

Office of State Parks
Agency Number 06-264
Program: Parks and Recreation

Fiscal Year 2023-2024 through 2027-2028

Agency Vision Statement

The Office of State Parks will operate and manage parks for recreational use of natural resources and portray historic and scientific sites of statewide importance to provide Louisiana citizens and their guests a great place to live, work, play and visit.

Agency/Program Mission Statement

The Office of State Parks (OSP) serves the citizens of Louisiana and visitors by preserving and interpreting natural areas of unique or exceptional scenic value, planning, developing and operating sites that provide outdoor recreation opportunities in natural surroundings, preserving and interpreting historical and scientific sites of statewide importance and administering intergovernmental programs related to outdoor recreation and trails.

Agency/Program Philosophy

The Office of State Parks understands its role to be proactive in the development of programs, promotion, and facilitation of use of areas under its direction. It enthusiastically accepts its responsibilities for preservation of natural areas, provision of recreation in natural settings, and presentation of culturally significant places. Interpretation, education and recreation are viewed as keys to providing better understanding and appreciation of the state's resources by its citizens and its visitors. Activities of the Office of State Parks are guided by plans of action that include specific objectives and the adherence to the criteria established in the Office of State Parks holdings classification system. Such observances are essential to the successful development and management of the Louisiana State Parks System. The Office of State Parks strives for: coordination between agencies, allied interests, and user groups; professional training and competence of its personnel; exemplary planning, design, construction and maintenance of its facilities; active development and use of interpretation and recreation programs; creation of public awareness of Office of State Parks programs; and development of a stable funding base to provide maintaining continuity of facility, program, and personnel quality.

Agency/Program Goal

OSP will increase and improve the focus on Louisiana's vast natural resources for all Louisiana citizens and visitors to enjoy through planning, constructing and operating a system of parks, historic sites and preservation areas in accordance with the highest standards of management, interpretation and conservation. OSP will enrich educational opportunities through training and raise the quality of visitor experience.

Program Objectives

- Objective 1.** The Administrative Program of the Office of State Parks will provide support to the agency and ensure that a minimum of 90% of its objectives are achieved annually.
- Objective 2.** To sustain the number of visitors served by the park system to at least 2,000,000 by the end of fiscal year 2024-2025, and to sustain the number of individuals participating in interpretive programs and events of at least 150,000 individuals annually by the end of fiscal year 2024-2025.
- Objective 3.** To fully obligate available Federal funds allocated to Louisiana annually through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and Recreational Trails Program (RTP) for the development of outdoor recreational facilities, and to uphold full compliance of all applicable Federal laws associated with projects developed through these programs.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVE:

Objective 1. The Administrative Program of the Office of State Parks will provide support to the agency and ensure that a minimum of 90% of its objectives are achieved annually.

Program Activity Parks and Recreation - Administration

State Outcome Goal Natural Resources

Strategies

- 1.1 Meet regularly with agency section heads.**
- 1.2 Conduct periodic visits of State Park and State Historic Site facilities throughout the state.**
- 1.3 Establish staff accountability measures and performance objectives.**
- 1.4 Review and revise operational and strategic plans of the agency.**
- 1.5 Evaluate programs to track progress with strategic plan.**
- 1.6 Evaluate existing programs and activities; research best practices and models for effective change; seek innovative solutions.**
- 1.7 Hire diverse and well-qualified professional staff.**

Indicators

Input	Number of agency program objectives.
Output	Number of objectives achieved annually.
Outcome	Annual percentage of objectives achieved.
Efficiency	Operation cost of park system per visitor.

Supporting Documentation for Objective #1 Performance Indicators

Rationale/Appropriateness

Administration of the Office of State Parks is conducted through facilities in Baton Rouge. Administrative staff develops management practices, initiates policies and procedures, exercises oversight in human resources actions, evaluates visitation trends and creates programs. The value of these efforts is measured through the success in meeting all of the objectives and performance indicators of the agency.

This objective establishes standards of achievement for the entire agency. Achievement of these objectives will determine the effectiveness of management practices, procedures and programs put in place by the administrative offices.

Primary Beneficiaries

The primary beneficiaries of this objective are taxpayers of the State of Louisiana. Achievement of the goals established in this objective demonstrates quality management procedures are in place for the entire agency. Quality administrative management protects taxpayer investment in the state park system.

Data Collection Procedure/Source, Frequency and Timing of Data Collection, Calculation Methodology, etc.

Data collected through all of the performance indicators of the agency are evaluated to determine calculations related to achievement of this objective. The measures identified through objectives #2 and #3 are totaled to determine the effectiveness of the agency in meeting all goals.

Limitation of the Indicators

Limitations of the indicators in this objective are only those identified in the specific performance indicators of objectives #2 and #3. The quality of information in calculation of those performance indicators determines the effectiveness of the performance indicators associated with this objective.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVE:

Objective 2. To sustain the number of visitors served by the park system to at least 2,000,000 by the end of fiscal year 2024-2025, and to sustain the number of individuals participating in interpretive programs and events of at least 150,000 individuals annually by the end of fiscal year 2024-2025.

Program Activity	Parks and Recreation - Field Operations and Regional Offices
State Outcome Goal	Natural Resources
Strategies	
2.1	Maintain and operate all state park sites and facilities to the highest national and international standards of quality.
2.2	Provide personnel with appropriate training, equipment and uniforms.
2.3	Continually revise and improve all agency policies and procedures.
2.4	Implement and upgrade all aspects of the facilities reservation system to offer state of the art capabilities.
2.5	Develop and administer an orientation program for all new employees.
2.6	Promote the park offerings through marketing, public relations and outreach programs.
2.7	Conduct random surveys to measure the quality of the visitors' experiences and receive suggestions for improvement.
2.8	Partner with other state and private agencies to enhance existing and develop new programs to attract new visitor groups.
2.9	Constantly review and evaluate programs offered to ensure quality control.
2.14	Increase staff participation in interpretive training programs, outreach initiatives and research projects.
2.15	Increase the number and variety of interpretive programs and events offered.
2.16	Review and evaluate interpretive programming to ensure quality of the programs.
2.17	Increase the focus on natural resources through programming and education.
2.18	Explore public private partnerships to enhance customer experience as well as increase revenue.

Indicators

Input	Budget and staff. Baseline number of participants in programs offered annually. Baseline number of programs and events offered annually.
Output	Annual visitation. Number of interpretive programs and events offered annually. Number of interpretive program and event participants annually.
Outcome	Percent change in annual visitation. Percentage change in number of programs and events offered annually.
Efficiency	Operating cost per visitor.

Supporting Documentation for Objective #2 Performance Indicators

Rationale/Appropriateness

Visitation is the most accurate measure of the number of people served by the park system. The visitation figures will include those who travel to parks, but will not include participants in off-site park programs offered or off-site outreach activities participated in, such as school-based programs and community events. The visitation figures will not include the “opportunity value” or “existence value” of the park to non-users. That is, the value of having the option to use said facilities and the value of preserving significant sites and resources for future generations are not contemplated in the set of indicators related to the number of people served by the park system. The number of operational sites is included as an input indicator as a means of factoring in the effect of having greater accessibility to the agency’s sites.

The mission of the Office of State Parks addresses the protection and presentation of the unique natural resources of the state. Achievement of this objective directly addresses the state outcome goal of proper management of Louisiana’s natural resources.

Programmatic participation incorporates the number of individuals reached and served by OSP staff through programs and activities delivered on-site as well as through outreach programs. Increasing the diversity of interpretive programs extends the reach of OSP beyond the borders of state parks and state historic sites. The result is an extension of the OSP in informing the public of the natural qualities of Louisiana. Through the measurement of programmatic participation, evaluations can be made as to the full extent of the reach of OSP in providing educational and informational services to Louisiana’s residents and guests.

Additionally the agency engages volunteer groups and individuals to provide new and diverse program offerings. Through this effort OSP is reaching out to new segment of the community to develop an additional customer base while engaging current customers with new programming materials.

OSP is also continuing efforts in development and delivery of “Pay for Service” interpretive programs. These programs are designed to be high-quality programs which participants are willing to pay amounts to compensate the agency for the materials necessary to deliver the programs. This effort is necessary to ensure the agency’s ability to continue to deliver quality programming to patrons during difficult budget periods.

Primary Beneficiaries

The primary beneficiaries of the agency’s efforts to achieve Objective #2 are the visitors and program participants themselves. The agency’s efforts are geared toward: 1) building awareness of park offerings among potential first-time or infrequent visitors; 2) ensuring customer satisfaction; 3) encouraging repeat visitation; 4) providing education to program participants, educators, preservationists, academicians, local children (school) and communities.

Data Collection Procedure/Source, Frequency and Timing of Data Collection, Calculation Methodology, etc.

Visitation data is collected annually and is included in a comprehensive report that includes total annual visitation and further breaks down visitation by in-state versus out-of-state visitation, day use versus overnight use, and visitation per site and per month. The visitation data is generated at the park gate and is collected on a fiscal year (July 1 – June 30) basis.

The percentage change in visitation is calculated using the standard formula:

$$\frac{V^2 - V^1}{V^1}$$

The number of participants reached annually is determined by a number of factors. Each site within the park system submits to the central office an annual list of programs it would like to offer during the next fiscal year. The interpretive staff evaluates the pool of requests on the basis of a number of factors including staff availability, scheduling, budget constraints and the proposed program’s historical and scientific validity. The approved list of programs is set at the beginning of the year. Any changes (cancellations or additions) will be included in the final program count.

Participation in the programs is measured at the site of the event and is reported to the central office. The park staff and public information section promote events through press releases and other media where possible.

Outreach activities extend participation through delivery of programs at schools and events outside the boundaries of parks and historic sites. Interpretive personnel account for attendance of outreach activities and report those numbers to the central office.

The efficiency indicator, operating cost per visitor, is calculated by dividing the final expenditures of the park system by the number of visitors as reported in the latest OSP annual report on visitation and comparing the same information as reported by the other states' park systems in the annual report of the National Association of State Park Directors.

Limitation of the Indicators

As mentioned above, the visitation data is fairly conservative in that it only counts the number of people directly, but not indirectly, served by the park system. The visitation data only reflects the number of people served on-site and excludes participants who come in contact with the park system through off-site events and outreach programs. Also, comparisons to other states are not always indicative of efficiency due to differences in methods of collecting visitation information. Louisiana counts the actual visitors entering the parks through entrance stations, but many other states do not have entrance stations and use traffic counters and multipliers to determine visitation.

Past and future natural disasters are also a limitation. Recent hurricanes and storms have damaged facilities reducing the capacity of the agency. Similar storms in the future could further impact facilities and the ability of the agency to attract visitors.

Reporting of participation is a fair indicator of the ability of programmatic participation, but it only accounts for a portion of the interpretive services section of OSP. Some programs offered are extremely labor-intensive and costly, while others are more modest, such as guided nature walks. Further, some programs may appear modest, but require extensive research and preparation.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVE:

Objective 3. To fully obligate available Federal funds allocated to Louisiana annually through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and Recreational Trails Program (RTP) for the development of outdoor recreational facilities, and to uphold full compliance of all applicable Federal laws associated with projects developed through these programs.

Program Activity Parks and Recreation - DOR (Federal Programs)

State Outcome Goal Natural Resources

Strategies

- 3.1 Process billing and conduct compliance inspections for LWCF and RTP construction projects so that all projects have been inspected in accordance with federal standards (at least once every five years).**
- 3.2 Review state and federal permits for impact on park and recreation projects as required by LWCF and RTP standards.**
- 3.3 Ensure all new project applicants are fully aware of compliance requirements at outset.**
- 3.4 Ensure all new recreation projects meet at least one of the top needs identified in the SCORP.**

Indicators

Input	Federal appropriation of funding for LWCF and RTP. Total amount of obligation of Federal funds to new recreation projects through LWCF and RTP. Number of LWCF inspections completed.
Output	Percentage of Federal funds obligated. Number of new LWCF and RTP projects approved. Number of inspected LWCF sites in compliance.
Outcome	Percentage of new projects funded meeting at least one of the top needs identified in the SCORP. Percentage of LWCF sites in compliance.
Efficiency	Ratio of number of projects inspected and permits reviewed to the number of project officers.

Supporting Documentation for the Objective #3 Performance Indicators

Rationale/Appropriateness

As per RS 56:1803, the Assistant Secretary of the Office of State Parks is designated as the authorized representative of the State of Louisiana under the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, and the Office of State Parks is charged with the duties of administering and monitoring recreation projects funded through the LWCF.

By Executive Order issued in January 2008 OSP is also charged with administration of the Recreational Trails Program.

The Federal budget provides funding for these two recreational grant programs annually. The Office of State Parks is tasked with evaluation of applications for funding and selecting the appropriate projects in full accordance of the rules and regulations of the LWCF and RTP. Monies not obligated within the specified timeline of each of these Federal programs would result in a loss for the State of Louisiana.

Federal regulations associated with the LWCF require OSP to conduct ongoing inspections of more than 750 projects throughout the state. Projects that have received LWCF support must continue to comply with federal requirements. Therefore, the agency is required to inspect sites to ensure the projects remain in good standing with the U.S. Department of Interior.

It is the objective of the agency to achieve a high rate of projects in good standing with the U.S. Department of the Interior not only because it is required by law, but also because federal funds are now available and are likely to increase in the future. It will serve the agency well to have maintained a positive track record of administering the program.

Proper administration of the Federal grant programs is a measure in protection and development of the unique natural resources of the state of Louisiana and making those resources available to Louisiana's residents and guests in an appropriate manner.

The efficiency indicator contemplates the labor-intensive nature of the work involved in monitoring compliance with the federal program and relates such to the small number of staff who oversee the program in addition to their regular agency duties.

Primary Beneficiaries

The primary beneficiaries of the agency's efforts to achieve Objective #3 are recreation enthusiasts who take advantage of the recreational offerings made available through the LWCF program in the past and those that will become available in the future.

Data Collection Procedure/Source, Frequency and Timing of Data Collection, Calculation Methodology, etc.

The agency annually tracks the number of projects inspected, new projects funded and projects in good standing and submits this information to the U.S. Department of the Interior. This data will be included in the strategic planning reports required by the state as well.

Limitations on the Indicators

As time passes, more and more projects are likely to fall out of compliance. However, the agency (through inspections and permit reviews) can neither provide rewards nor penalties based on compliance. The agency can merely inform the entities of any deficiencies and encourage corrective action. However, the state remains ultimately responsible for site compliance, meaning the state would have to pay the cost to bring the site into compliance if the local entity does not take corrective action. According to federal law on the subject, noncompliance in LWCF projects puts all federal funding received by the state of Louisiana in jeopardy.

Office of State Parks Program Supporting Documentation

A. Statement identifying the principal clients and users of each program and program objective and the specific service or benefit derived by such persons or organizations:

As specified in its enabling legislation, OSP is established to serve all Louisiana residents and their visitors. Included in this broad classification are tourists, school groups, educational institutions, academicians, historians, preservationists, recreation enthusiasts (cyclists, anglers, canoeists, hikers, campers, birders, runners, etc.), educators, scouting, Friends, 4H and other service organizations, state, federal and local agencies and professional and recreational organizations. Through its preservation role, the agency serves the interests of the above-mentioned groups, plus future generations of Louisiana citizens and visitors including those who do not avail themselves of park services. The benefit derived by these groups is the opportunity to take advantage of the state's recreational resources and learn about its natural, cultural and historical resources. Other beneficiaries of the agency's program are related businesses (e.g. canoe outfitters, bait shops, tour operators, etc.) and support businesses and attractions (museums, hotels, shops, restaurants, gas stations, etc.). Their benefits are economic.

B. List of external variables:

The successful accomplishment of the agency's goals and objectives is heavily dependent upon a number of external variables. For example, visitation and quality of the park experience are affected by weather, insects, lake draw downs, hurricanes, floods, winter storms, tornadoes, power outages, droughts pine beetle infestations and the aftermath associated therewith. Mechanical breakdowns, construction projects and major repairs impact and often temporarily disrupt access and/or services to the public. Further, the economy, highway signage (and lack thereof), funding levels and changing demographics and recreation trends will have an impact on the achievement of the program's goals.

C. Statement of how duplication will be avoided when the operations of more than one program are directed at achieving a single goal, objective or strategy:

OSP has only one program, and one program goal. The program objectives complement each other in the achievement of the program goal.

D. Statement of how the plan will drive management decisions and other agency processes:

The strategic planning process has been the impetus for the agency to evaluate opportunities for improved and increased service to the public. Armed with a clear mission, a thorough self-assessment and stakeholder analysis, the agency formulated goals, objectives, strategies and priorities. As a result of the planning process, the agency has focused on a proactive approach to the management and conservation of its natural and man-made resources. The agency also plans to make a priority its investment in the

human resources of the agency, through the development of new employee orientation programs and increased training opportunities in customer relations, interpretation, educational opportunities related to job performance in addition to law enforcement, safety and first aid training programs. Annually, the agency will measure the effectiveness of the strategies in the attainment of the desired outcomes. Based on the measurements, and taking into account the impact of any external variables, the agency will be able to determine the need to modify its strategies and reallocate resources.

E. Authorizations for each goal:

OSP has one goal that is authorized under both La. RS 36:201 et seq. and La. RS 56:1681 et seq.

F. Program evaluation used to develop objectives and strategies:

In establishing its objectives and strategies, the agency referred to the Louisiana State Parks Master Plan, the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (2014-2019), the current interpretive program list and the agency's annual visitation reports.

The Louisiana State Parks Master Plan is the guiding document for the acquisition, planning and construction of new and existing sites and facilities. In addition to the recommendations contained in the master plan, the agency regularly receives requests to conduct feasibility studies for the acquisition and development of other sites. The Division of Resource Planning and Development is responsible for these projects, repair and expansion projects and technical assistance provided to other state and local entities as requested. The number of Capital Outlay projects, feasibility studies, technical assistance projects and repair work undertaken depends on the needs and requests in a given year. Those activities are not contemplated under this strategic plan.