

chapter 1

Introduction



Introduction

Thousand Springs State Park is made up of a collection of properties in the Hagerman Valley that have been brought into the state park system over the past 35 years. The first acquisition of property for a state park in the area was made in 1970. The latest state park property acquisition was made in 2001. Today, the entire park contains a little over 1500 acres.

In early 2005, the planning process for the Thousand Springs State Park master plan began. One of the first orders of business for the agency Planning Review Team was to determine if this master planning process was for one (1) or as many as four (4) separate state parks. The decision was made to combine all park properties under the name of one state park—Thousand Springs State Park. Each of the four properties previously identified as



Springs and a Pelican at Crystal Lake

individual parks were designated as units. The unit names are Malad Gorge, Billingsley Creek, Box Canyon and Niagara Springs. Located within the Billingsley Creek unit is the homesite of renowned author Vardis Fisher. The area around his home, including Fisher Lake, has been designated the Vardis Fisher Day Use Area.

1.1 The Future At Glance

The following excerpts from the 2003-2007 Idaho Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Plan (SCORTP) provide an insight to future recreational needs in Idaho. This document is the most comprehensive source of Idaho information on outdoor recreation and tourism available. It was designed by a multi-agency planning team to assist in the decision-making needs of a variety of tourism providers.

“Use projections should always be viewed cautiously. The preferred recreational activities of today may be the “been there, done that” activities of tomorrow. Recreational habits are influenced by weather, income, population growth, availability and other factors. Even so, it is useful to see what the projections are based on today’s patterns.”

“J.M. Bowker, Donald B.K. English and H. Ken Cordell developed projection models for the publication *Outdoor Recreation in American Life: A National Assessment of Demand and Supply Trends*, 1999. It is the only ongoing, comprehensive assessment of outdoor recreation trends in the country. The researchers created models based on today’s behavior as sampled through the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment.”

“According to the study, demand for water-based recreation activities will grow faster than population growth in the Rocky Mountain Region in the next several years. These activities include non-pool swimming, canoeing and visiting a beach or waterslide. Additionally, the region will probably need additional urban recreation resources for biking, picnicking, family gatherings and walking, as well as the get-away-from-it-all resource of developed camping in coming years.”

Dispersed land activities are anticipated to grow in the Rocky Mountain Region in the near future. They include rock climbing, primitive camping, horseback riding, backpacking, hiking and off-road driving. Winter activities continue to grow in popularity, including snowmobiling and downhill skiing. Cross-country skiing is also anticipated to show strong growth in the coming years. Hunting is expected to rise; fishing is projected to grow faster than hunting, and non-consumptive activities are anticipated to have the largest percentage of growth among wildlife-related activities in the next couple of decades. Beyond traditional recreational pursuits, there lie emerging recreational activities that didn’t exist 10 or 20 years ago. From adventure racing to zorbing, extreme outdoor recreation is also on the rise.

With growing population and increasing demand for outdoor recreation opportunities, development and management of the finite resources of the state will become more challenging. It is therefore crucial that careful planning, development and management be a part of any large outdoor recreation or tourism project.

1.2 Park And Recreation Planning And Development In Idaho--An Overview

Authority

In 1965, the Idaho State Legislature enacted legislation creating the Idaho Department of

Parks and Recreation (IDPR). The legislation reads, in part:

It is the intent of the Legislature that the Department of Parks and Recreation shall formulate and put into execution a long range, comprehensive plan and program for the acquisition, planning, protection, operation, maintenance, development and wise use of areas of scenic beauty, recreational utility, historic, archeological or scientific interest, to the end that the health, happiness, recreational opportunities and wholesome enjoyment of life of the people may be further encouraged.

The Idaho Park and Recreation Board is responsible for administering, conducting and supervising the IDPR. The Legislature has given the Board the power to:

- Make expenditures for the acquisition, care, control, supervision, improvement, development, extension, and maintenance of all lands under the control of the department.
- Appoint local or regional advisory councils to consider, study, and advise the department in the development, use and maintenance of any areas to be considered as future park sites.
- Cooperate with the federal government and local governments of the state for the purpose of acquiring, developing, extending or maintaining lands that are designated as state parks.
- Construct, lease or otherwise establish public park or recreational facilities and services, and charge and collect reasonable fees to operate these facilities and services.
- Apply to any appropriate agency or officer of the federal government for aid from any federal program respecting outdoor recreation, and obligate the state regarding the responsible management of any federal funds transferred to it for the purpose of federal enactment.

Policy

The Idaho Park and Recreation Board has established operational policies to guide IDPR staff in the acquisition, planning, development, and protection of land for public outdoor recreation use. They are as follows:

Acquisition. Acquisition of recreation lands is vital to the state park system and should occur in tandem with the needs of a growing population. Public use of these acquired areas should be made possible as soon as the department is able.

Planning. Few responsibilities of a state park system are more important than planning. To ensure people's recreating needs will be met by the state park system, there should be current and advance planning for recreation facilities and services. Such planning shall follow the Master Plan Guidelines document adopted by the Board. Planning shall be in conformance with the supply, demand, and needs as outlined in the Idaho Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Plan (SCORTP).

A state park classification system has been adopted to aid in the proper planning, development, and management of park lands. Four classifications have been defined: natural, recreation, heritage, and recreation trailway.

The department shall plan for appropriate conservation-education facilities and activities that will enhance the public's use and enjoyment of the system.

The department shall plan for creative and informative interpretive programs. In the planning, development, and implementation of interpretive programs, the department shall identify and emphasize the values that are of primary importance for each park.

Development. Services and facilities shall be in accordance with the park classification and resource area designations (zoning) of each

park. Considerations for facilities and service shall be:

1. Within the park system, provision shall be made for a wide range of interests and activities enjoyed by Idaho residents and tourists.
2. Each park will be developed for as many activities as is consistent with its classification, and will be managed to insure the wise use and protection of the facility or resource.
3. To allow full park use by individuals who may or may not own recreational equipment, IDPR may consider the rental and sale of items appropriate in parks.
4. Park facilities developed to facilitate service and provide recreational opportunity shall be architecturally suited to the theme and purpose of the park.
5. No facilities or services shall be permitted within a park that encourages or contributes to rapid deterioration of the park environment or adjacent property.
6. Access for people with disabilities will be provided in compliance with current ADA standards.

Protection. Lands acquired for the state park system should remain dedicated to that use and protected against exploitation.

Direction

The 2003-2007 Idaho Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Plan (SCORTP) surveyed Idahoans to rank 19 issues in outdoor recreation on their importance. The following were ranked as their top ten issues:

1. Protecting water quality.
2. Protecting existing access to public lands.

3. Protecting natural resources on public lands.
4. Educating youth about natural resources and the environment.
5. Controlling invasive species.
6. Educating adults about natural resources and the environment.
7. Providing recreation safety instruction to youth.
8. Providing outdoor recreation education for youth.
9. Providing access for the disabled.
10. Rehabilitating outdoor recreation facilities.

1.3 Agency Strategic Plan Congruency Analysis

Purpose

The following analysis was prepared, upon the conclusion of the planning process, to emphasize how the resulting park master plan is congruent with the agency's mission and vision statements, and the initiatives of the agency strategic plan.

Agency Mission

The mission of the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation is *"To improve the quality of life in Idaho through outdoor recreation and resource stewardship."*

The Thousand Springs State Park master plan has as the basis of its park management concept the balance of recreational use and resource conservation/enhancement. It calls for the expansion of recreational facilities on parcels of disturbed land, the restoration of native grasses, the improvement of water quality and the careful management of valuable natural resources.

Agency Vision

The IDPR vision statement declares, *"The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation will live up to the trust of Idahoans by striving to understand the recreational needs of the people, practicing wise resource stewardship and carefully maintaining facilities. We will promote ethical behavior, safe practices and the sharpening of outdoor skills. While recognizing private property rights the agency will protect access to public lands. The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation will continue its role as a leader in outdoor recreation through partnerships, innovation and good work."*

In an attempt to understand the needs and desires of Idahoans for Thousand Springs State Park, approximately a dozen public and stakeholder meetings were held, written comments were solicited and a visitor survey was conducted at the park. All of this information was considered in formulating the draft master plan. Natural, cultural, historical and human resources of the park have been examined during the planning process and recommendations that provide for the careful stewardship of these resources can be found in chapters 3, 5 and 6.

Agency Strategic Plan

The Idaho Park and Recreation Board adopted the agency strategic plan, Working for Recreation—The 2006-2010 Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan, on April 25, 2005. From that document, the Board has developed 3 strategic initiatives. They are:

- **Focus on Core Responsibilities**
 - Consider the day-to-day management of our legislatively authorized parks and programs our first priority
 - Devote a significant share of agency resources to improving the condition of our facilities
 - Determine what outdoor recreation facilities are needed by the public and determine the best way to see that they are provided

- Be responsive to scheduling resources to customer requests through an enhanced reservation system
- ***Address the Issues Associated with Growing Demand***
 - Assure public access for outdoor recreation through key land acquisitions, easements, education and partnerships
 - Provide education, mediation and regulatory programs to enhance user opportunities and experiences
 - Seek ways to bring sustainable funding for outdoor recreation into alignment with demand
- ***Provide Outdoor Recreation Leadership***
 - Assume a leadership role in seeking partnerships with other agencies, NGOs and the private sector to enhance outdoor recreation
 - Improve communication with the public and partners about outdoor recreation opportunities and issues

Board Initiative #1 – Focus on Core Responsibilities notes the need to “determine what outdoor recreation facilities are needed by the public and determine the best way to see that they are provided.” Public involvement was solicited throughout the planning process to determine the needs and desires of the public, as well as to receive their input on how to provide for those needs and desires. A detailed listing of input opportunities into the plan is listed later in this chapter in the section titled “Summary of Input.”

Board Initiative #2 – Address the Issues Associate with Growing Demand speaks of assuring public access for outdoor recreation through key land acquisitions, easements, education and partnerships. The Thousand Springs State Park Master Plan recognizes the need to meet the growing demands of

recreationists and provide access to recreational lands through partnerships. Thousand Springs State Park is a park that is built upon partnerships. Each of its four (4) units is reliant upon partnerships in order to fulfill its mission. At Malad Gorge, IDPR partners with the Idaho Department of Lands on the 40-acre parcel containing the wildlife pond and first tee of the disc golf course. At Billingsley Creek, IDPR partners with the University of Idaho and USDA Agricultural Research Service to provide for aquaculture research and education. At Box Canyon, IDPR partners with The Nature Conservancy in the management of the unit. At Niagara Springs, IDPR partners with the Idaho Department of Fish & Game in management of the day-use/camping area. The Thousand Springs State Park Master Plan encourages the continuation of these partnerships to provide access to quality recreational and educational experiences for Idaho’s citizens and visitors.

1.4 Preliminary Policy Statements

Prior to beginning the planning process, the following policy statements were developed to guide participants, to outline planning goals, to establish limits, to identify authorities from which approval must be obtained and to provide a yardstick to measure the success of the final product:

1. The Master Plan (MP) will follow the IDPR State Park Master Plan Guidelines and be consistent with all policies adopted by the Idaho Park and Recreation Board.
2. The MP will follow the direction outlined in the agency’s current strategic plan.
3. The MP will comply with the provisions of the Gooding County Comprehensive Plan and land-use/development ordinances, and be approved by the Gooding County Planning and Zoning Commission. The MP will also be

presented to the Hagerman City Council for its review and comment.

4. Public involvement throughout the course of the master plan process will be pursued in an open, honest and fair manner, utilizing processes and techniques outlined in the IDPR Public Involvement Guide. A Stakeholder Advisory Team will be an integral component of the planning process.
5. The MP will inventory the existing natural systems, and cultural and historical resources within the park's boundaries to determine the limitations and opportunities presented by the sites.
6. The MP will establish the classification of the park using the criteria outlined in the IDPR State Park Land Classification and Resource Area Designation System.
7. The MP will identify and promote recreational activities, compatible with the park's classification, that address the region's recreation needs as identified in the most recent Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Plan (SCORTP).
8. The MP will explore and recognize the relationship between the park and the local community and be sensitive to the needs of the park's host community.
9. The MP will recognize all existing easements, leases, contracts, agreements and permits that are currently in effect at Thousand Springs State Park.
10. The MP will recognize that the historic use of park lands in the Hagerman Valley by man and animal in ages past, and the draft MP will be submitted to the State of Idaho, acting through its State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Park Service of

the U.S. Department of the Interior, for its review and approval.

1.5 Summary Of Input

Preliminary Open House

A preliminary open house was held at the Billingsley Creek unit of Thousand Springs State Park on March 15, 2005 to announce the master planning process. Park and planning staff were on hand to discuss the master planning process and timeline, solicit applications for the Stakeholder Advisory Team, and gather names for the master plan mail list. Nineteen (19) names/addresses were added to the mailing list from this meeting.

The Planning Review Team

The Planning Review Team (PRT) is a staff team that is assembled on the basis of the park's unique needs and staff's individual expertise. Its purpose is to provide a conduit for department leadership input, review, concurrence and support of the master plan process and product as they evolve. Director Robert Meinen appointed the Thousand Springs State Park Master Plan PRT on February 16, 2005. Team members include Dean Sangrey, Operations Division Administrator; Steve Frost, South Region Manager; Lonnie Johnson, Thousand Springs State Park manager; John Crowe, South Region Development Planner;



Preliminary Open House

Ron Howerton, South Region Engineering Technician; Mary Lucachick, Outdoor Recreation Resource Analyst (water); John Sandy, Special Project Coordinator; and Connie Vaughn, Planner and project manager for the master plan.

The PRT met on April 20-21, 2005 to discuss the park as a whole and each site's purpose. They discussed the management configuration/ name for the park and determined that it should be one park, named Thousand Springs State Park, with four management units. The units are Malad Gorge, Billingsley Creek (both the upper and lower properties), Earl M. Hardy Box Canyon Springs Nature Preserve (Box Canyon) and Niagara Springs (both the Niagara Springs and Crystal Springs properties). The PRT also provided input on park significance and qualities, park classification, issues, vision and goals.

The Planning Review Team assisted with the June 8-9, 2005 Public Input Workshops, June 9, 2005 Staff Input Workshop, and October 26-27, 2005 Management Alternatives Open Houses. They also met with the Stakeholder Advisory Team on August 16, 2005 to provide input into the development of management alternatives and again on November 5, 2005 to craft a preferred management alternative for the plan.

The Stakeholder Advisory Team

The Stakeholder Advisory Team (SAT) consists of 14 interested stakeholders who were selected through an identification and application process. Team members represented management partners in Thousand Springs State Park; federal, state and local agencies; recreationists and interested citizens. SAT members include: Mark Fleming, Idaho Dept. of Fish & Game; Lynea Newcomer, The Nature Conservancy; Dr. Madison Powell, University of Idaho Aquaculture Research Institute; Neil King, National Park Service; Kay Hardy, Hardy Foundation; Craig Laughlin, Idaho Power Co.; Max Yingst, Bureau of Land Management;

Creed Robinson, Hagerman School District; Bryan Kenworthy, Hagerman National Fish Hatchery; Pete Remmen, IDEA; Frank Erwin, adjacent landowner; Jim Scott, City of Hagerman; Joe Bennett, equestrian, hunter and angler; and Carolyn Coiner, non-game/ environmental education.

The SAT met for the first time at an all-day orientation session and tour at the park on May 14, 2005. They met next to participate in the Public Input Workshops held on June 8-9, 2005 in Hagerman and Boise, respectively. The SAT's third meeting was with the PRT on August 16, 2005, when they provided input on development of management alternatives for the park, based on input received from staff and the public. On October 26-27, 2005, the SAT participated in the Management Alternative Open Houses held in Twin Falls and at the park, respectively. The SAT's final gathering before development of the draft plan was with the PRT on November 5, 2005 to craft a preferred management alternative for the plan.

Public Input Workshop

Public Input Workshops were held in Hagerman on June 8, 2005 and in Boise on June 9, 2005. The meetings drew 36 attendees, with the largest turnout being in Hagerman. Additionally, 83 individuals submitted written input. Each workshop began at 6:30 p.m. The purpose of the workshop was to collect information from the public regarding park significance and qualities, issues and concerns, and desired experiences and opportunities for the various units of Thousand Springs State Park.

Staff Input Workshop

Thousand Springs State Park staff, as well as other interested agency staff, a representative from the Legislative Services Office, and a representative from Boise State University met on June 9, 2005 for the staff input workshop. Staff gave input on the park's significance, quality and issues, as well as ideas for the park.

Visitor Survey

A park visitor survey was collected in late summer 2005. It queried visitors about their visit to the park and asked for feedback on current and/or future amenities in the park. Eight-five (85) individuals completed the park survey. Results of the survey can be found in Chapter 4 – Current Park Visitor Profile.

Summary of Input

Input from the public (both at workshops and in writing), park staff and planning team members was summarized and posted on the IDPR website on July 22, 2005. A summary of all scoping input received can be found in Appendix A.

Management Alternatives Open House

Public open houses to review and seek written comments on the three (3) management alternatives were held at the City Hall Conference Room in Twin Falls on October 25, 2005 and at the Billingsley Creek unit of the park in Hagerman on October 26, 2005. Of the 19 attendees, the majority of the individuals came to the open house at the park. In the comments received on the management alternatives, the majority was in favor of some variation of the balanced use/heritage concept.

Draft Master Plan Open House

Public open houses were held in Twin Falls and Hagerman on June 8 and June 9, 2006 respectively, to present the draft Thousand Springs State Park master plan and solicit comments on the plan.

City and County Presentations of the Draft Master Plan

A presentation of the draft Thousand Springs State Park master plan was given to the Hagerman City Council on June 21, 2006 and to the Gooding County Planning and Zoning Commission on June 26, 2006.



Management Alternatives Open House