

> **ACCG** Lifelong Learning Academy
Advancing Georgia's Counties

OUTDOOR RECREATION:

Improving a Community's Sustainability from
an Economic, Environmental and Social
Perspective

Becky Kelley, Director
Georgia State Parks, Recreation and
Historic Sites Division

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PARKS

> Healthy, Happy Communities



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

- One of top 3 reasons businesses cite in making relocation decisions
- Access to parks strongly linked to reduced crime and juvenile delinquency
- Home-buyers willing to pay more to live close to parks
- Trees in cities save \$400 Billion in storm water retention facility costs
- People who live near parks exercise more and report better mental health, even if they don't actually exercise there

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> Environmental & Social Benefits



Parks and protected public lands proven to:

- Improve water quality, protect ground water and prevent flooding
- Improve the quality of air we breathe
- Provide vegetative buffers to development and produce essential habitat for wildlife
- Provide places for children and families to connect with nature and recreate outdoors together
- Strengthen community ties and bring diverse populations together

Parks have the power to strengthen communities, transform lives and protect the future

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Outdoor Recreation ...is BIG Business in Georgia

> GA Economic Benefits are HUGH!



\$23.3 BILLION per year in tourism economic impact

231,000 jobs connected to outdoor recreation

\$7 Billion in wages and salaries

\$1.4 Billion in state and local taxes



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> GA Economic Benefits are HUGH!



- Golf = \$15 Billion/year
- Canoeing, Kayaking & Rafting = \$11.3 Billion/year
- Boating = \$2.7 Billion/year
- Camping/RV = \$3.2 Billion/year
- Hunting & Fishing = \$2.3 Billion/year
- Silver Comet Trail = \$120 Million/year
- Wineries/Vineyards = \$39 Million/year

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> Economic Impact of GA State Parks



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

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> Local and Regional Park Impacts



- Nationally, local and regional parks create **\$140 Billion in economic impact** activity per year and support almost **1 million jobs**.
- **Local park events and tournaments generate both direct revenue and indirect economic activity** from tourism, hospitality expenditures, fuel, recreation equipment sales, and many other private sector businesses



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> Youth Sports Vacations = BIG Business



LakePoint is the premier sports vacation destination, catering to the travel sports family lifestyle. This Sporting Community will be home to more than 6 million annual visitors, and more than 40 sports.



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Georgia Trends

> Leisure Travel Trending UP



- **Retirement up - More people with disposable income and time to travel**
- **Millennials and Boomers are growing demographics**
- **Oil prices down - Oil prices at 6-year low, and not likely to rise substantially**
- **More demand for travel within drivable distance**

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> Leisure Travel Trending UP



- Percent of leisure travelers interested in visiting Georgia up 12% over 2014
- Shift in Lodging preferences –
 - Hotel/motel use down from 83% in 2013 to 76% in 2014
 - Campground use up 10% to 13%
 - Vacation condo (cottages) up to 9%



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>Parks: Low Cost/High Value....Yet



Even when the positive evidence is clear, we, as a society often devalue the myriad benefits of recreation

- When services reduced, other outlets do not/cannot fill the gaps often resulting in negative outcomes
- Overwhelmingly, people want and will support parks yet, collectively our society is diminishing financial support for parks at all levels of government
- It's a real conundrum....



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The Georgia Plan for Outdoor Recreation

- A statewide blueprint for maintaining and sustaining public outdoor recreation resources to meet the demands of Georgia's diverse and growing population
- The plan, which is updated every five years, keeps Georgia eligible for federal grant support through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

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The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

> LWCF in Georgia



- Georgia has received \$85 million in LWCF grants and leveraged these funds to accomplish over \$170 million in city, county and state park improvements
- 95% of Georgia's cities and counties have improved their quality of life and economic vitality via LWCF projects
- The current unmet demand for park and recreation improvements in Georgia exceed \$123 million



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>Congressional Action: LWCF



Congress did not act to renew the LWCF Act before it expired on September 30, 2015

- Future of the entire program and 'Stateside' funds uncertain
- Only available federal or state fund directly supporting local parks and recreation acquisitions, renovations and new developments



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Key Elements:

- Public opinion survey, input meetings and focus groups to determine attitudes, needs and priorities for outdoor recreation
- Inventory of Georgia's local, state & federal outdoor recreation resources
- National and statewide trends analysis

Direction and plan of action for the future of outdoor recreation statewide with priorities for future LWCF grant cycle

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Upcoming Public Input Meetings:

- Thursday, October 22, Tifton
- Monday, November 2, Dalton
- Monday, November 16, Perry

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ACCG Call to Action:

- Encourage attendance at public meetings
- Share thoughts and ideas with us
- Incorporate findings and recommendations into local plans and capital projects
- Support Congressional action to reinstate and maximize LWCF funds for local and state park projects

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> The Power of Parks



Public parks, trails, open spaces and recreation facilities help every community thrive and become more sustainable.

Thank you for all that you do to support and advance parks within your community.

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>For More Information



Becky Kelley

Director

Georgia State Parks, Recreation and Historic Sites

becky.kelley@dnr.ga.gov

770-389-7270

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