

Tennessee Valley Authority Recreation Strategic Plan

*A Framework for Providing Recreation Opportunities
On and Along the Tennessee River System*

2004-2005

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Tennessee Valley Authority Recreation Strategic Plan:

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Introduction and Purpose

For over 70 years, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) has provided a wide range of recreation opportunities on its public land base and through management of the Tennessee River and reservoir system. TVA strives to meet the varied needs of the public by providing and facilitating recreation opportunities to benefit users and communities as a sustainable economic benefit to the region.

In accordance with the TVA Act, TVA manages the Tennessee River system for the purposes of navigation and flood control and, so far as may be consistent with such purposes, for power production. Consistent with those purposes and with 16 U.S.C. § 4601-17(d), TVA manages the river system to provide recreation opportunities and a wide range of other public benefits.¹ TVA's resource stewardship programs, including recreation activities, were traditionally funded through federal appropriations. However, TVA has received no federal appropriations since 1999 and now funds its stewardship functions primarily from power system revenues.

TVA's recreation activities are consistent with the multipurpose mission reaffirmed in the Strategic Plan adopted by the TVA Board in January 2004: to improve the quality of life in the Tennessee Valley region by providing affordable and reliable electric power, promoting economic development, and managing the Tennessee River system for a balance of benefits, including recreation. Finally, continued involvement in the recreation business is advisable given TVA's interest in maintaining positive relationships with stakeholders.

TVA manages the Tennessee River, the fifth-largest river system in the nation, as a balanced, integrated system, uniting energy, economic development, and environmental interests across state boundaries. The river system—which includes 650,000 surface-acres of water, 293,000 acres of public land, and 11,000 miles of shoreline—is a magnet for recreation. It enhances the quality of life for more than eight million Valley residents and has become a driving economic force and the anchor of the tourism industry in many Valley communities. In 2002, there were nearly 22 million water-based recreation visitor-days on TVA-managed waters, which generated nearly \$ 500 million in recreation spending and \$ 61.2 million in economic impact. In addition, there are over 136 manufacturers of outdoor goods and equipment in the Valley, including; boats, campers and motor-homes which provide an estimated 10,600 full-time jobs.

¹ TVA has long taken into consideration various competing needs in the operation of its unified river system, including recreation; water quality, downstream water supply, fisheries, aquatic weed and insect control, and dam safety. Although TVA's authority to take into account recreational uses was made clearer under 16 U.S.C. § 4601-17(d), the 1976 amendment to the Federal Water Project Act, such uses cannot preempt TVA's obligations under the TVA Act to operate its dams and reservoirs for the primary purposes of navigation, flood control, and power generation.

Recreation use of the Tennessee River system is projected to grow and increase in importance as population growth continues in the Southeast. The increasing and competing demands for recreation will challenge the ability of resource managers and recreation professionals into the future. The purpose of this recreation strategic plan is to establish a clear direction for TVA's future involvement in recreation. It is based on a review of TVA's experience in providing recreation opportunities, an analysis of recreation needs, and careful evaluation of a range of recreation strategies in light of TVA's current and likely future business environment.

This document lays out TVA's recreation vision, goals, operational objectives, and operational actions. It is intended to provide a framework to support resource allocation decisions. Details regarding implementation will be developed and documented as part of a new "Improve Recreation Opportunities" process.

Recreation Vision

Add value to TVA's mission as a regional development agency and public power provider by working in partnership to enhance recreation opportunities and address unmet recreation needs, while managing resources on and along the Tennessee River system.

Recreation Goals

In support of accomplishing TVA's mission and achieving our recreation vision, TVA focuses on five recreation goals:

- ∞ Supporting diverse recreation activities through management of river flows;
- ∞ Provide recreation opportunities on TVA-managed lands;
- ∞ Provide for diverse recreation opportunities through collaborations and partnerships;
- ∞ Plan, collect and manage TVA recreation information; and
- ∞ Integrate operational activities and partnerships which support outdoor recreation opportunities to manage TVA's lands and waters more effectively.

Operational Objectives and Actions

Goal 1: Supporting diverse recreation activities through management of river flows

1. Manage flows to support reservoir recreation.
 - ∞ Limit the drawdown from June 1 through Labor Day.
 - ∞ Manage the winter drawdown to facilitate boat access.
2. Manage flows at selected locations and times to support riverine recreation.
 - ∞ Manage water releases to support whitewater recreation opportunities.
3. Manage flows to enhance sport-fishing.
 - ∞ Provide releases from selected dams to support cold and warm water sport-fishing.
 - ∞ Stabilize reservoir levels during the spring spawn to promote spawning success.
4. Schedule flows to support special events and activities (e.g., shoreline cleanups, fall color cruises, charity fundraisers, holiday celebrations, bird migration observation, etc.)

Goal 2: Provide recreation opportunities on TVA-managed lands

1. Allocate TVA-managed lands for recreation through the Reservoir Lands Planning Process, which includes “Integrated Resource Management Plans”.
 - ∞ Ensure public involvement by engaging stakeholders.
 - ∞ Coordinate peer agency review to complement TVA management objectives, avoid duplication of effort, and expand potential partnerships.
2. Operate and maintain existing developed recreation facilities and areas to meet standards for safety, quality and environmental protection.
 - ∞ Where appropriate, provide recreation facilities that comply with ADA standards.
 - ∞ Evaluate campground operations and improve management, including review of reservation systems
 - ∞ Develop and maintain updated near-term (5-year) capital and maintenance plans for recreation assets based on existing funding sources while seeking new funding sources.
 - ∞ Develop and implement “due diligence” review of new construction proposals to ensure demonstrated need, identify potential funding sources, and funding for future maintenance expense(s).
3. Evaluate informal recreation areas and their associated visitation levels to define management strategies and identify recreation opportunities.
 - ∞ Define and establish criteria for informal recreation areas.
 - ∞ Inventory and review sites for recreation potential.
 - ∞ Evaluate sites considering public access, site preservation, efficiency of operations and partnership opportunities.
 - ∞ Develop management strategies for the most intensively used sites.

Goal 3: Provide for diverse recreation opportunities through collaborations & partnerships

1. Promote coordination among Federal, State, and local agencies and non-government organizations engaged in the research, planning, programming and implementation of recreation facilities and opportunities.
 - ∞ Establish and maintain relationships with various agencies and non-government organizations to determine Valley-wide recreation needs, opportunities and trends.
2. Build relationships and partnerships to leverage existing resources for recreation and create recreation experiences Valley-wide and seek to discover new resources.
 - ∞ Coordinate with potential partners in planning for TVA’s investment in recreation projects to support various/diverse recreation needs.
 - ∞ Work with developers and commercial operators to ensure that quality, environmentally responsible camping, marina and other recreation opportunities are available on TVA lands and waters.
 - ∞ Work to establish partnerships and agreements to provide recreation experiences.
3. Support sustainable recreation projects by collecting and sharing recreation visitation data and other information.

- ∞ Seek opportunities to participate with Valley states in revising their State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans (SCORPs).
- ∞ Enable effective, sound, and sustainable permitting and land-use decisions about the type and placement of new recreation developments on TVA lands.
- ∞ Maintain up-to-date information about recreation visitation to TVA's reservoirs and tailwater areas.

Goal 4: Plan, collect and manage TVA recreation information

1. Provide up-to-date information to the public about recreation opportunities on and along the Tennessee River system using a variety of media, including web sites and written communications.
 - ∞ Complete and keep updated TVA's inventory of reservoir recreation facilities and lands.
 - ∞ Use TVA's web site to provide public access to information about commercial and public recreation opportunities.
 - ∞ Work with TVA's Communications and Government Relations organization to increase use of the Media for distributing information about recreation opportunities.
 - ∞ Spotlight recreation opportunities in the TVA River Neighbors newsletter.
2. Work with tourism officials and recreation information providers to ensure information on TVA recreation opportunities is made available to the public.
 - ∞ Inform tourism officials and recreation information providers about recreation opportunities on and along the river system.
 - ∞ Provide commercial mapping vendors with access to TVA's most current information about recreation opportunities.

Goal 5: Integrate operational activities and partnerships which support outdoor recreation opportunities to manage TVA's lands and waters more effectively.

1. Balance the protection of water and land-related natural resources with recreational use.
 - ∞ Review and provide input for making gains on recreation opportunities, to developing watershed improvement plans and projects that enhance/improve water quality and shoreline management.
 - ∞ Re-evaluate TVA Resource management area plans and planning activities to align with local/regional and state recreation interests.
 - ∞ Identify economic gains of recreational opportunities in the project justification for the Integrated Resource Management, Improve Water Quality and Improve Shoreline Conditions process areas.
 - ∞ Work to develop and integrate partnerships that help to identify, develop and deliver a broad spectrum of recreation needs and opportunities.

Summary

TVA's recreation goals support TVA's mission and are consistent with TVA's Strategic Plan. Our progress in achieving them will contribute to achieving our recreation vision.

TVA is faced with the challenge of delivering services with greater efficiency, effectiveness, and quality. Focusing on the recreation goals identified in this plan will help us meet this challenge. These goals also provide an explicit path between the present and our vision for TVA's future involvement in recreation.

We have envisioned a preferred future "meeting unmet recreation needs" in developing this document, but strategic planning for TVA's recreation activities is an ongoing process. As our business environment and public values continue to change, our strategy for providing recreation opportunities also will change. Our success will depend on our continuing ability to satisfy our stakeholders and responsibly steward the resources with which we have been entrusted.

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