the next five years, will serve as a ‘to do’ list for all stakeholders in outdoor recreation, from the state of Georgia to city and county governments. Implementing the recommendations from this SCORP will make Georgia a model for the nation in outdoor recreation, quality service and resource protection.



There are six strategic action categories, all of equal importance. The focus on Health and Livability, Economic Vitality and Conservation results from analysis of all the findings of the SCORP 2008–2013 process. Commitment, Education and Funding strategies identify essential components for successful implementation of the SCORP recommendations. Actions within each of the six strategic areas are numerically coded so that they can be applied to Land and Water Conservation Fund criteria and tracked for performance measurement purposes.

**A. Health Through Fitness and Livability**

*Recreation providers, public health officials, planners and policy-makers must collaborate to fight Georgia’s obesity epidemic, combat other serious health conditions and improve overall health by promoting and accommodating active lifestyles. The connection between positive physical and mental health and spending time outdoors is undeniable.*

*It is critical that Georgia and all city and county governments make comprehensive connections between planning, zoning, natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation. Livable communities strengthen social bonding among diverse cultures and create a sense of community, while they also slow the fragmentation of our landscape. These elements are vitally important in areas of Georgia that are experiencing demographic shifts.*

**All Outdoor Recreation Providers and Other Partners will:**

- A.1. Improve access to outdoor recreation resources and facilities by providing locations near where people live and work and exploring ways to connect existing facilities for pedestrians and non-motorized vehicles (bikes, in-line skates, horses, etc.).
- A.2. Collaborate with local health departments to create programs and activities in parks and outdoor recreation areas promoting ‘healthy lifestyle choices.’
- A.3. Identify and reduce barriers that prevent the use of outdoor recreation facilities (e.g., safety concerns, cost of participation, incorporation of public transportation networks and accessibility by those with physical limitations).
- A.4. Attend to segments of the population that are under-served by existing facilities (e.g., seniors, young adults and African American populations).

- A.5. Recognize how recreation preferences change with shifts in demographic composition (e.g., growing Hispanic populations).
- A.6. Create opportunities to “cross-culturalize” activities to increase participation in outdoor recreation activities by Georgia’s diverse populations.
- A.7. Enhance security for outdoor recreation areas where appropriate.

#### **The State of Georgia will:**

- A.8. Work with statewide organizations such as the DHR, GRPA, and others to advance the “Healthy Georgia” initiative and incorporate health and livability programs in state and local outdoor recreation sites.

#### **City and County Governments will:**

- A.9. Provide a variety of outdoor recreation areas and parks in close proximity to where people live and work.
- A.10. Promote the development of residential areas that retain greenspace, include recreation facilities and provide safe pedestrian access to public parks from schools, business and retail centers.

## **B. Economic Vitality**

*Agencies at all levels must seek ways to capitalize on the public’s growing desire and ability to travel in order to experience nature and participate in outdoor recreation events and programs. Efforts should be made to maximize the tourism potential associated with conservation of our natural resources and provision of recreation and sports activities as key visitor attractions for Georgia and its local communities.*

*Preservation of greenspace is a cost effective and value-added means to address flood management, air and water quality and other municipal infrastructure needs. Wise planning and utilization of natural areas can address these issues while providing highly desirable greenspace for growing communities.*

*The state of Georgia and its local communities can benefit from the significant and multi-layered return on investment from outdoor recreation and natural resource conservation expenditures.*

#### **All Outdoor Recreation Providers and Other Partners will:**

- B.1. Rehabilitate, update and upgrade existing outdoor recreation facilities to maximize marketability.

#### **The State of Georgia will:**

- B.2. Collaborate with other partners to document the economic benefits of outdoor recreation in Georgia through market research and tracking the financial return of investments in outdoor recreation facilities.
- B.3. Facilitate collaborations between state agencies to advance the economic benefits of outdoor recreation and natural resource conservation.
- B.4. Market our natural and recreation resources to gain public participation and support, advance tourism and economic development opportunities and encourage volunteerism, collaborating with other state agencies that specialize in market analysis and promotion to significantly strengthen any marketing effort.

**City and County Governments will:**

- B.5. Promote outdoor recreation events, programs and facilities that attract day travelers and overnight visitation.
- B.6. Create partnerships with local businesses that provide direct or indirect materials or services for outdoor recreation such as local convention and visitor bureaus, recreation equipment vendors and guide services.

**C. Conservation**

*All partners must act immediately and collaboratively to conserve Georgia's natural resources, address Georgia's rapid growth and urbanization, build a new generation of environmental stewards and capitalize on the state's strong support for both natural resource conservation and enhanced outdoor recreation opportunities.*

**All Outdoor Recreation Providers and Other Partners will:**

- C.1. Identify and prioritize key lands for acquisition, especially in the fastest-growing areas of the state.
- C.2. Create plans to manage and operate facilities and sites to 1) efficiently use limited funds, 2) ensure the protection of biodiversity, and 3) respond to recreation preferences and needs. These plans should be functional and include specific measures for defining success.
- C.3. Explore and expand partnerships with land trusts and other conservation organizations as a means to permanently protect greenspace.
- C.4. Develop multi-jurisdictional projects to satisfy several important objectives: 1) to coordinate land protection efforts for connectivity, 2) capitalize on complementary strengths and weaknesses, and 3) ensure resource conservation and outdoor recreation opportunities.
- C.5. Provide balanced interpretation, education and outdoor recreation programs to expand the knowledge and appreciation of our natural, cultural and recreation resources in a manner consistent with conservation

**The State of Georgia will:**

- C.6. Establish and maintain resource data for use by local government officials focusing on land needs and unique areas needing protection in accordance with the Georgia Land Conservation Plan, the Georgia State Wildlife Action Plan and the Coastal Management Plan.
- C.7. Facilitate collaborations and partnerships for the protection of wetlands and the provision of greenway and blueway trail corridors, including the creation of the Georgia Scenic Trail System.
- C.8. Expand the SCORP inventory of outdoor recreation resources and other GIS databases to identify lands suitable for conservation.
- C.9. Seek opportunities for state agencies to work together to facilitate increased conservation of Georgia's natural resources.
- C.10. Work with the federal government to ensure permanent protection of natural areas within military bases in Georgia.
- C.11. Investigate the reconstitution of the Georgia Youth Conservation Corps.

**City and County Governments will:**

- C.12. Encourage land use planning that includes natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation opportunities.
- C.13. Develop corridors to link recreation sites and residential areas using multi-use pathways.

**D. Commitment**

*Collaborations must be maximized to improve the quality and availability of recreation opportunities throughout Georgia. An implementation plan with measurable goals and timeline expectations must be developed to ensure progressive fulfillment of SCORP 2008-2013 recommendations.*

**All Outdoor Recreation Providers and Other Partners will:**

- D.1. Foster advocacy organizations to advance the benefits of outdoor recreation, modeled on the “Friends of the Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites” group and other successful collaborations.
- D.2. Facilitate, fund and collaborate in efforts to advance the recommendations of SCORP, including the development of educational and support materials.
- D.3. Seek ways to further individual agency missions by leveraging the efforts of state and local partners.
- D.4. Refine and reinforce a systematic plan identifying the status and future needs for land acquisition, and facilities development and operation.
- D.5. Acknowledge and integrate the preferences of ethnic and socio-demographic groups, tailoring facilities and programs to serve diverse constituencies.

**The State of Georgia will:**

- D.6. Pronounce the creation of the Georgia Outdoor Recreation Partnership (GORP) through the Department of Natural Resources and charge it with prioritizing and implementing the vision of SCORP 2008–2013. GORP will be comprised of members of the existing SCORP Advisory Committee along with representatives from state departments (DNR, DCA, DHR, DED, DOE, DOT, etc.) and allied agencies and organizations sharing a common mission and commitment. Report SCORP implementation status in a fall 2008 Conference on Outdoor Recreation.
- D.7. Conduct regular statewide assessments on outdoor recreation preferences by socio-demographics; modify the DNR Strategic Plan and PRHSD System Plan to address these findings; and share data with other outdoor recreation providers to use in developing their own local plans and programs.
- D.8. Provide technical assistance to outdoor recreation providers by serving as or providing for a clearinghouse for information on planning, development, management and funding. Research and technical assistance will include:
  - a. Best practice models and case studies for recreation planning for cities, counties and other outdoor recreation providers, including best practice models for natural resource stewardship and sustainability.



- b. Converting the SCORP inventory GIS database to a web-based format for use as a planning tool for recreation planners and an informational resource for the public.
- c. Working to commit resources for maintaining and improving the current database of recreation and conservation lands.
- d. Establishing recreation standards and specific metrics for outdoor recreation providers that outline target service delivery goals by population for outdoor recreation land and facility types.
- e. Planning assistance for local recreation providers to help them protect parks and greenspace and provide high quality recreation service opportunities based on emerging trends (for example, counties experiencing explosive growth and those facing population loss have very different recreation needs).
- f. Information and educational materials that advance a conservation ethic and promote environmental awareness.
- g. Investigate recreation property liability constraints.



One of the initiatives of PRHSD is the “**Get Outdoors Georgia**” campaign designed to highlight the link between participation in outdoor recreation and improved health for people of all ages and abilities; achieve decreased obesity; and emphasize children’s early involvement in nature for establishing life-long physical, mental and community benefits. Part of this initiative is to post, on the DNR website, activity-based events taking place at state parks and historic sites.

### City and County Governments will:

- D.9. Work with DNR to explore: alternate funding sources, ways of improving efficiency in service delivery, and ways to maximize benefits to the community for every dollar spent on outdoor recreation efforts.
- D.10. Seek ways to incorporate the principles of environmental planning into zoning policies and into the construction of their own buildings and facilities.
- D.11. Stay current with the needs of their constituents for outdoor recreation opportunities.
- D.12. Acknowledge the economic and health benefits that outdoor recreation sites provide to their communities.
- D.13. Enter into an agreement with DNR to assist GORP with its efforts (e.g., gathering database information, county-level information and plats defining).

## E. Education

*Tools and resources are available and must be shared to conserve recreation lands and provide high quality opportunities for all. Elevating the priority of outdoor recreation with policymakers, planners, practitioners, partners and the public will heighten their awareness of the benefits in terms of community health and livability, economic vitality and conservation of Georgia’s natural resources.*

**All Outdoor Recreation Providers and Other Partners will:**

- E.1. Advance SCORP objectives by educating policy makers on the value of outdoor recreation for community health, livability, economic vitality and ecological integrity. Use SCORP as a policy document to drive decision-making on recreation initiatives.
- E.2. Collaborate to develop training opportunities and programs for policymakers, planners and outdoor recreation providers designed to:
  - a. Demonstrate the benefits of outdoor recreation for quality of life, healthy communities and economic vitality.
  - b. Delineate and reinforce a conservation ethic. (The Green Infrastructure Toolkit created by the Atlanta Regional Commission, The Georgia Conservancy and The Trust for Public Land is suggested as a good model.)
- E.3. Broadcast the vision of SCORP through aggressive marketing, conferences, newsletters and other outreach tools.
- E.4. Integrate principles of healthy living, livable communities, economic vitality and resource conservation into the mission statements of service providers.
- E.5. Provide balanced interpretation, education and outdoor recreation programs to expand the knowledge and appreciation of our natural, cultural and recreation resources in a manner consistent with conservation.

**The State of Georgia will:**

- E.6. Through the Governor's Office and DNR, educate members of the Georgia General Assembly and all state agencies about the findings and recommendations of SCORP 2008–2013.
- E.7. Work with the Department of Education to advance healthy lifestyles and natural resource conservation in Georgia public schools.
- E.8. Inspire and facilitate the efforts of the Georgia Department of Education and the university system to create curricula and degree programs designed to educate students and produce well-trained professionals in the fields of recreation (leisure services) and resource management, ensuring planning competency and responsiveness to the community.

**City and County Governments will:**

- E.9. Commit themselves to understanding the value of recreation in their communities.
- E.10. Capitalize on the assistance provided by DNR, including applying for LWCF funding and working with PRHSD to seek other sources of funding and support.
- E.11. Encourage site managers and service providers to attend training sessions and to utilize tools provided by DNR and its partners.
- E.12. Explore ways to collaborate with partners to achieve objectives for recreation (e.g., memoranda of agreement, management agreements, cost-sharing and staff-sharing).

## F. Funding

*The issue of funding is multi-faceted since it covers recreation land acquisition, facility construction, operations and appropriate recapitalization. It also includes the efficient use of existing funds at all levels of government, leveraged with private and non-profit investment and the creation of consistent funding streams.*

*Solid data and science are among the best tools available to recreation providers to ensure adequate funding. They reveal strong and direct correlations between recreation and community wellness as well as justify the need for additional state and federal funding.*

### All Outdoor Recreation Providers and Other Partners will:

- F.1. Identify both short- and long-term funding options for land acquisition, conservation and management as well as for facility development, maintenance and rehabilitation.
- F.2. Develop staffing plans, cost estimates and options for service delivery (e.g., in-house staff, contracted services, staff-sharing arrangements and volunteer networks) as well as for the operation and maintenance of recreation facilities. It is important that this information is provided to local officials before the construction of new facilities to ensure that needs are being met to provide safe, clean and attractive facilities.
- F.3. Develop training and certification programs for operations and maintenance personnel to ensure the most cost-effective methods are used.
- F.4. Expand the use of volunteers, interns and other staffing alternatives.
- F.5. Create and sustain partnerships to minimize reliance on tax revenues to support the operations and management aspects of public parks and outdoor recreation areas.

### The State of Georgia will:

- F.6. Work with the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, allied state agencies and state legislative leaders to develop a funding source to parallel the goals of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund in supporting state and local needs for outdoor recreation including land acquisition, resource conservation and management as well as facility maintenance, rehabilitation and development.
- F.7. Seek collaborations and synergies to maximize existing state and federal funding sources (e.g., LWCF, Forest Legacy, SAFETEA-LU and Urban Parks and Recreation).

### City and County Governments will:

- F.8. Pursue the use of special purpose local option sales tax (SPLOST), impact fees, business and industry partnerships and foundation grants as additional funding mechanisms to fund land acquisition, conservation and management as well as facility development, maintenance and rehabilitation.