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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Mary Mallinson Long entitled “Evaluation of Tennessee State Park Governance: Public Involvement, Agency Accountability and Conservation Implications.” I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Forestry.

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Evaluation of Tennessee State Park Governance:
Public Involvement, Agency Accountability and
Conservation Implications

A Thesis Presented for the
Master of Science Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Mary Mallinson Long
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents, Howatt and Sandy Mallinson, the first to instill in me the appreciation, respect and love for nature; to my husband, Herman, for his humor, patience, love and unwavering support; and to our daughter, Jessica, for providing inspiration through her spirited determination and quest for knowledge.
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ABSTRACT

A primary challenge for governance in our democracy is one of creating governing arrangements and structures that can pursue policies and other decisions that are effective (meet the public interest) and efficient. The history of Tennessee State Parks’ strategic direction and management is fraught with political interests guiding these decisions. This allows the political power to be concentrated in the executive and legislative arms of government and is subject to special interest economic and political influences. The civic/public sector has had little influence on these decisions. Given these conditions, the agency is particularly vulnerable to political battles between the executive and legislative branches of government, as witnessed in the tax and budgets struggles of recent years in Tennessee, resulting in the temporary closings of fourteen state parks. Results also include disinvestments over time in management systems, questionable strategic decisions regarding high-end capital expenditures for resort development, and incentives for legislators to push for the development of recreational structures in their home districts regardless of environmental or strategic impacts on the Tennessee State Parks system.

A literature review, a Survey of State Park Directors, and personal interviews with persons affiliated with Tennessee State Parks governance were conducted to determine the past history of Tennessee State Parks governance, what models and processes lead to good governance, and specifically how strategic management plans, advisory committees, and process for public involvement impact agency accountability and the protection of park and natural areas. The results of this research led to findings and recommendations for an independent and comprehensive decision-making model for
state park governance and a reliable and sufficient funding source for the Tennessee State Parks system.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“American public bureaucracy is not designed to be effective. The bureaucracy arises out of politics, and its design reflects the interests, strategies, and compromises of those who exercise political power.”

---Terry Moe

Overview and Statement of Problem

In 2001, fourteen of the fifty-four Tennessee State Parks were closed and thirty others remained open on a reduced schedule. State park operations were curtailed in response to a $3.5 million budget shortfall faced by the Tennessee Department of Conservation (Stempeck 2002). However, the influence of political interests and lack of public involvement were possible contributors to the funding deficit and indicative of greater, underlying problems faced by the Tennessee State Parks system (Public Input Record for the Master Plan for State Parks, 1999-2009).

A primary challenge for governance in our democracy is one of creating governing arrangements and structures that can pursue policies and other decisions that are effective (meet the public interest) and efficient. The history of the Tennessee State Parks’ strategic direction and management is fraught with political interests guiding these decisions. The political power has been concentrated in the executive and legislative arms of government and is subject to special interest economic and political influences. The civic/public sector has had little influence on these decisions. Given these conditions, the agency is particularly vulnerable to political battles between the executive and legislative branches of government, as witnessed in the tax and budgets struggles of
recent years in Tennessee, resulting in fourteen state park closures. Results also include disinvestments over time in management systems, questionable strategic decisions regarding high-end capital expenditures for resort development, and incentives for legislators to push for the development of recreational structures in their home districts regardless of environmental or strategic impacts on the Tennessee State Parks system (Public Input Record for the Master Plan for State Parks, 1999-2009).

To help the reader better understand state park management problems, some historical and analytical information is discussed in the next few pages. This information was uncovered as the author began her initial research into Tennessee State Parks. Much of this information comes from the Master Plan for Tennessee State Parks 1999-2009 and the Public Input Record for the Master Plan for State Parks, 1999-2009.

The Tennessee State Parks system (TSP) consists of fifty-four parks that include 137,495 acres, along with 14,643 additional acres in state natural, historical, and archeological areas (Ruse Tucker, personal communication, February 2004). An estimated 27 million annual visitors utilize the park system for hiking, camping, boating, fishing, and other ways to experience the nature and history of Tennessee (Tennessee State Parks 2002-2003 Visitation Report). Many state parks also offer cabin rentals, lodges, restaurants, amphitheaters, meeting facilities, marinas and golf courses.

The Tennessee State Parks system was established by Tennessee Public Act of 1937 (commonly referred to as the “Organic Act”) on May 21, 1937 by Governor Gordon Browning. Chapter 66, Sections 1 and 2 state in part:
…the term ‘park’ shall mean and include any and all areas of land, heretofore or hereafter acquired by the State, which by reason of having natural and historic features, scenic beauty or location, possesses, natural or potential physical, aesthetic, scientific, creative, social, or other recreational values; and is dedicated to and forever reserved and administered by the state for recreational and cultural use and enjoyment of the people.

Be it further enacted, that every park under the provisions of this Act shall be preserved in a natural condition so far as may be consistent with its human use and safety and all improvements shall be of such character as not to lessen its inherent recreational value.

The Tennessee State Parks Mission Statement further charges the park system to “preserve and protect, in perpetuity, unique examples of natural, cultural, and scenic areas, and to provide a variety of safe, quality outdoor experiences through a well-planned and professionally managed system of State parks” (Master Plan for Tennessee State Parks 1999-2009).

Although these guiding principles are noble, it is questionable whether the parks are being preserved and protected true to their inherent recreational value while providing recreational experiences for park users, and whether the park system is well-planned and professionally managed.
Historically, the Tennessee State Parks system operated in a piecemeal fashion; separate parks often operated under different guidelines with no systematic enforcement of standards and with few policies and systems in place to help evaluate impacts of management actions. Although park management has improved considerably under the Bredesen administration, under-investment and inadequate management systems continue to undermine efforts to make needed changes. Furthermore, due to the past administration’s budget cuts and current budget constraints, the resources and staff are not available to accomplish the formidable tasks of implementing management strategies and policies and evaluating the impacts of management actions (TDEC official, personal communication, April 2004).

The Tennessee Outdoor Recreation Area System (TORAS) operation plan used in the 1970’s, was abandoned in mid-1980. Environmental, conservation and recreational groups met with park staff in a November 1996 forum to begin a comprehensive planning process to guide the Tennessee State Parks system. In 1998, the Tennessee General Assembly enacted legislation (Tennessee Code Annotated 11-3-120) directing the Department of Environment and Conservation to involve the public in formulating a Master Plan for Tennessee State Parks. The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) hosted nine public meetings across Tennessee from April to May 1998, with 229 people attending. These meetings provided valuable and relevant insight into the needs and desires of the included stakeholders. However, the Executive Branch Strategic Plan set by former Gov. Don Sundquist failed to reflect citizen input. Furthermore, many of the state park users’ most vocal needs and desires specifically
expressed during these meetings and entered in the Public Input Record for the Master Plan were not included in the Master Plan for Tennessee State Parks 1999-2009.

The Master Plan for Tennessee State Parks 1999-2009 also excluded mandated components such as comprehensive information on the assessment of facilities, inventory of natural resources, and wide-ranging public input. Additionally, while some objectives of the Master Plan for Tennessee State Parks 1999-2009 are being followed, many aspects have never been fully implemented, enforced, referred to or updated (TDEC official, personal communication, April 2004).

Unplanned and questionable allocations of state fiscal resources have occurred, in part due to a lack of a fully implemented comprehensive or strategic management plan. For example, according to the Public Input Record for the Master Plan for State Parks 1999-2009, individual park managers had authoritative autonomy in decision-making, allowing park managers to determine appropriate zones for development and use without consistent review by resource management professionals. The Tennessee State Parks Reform Initiative was submitted at the first public forum on Tennessee State Parks, held in 1996 (Public Input Record for the Master Plan for State Parks, 1999-2009). This initiative outlined problems and endorsed park reforms and included the following statements:

The absence of an effective systems plan or administrative leadership has allowed pressure for development to serve local recreational needs to have an adverse impact on the state’s resources. It has led to the reclassification of a small portion of Frozen Head as “state park” rather than “state natural
area” which is legally protected from development. Absence of a resource management plan allowed a ranger at Henry Horton State Park to disk 50 acres of the small park to plant [exotic, invasive plant species] lespedeza for locals to use in training rabbit dogs. The project destroyed a portion of one of the parks two trails (Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning, November 16, 1996).

Additional examples of questionable management of fiscal resources and disregard for public input are the golf courses, inns and conference centers, built after the demise of TORAS (Public Input Record for the Master Plan for State Parks, 1999-2009). In 1995, the legislature, led by Lt. Gov. John Wilder, mandated $56 million for park inn expansion and conference centers and $20 million for four additional Bear Trace golf courses. According to park officials, the legislation intended for these developments to be self-sufficient but this has not happened. The lack of revenue is partly due to the fact that these parks are located in largely isolated areas and are not considered destinations in themselves on a year-round basis. Also, the retail facilities and golf courses in state parks (formerly referred to as “resort parks”) require high maintenance from a system that is already stressed. Since public funds in the form of bonds were used to construct these facilities, they cannot be leased to private enterprise until the bond debt is paid, which leaves the park system responsible for their operation and maintenance (TDEC official, personal communication, April 2004).

The building of these projects ignited controversy throughout the state, partly because previous public input reflected conservation protection rather than development
of the state parks. According to a 1994 state park survey, 49% of park users believed the top priority for the state park system should be to protect the natural resources of parks, while only 6% thought development of park facilities should be priority (Public Input Record for the Master Plan for State Parks, 1999-2009). Also, little or no environmental assessments were conducted prior to development. The golf course at Chickasaw State Park is built on a former wetland site, and the Panther Creek State Park proposed golf course would have cleared acres of woodland as well as removed soccer fields that were being used on a regular basis by the public. By the time the Panther Creek Golf Course project was proposed, the public outcry to these projects was so great the golf course plans were abandoned. However, in fiscal year 1999-2000, Governor Sundquist submitted a budget that included $250,000 for a feasibility study for a new “resort park” in east Tennessee and $24 million for system-wide Bear Trace golf courses (Master Plan for Tennessee State Parks 1999-2009). Funding for these projects was requested after the State Park system had gathered public input, the vast majority of which specifically spoke against this kind of development. The legislature approved one additional Bear Trace golf course but denied funding for the other three.

TDEC falls under the control of the executive branch while the legislative branch controls funding and thereby exerts considerable influence on the system. Funding for maintaining the park system has not been reliable over the years and is accomplished through funds appropriated from the state legislature, federal grants through the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and an assortment of user fees implemented in 35-40% of the parks. Furthermore any revenue generated by the retail facilities is not dedicated to the state park system, but instead goes into the general state coffers. This money is then
appropriated, at the discretion of the legislators, back into the state park system. The $76 million funding allocated to build the retail facilities and golf courses in 1995 would have easily paid for “the total cost of every possible maintenance need” of every state park ($39,475,000) in 1998 (Master Plan for Tennessee State Parks 1999-2009, p 44). In 1998, only $9 million for maintenance projects was allocated, which was still a huge increase over the $5 million allocated annually in prior years including 1995. In 2001, Gov. Sundquist, faced with a $3.5 million TDEC budget shortfall, slashed basic park financial support, resulting in deep cuts in administrative and managerial systems. Fourteen of Tennessee’s fifty-four state parks were closed and thirty others were scaled back to operate on a five-day week. The park closures prompted the National Park Service to withhold $715,000 from the Land and Water Conservation Fund until the parks reopened for public use (Stempeck 2002).

Although mandated by the Master Plan for Tennessee State Parks 1999-2009 (Performance Measure 2-A-2), few evaluations have been done to determine the current natural resource inventory, the needs of the environment in respect to sustainability, the impacts of past projects, how to correct or modify past damage, the impacts of future projects and how to modify or reduce environmental damage (TDEC official, personal communication, April 2004). Currently, an All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory (ATBI) is taking place to try to determine species, population, and habitat, and fragile ecosystems, which will aid eco-regional planning efforts. However, this inventory requires staffing and funding, and is far from being complete. Without these environmental evaluations, the areas of unique habitats are not properly documented and therefore not properly protected.
The above are examples of how management and strategic decision-making for the state parks have been inconsistent with their mission to “preserve and protect in perpetuity, unique examples of natural, cultural, and scenic areas” and have not been reflective of environmental concerns. With a strong policy for strategic management and better stakeholder influence and input, the system may not have been as vulnerable to these directives.

Objectives and Methodology

The goal of this research is to identify and evaluate opportunities for improvements in governance and decision-making processes in regard to how Tennessee implements State Park mandates for natural area and park protection and provision of outdoor (resource based) recreation experiences.

Specific objectives are to:

1. Identify past state park governance, i.e. mechanisms, procedures, and processes, in Tennessee. Identify governance and decision-making processes that have determined the direction of and investments in major programs of the Tennessee State Parks system. Of particular interest is determining who was involved in decision-making, the roles played, extent of public involvement, extent of mechanisms of public accountability, and importance given to natural resource considerations.
2. Determine principles and lessons learned for governing state parks from the literature and other park systems in other states in the United States.

The following methods were utilized to obtain the above objectives:

1. Determine past governance.
   a. Limited one-on-one personal interviews were conducted with Tennessee State Parks personnel, influential and knowledgeable legislators and stakeholders such as park users and individuals representing non-governmental organizations. The researcher facilitated these reflective conversations and documented a brief and basic historical synopsis of state park decision-making processes and procedures. Extensive in-depth historical interviews were beyond the scope of this thesis.

2. Determine principles and lessons learned.
   a. Evaluation of the literature concerning state park governance was conducted utilizing appropriate websites and published works, to determine the important principles and elements that promote excellence in park planning and management.
   b. A mail survey was sent to each director or planning manager of each state park system in the United States. The survey sought basic information on how decision-making, planning, and
public input are accomplished in the respective park systems. This provided a guide for a comparative evaluation of the Tennessee State Parks system to be conducted by the state park planning office, and established a benchmark for future evaluations not addressed by this thesis. The survey consisted of a relatively short questionnaire (see Appendix 2) designed to gather information on the following:

i. The mechanisms of public involvement in park decision-making policy and/or budget decisions.

ii. The presence (or absence), role and autonomy of an advisory committee or commission and the extent of influence this group has in the design and governance process.

iii. Presence/absence of communication mechanisms designed to provide agency accountability and feedback regarding policy and budget decisions.

iv. Presence/absence of statewide strategic system level planning and the degree to which such plans influence policy and budget decisions.

v. Opinion of survey participants regarding the five state park systems in the country that they feel are best in involving the public and providing agency
accountability regarding state park decision-making and providing protection of their natural resources.

**Thesis Direction**

The following chapter (Chapter 2: Literature Review) identifies and evaluates information gathered on governance models of park and publicly held lands. Specifically, public participation is reviewed to determine what role, if any, it plays in accountability and responsibility in government agencies and what impact, if any, it has on conservation. Chapter 3 (Chapter 3: Survey of State Park Directors) reviews and analyzes a survey conducted to determine how state park governance is accomplished in different state park systems throughout the United States. This chapter looks at specific links occurring between the governing models of advisory committees, strategic management plans and formal process for public involvement. Chapter 4 (Chapter 4: Personal Interviews) provides historical and contemporary information and perspectives pertaining to Tennessee State Parks from interviewees affiliated with the Tennessee State Parks system. The research concludes (Chapter 5: Discussions and Recommendations) with a review and analysis of research findings, additional information on Tennessee State Parks governance, recommendations for Tennessee State Parks governance and concluding reflections.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

_The problems we have created as a result of our thinking so far cannot be solved by thinking the way we did when we created them._

—Albert Einstein

Introduction

To achieve excellence in state park governance, it is necessary to have a legitimate governance system that is knowledgeable and reflects the direct input and participation of the public. To gain legitimacy, the planning process must include “fair representation, appropriate government resources, and be consensus driven” (Mascarenhas and Scarce 2004, p.17), thus increasing the power of the involved individuals and the process itself.

A knowledgeable system is one that is based on professional and scientific principles of state park planning and management, and one that is equipped with the management systems necessary to effectively and efficiently support a premier statewide park system. Effective public input and participation are needed to first develop critical public-park system linkages and second to provide public accountability and political support.

Objectives for this research include determining important principles and elements that promote excellence in park planning and management. The literature review was conducted to determine what leads to good governance for park systems, and
specifically, how public participation and accountability and responsibility in government agencies impact conservation. Nothing was found in the academic literature or journals concerning Tennessee State Parks governance and little has been written on state park governance. Given these limitations, the literature review was expanded to include articles and information on national and international park and natural resource management dealing with public input, agency accountability and protection of natural areas. Other information has been gleaned from public participation and accountability literature on management of public assets. Collectively, this will help provide objective information on how others design and implement the governance and decision-making processes in regard to state park mandates of natural area and park protection and provision of outdoor (resource based) recreation experiences.

The literature review information is divided into the broad headings of public participation, accountability and responsibility in government agencies and conservation considerations.

**Public Participation**

**Historical Basis and Government Administrative Models**

The legislative foundation for public input into federal land management of public lands in the United States stems from the 1946 Administrative Procedures Act (APA). This act established minimum procedures for “citizen consultation, input, and information dissemination” (Koontz 1999, p. 254). This act established the systematic process for all federal agencies in the provision of public notice, information on the rules, public comment, and judicial review. However, it also relegated the public role to an
adversarial position in that the prime opportunities for public input were provided for in
the appeals and adjudication process (Moote and McClaran 1997). According to Beierle
and Cayford, “The APA continues to govern all regulatory proceedings and is the
cornerstone of public participation in administrative governance” (2002, p. 3).

By the 1960’s and early 1970’s, public mistrust of agency decision-making
prompted the passage of the Government in the Sunshine Act, the Freedom of
Information Act, and the Federal Advisory Committee Act. These additional legislative
acts improved accountability of public officials, in part by requiring open meetings with a
public presence, and increasing public access to government agency information (Moote
and McClaran 1997).

Additional laws addressing public input for federal agencies include the National
Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), which applies to all federal agencies, and the
National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA) for the U.S. Forest Service. These
acts direct the lead federal agency to include the public in decision and rule making
processes. This public participation includes allowing public access, comment and
review of plans and programs for a given time period (Koontz 1999). Contrary to this,
the much used 1973 Endangered Species Act supersedes landowner interests thereby
undermining sustainability, “which demands participant inclusiveness and a holistic,
/systemic view” (Ostermeier 1999, p. 458).

The laws and regulations requiring public participation signaled a shift from a
managerial approach to a pluralistic model in government administration. Beginning in
1964 with President Johnson’s push for a “Great Society” and on to the present, a number
of laws directing public participation have been enacted. The cumulative effects of these
pluralistic laws are the enabling and expansion of the public’s access to government information and influence on decisionmaking.

Furthermore, pluralism may be giving way to a popular democratic model in which participation and the building of civic and social capacity are all stressed to further influence decision-making. In other words, the role of government and society is changing from the managerial approach of government agencies assurance that they are working in the public’s best interest (accountability) to the society’s active participation in the development of policy. This public participation is also known as participative or deliberative democracy (Ravenscroft, Curry and Markwell 2002). These ideas are reflected in the passage of the Negotiated Rulemaking Act in 1990, granting agencies to use formal negotiations with interest groups to “temper the confrontational politics that typify environmental policy”, “keep government accountable”, “help agencies make good decisions”, “help resolve long-standing problems of conflict and mistrust”, and “build capacity for solving the wicked problems of the future” to facilitate rulemaking (Beierle and Cayford 2002, p. 5).

The possibility of successfully implementing the participatory democracy model in public land use planning has not been closely researched (Moote and McClaran 1997). In a study by Moote and McClaran (1997), participatory democracy was evaluated on the five main criticisms of the traditional public participation process: efficacy, representation and access, information exchange and learning, continuity of participation, and decision-making authority. According to this study, participatory democracy garnishes similar criticisms as the traditional models. These include creating a plan that is not necessarily accepted by all involved, lack or restriction of stakeholder participation,
lack of financial resources, intractable fundamental conflicts that may not be resolved, lack of continuity by agency and stakeholder personnel, and no laws providing for shared decision-making authority (Moote and McClaran 1997). Also pointed out is the importance and difficulty of including the values, interests and concerns of the broader community and not just those involved in the process. Furthermore, some feel that participatory democracy is another way to allow lead agencies to distance themselves from difficult problems and blame stakeholders for plans that do not work (Mascarenhas and Scarce 2004). Finally, Moote and McClaran call for additional changes to be “…developed to address the logistical and legal barriers to participatory public land planning and decision-making” (1997, p. 479).

Roles, Process and Implementation

Beierle and Cayford define public participation as, “any [of] several “mechanisms” intentionally instituted to involve the lay public or their representatives in administrative decisionmaking. Such mechanisms range from town meetings at which citizens express their opinions to formally mediated negotiations in which parties write regulations: they also include advisory committees, citizen juries, and focus groups” (2002, p. 6). Laird states that, participation “makes people more aware of the linkages between public and private interests, helps them develop a sense of justice, and is a critical part of the process of developing a sense of community” (Laird qtd. in Beierle and Cayford 2002, p. 4). It is also defined as a venue for aspiring to political equality, holding elected officials accountable, and as a way to move from representative to participatory democracy (Mascarenhas and Scarce 2004).
This shift to participatory democracy emphasizes the role of communities in environmental policy and planning. Programs such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s “community-based environmental protection” and the National Environmental Justice Advisory Committee’s Model Plan for Public Participation (NEJAC 1996) highlight environmental responsibility in communities (Beierle and Cayford 2002, p. 4). Sound democratic processes must incorporate or consider other factors such as cost effectiveness, efficiency, and the quality of the final result(s) (Leach 2004). For processes and decisions to be sustainable, it is argued that “strong, imaginative, decentralized institutions” must be developed “that are collaborative and foster open participation and deliberation” (Ostermeier 1999, p. 458). Constructing these governance structures and institutions which include participatory elements can be difficult but are known to stabilize power structures and relationships over time. These deliberative participatory models stimulate dialogue which opens policy choices up to public scrutiny, minimizing the possibility of social conflict and poor environmental practices (Brechin, et al 2002; Nanz and Steffek 2004). These governance models must be transparent in their function, include the concerns of stakeholders, and work to empower particularly marginalized groups (Nanz and Steffek 2004).

Some information indicates the U.S. federal government has been much more responsive to the public’s demands for participation than the states appear to have been. This is evidenced by the preceding of amassed federal legislation compared to the states actions (Koonzt 1999). In some instances, states do not have to abide by these federal statutes. Koonzt (1999) further observes forest agency officials at the state level are not required to adhere to specific planning rules that national forest agency officials must
follow. Empirical evidence shows agencies and officials at the state and local levels are less effective and/or supportive of public participation and public input compared to national governance (Leach 2004; Koontz 1999). Contributing factors to these differences are “statutory constraints, legislator pressure, underlying agency mission, and personnel mobility” (Koontz 1999, p. 251), reflecting a need for additional modifications to the legislative framework of the devolution process for decisionmaking. Federal grants appear to have been an impetus for states enacting public participation laws, however, empirical information on states’ involvement in and promotion of public participation is lacking (Koontz 1999; Beierle and Cayford 2002).

Public Involvement in Environmental Decision-Making

One bit of empirical evidence that does exist is the work done by Thomas Beierle and Jerry Cayford in the analysis of 239 cases of public involvement in environmental decision-making. They devised a conceptual model that encompassed a wide variety of public participation yet defined enough to pinpoint important differences among the cases. Their framework consisted of analyzing each case based on the major components of context, process, and results. “Each case occurred in a particular context, used a particular process, and produced a particular set of results” (Beierle and Cayford 2002, p. 9).

As stated above, each case of public participation in environmental decision-making occurs in a specific context, which includes the backdrop and history of the location, and the relationships of those involved. These relationships are among individuals, between individuals, groups and the lead agency, and the agency or
institutional background and setting (Beierle and Cayford 2002). This context frames the situation in which the case is played out.

The process used by each case is influenced by the mechanisms involved. The mechanisms chosen to include the public and the nature of the process affect the results of the case, determining who participates, and what, how, when and where discussions or meetings are held. Negotiations, open meetings and public hearings may be employed, but it was found that advisory committees are most often used when more intensive discourse or problem-solving are required. “The planning, design, and execution of the process” is central and relevant to the results (Beierle and Cayford 2002, p. 12).

Results of the public participation process include specific outputs as well as secondary outcomes. These results can be viewed in the context of five social goals, outlined below. Success, according to Beierle and Cayford, is defined in the context of the achievement of these goals. However, some feel that success depends on whether or not the participants reach consensus, feel the process is fair, and/or progress is made in implementing agreements (Beierle and Cayford 2002).

Output, relationships and capacity building are incorporated into the evaluation of results and social goals in Beierle and Cayford’s (2002, p. 14) conceptual method. Their outline is given below:

**Output**
- Incorporating public values into decisions
- Improving the substantive quality of decisions

**Relationships**
• Resolving conflict among competing interests
• Building trust in institutions

Capacity Building

• Educating and informing the public

Based on the analysis of the 239 cases, it was determined that public participation in environmental decisionmaking largely produces good outcomes. These results included outputs in which public values were incorporated into and improved the quality of the decisions. Relationships were improved through resolving or mitigating conflict, and increasing trust between participants. Also capacity building was accomplished in that the public became better educated about situations, allowing for more involvement in the decisionmaking processes, and greater collective work to implement change.

Additional analysis of the role of context and process reveals that the “process of participation, rather than its context, is largely responsible for the success or failure of public participation” (Beierle and Cayford 2002, p. 7). However, analysis only partially supported the claim that quality public participation lays the groundwork for better implementation. Furthermore, public participation appears to have the greatest success with educating the public, and the least success with building trust in institutions, with the other social goals in between these opposites (Beierle and Cayford 2002). Overall, the case study provided an optimistic view of the possibilities that such public participation processes can accomplish.
Capacity

The above analysis is helpful in providing society and government with structures and mechanisms for the design and implementation of better environmental governance. Realizing tangible outputs, improving relationships and building capacity increases the chances that governance can “learn, experiment, and adapt creatively to threats and opportunities” (Innes and Booher forthcoming, p. 7). This flexibility is crucial for effective assessment and action needed in dealing with difficult or intractable environmental situations in communities. This “community capacity” has been defined as “the interaction of human capital, organizational resources, and social capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well being of a given community” (Chaskin qtd. in Innes and Booher forthcoming, p. 8). Community capacity may take the form of organized efforts or informal social processes.

Inherent to community capacity is the continual process of individual and collective learning and evolving. Participants must strive to understand and identify what works, or will work, in given contexts and processes to provide specific results. These activities must be comprehensive, deliberative, and knowledge-based to provide for sustainable results (Ostermeier 1999). These actions are based on collaborative processes and promote collaborative capacity, further pushing the paradigm toward participative democracy. Success in this case is assessed by the ability of the community, society and/or “governance system to be self-organizing, intelligent, and sustainable” (Innes and Booher forthcoming, p. 10). Past research supports the statement that these organized and intelligent systems are capable of being responsive to chaotic situations, even
performing at a higher level utilizing individual actions, their respective local knowledge, and collective actions and responses (Innes and Booher forthcoming).

Collaborative capacity is strengthened by having a diverse group of motivated individuals honed in the personal skills of communication, problem solving, conflict resolution, infrastructure and coalition building, as well as understanding the value, roles and responsibilities in collaborative planning and execution of action. However, even with collaborative capacity, someone must often take the initiative to provide leadership, vision and inspiration to others in building their individual capacity (Innes and Booher forthcoming).

Finally, governance capacity is characterized by the collective action of informed and empowered diverse actors and interests. These diverse interests include networked nonprofits, businesses, educators, cultural and ethnic groups that recognize and believe in the value of each individual or group, and their collective abilities. Through their networking abilities, they are able to increase and “improve the choices available to all of them as a result of collectively developed innovative ideas” (Booher and Innes 2002, p. 226). This governance capacity does not allow for co-opting of stakeholders into undesirable agreements since these individuals and groups are well-informed and empowered. With this network capacity, governance is able to address problems and take advantage of opportunities quickly and effectively, producing results reflecting collective interests and thereby increasing its ability to avoid prolonged and embroiled environmental conflicts (Innes and Booher forthcoming; Booher and Innes 2002).
Accountability and Responsibility in Government Agencies

Accountability and responsibility are interrelated not only to each other but are inherent parts of participatory democracy. Citizen participation in governance and decisionmaking is undertaken not just for the purpose of providing input and having a voice, but also to help participants feel and/or know that they will be listened to and respected; people do not just go through the process but believe the process is accountable to them. Methods are used to impose accountability so that agencies will act responsibly, i.e. “acting in accordance with the preferences and expectations of the person or entity to which one is accountable or responsible” (Dunn and Legge 2001, p. 73). These methods and mechanisms are created to guide and enforce agreements and define how agencies and administrations remain responsive to the public (Brechin, et al 2002; Dunn and Legge 2001). Dunn and Legge (2001, p. 73) further describe accountability as the following:

Accountability is the obligation owed by all public officials to the public, the ultimate sovereign in a democracy, for explanation and justification of their use of public office and the delegated powers conferred on the government through constitutional processes. Accountability is the price citizens extract for conferring substantial administrative discretion and policy responsibility on both elected and appointed government personnel.

Accountability provides for answers in how one carries out his or her respective role and responsibility. In the broader sense, it is a part of causal responsibility, and
provides for blame and punishment (Kaler 2002). The organization AccountAbility states, “To account for something is to explain or justify the acts, omissions, risks, and dependencies for which one is responsible to people with legitimate interest” (AccountAbility qtd. in Kaler 2002, p. 329). Therefore, those who are held accountable must have clear definitions of responsibility, exercise discretion and carefully consider the consequences of their actions. Accountability fundamentally deals with controlling conduct and preventing misconduct, thus providing for clear assessment by the public of agencies and officials in whom they have placed their trust. However, “soft” or voluntary accountability as opposed to “hard” accountability (required by law, organizational or societal requirements) may result in the responsible individual providing information as he or she prefers, on his or her own terms. This can result in poor accountability with less punitive or penal consequences and is, therefore, suspect (Kaler 2002).

In the 1940’s, a debate took place in the United States between Herman Finer and Carl J. Friedrich, which was to have lasting effects on the way public administration is conducted. In this debate, Finer asserted that unelected public officials are servants of and to the public; they have a political responsibility to be obedient to the public and not act on their own ideas or decisions. Public administrators, he felt, needed to abide by controls set by elected authorities, e.g. the legislators and president, and would thereby be accountable. Finer’s views emphasized external control and accountability (Dunn and Legge 2001).

Carl Friedrich’s stand was that administrators in government service should not be directly accountable to the public, but instead to the elected officials. This was due, in part, to the complexity of public sector problems. He felt strongly that technical
competence was required by administrators to understand and resolve these problems, and that these actions could only be judged effectively by fellow professionals. His statements provide the basis for the use of professional knowledge in public administrators’ course of actions. However, he also called for the public sentiment majority to be properly considered in decisionmaking. Friedrich’s views emphasized internal controls and responsibility (Dunn and Legge 2001).

This debate helped define and outline the mechanisms of accountability to the public and to elected officials. It determined that public administrators are subordinate to elected officials, legislators and elected executives. The elected officials provide guidance and define responsibilities of unelected officials, and are accountable to the public. Also, public officials and legislators are guided by their technical knowledge and public sentiment. Disagreement continues over whether or not unelected public officials should be directly accountable to the public (Dunn and Legge 2001).

Intrinsic to the debate over accountability of public officials is the discussion of “the consideration of the ethical behavior (honesty, rectitude) of the official and consideration of the moral content of the public policy or action the official promulgates or carries out” (Willbern 1994, p. 371). Willbern (1994, p. 372) has discerned six levels of moral deliberation for public officials:

1. basic honesty and conformity to law
2. conflicts of interest
3. service orientation and procedural fairness
4. the ethic of democratic responsibility
5. the ethic of public policy determination

6. the ethic of compromise and social integration

According to Willbern (1994), the least complex of these moral considerations are the first two along with the third to a degree, and deal more in the aspects of personal morality, pertain more to the conduct of public officials and are usually the focus of unethical behavior and subsequent public outrage. The third (again to a degree) through sixth types are more complex, concerned with the morality of the decisions or actions taken by the government official or employee, and involve more collective, bureaucratic and shared moral responsibility. The fourth through sixth pertain to the content of what public officials do.

The first moral level, basic conformity to the law, is built on the premise that civil employees are morally bound to be truthful, keep promises, be respectful of persons and property and abide by the law, except in extreme situations. The pluralistic society, judiciary and independent media of our democratic, civil society help insure this conformity in the United States.

The second moral consideration, conflicts of interest, presumes the civil official pursues the public interest, with his or her own interests being subordinate. Certain measures are taken to insure the official acknowledges outside interests and refrains from actions where conflict may arise, but conflicts can be subtle and difficult to discern. It is this moral dilemma that must be broached when political appointees and elected officials reward friends and contributors with jobs, contracts or other services. But the question
remains as to how much the conflict of interest influences a decision and where does it become unethical?

   Service orientation and procedural fairness is the third level of moral discussion. Government activities and programs are created around providing a service to the public, but authority and decisions are also exercised in the implementation of services. The moral danger occurs when official behavior and program services are carried out with an arrogant, self-centered, or judgmental attitude or manner. This moral level also includes a person’s procedural due process in judicial and administrative procedures. Since a complex society will most certainly have interests that oppose each other and cannot all be satisfied, the process of decision-making in policy and action must be fair.

   The fourth level of public morality is the ethic of democratic responsibility. In many governmental programs, public participation in decision-making and participatory management is encouraged or sometimes required, based on the public’s right to know. Participation may include public hearings, statutes, or advisory committees. Willbern (1994, p. 378) explains the logic of democratic responsibility:

   …the legitimacy of popular control is transmitted to operating public servants through a chain of delegation. The legislature is supposed to do what the people want, while the public executive and administrator are to conform to legislative intent. The politically chosen official, either elected or appointed by someone who was elected, has the mandate of the people. The civil servant is ethically bound to carry out the instructions of these politicians, who derive their legitimacy from the people.
However, there are times when the above scenario is not fully functional, e.g. public participation is unwelcome, thwarted by special interest or lacking full and/or truthful information. For the public official in this predicament, making public decisions based on incomplete information or skewed public input is a particularly moral dilemma. Furthermore, it is to be expected that the public will not necessarily speak with one clear voice, with full knowledge, or sound reason.

The fifth level of moral level, the ethic of public policy determination, may be the most complex and difficult of all, since it deals with making the direct decisions which become public policy. According to Willbern, policy decisions, undeniably, are moral judgments. These sapient deliberations involve benefit-cost decisions (essentially measurement considerations) and distribution decisions of who will and will not be the policy and program recipients. These policies must be fair and equitable, but they do, at times by design, discriminate on the basis of need and behavior.

The ethic of compromise and social integration is the sixth level of public morality. People who hold differing values must live together in a complex, democratic society, where the definition and sincerity of words and actions become blurred. Collaboration, negotiation and compromise are important tools for the public official to use to avoid stalemate and conflict. These tools are best utilized within institutional arrangements which “encourag[e] public policy discourse and mutual persuasion and, finally, resolution of differences” (Willbern 1994, p. 383). The difficulty of providing substantive due process creates a greater need for procedural due process to assure protection of the individual against the power of the state and further legitimize the public decision-making process.
Many kinds of mechanisms exist that can be used complimentarily to exert and maintain control over officials (Blair 2000). Additional mechanisms of accountability in democratic governments listed by Dunn and Legge (2001, p. 77) include the following:

- Political mechanisms including pressures brought by the general public, special interest groups, and agency clientele
- Legal mechanisms such as “court actions, review of administrative actions by courts, and the imposition of judicially defined sanctions on administrators”
- Professional mechanisms including the deference to expertise
- Hierarchical mechanisms of “organizationally imposed rules and sanctions”
- Independent media acting as a socially responsible or “watchdog” agency by focusing on activities, relationships or legislation of officials

The mechanisms that appear to influence officials the most are their respective position in government and the specific matter being addressed, e.g. general responsibilities, routine matters or policy development. This, and other questions, were addressed by a study of 858 local government managers in the United States, randomly selected from Who's Who in Local Government Management (International City and County Management Association 1996) (Dunn and Legge 2001).
These local government managers ranked professional knowledge higher when working with general responsibilities, but when dealing in policy development, they deferred to the preference of elected officials. They ranked media the lowest mechanism of influence on their actions, questioning the premise that elected officials are often too sensitive to the media. Also, the preference of a group most affected by a situation or policy, was ranked above the general public’s views on that policy. This is particularly important because it runs contrary to scholars that believe the majority interest of the public should always be met by public officials (Dunn and Legge 2001).

The responsibility-accountability relationship between elected and unelected officials and the public is complex and multi-faceted. “The complexity of this relationship is marked by the need for administrators to be simultaneously empowered (by the definition of their responsibility, both objectively and subjectively) and constrained (through mechanisms of accountability, which then feed into definitions of responsibility)” (Dunn and Legge 2001, p. 81). These paradoxical concepts encompass both internal and external controls from which administrative officials must balance and look to for guidance as they make their decisions in democratic policy.

**Conservation Considerations**

Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines conservation as “a careful preservation and protection of something; especially: planned management of a natural resource to prevent exploitation, destruction, or neglect.” This definition is pertinent to natural resource and ecosystems management today in trying to develop and implement goals, strategies and plans.
The traditional approach to natural resource management policy was instituted as “implementing prescriptive solutions to maximize a production function” (Brown and MacLeod 1996, p. 289). The traditional model assumed that ecosystems “behaved in a linear, deterministic manner” (Brown and MacLeod 1996, p. 289) and values of ecosystem services were generally agreed upon, as were recommended technology by land managers. This model was more concerned with achieving a desired product (e.g. high timber yield), but resulted in “an unpredictable performance by ecosystems, conflicting expectations among users, and low adoption rates for the outputs of research and development” (Brown and MacLeod 1996, p. 289). For example, in the past national parks were used as hunter ‘warehouses’ (Shafer 1999, p. 5.2), whereas, today they are managed to “…protect and provide access to our Nation's natural and cultural heritage…” (National Park Service website).

The role of natural resource management is ever evolving, and is now often referred to as ecosystems management. This ecosystems approach takes into account the interactions between the abiotic and biotic systems within the ecosystem, reflecting a larger and more intricate picture than past models. This is similar to, but differs slightly from landscape ecology, which also encompasses a larger picture of the physical, biological and social environments, but utilizes different resources for multiple uses (Hercock 2002). Currently, natural resource management is in transition to seek an ecologically sustainable, economically feasible model, which is also socially acceptable (Shannon and Antypas 1997; Ostermeier 1999; McCormick 1999). This requires including the relationships of humans with the environment, the costs and benefits of actions to society, and the reality of the bio-physical laws that constrain the ecological
system. Furthermore, “policy development and implementation must be politically and socially acceptable and based on accurate and relevant information about natural system” (Elfring qtd. in Brown and MacLeod 1996, p. 289). The holistic approach of ecosystem management has evolved from the Bruntland Commission’s widely accepted, albeit controversial, definition of sustainable development. For an action to meet the definition of sustainable, it must “meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987 qtd. in Southgate and Sharpley 2002, p. 240).

It has been debated that conservation and resource management are social processes and social action products, and, therefore, natural resource issues are more social problems than actual environmental issues (Southgate and Sharpley 2002; Brechin 2002). The lack of protection or degradation of natural resources can be linked to lack of education, lack of finances or outright poverty (Southgate and Sharpley 2002), which illuminates the importance of linking social and environmental factors in the mitigation of natural resource issues. The dialogue for sustainable tourism, along with sustainable development is a discussion about social equity as well as environmental matters, and has initiated changes in Western politics since the 1970’s. One can further link these factors by visualizing the sale of tourism in the form of environmental or natural resources by the tourism industry to the consumer. When thought of in this aspect, and with little or no regard for the resources, tourism bears greater resemblance to invasive, degrading heavy industries such as mining or logging, which attract great environmental concern. Therefore, sustainable use and ecological limits must be considered to keep tourist
destinations from becoming exploited and unattractive, leading to eventual degradation and decline (Southgate and Sharpley 2002).

Problems from pervasive conflicts necessitate governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), businesses, developers, and other stakeholders struggle with how to balance the needs of the individuals and community as well as maintain ecological viability. This concept is often referred to as sustainable development, even though this term has come to have contradictory meanings to different groups. Tourism is one area of the economic sector that is viewed as having less impact on the environment, and therefore thought of as being compatible with sustainable development in protected areas (Jamal and Eyre 2003). Tourism transects many sectors of our society and can promote the environment and local development with great economic impact (Southgate and Sharpley 2002). However, tourism has been a double edged sword for many areas of the world blessed with serene beauty and ecologically sensitive areas. One such place is Bow Valley in Banff, Canada. This valley hosts most of the human and economic activity for and includes the watershed of Banff National Park (BNP). This valley also includes one of the richest areas of biodiversity (Jamal and Eyre 2003) in the region.

Banff National Park, a World Heritage Site, hosts around five million annual visitors which spend and generate over CDN $1 billion annually. Therefore, tourism plays a huge part in the economy of the area, including the provincial and federal governments. The park was originally established in 1885 to help fund Canada’s transcontinental railway, establishing a historical philosophy of parks for profit. In 1994, pervasive conflicts between developers and environmentalists convinced the government
to set up a Banff Bow Valley Study (BBVS) and a five member Task Force (BBVTF). One of several mechanisms that the Task Force used to elicit public input was to set up a “high-profile multi-sectoral round table facilitated by a formally appointed mediator” (Jamal and Eyre 2003, p. 421). Included in this Banff Bow Valley Round Table (BBVRT) were fourteen voluntary sectors representing the commercial, local and national environmental, culture and social/health/education, park users, First Nations, federal government, municipalities of the region interests and the Task Force, itself. Each sector represented multiple groups and individuals, further challenging the effective flow of information and communication.

The BBVRT was initially charged with the hefty mandate to “identify issues, provide public input towards a coordinated strategy for the region, develop a vision, and possibly develop specific action plans” (Jamal and Eyre 2003, p. 421). However, this round table was only an advisory body, instructed to utilize a shared decisionmaking process, with no guarantees that the public input obtained would be institutionalized in any document by the final decision-makers.

The Banff Bow Valley Study (Jamal and Eyre 2003) highlights the amount and depth of problems incurred when working in an ecologically sensitive area with a historical and national context, and includes multiple and diverse stakeholders in the process. Tackling difficult problems requires a well-defined but flexible process that is perceived to be fair by the diverse group of involved stakeholders and institutions. Implementation of this process requires tremendous resources and investments in time, energy, people, and an enduring belief in the process itself. Facilitators must be knowledgeable and equitable in how the process is implemented and foster trust from and
among the diverse stakeholders. These stakeholders come with differing perspectives and backgrounds, with conflicting priorities and agendas, but have a common desire to participate in the process. Understanding a single difficult issue must also include delving below the surface to recognize and address the historical reasons for the principal issue, possibly requiring additional resources. Furthermore, stakeholder financial investments and the prospect of future profits can greatly influence the overarching agenda and mission. Sustainable results are the products of a continual, flexible process and are achieved only through the courage, tenacity, patience, understanding and willingness of the participants.

As exemplified by the Banff Bow Valley Study, social issues become an integral part of the problem with conserving the environment, whether in a park, natural or ecologically sensitive area, and include questions and a lack of consensus on what and how much to conserve. The definition of what constitutes conservation to a business person may be viewed differently by an environmentalist or government official (Jamal and Eyre 2003; Brown and MacLeod 1996). However, evidence suggests that when decisions are made using collaborative techniques involving multiple stakeholders such as tourism developers, local communities, and local governance structures, sustainability is most likely achieved (Southgate and Sharpley 2002). In this way, tourism can encourage both conservation and development. However, the protection of natural resources and biodiversity is dependent on committed, strong and knowledgeable social actors (Brechin et al 2002).

Questions also remain as to how different perturbations effect habitats and species, to what degree disturbed environments are to be restored, and whether or not
partly restored environments are functional and at what level. Even within the environmental community, disagreements abound on whether restoration is comparable to the former ecosystem. Furthermore, environmental reparation and sustainability is now thought to be directly influenced by and contingent on biodiversity and maturity of the disturbed ecosystem. The relationships between and within the ecological communities provide a stability and resilience to perturbations, such as tourism (Southgate and Sharpley 2002). Some strongly suggest that species and habitats are not protected when development is incorporated into conservation management, and that this anthropocentric approach produces more problems than benefits when compared to a biocentric approach (Brechin et al 2002).

Natural resource and conservation issues are further exacerbated by the simple fact that habitats cross political and administrative boundaries, complicating federal, state, and local primacy of authority, single versus multiple use agency mandates, and land use planning (Hercock 2002). Therefore, utilizing an adaptive, integrated management approach to the ecosystem is important to provide shared, flexible, and more effective processes to address diverse uses, conflicting interests, instill trust and provide for better solutions to difficult problems (Hercock 2002; Beierle 2002; Lal, Lim-Applegate and Scoccimarro 2001).

The importance of holistic land-use planning cannot be overemphasized to realize sustainable tourism development in natural ecosystems settings. Planning needs to incorporate environmental assessments (e.g. ATBI and fragile ecosystems), impact assessments, carrying capacity or saturation limits of the ecosystem, and economic goals for the tourism industry. Ecological models need to reflect ecosystem dynamics such as
climate change, fire, flooding, and other perturbations to provide a more realistic view of natural spatial and temporal relationships. Human, animal, plant and species introduction or extinction also need to be reflected in these models and focus on small scale or large scale outputs as needed (Brown and MacLeod 1996; Dale, et al 1998). Additionally, geographic information systems (GIS) can be used to create biological resource risk maps, which depict the location of habitats and other natural resources at risk depending on land use planning, allowing resource managers to alter human usage to ameliorate or mitigate environmental impact and damage (Dale, et al 1998). These comprehensive models and ideas are utilized in participatory democracy in ecosystems management.

Land-use planning can provide a balance between the “physical capacities of the resource base against the different interests that are involved in development, providing [a] valuable regulatory mechanism” (Southgate and Sharpley 2002, p. 247). By incorporating the requirements of local governance and ecological sustainability, it has been argued that “tourism can sustain communities, conserve environmental resources and genuinely serve the socioeconomic and spiritual rights of future generations” (Southgate and Sharpley 2002, p. 262).

The Southern Appalachian Man and Biosphere states that as of 1996, “…in the Southern Appalachian region, 84% of the 51 federally listed threatened and endangered plant and animal species are associated with rare community and streamside habitats” (Dale, et al 1998, p. 203). According to the National Park Service, protected land areas are already threatened by “habitat fragmentation, increasing development, recreation pressure, resource extraction, pollution, altered disturbance and hydrological regimes, exotic species invasions, and poaching and collecting. Marine areas like coral reefs
suffer from sedimentation and nutrient enrichment, overfishing, boat anchoring, damage by divers and snorkelers, and severe hurricanes” (Shafer 1999, p. 130). Furthermore, these disturbances and changes in land use can constitute an absolute change in habitat area (Dale, et al 1998). Impending climate changes will only increase these stresses. Without basic consensus, greater scientific information and empirical evidence, viable protection of ecosystem resources remains a difficult, elusive proposition.

Conclusions

As stated in the introduction, little has been written in the academic literature dealing with state park issues or governance. The lack of articles implies that substantive research has not been done to determine what is available, what is needed and what may or may not work in state park governance. Several statements can be drawn from the existing literature concerning the issues of public involvement and agency accountability and how they effect conservation. Much of the literature supports at least three major points for agencies to consider when dealing with public lands and natural resources. In particular, Beierle and Cayford’s (2002) work outlines the five social goals for public participation, which support the following statements listed below:

1. Design and implement a planning model that:
   a. ensures the incorporation of public values into decisions
   b. improves the substantive quality of decisions.
2. Design and implement mechanisms that improve and build relationships that include resolving conflict and building trust:
   a. among competing stakeholder interests
   b. between stakeholders and agencies/institutions

3. Design and implement mechanisms to increase capacity:
   a. of the public to be a more effective partner/collaborator through education and information;
   b. of agencies/government to be a more effective partner/collaborator through the development of accountability mechanisms that meet specific minimum standards and goals.

Incorporating public values has been legislated, with mixed success beginning with the Administrative Procedures Act. The authors Koontz (1999), Moote and McClaran (1997), Beierle and Cayford (2002), and Ostermeier (1999) all discuss the problems with, additional need for or lack of legislation and/or mechanisms that deal with the public input process, improved decision-making, and conflict resolution. Beierle and Cayford (2002) furthermore state that decisions that incorporate public participation, which would include public values, largely produce good outcomes. Leach (2004) and Koontz (1999) both submit evidence that mechanisms for meeting public needs are lacking at the state level, and Willbern (1994) presents the chain of democratic procedures, which without the input of public values, will not be fully functional. Jamal and Eyre’s (2003) work on the Banff Bow Valley Study along with Moote and McClaran’s (1997) work expose some of the difficulty and pitfalls that may be
encountered with participatory democracy, providing additional insight for better mechanisms and planning. Finally, Brown and MacLeod (1996), Hercock (2002), Beierle and Cayford (2002), Lal, Lim-Applegate and Scoccimarro (2001) all support adaptive management approaches to problem solving, of which public participation and values play an integral role.

The above listed authors and their respective statements and arguments are also in general support for increasing the capacity of the public through education to be more effective. Capacity building through educating and informing the public is incorporated into the results of the five social goals called for by Beierle and Cayford (2002). Brown & MacLeod (1996) discuss the need for accurate and relevant information for policy decision-making and Jamal and Eyre’s (2003) work also exhibits the need for an educated and informed public. Innes and Booher (forthcoming) argue for individual and community capacity as Ravenscroft, Curry and Markwell (2002) mark this as a shift toward participatory democracy.

Much of the work of these authors also supports the need for agencies and governments to be more effective for and accountable to the public. Beierle and Cayford (2002) discuss the need for agencies to be accountable to facilitate rulemaking, while Brechin et al (2002) and Nanz and Steffek (2004) discuss opening policy to public scrutiny and the importance of transparency in government models. According to Innes and Booher (forthcoming), governance capacity is increased through individual and collective actions and responses. Dunn and Legge (2001) remind us that people participate because they believe the agency listens, furthering the discussion for building agency capacity and accountability. Effective agency collaboration and accountability is
also supported by the adaptive management approaches discussed by Brown and MacLeod (1996), Hercock (2002), Beierle and Cayford (2002), Lal, Lim-Applegate and Scoccimarro (2001), while Kaler (2002) admonishes the necessity for “hard” accountability. Finally, Dunn and Legge (2001) explicate the need for effective agency capacity and accountability mechanisms, whether internal or external, with their article on the Finer-Friedrich debate and discussion of the mechanisms of accountability.

Taken as a whole, these statements call for a partnership model for state park governance linking government legislative, administrative, and respective agencies with the civic/public sector for the planning and management of publicly owned and/or managed park and natural areas.
CHAPTER 3: SURVEY OF STATE PARK DIRECTORS

Introduction

A mail survey, Survey of State Park Directors, was developed and mailed to the director or planning manager of each state park system in the United States. The objective of the survey was to identify and evaluate the governance and decision-making processes used by public entities in designing and implementing mandates for protecting natural areas and providing outdoor recreation experiences in state parks, including how planning, public input, and decision-making are accomplished. The survey consisted of a relatively short questionnaire (Appendix 2) designed to provide specific information on public involvement, agency accountability, advisory committees, and strategic management planning.

Basic information on the survey is outlined in Chapter 1 under Objectives and Methodology. Specific information on survey methods, analysis and findings, and conclusions are covered in this chapter.

Methods

The Survey of State Park Directors was designed using a combination of factual and subjective, close-ended questions including Likert Scale and filter questions, as well as open-ended questions for gathering opinions. Some of the information gained from the open-ended questions provided information for possible future use not covered by this thesis. The first set of questions, 1-3, consisted of fill-in-the-blank, factual questions. Questions 4-8a were close-ended, factual questions with check boxes. Questions 9-21
were presented in close-ended, subjective questions in a Likert Scale format. Questions 22-27 were close-ended, factual questions with check boxes. The final set of questions, 28-31, consisted of subjective, open-ended questions. The survey ended with a request for confidential contact information if survey results were requested.

Dillman’s Total Design Method was employed, with pre-survey contact and multi-wave follow-up. This method consisted of telephone calls verifying names, titles, mail and email addresses and a prelude to the survey, a pre-survey letter, survey mailing with cover letter, reminder letter, reminder postcard, secondary survey mailing, email reminder, email with survey attached, and a final email reminder/request. In addition, individual emails were sent to twenty-two directors, who had initially responded to the survey, to gather omitted information or clarify answers.

There are numerous advantages to using a mail questionnaire, including relatively low cost, a reduction in error, considered answers and consultations instead of immediate responses. The disadvantages are mail questionnaires usually require simple questions with no opportunity for probing or control over who fills out the questionnaire (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 2000).

A total of 50 surveys were mailed in July 2004; one survey was mailed to each Director of the 50 state park systems in the United States. The multi-wave follow-up concluded with a February 15, 2005 cut-off date for survey returns. A total of 46 surveys were returned (92% return rate). The survey response rate (92%) allows substantive generalizations about the entire population of parks. Also, to reduce statistical error for a “small N” population (N=46 respondents), the median calculation is used, rather than the mean, in the number and total acres of state parks and other areas.
Analysis and Findings

As previously stated, the overall purpose of the survey was to gather information about how decision-making, planning, and public input is accomplished in respective park systems, and specifically on how the presence or lack of public involvement, agency accountability, advisory committees, and strategic management planning impact conservation.

Initial analysis and findings stated in this section will include combined state park responses to each question in the survey. Later, analysis and findings will focus on those state park systems which have an advisory committee or commission with decision-making and/or policy setting powers, followed by those systems which have a formal process for public involvement required by legislation. The survey question to which the following discussions are pertaining to is referenced as (Q#).

To reduce ambiguity, the following definitions were included in the survey:

- A “formal process for public involvement” is one required by either legislation or administrative policy.
- A “strategic management plan” refers to any comprehensive, long-term, system or statewide plan providing general policies and directives for guiding park policy and/or budgetary decisions.

It should be noted that 34 state park systems requested the results of the survey.
Combined Findings for State Park Systems

As the responses were tabulated, it quickly became evident there exists a great variance in the design of, and to some extent, the verbiage used in describing state park systems. Respondents’ answers came with a multitude of insightful and specific explanations and questions designed to facilitate communication and documentation about their specific state park system. Many times, this information helped in revealing the processes used and the way in which their system functioned.

The first three questions were designed to gather basic information such as the title of the person filling out the survey, which park system he/she represented, and the types and acreage of areas managed within their park system.

Respondents’ answers concerning the type and number of state parks and areas included several explanations about how specific park systems designate parks and determine what they have. Furthermore, state park systems differ from state to state in what properties are managed. For example, some manage parks and trails, others parks and lands, while others manage forests and rivers, etc. Since the focus of this thesis is state parks, other areas not specifically designated as a state park were combined into a single category. The fact that a variety of properties exist as part of state park systems warrants their recognition.

From 50 state park systems, 46 responded, representing more than 2,181 individual state parks consisting of 8,354,385 acres. From the respondent’s answers, the survey found the median number of parks within each state park system is 41.5 consisting of 69,903 median acres (Q3). The least number of parks within a system is Nebraska, with eight parks, and the most number is California with 270. The least number of park
acres within a system is Rhode Island with 8,748 compared to Alaska with 2,300,000. A median of 43 “other areas” are additionally managed by each state park system with an additional 30,000 median acres. These “other areas” are a combined total of properties and may include State Natural Areas, State Recreation Areas (may include land and/or water), State Historical Areas, State Archeological Areas, Pre-historical and Historical (not above ground), Regional State Parks (as differentiated from Traditional State Parks), Environmental Areas, Science Centers, Environmental Education Areas, Waysides, State Monuments, Mountain Attractions, State Trails, Recreational Trails, Multi-Use Trails, State Park Reserves, State Preserves, Resource Areas, State Fish and Wildlife Areas, State Habitat Areas, State Forests, State Forest Campgrounds, Underwater Parks, State Lakes, State Rivers, River Corridors, Fishing Access Sites, and Lake Headwaters.

The next set of questions (Q 4-8a) requested information on strategic management plans, advisory committees, and formal processes for public involvement. The frequencies and percents for strategic management plans and advisory committees are shown in Table 1 and Table 2, respectively.

Table 1 shows the respondents indicated 28.3% of state park systems do not have a strategic management plan while an overall majority of the park systems, 71.7%, have a strategic management plan. Furthermore, 37% of state park systems have a strategic management plan that is being followed to a considerable degree.

Table 2 shows 31.1% of state park systems do not have an advisory committee. The majority of park systems, 68.9%, have an advisory committee or commission, and 37.8% of state park systems have an advisory committee with decision-making and/or policy setting powers.
**Table 1.** Frequency and percent of state park systems that follow current strategic management plans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount Followed</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not At All</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Degree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Degree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considerable Degree</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2.** Frequency and percent of advisory committees and their role in state park systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advisory Committee Role</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Advisory Committee (AC-N)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role: Strictly Advisory (AC-A)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role: Decision-Making (AC-D)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>37.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 shows the frequency and percent of different processes for public involvement in state park systems. According to the survey results, just over one-third (34.9%) of state park systems do not have a formal process for public involvement. A majority of park systems, 65.1%, have a formal process for public involvement, with 46.5% of these formal processes being required by legislation.

Information on the importance of conservation and public involvement, the function of strategic management plans and advisory committees was requested (Q9-21). Respondents were asked to disagree or agree with statements based on their specific park system. For clarity and tabulation purposes, percentages for “strongly disagree” and “disagree” are listed together as “disagree,” and percentages for “strongly agree” and “agree” are listed together as “agree.

The respondents agreed that conservation, public involvement, and agency accountability were important to their systems (Q16, 14, 15, respectively). Ninety-one percent (91.1%) of respondent’s agreed with the statement, “Conservation of natural resources is of high importance relative to other priorities in the park system” (Q16). In

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process for Public Involvement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Formal Process (FP-N)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process: Administrative Policy (FP-A)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process: Legislated (FP-L)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>46.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Frequency and percent of public involvement processes in state park systems
addition, 80% and 82% respectively agreed biological inventories are used in areas of their park system to determine the presence of threatened or endangered species and unique or fragile habitat (Q17 and 18 respectively). Furthermore, 77.7% of respondents indicated geographic information systems (GIS) are used as a data management tool in their park systems (Q21). A total of 57.8% disagreed with the statement, “Park managers have discretion to make decisions impacting the natural resources within their park without consulting a regional or state level manager” (Q19). The lowest percentage of affirmative response regarding conservation dealt with eco-regional planning with only 38.7% of respondents agreeing their park system uses it as “an integral part of park planning,” and 31.8% disagreeing; almost 30% remained neutral (Q20).

Eighty-four percent (84.1%) of the respondents agreed that public involvement plays an important role in influencing state park policy and decision-making (Q14). Seventy-six percent (75.5%) agreed their “park system has formal procedures in place to ensure agency accountability to the public regarding major policy and/or budgetary decisions” (Q15).

When asked if the strategic management plan provides significant direction to state park policy or budgetary decisions, 70.3% agreed the plan provides significant direction to policy (Q12), but only 55.6% agreed it similarly influences budgets (Q13). This suggests for over two-thirds (70.3%) of the states, strategic management planning is an important mechanism in influencing park policy. However, the influence of such planning in influencing budgetary decisions falls off to slightly over half (55.6%) of the states. This is not surprising, given the fundamental role of state legislative bodies in establishing state budgets.
Sixty-two percent (61.8%) of respondents agreed that the “state park advisory committee or commission has a significant level of influence in guiding park policy” (Q9), but only 26.5% responded that the committee has a significant level of influence in guiding park budgetary decisions (Q10). Furthermore, over half, 58.1%, agreed their advisory committee operates independently from the state legislative and executive branches when making policy decisions (Q11). This suggests for almost two-thirds (61.8%) of the states, the advisory committee is an important mechanism in influencing park policy. However, the influence of these committees in influencing budgetary decisions drops to just over one-fourth (26.5%) of the states. Again, this is not surprising, given the fundamental role of state legislative bodies in establishing state budgets.

Information was gathered on whose input is included in the process for decision-making regarding the following four kinds of decisions: the strategic management plan (Q22), natural resource conservation (Q23), major new construction (Q24), and substantial improvements or changes to the physical infrastructure for the state park system (Q25). The individuals, groups or organizations whose input was included, e.g. park personnel, general public, etc. are referred to as categories. Percentage totals for each question and combined totals are shown in Table 4. Since it was important to gain a sense of whose input is included the most in all scenarios, suggesting which category has the most access to decision-making, only the combined totals will be discussed. Park systems included input from park personnel 99% of the time; this category and percentage are not included in further analysis.
Table 4. Percent of input included by category and decision type for state park decision-making

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of input included</th>
<th>Strategic Management Plan (Q22) N=46</th>
<th>Natural Resource Conservation (Q23) N=46</th>
<th>Major New Construction (Q24) N=46</th>
<th>Improve Physical Infrastructure (Q25) N=46</th>
<th>Combined Category Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>park users</td>
<td>67.4%</td>
<td>76.1%</td>
<td>82.6%</td>
<td>78.3%</td>
<td>76.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>general public</td>
<td>63.0%</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>environmental organizations</td>
<td>60.1%</td>
<td>82.6%</td>
<td>58.7%</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
<td>60.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-governmental organizations</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gateway community leaders</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>business owners or representatives</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>industry representatives</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>others</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined Decision Type Average</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Using the combined category average in Table 4, the survey shows input from park users (76.1%) is used most often in park planning and management decisions, followed by general public (63.6%), environmental organizations (60.7%), non-governmental organizations and gateway community leaders (tied with 39.1%), business owners or representatives (25.6%), and industry representatives (18%). Respondents checked the “others” category 27.7% of the time. The categories “none of the above” and “don’t know” were both marked at 0%.

The first three categories (park users, general public, environmental organizations) remained in the same sequential order for all questions except when natural resource conservation was the topic. When answering this question (Q23), the park systems indicated that they gathered input from environmental organizations (82.6%), park users (76.1%) and general public (69.6%). This information is shown in the Natural Resource Conservation (Q23) column in Table 4.

Participants were asked what mechanisms, if any, were used for public involvement (Q26). According to the respondents, town or public meetings are used most often at 91.3%, followed by public comment periods on changes in policy decisions (89.1), interactive websites (71.7%), survey questionnaire boxes located in parks (50%), comment boxes located in parks and mail surveys (tied at 47.8%). Personal interviews with park visitors, telephone surveys, toll-free access number, others, and interactive kiosks located at park centers ranged from 39.1% to 13% respectively.

Information on resource management strategies used in ecologically sensitive areas was requested (Q27). According to the respondents’ answers, 71.7% of systems do not allow construction in ecologically sensitive areas, 67.4% do not allow vehicle or boat
traffic, 41.3% do not allow personal foot traffic, 34.8% listed other strategies (includes planning, constructing boardwalks, etc., educational use, restrictions on individual case or time of year, etc.). Four percent (4.3%) of respondents stated there were no restrictions in ecologically sensitive areas and the same percentage (4.3%) did not know the resource management strategies, if any. Only one park system (2.2%) contained no known ecologically sensitive areas.

Respondents were asked their opinions of the five best state park systems in and outside of the U.S. that are best at involving the public and providing agency accountability and the best at providing protection of their natural resources (Q28-31). The number of times the system was listed is in parenthesis:

- In the US, the five state park systems indicated as the best at involving the public in state park decision-making and providing agency accountability to the public regarding agency decisions (Q28) are California (5), New York and Missouri (4), Florida and Ohio (3).
- In the US, the five state park systems indicated as the best at providing protection of their natural resources (Q29) are California and Florida (7), New York and North Carolina (4), Ohio (3).
- Outside of the U.S, the three park systems that are particularly good at involving the public in park decision-making and providing agency accountability to the public regarding agency decisions (Q30) are Canada (specifically Ontario, Nova Scotia), Puerto Rico, Australia (specifically Penrith & Queensland).
Outside the US, the three park systems that are particularly good at providing protection of their natural resources (Q31) are Canada (specifically Ontario, Nova Scotia), Puerto Rico, England (specifically Canterbury), Costa Rica.

Advisory Committees and Two Links

To determine what effect, if any, the presence of an advisory committee or commission has on conservation policies, the responses from the survey were examined based on the percent and frequency of advisory committees and their role in state park systems (Table 2, p. 48). Data sets were created with all respondents placed into groups of no advisory committee (AC-N), advisory committee-strictly advisory (AC-A) and advisory committee-decision-making (AC-D). These data sets were then compared for relationships between advisory committees and strategic management plans and advisory committees and process for public involvement in state park systems.

The state parks indicated (Table 2, p. 48) a total of 14 park systems (31.1%) do not have an advisory committee or commission. A total of 31 park systems (68.9%) reported they have an advisory committee or commission, with 14 having a strictly advisory role (31.1%) and 17 having decision-making and/or policy setting powers (37.8%).

Table 5 shows the cross-tabulation of advisory committee and strategic management plans in state park systems. It appears those systems in the AC-N group have the highest percentage of a strategic management plan (92.9%) with most saying it is being followed to some degree (69.2%) and the rest (30.8%) following it to a
Table 5. Advisory committee - strategic management plan cross-tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AC-N</th>
<th>AC-A</th>
<th>AC-D</th>
<th>Total AC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have Strategic Management Plan</td>
<td>92.9%</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow to some degree</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow to considerable degree</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

considerable degree. In those systems having an AC-A, 57.1% have a strategic management plan but a higher number (87.5%) are following this plan to a considerable degree. However, in the AC-D group, 70.6% have a management plan with half following this plan to a considerable degree (50%). The survey indicates an inverse relationship between the presence of an advisory group and the presence of a strategic management plan. It also indicates that most park systems with strategic management plans follow them to some or a considerable degree (93.9%) as opposed to a limited degree or not at all.

Table 6 shows the relationship between advisory committees and public involvement in state park systems. As shown in Table 6, 46.2% of the AC-N group have no formal process for public involvement, followed by decreasing percentages and only 15.4% have a formal process required by legislation. The AC-A group was almost evenly divided in no formal process for public involvement (28.6%), a formal process not required by legislation (administrative) (35.7%), and a formal process required by legislation (35.7%). Most of the AC-D group had either no formal process for public involvement (33.3%), or a formal process not required by legislation (administrative)
Table 6. Advisory committee - public involvement process cross-tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AC-N</th>
<th>AC-A</th>
<th>AC-D</th>
<th>Total AC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal Process-No (FP-N)</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Process-Administrative (FP-A)</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Process-Legislation (FP-L)</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(60%). Only one respondent in this group has a formal process required by legislation (6.7%).

According to the respondents’ answers, the AC-A group remained largely neutral in the influence of their advisory committees in guiding park policy (Q9) but felt their committees did not guide park budgetary decisions (Q10). AC-A also felt they did not operate independently when making policy decisions (Q11). On the other hand, the AC-D group felt their advisory committees have a significant level of influence in guiding park policy decisions (Q9), and was split on whether they influence park budgetary decisions (Q10). The AC-D group felt they operate independently from the state legislative and executive branches when making policy decisions (Q11).

However, there was no difference between the AC-N, AC-A, and AC-D, groups in how they answered the questions pertaining to strategic management plans, public involvement, and agency accountability (Q 12-15). Those park systems with a strategic management plan felt it provides significant direction to state park policy and budgetary decisions (Q12 and 13). All groups agreed that public involvement plays an important
role in influencing state park policy and decision-making (Q14). All groups also agreed they have formal procedures in place to ensure agency accountability to the public regarding major policy and/or budgetary decisions (Q15).

Also, all groups (AC-N, AC-A and AC-D) agreed that conservation is of high importance relative to other priorities in the park system (Q16). Furthermore, they also agreed that biological inventories are being used to determine the presence of threatened or endangered species and unique or fragile habitat (Q17 and 18). They all disagreed that park managers have the discretion to make decisions impacting natural resources within their park without consulting a regional or state level manager (Q19).

No clear pattern or difference emerged between AC-D, AC-A, and AC-N in category input included in the decision-making process for the strategic management plan (Q22), natural resource conservation (Q23), major new construction (Q24), and substantial improvements or changes for the state park system (Q25). The survey responses revealed that all groups included input from park personnel at the highest rate, with input from park users, general public, environmental organizations, also at a high but somewhat lesser percentage. The other categories generally had input at low percentages for all scenarios. Also, the mechanisms used for public involvement (Q26) varied widely between groups, but they all used public comment period and town or park meetings at a high percentage (tied at averaged at 91.1%), with interactive websites (averaged at 73.3%) and survey questionnaires in parks (averaged at 51.1%). All other mechanisms were used below 50%.

As for the resource management strategies used in the ecologically sensitive areas (Q27), AC-N has the highest percentage of off limits to vehicle or boat traffic and
construction, but the lowest percentage of off limits to foot traffic, the highest of which was held by AC-A. However, AC-A also had two systems that either didn’t know of any ecologically sensitive areas or didn’t know the mechanisms used, if any, and two systems that had no restrictions in ecologically sensitive areas. AC-D had the middle or lowest percentage in all resource management strategies for ecologically sensitive areas and one system that didn’t know the mechanisms used, if any.

**Process for Public Involvement and Two Links**

To determine what effect, if any, the presence of a formal process for public involvement has on conservation policies, the responses from the survey were examined based on the answer to the frequency and percent of public involvement process in state park systems (Table 3, p. 49). Data sets were created with all respondents placed into groups of no formal process (FP-N), formal process not required by legislation but by administrative policy (FP-A), and formal process required by legislation (FP-L). These data sets were then compared for relationships between process for public involvement and strategic management plans and process for public involvement and advisory committees in state park systems.

The state park systems (Table 3, p. 49) indicated 15 park systems have no formal process for public involvement. Twenty-eight park systems have a formal process for public involvement (65.1%) with 8 systems having processes not required by legislation but by administrative policy (18.6%) and 20 systems having processes required by legislation (46.5%).
Table 7 shows the cross-tabulation of public involvement and strategic management plans in state park systems. This table shows 80% of the FP-N group has a strategic management plan with 58.3% of the state parks following the strategic management plan to a considerable degree. The category least utilizing a strategic management plan was the FP-L group at 62.5%, whose strategic management plans are being followed to a considerable degree at the highest rate of 60%.

Table 8 shows the cross-tabulation of public involvement and advisory committee in state park systems. Table 8 shows 40% of those with no formal process for public involvement (FP-N) also had no advisory committee, whereas 47.4% of the FP-A have advisory committees with decision-making authority, and 62.5% of the FP-L have advisory committees that are strictly advisory. Only one park system (12.5%) with a FP-L has an advisory committee with decision-making authority.

When asked if their park system’s advisory committee had significant influence in guiding park policy (Q9) FP-N remained largely neutral while both FP-A and FP-L agreed. All three disagreed with the statement that their committee had significant influence on budgetary decisions (Q10). Both FP-N and FP-A agreed their advisory committees operate independently from the state legislative and executive branches when making policy decisions (Q11). However, FP-L disagreed (half of which strongly disagreed) with this statement.

All three groups agree that their strategic management plans provide significant direction to state park policy decisions (Q12), but only FP-N agrees it provides direction to budgetary decisions (Q13). Both FP-A and FP-L were split on this question, both with equal numbers agreeing and disagreeing, and 3 and 1 systems remaining neutral,
Table 7. Public involvement - strategic management plan cross-tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FP-N</th>
<th>FP-A</th>
<th>FP-L</th>
<th>Total FP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have Strategic Management Plan</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>72.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow to some degree</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow to considerable degree</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. Public involvement - advisory committee cross-tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FP-N</th>
<th>FP-A</th>
<th>FP-L</th>
<th>Total FP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Advisory Committee</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisory Committee-Strictly Advisory</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisory Committee-Decision-Making</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
respectively. FP-L groups strongly agreed that public involvement plays an important role in influencing state park policy and decision-making; the other two groups agreed with this statement (Q14). Similar to above was that FP-L also agreed (half strongly agreed) that their park system has formal procedures in place to ensure agency accountability to the public regarding major policy and/or budgetary decisions (Q15). Both FP-N and FP-A agreed with this statement.

When answering questions about conservation (questions 16-21), all groups strongly agreed that conservation of natural resources is of high importance relative to other priorities in the park system (Q16), FP-L strongly agreed at 75%, compared to FP-N and FP-A with 53.3% and 52.6%, respectively. FP-L strongly agreed or agreed more with the use of biological inventories to determine the presence of threatened or endangered species and unique or fragile habitat (Q17 and 18), and the use of geographic information systems (GIS) as a tool in data management (Q21), than the other two groups. The FP-N and FP-A agreed with these statements, but at a lesser frequency. FP-N were divided on their responses (60% disagreed, 40% agreed) as to whether park managers have discretion to make decisions impacting the natural resources within their park without consulting a regional or state level manager (Q19). This is in sharp contrast to FP-A with 26.3% agreed and 0% agreed by FP-L. When asked about eco-regional planning being an integral part of park planning (Q20), FP-N had more park systems disagreeing with this statement, FP-A had more park systems agreeing, and FP-L’s park systems were evenly split between agreeing and disagreeing; each of these groups had park systems remaining neutral.
It appears from the responses that FP-L group includes input from a greater number of categories in the decision-making process for the strategic management plan (Q22), natural resource conservation (Q23), major new construction (Q24), and substantial improvements or changes for the state park system (Q25). The survey responses revealed that all groups included input from park personnel at the highest rate, with input from park users, general public, and environmental organizations also at a high but somewhat lesser percentage. The other categories generally had input at low percentages (43% or less) for all scenarios. The FP-L group also made use of a greater number of mechanisms for public involvement (Q26), than the other two groups. However, the interactive kiosks and interactive websites are used more by FP-N. Overall, all groups used town or park meetings at the highest percentage (90.7%), followed by town meetings (88.4%), with interactive websites (averaged at 74.4%) and survey questionnaires in parks (51.2%). All other mechanisms were used below 50%.

As for the resource management strategies used in ecologically sensitive areas (Q27), FP-L had the highest percentage and FP-N had the lowest percentage of off limits to vehicle or boat traffic and construction. FP-L had the lowest percentage of off limits to foot traffic, the highest of which was held by FP-N. Only one park system (a FP-L park system) didn’t know of any ecologically sensitive areas. Two park systems, both in the FP-N group, had no restrictions in ecologically sensitive areas. FP-A had two park systems that didn’t know the mechanisms used, if any, for resource management in ecologically sensitive areas.
Conclusions

Combined Findings for State Park Systems

The respondents agreed that conservation, public involvement, and agency accountability were important to their systems. The practices and mechanisms used for conservation (e.g. biological inventories and geographic information systems), and park managers not having discretion on impacting natural resources without prior consultation with system staff, support the statement that conservation is of high importance.

The high percentage of input included in the decision-making processes affecting state parks, and the specific categories, e.g. park personnel, park users, general public, environmental organizations, indicates that a wide variety of input is sought from those most directly affected by actions within the parks, further supporting the statement that public involvement is important. The fact that three-quarters of park systems have formal procedures in place to ensure agency accountability to the public regarding major policy and/or budgetary decisions also supports the statement that public involvement is important.

Apparently over half of the park systems have a strategic management plan that addresses state park policy and budgetary decisions; a lesser number have state park advisory committees that influence park policy, with much fewer addressing budgetary decisions. Still, over half have advisory committees that are reported to operate independently when making policy decisions.
Advisory Committees

Slightly greater than a third (37.7%) of park systems have an advisory committee or commission with decision-making and/or policy setting powers. Depending on how independent these committees are and on the importance of the decisions they influence, these committees or commissions may be very important policy players in their respective states.

Park systems with no advisory committee are more likely to have a strategic management plan, but also less likely to follow it. Just over half of park systems with an advisory committee with strictly advisory powers have a strategic management plan, and they follow it better. Almost three-quarters of park systems with advisory committees with decision-making power have a strategic management plan, but only half of those follow it well. The presence or absence or type of advisory committee did not seem to have an effect on the strategic management plan’s influence on policy and budgetary decisions.

The data showed the park systems with advisory committees with decision-making powers had the highest number of positive responses when asked if their park system’s advisory committee had a significant level of influence on park policy and budgetary decisions. This group also had the highest number of positive responses in operating independently from state legislative and executive branches when making policy decisions.

No clear pattern or difference emerged in the absence or presence or type of advisory committee in public involvement and agency accountability, that is, all groups
agreed public involvement plays an important role in decision-making and felt their system had formal procedures in place to ensure agency accountability.

No clear pattern or difference emerged in the absence or presence or type of advisory committee in the use of conservation mechanisms and practices (biological inventories and geographic information systems, and park manager oversight). However, the use of these mechanisms and practices by all groups supports the statement that conservation is important.

No clear pattern or difference emerged in the absence or presence or type of advisory committee for whose input was included in the decision-making process for the strategic management plan, natural resource conservation, major new construction, and substantial improvements or changes for the state park system.

**Process for Public Involvement**

Those park systems with no formal process for public involvement are more likely to have a strategic management plan but not have an advisory committee. When they do have an advisory committee, it has less influence on park policy. Apparently no formal process for public involvement groups have more strategic management plan influence on both policy and budget.

No clear pattern or difference emerged in the absence or presence or type of formal process for public involvement in their advisory committee’s influence of budgetary decisions, in that no group stated their advisory committees had influence. When there is no formal process for public involvement, or one not required by legislation, there is a greater likelihood their advisory committees operate independently
when making policy decisions; the formal process for public involvement required by legislation group’s advisory committee does not operate independently from those who authorize the public involvement process.

Public involvement is more influential regarding policy and decision-making by states where public involvement is formal and required by legislation compared to other states with public involvement not being formally required. This implies that those park systems where formal process for public involvement is required by legislation also made use of a greater number of mechanisms for public involvement than the other two groups, indicating public involvement is important to them.

When the formal process for public involvement is required by legislation, the park systems indicate they have much better agency accountability, but all groups feel they have some agency accountability.

Those park systems with formal process for public involvement required by legislation have a higher percentage of conservation importance and back it up with biological usage and geographic information systems. They also require park managers to have higher approval before taking actions impacting the natural resources. This group also uses more conservation management strategies than other groups, supporting the statement that conservation is important.

No clear pattern or difference emerged in the absence or presence or type of formal process for public involvement for category input included in the decision-making process for the strategic management plan, natural resource conservation, major new construction, and substantial improvements or changes for the state park system.
The data suggests that those park systems which have a formal process for public involvement, gather public input via a wide array of mechanisms, and include this input into decision-making have a greater likelihood of agency accountability and conservation of ecological resources. Also, even though the FP-L may not have as many park systems with a strategic management plan, those plans are being followed to a higher “considerable degree.” Interestingly, only one formal process required by legislation and advisory committee with decision-making authority park system exists. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to look deeper into that system’s functionality.
CHAPTER 4: PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

Introduction

Knowledge and understanding of the past is implicit to the formation of innovative and effective ideas for the future. It is important to gain a sense of what individuals, institutions and interests were influential in guiding Tennessee State Parks governance systems in the recent past. In particular, it is important to better understand who was involved and what perspectives they held on particular issues and situations to gain greater insight into the decisions and the decision-making processes for Tennessee State Parks. This chapter includes the methods used, analysis of information and conclusions from the personal interviews.

Methods

Nine limited interviews were conducted between November 2004 and June 2005, and included:

- Two employees of environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that were previously and actively involved with Tennessee State Parks issues.
- Five Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) personnel (three current and two past employees).
• Two legislators that hold/held influential and/or knowledgeable positions on state committees or deal/dealt with Tennessee State Parks issues (one current and one past legislator).

All interviews took place as private, in person, one-on-one conversations, with an exception of one private telephone interview.

The interviewees were selected because they were “respondents known to have been involved in a particular experience” to obtain the “subject’s experiences and thought regarding the situations under study” (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 2000, p. 218). The meetings were conducted using a focused, schedule-structured interview process with each respondent being asked the same set of sequential questions (see Appendix 3). However, the respondents were asked to freely add their perspectives on the topics. Additional probe questions were asked of each respondent to obtain richer insight and qualitative information on the subject. These conversations ranged from 45 minutes to 3 hours, and ended when the interviewee felt he/she had nothing more to contribute or had exhausted all of the time set aside for the interview.

According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2000), there are a number of advantages to using the personal interview. They include flexibility in the questioning process in that the interviewer can clarify questions or answers and probe for more information, control of the interview situation, high response rate, and collection of supplementary information to gain fuller information and spontaneous reactions that might be useful in data analysis.
Conversely, the disadvantages to the personal interview include higher financial cost than other types of interviews, interviewer bias, i.e., the interviewer’s personal influence and bias and/or lack of standardization, and a lack of anonymity in that the respondent may feel uncomfortable with the interviewer (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 2000). Another reported downside to the plausibility of verbal interviews is that there is no guarantee that the respondent’s actual behavior will reflect his or her reported behavior. On the other hand, structured questionnaires may provide a better understanding of observed behavior (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 2000).

The questions used for these interviews were rigorously reviewed and reworked by members of this interviewer’s committee to reduce any bias or perceived bias. All interviewees stated they were happy, willing, and/or interested in relating their stories and perspectives of what they knew. Also, to reduce ambiguity and maintain congruity, phrases were defined for the interviewees as listed below:

- “Public involvement” refers to formal or informal ways that individuals/groups attempt to influence decision-making
- A “formal process for public involvement” is one required by either legislation or administrative policy
- A “system-wide strategic management plan” refers to any comprehensive, long-term, system or statewide plan providing general policies and directives for guiding park policy and/or budgetary decisions
• An “advisory board or committee” applies to any state legitimized board organized to provide guidance to a specific park system. The board or committee may or may not arise through legislation, influence budget or policy decisions, have decision-making and/or policy setting powers, and/or operate autonomously from the legislative and executive branches when making decisions.

As previously stated, these reflective conversations were held to document a basic historical synopsis of state park decision-making processes and procedures in Tennessee. More extensive in-depth historical interviews were beyond the scope of this thesis.

Analysis and Findings

All interviewees were quite poignant and knowledgeable in their discussion and insight of past and current problems and issues associated with the Tennessee State Parks system. The interview analysis and findings are presented in two sub-sections, a historical perspective (prior to the current Bredesen administration) followed by a current perspective. The report made in this chapter reflects the statements made by the interviewees, whether specifically stated or not.

Historical Perspective

The past history provided by the interviewers provided insight into the difficulties and struggles of state agency professionals in trying to maintain or improve Tennessee State Parks. According to these interviewees, the concept of “what the state park system
should be” has been an evolving process, with numerous detours, hindrances, and regressions along the way. All categories of interviewees, NGOs, past and current TDEC employees, and legislators provided diverse perspectives on the background, history and management of Tennessee State Parks.

Overall, they all feel Tennessee State Parks are unique places that should be protected and not exploited, and the legislators have a fiduciary responsibility to the people of Tennessee to provide for this as directed by the Organic Act of 1937 and the Tennessee State Parks Mission Statement. The Organic Act of 1937 states, “every park under the provisions of this chapter shall be preserved in a natural condition so far as may be consistent with its human use and safety and all improvements shall be of such character as not to lessen its inherent recreational value.” The mission of Tennessee State Parks is to “preserve and protect in perpetuity, unique examples of natural, cultural, and scenic areas, and to provide a variety of safe, quality outdoor experiences through a well-planned and professionally managed system of state parks.”

Interviewees from each category indicated that early on in the 1970’s through the 1980’s, the Tennessee State Parks system was undefined in what it was and what it should be. The idea was to be “everything to everybody” which encompassed developing and maintaining a multi-functional park system with different classifications of parks that would meet the needs of different individuals in each of the three geographic regions of Tennessee. However, conservation and recreation programs were not well developed. There was no definition, perceived incompatibility, or separation of natural resource based recreation (e.g. hiking and canoeing) from other sports programs (e.g. tennis and golf).
The evolving concept of what state parks should be was shaped by each administration. Gov. Alexander (1979-1987) emphasized scenic trails and rivers, and natural areas. He increased land acquisition, planning, capital improvement programs and park maintenance.

Gov. McWherter (1987-1995) reorganized the Tennessee Department of Conservation and Tennessee Department of Health and Environment to become the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, placing the Tennessee State Parks system under this department. It was stated that McWherter would have preferred to place Tennessee State Parks under tourism, but encountered strong opposition. Strategic management plans were created for each park, with public meetings held to gain comment on these plans. It was reported these meetings were heavily attended by those supporting ATV (all-terrain vehicles), OHV (off-highway vehicles), golf courses, and other special projects, and these groups’ interests overshadowed conservation groups’ statements. The McWherter administration had a strong emphasis on parks producing revenue, with a lesser importance of protecting natural resources and adhering to the mission statement.

During the McWherter administration, the concept and development of the Bear Trace golf courses, conference centers and resort inn expansions was begun. Concerned about the focus on park development, a lawsuit was filed in January 1995 by Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning versus TDEC, and individually against (McWherter appointee) TDEC Commissioner J.W. Luna, Commissioner of TN Department of Finance and Administration David Manning, and State Architect Mike Fitts. The plaintiff grievance was that TDEC was developing the state parks counter to the
protection legislated by the Organic Act of 1937. This suit was dismissed by an administrative judge.

However, one interviewee believes the McWherter administration brought about a new beginning for the Tennessee State Parks system by helping to shape and define it and included public involvement and strategic management plans. Overall, processes were established, but more definition and refinement was needed.

The statement was made by an interviewee that Gov. Sundquist embraced Gov. McWherter’s concept of increased development of the Tennessee State Parks system. Furthermore, all interviewees agreed in their statements that Gov. Sundquist (1995-2003) worked to systematically dismantle the existing park system by abolishing programs, dispersing employees, and eventually unjustifiably closing fourteen state parks in 2001. Interviewees uniformly concentrated their historical discussion on the two Sundquist administrations, and for that reason the remainder of this discussion on the historical perspective is in reference to the Sundquist administrations.

During the Sundquist administrations, interviewees stated there was little emphasis on natural resource protection. Instead, parks were looked at as commodities that needed to produce revenue and become self-sufficient. It was during this time period that significant expansion and construction occurred in already developed state parks. One of the most frustrating situations to all those interviewed, was the way in which the decisions for the development occurred. All interviewed concurred that these decisions were supported by a few people with no natural resource background, who were political appointees to the park system or TDEC. It was stated that legislators would consult with these political appointees, instead of the park professionals, to gather information about
issues surrounding the state parks. It was reported that legislators would receive politically biased information from the appointees rather than science-based or those that reflected public sentiment. The interviewees were dismayed that the final decisions made by the legislature in approving funding for development, were made without taking public input into consideration. This occurred even though development was taking place on public parks and being paid for by public money. Also, natural resources and fragile ecosystems were being destroyed or damaged in the development process. The feeling by the interviewees was that the spirit and function of the Organic Act and the mission statement were heavily violated. All interviewees conveyed their belief that these actions were an abuse of publicly held lands as well as the very system and processes that were charged in protecting these lands and serving the people of Tennessee.

During this timeframe, it was stated that the overarching direction of the Tennessee State Parks system was to drive the parks to become commercial, revenue producers with the goal of self-sufficiency. An interviewee stated these decisions to build the golf courses were conducted “in the dark.” This interviewee was informed by a contractor that the request for proposal (RFP) process was written and arranged for a particular contractor to win the bidding process. It was further stated that the golf course lobbyists had a great deal of influence in decisions that were being made, and golf courses, lodges, and swimming pools were pushed as revenue enhancers.

These actions prompted a coalition to form among NGOs and included Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning (TCWP), Sierra Club, Tennessee Conservation Voters (TCV), Tennessee Environmental Council (TEC), and the Tennessee Recreation and
Parks Association to combat what they felt was a misuse of power. The coalition began hosting public forums to bring state park issues to the public and gather public information. Officials from Tennessee State Parks were invited to attend, and then TDEC Commissioner Wilson accepted the invitation to co-sponsor the first forum. Four forums were held between 1996 and 1999, with TDEC cooperation being sporadic. Four interviewees stated that public input gathered was not being used by Tennessee State Parks in their decisions. This became evident via the Master Plan for Tennessee State Parks 1999-2009, parts of which proposed significant development including additional golf courses and further expansion of “resort parks.” These proposals did not reflect, and were actually contrary to, the gathered public comments and opinions, and according to one interviewee, were included by the Sundquist administration and its TDEC appointees. One interviewee stated the coalition became frustrated and tired of working so hard with no concrete results or inclusion into the state park decision-making processes.

During this time, according to two interviewees, some legislators became quite concerned about the way the Tennessee State Parks system was being handled, developed, and misused. It became clear to these interviewees that fiscal issues were severely and negatively directing park policy. Lack of adequate state park funding “impacts the ability to accomplish the mission” leaving the individual parks and collective system vulnerable, with no formalized agency accountability. It was reported as an attempt to rectify this situation, Sen. Bud Gilbert, introduced legislation (SB 1856 – HB 1933) in 1997 to remove Tennessee State Parks from TDEC to provide greater autonomy and financial independence, make permanent the public forums for creating a
Master Plan and create a board from the public domain. Overall the bill was designed to formalize processes and gain greater clout in Tennessee State Parks decision-making and accountability, operating similar to the Tennessee Wildlife and Resources Agency (TWRA). This bill, backed by NGOs, was defeated three years in a row. Two interviewees offered reasons for the defeat of SB 1856 and stated the legislature will not relinquish the power they hold over the state park system, partly because “state parks is a gift that legislators give themselves.” Park developments are championed by legislators, can provide jobs for constituents, and then authorized structures are named for the legislator, thereby leaving a legacy.

All interviewees concur that much damage was done to the state park system during and as a result of the Sundquist administrations’ actions. Three TDEC commissioners and three State Park Directors were appointed during the Sundquist administrations, none of which had a natural resource background. Justin Wilson, TDEC Commissioner and Walter Butler, TDEC Assistant Commissioner, attended the first of the public forums and seemed to welcome and appreciate the public involvement and planning aspects of the state parks. However, both were replaced, and Milton Hamilton, who had served many years in the legislature and was near retirement, was installed as the TDEC Commissioner. It was stated by two interviewees that Mr. Hamilton was basically a good man, but was used in this position to allow the destruction of the state park system. However, another interviewee felt Mr. Hamilton operated in secret with no transparency, stating he would meet with NGOs but was clearly irritated with them. It was also a widely held perspective that Mark Williams, eventual Director of Parks, was brought in by Sundquist as the “hatchet man.” It was stated that it was he who
spearheaded dividing program services, transferred personnel, dissolved the interpretive specialists, planning and natural resource groups, supported increased development, and refused public participation and ideas from NGOs for visitation analysis and impact studies. His actions supported development over natural resources management. An interviewee stated, “Mark Williams didn’t know about parks and didn’t care—he wasn’t there to care.”

Interviewees were unanimous in their statements about Tennessee State Parks personnel and differentiated them from the political appointees that wielded the power to create and change state park policy. The sense was that staff who had a parks, recreation, or natural resource background were good people, working hard for the park system and individual state parks, with a fair grasp of what the parks should be, but felt completely powerless during this time. Personnel morale was reported to be low and a sense of uncertainty about their future and the future integrity of the state park system and individual parks was reported to prevail. The personnel also went through great frustration in the dismantling and reorganization of the state park system. Many jobs were terminated, staff resigned and others were reassigned to different groups or positions.

One interviewee discussed how, during this time, different state park personnel would come forward anonymously to an NGO to provide information they felt should become public. Information provided by them was passed along to specific newspapers and journalists across the state who were helpful in exposing state park problems and issues. The feeling was these issues could be promoted from the outside by the public, but not from the inside by the staff. These employees were fearful of losing their jobs or
being transferred and did not feel they had open lines of communication to their decision-making, political superiors.

All interviewees stated in one way or another that the previous administration was breaking, dismantling, destroying, bankrupting, or tearing apart the park system. These actions culminated with the closing of fourteen state parks in 2001, but not before the legislature tried in vain to strip the Governor and TDEC of the power to do so. The park closures were widely seen by the interviewees as a direct political response to legislators who refused to support tax increases and/or Gov. Sundquist’s budget requests. Two interviewees expanded on this to say that no “resort parks” were closed. One interviewee further stated no park closures occurred in counties where pro-income tax legislators resided and offered the following specific incidence. An east Tennessee senator made a disparaging remark about Gov. Sundquist, and the next day, a park in his district (Ft. Loudoun) was scheduled to close. The parks were supposedly closed to save money, but one interviewee was adamant that “not one penny was saved” by these actions, and these specific parks were targeted for political retaliation and not to meet any real budgetary need.

**Contemporary Perspective**

All interviewees concur that under the current administration (Bredesen 2003-present) there is a high level of respect for, adherence to, and guidance by the State Park Mission Statement. Interviewees from all categories believe that “things are better now” and that natural resource decisions are given high priority, with protection as the goal. All interviewees strongly believed that the first and foremost goal for Tennessee State
Parks should be to follow the first part of the mission statement to “preserve and protect in perpetuity, unique examples of natural, cultural, and scenic areas…” One interviewee stated that natural resource issues historically were given low priority, but this administration has elevated them to a high priority. It was also stated that Tennessee State Parks is in a proactive, rather than a reactive mode at this time, with planning, cultural and interpretive programs, and All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory (ATBI) projects moving forward.

The interviewees are all relieved that park managers and those in higher key positions in the state park system have a natural resource, conservation, parks or recreation background, as opposed to being a political appointee with a hotel, tourism industry, or other unrelated background. Future administrations, however, do not have to abide by this educational requirement, leaving the positions vulnerable to their discretion.

All interviewees discussed the situation that currently exists in that Tennessee State Parks teams and professional personnel groups are being reassembled to utilize the years of collective knowledge that exist within them. Furthermore, park managers now report to three professionally trained regional park managers, instead of one, as in previous administrations. Personnel morale is high and all interviewees were thrilled and relieved that Jim Fyke was appointed to the newly elevated position of Deputy Commissioner of State Parks [and subsequently TDEC Commissioner]. They feel Jim Fyke brings credibility and helps to restore trust in the park system, citing his past job performance in Nashville and his background in parks and natural resources. Also, a new position of Director of Natural and Cultural Resource Management has been created, demonstrating, as stated by one interviewee, the importance these resources have to this
administration. As a result, the state park system is functioning better, despite being short-staffed and perennially underfunded. The feeling is that the personnel and funding will eventually be available to tackle the problems and improve situations. All interviewees give primary credit for this turnabout to Gov. Bredesen and Jim Fyke, and then to the professionals they have placed in key positions in TDEC and Tennessee State Parks.

It was pointed out by one interviewee that one of the more prominent issues now present, is the conversion of the parks from visitor demand to a natural resource based emphasis, dependent on what cultural and/or natural resources are significant within a given park. This interviewee stated it was important for Tennessee State Parks not to become or follow the idea of “fashion parks,” providing areas for the “sport d’jour” such as tennis, golf, skate board or roller blades, and that these things were best left to urban parks or local governments. In addition, most interviewees from all categories were adamant about not having the parks turn into revenue producing businesses or allowing businesses within their boundaries. One interviewee stated that when parks provide services as a business, it puts them in direct competition with the private sector and makes them stray from the state park mission statement. They mostly felt that the business of business should be left to the outside community (with the possible exception of marinas), and that parks should remain largely undeveloped with a high degree of natural resource integrity for people to experience, appreciate and enjoy. It was stated that these decisions and past mindset of parks being revenue producers were part of the previous problem with the over development of state parks. It was further stated that
decisions concerning the usage of the natural resources in park and natural areas will
drive the future direction of development or conservation of Tennessee State Parks.

Public involvement and agency accountability appear to still be inadequate,
according to multiple statements from interviewees from each of the categories. Two
interviewees felt there is currently better rapport between the public and TDEC
Commissioner Jim Fyke, with one stating that NGOs have access to him, he listens and
has the backing of the Governor. However, concern was expressed about the pressure to
build yet another “resort park” in east Tennessee (which currently does not have one),
and the feeling that certain legislators who want this have direct access to Gov. Bredesen.
Also, and perhaps more importantly, are the statements given by two interviewees that
the coalition of NGOs, and these particular interviewees, are currently not involved with
state park issues. The reasons given by one interviewee for the NGOs non-involvement
was the NGOs were worn out from previous confrontations and are currently “taking a
breather since no one is mad.” Another interviewee stated NGOs and individuals are
allowing Commissioner Fyke to get “settled in.” Also, these two interviewees feel that
everything is better now since TDEC and the Tennessee State Parks system are more
responsive, and they moved on to other things. They did not know of current public
involvement or mechanisms used in the state park decision-making process, stated there
are no current lines of communication between Tennessee State Parks and NGOs, and
they are not being consulted for their opinions on issues. However, they also stated they
have access to specific people (as well as the Commissioner) within TDEC to talk with if
needed, but generally feel like everything is alright because TDEC and the state park
system have some good people in place they trust.
Other interviewees were somewhat more knowledgeable about current public involvement but were divided as to whether or not it is currently adequate. There was a general consensus among interviewees that Tennessee State Parks and TDEC are both much more responsible and conscientious about the decisions being made and are more accountable to the public. Four interviewees stated that public involvement occurs in many ways and noted Friends Groups, lobbying, contacting legislators, or participation in rulemaking hearings. Two interviewees believed that public input and accountability were adequate, specifically citing the new Tennessee State Parks position of Friends Groups/Volunteer Coordinator, the increase in park Friends Groups and the Friends Group conference held in October 2004 as the primary reason. These Friends Groups exist across the state, help with projects and expenses and also serve as watchdogs of the agency, thereby increasing accountability. However, an interviewee stated the program is also fragmented, only about a year old and will take time to grow in force and gain power. Three other interviewees stated that public involvement and input is still lacking and much more improvement is needed. One interviewee cited that the lack of a formalized public involvement process has an overall negative effect on the park system and that incorporating public input can be difficult because of the lack of ground rules. This person was concerned that without more public involvement, people are not aware of what the parks are, and current and limited marketing promotes cabins, inns, and golf courses, but not the natural authenticity of the parks. Concern was also raised about the lack of a public relations staff that could be utilized to collect social data on state park visitors, including demographics, comments and suggestions. Two interviewees
mentioned the fact that Tennessee State Parks will be holding public forums in 2005, which should provide valuable information.

Two categories of interviewees were in agreement that public involvement is not adequate at this time. It was stated that even though public involvement is required by law, the system does a poor job of including it. One interviewee felt public comments and direct calls to legislators provide the most effective form of public input, but public input and involvement is also accomplished via NGOs, user and Friends Groups, and neighborhood community groups at the individual state park level. It was also stated that the public needs to trust the [park] professionals in the system to do the right thing in managing the state parks.

Interviewees gave insight as to their perspective on public input, with one interviewee believing many legislators feel it’s a “burden” to stop and get input. One interviewee explained legislators often “forget to gather public input,” because the legislators believe they have all the answers. This interviewee believed that legislators feel gathering public input is time consuming, difficult and produces limited information, some of which is used, and some discarded. This interviewee continued to say the gathering of information is sometimes an exercise of going through the motions to meet requirements or demand, with no real meaning or intent of utilizing the collected data. Furthermore, it was stated when public input is gathered, some legislators feel their efforts are not appreciated or are accused of not doing enough; they cannot win either way. However, the majority of interviewees stated they believe gathering public input is an important obligation to the public and should be taken seriously.
All interviewees agreed that agency accountability is lacking and, without greater public involvement, Tennessee State Parks remains open to scrutiny. However, new programs and mechanisms are being added incrementally, such as individual park Friends Groups and All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory, which will serve to help keep the agency focused on its mission statement. Three interviewees expressed the need for strong agency accountability to the public, stating the citizens of Tennessee are the true owners of the state parks and lands, which have been paid for and maintained by tax dollars. This accountability becomes increasingly important in land acquisition for new parks, creating connectivity in park lands for wildlife corridors, maintaining existing properties and boundary integrity, working with existing land management groups such as The Nature Conservancy, Tennessee Valley Authority and/or Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, and especially in communicating with the rising population on how the park properties are and will be managed.

Inherent to the accountability issue is the funding process for the Tennessee State Parks system, which the interviewees unanimously believe consistently hurts the state parks. According to the interviewees, the funding issues are actually two separate problems. The first is basic funding for the state park system, which they all believe to be much lower than actually needed to provide for maintenance, staff, programs and growth within the system. Secondly, the interviewees brought up the need for funding via an independent or autonomous source from the legislature, such as a dedicated tax or an oversight model. Both of these will be discussed in later paragraphs.

It was stated the state park system needs long term structural funding, instead of the short term, piecemeal, static funding they currently have to work with. The need to
de-politicize the funding and oversight of the state park system was brought up many times. It was stated by two interviewees that some legislators view individual state parks in their districts as development opportunities to provide jobs to constituents via pork barrel projects that are highly subject to trade-offs.

The creation of a state park oversight board similar to TWRA current model was discussed by five interviewees representing each category. This model would include a specialized board with prominent stakeholders, professional staff, and an independent funding source. It is felt by some that this model would provide better policy and management to oversee the state parks and serve the taxpayers interests. However, it was also stated by one interviewee that the legislators would not acquiesce to this for reasons stated previously; legislators will not relinquish the power they currently hold over the Tennessee State Parks system.

Another stated possibility is to create a separate funding source similar to the funding mechanisms used by the TWRA in which fishers and hunters provide money for TWRA. One interviewee suggested that an independent sales tax on birdseed, outdoor products, or real estate could help fund the state park system.

Most interviewees felt the lack of a system-wide strategic management plan also hurt the Tennessee State Parks system. Most made similar statements that a strategic management plan provides overall management, strategy, goals and objectives, and the lack of one makes it harder to effectively adhere to Tennessee State Parks mission statement. This was seen by some as the state losing an opportunity to make its park system the best system in the country by not having a long range vision based on the “incredible natural resources” found in Tennessee State Parks. It was also stated by
many that each park needs to have its own individual park plan, in addition to a system-wide strategic management plan. However, one interviewee believes there is no need for a system-wide strategic management plan due to the diverse nature of each park, and that planning should instead be accomplished by individual park plans.

Conclusions

All of the interviewees were quite pragmatic in their statements in that they all realize the shortcomings and pitfalls of the current system. Most interviewees agree that this administration has its hands full recreating what was dismantled and “destroyed” by the previous administration, e.g. recreating functioning programs, processes, and groups of employees with profound institutional knowledge of the Tennessee State Parks system.

Most of the interviewees agreed on several items, most notably, the current administration (Bredesen) seems to care more about and is doing a better job of running the Tennessee State Parks system than the previous one (Sundquist). As a result of efforts being made, the interviewees believe the parks, processes, quality and morale of employees are improving. They feel natural resource and park professionals are in key positions and the mission statement is currently guiding the state park system.

The overarching concern of those interviewed is the lack of willingness by the Tennessee state government to write into law, a strong mechanism designed to void politics from Tennessee State Parks decisions and actions, and provide for sustainable funding. The consensus among the interviewees was that some sort of oversight system is greatly needed that largely removes the politics from state park decision-making to keep the past from recurring. Furthermore, interviewees feel it is important to create and
pass legislation for effective public involvement, agency accountability to the public, professional qualifications for key employees, and make conservation a major priority per the Organic Act and the Tennessee State Parks Mission Statement. Without this mechanism and legislation, it appeared to those interviewed that any improvements made could be carelessly and somewhat easily reversed.

All voiced concern over the processes used to finance the Tennessee State Parks system. Concerns include transparency, legislator’s motives, power and agenda, executive agendas, lack of funding and lack of a plan for sustainable funding for maintaining and growing the current park system. Furthermore, the majority of the interviewees believe that the lack of funding combined with too few professional staff are fundamental and regressive issues that the legislature refuses to address or correct.

In taking full view of what the interviewees have said, it is evident that there is a tremendous amount of work and energy being exerted by TDEC employees to try to rebuild the state park system and make it more effective (address mission and goals) and more efficient (making most efficient use of fiscal and other resources). The majority of interviewees believe Tennessee State Parks employees are working as hard, fast and long as they can, within what may be a limited period of time, to build a system that reflects the mission statement.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“…we have not inherited the earth from our parents, we have borrowed it from our children.”

—World Conservation Union 1980

Research Findings: Governance, Processes, and Lessons Learned

Literature Review

The literature review reveals a general lack of existing research on state park governance. It also exposes the lack of and support for mechanisms for meeting public needs at the state level. Three concepts continue to emerge in the reviewed literature. They are a shift to and need for (1) partnership models for park governance, (2) more effective and accountable government, and (3) increased capacity building of the public and government agencies to work effectively together.

Partnership models are structures linking government agencies with the public sector for the purpose of increasing public input, improving decision-making and conflict resolution. According to the literature, partnership models are increasingly being implemented at the state level, in part, to help meet the public’s needs. The literature suggests that the increasing use of these partnership models supports a shift in land management from an authoritative and managerial approach to participatory governance. Literature writings state that democratic procedures will not be fully functional without public input and participation, further supporting partnership models. Beierle and
Cayford (2002) state these models are increasingly being used with generally good results for the planning and management of publicly owned resources like parklands.

The literature also calls for agencies and government to be more effective and accountable to the public with greater public scrutiny, transparency, hard (required or legislated) accountability, and facilitated rulemaking. Public involvement is again discussed in the literature as an integral part of holding government officials and agency actions accountable.

Finally, the literature supports capacity building in the individual and community to further strengthen governance function and accountability. This capacity building is largely accomplished, according to the literature, through informing and educating the public and key factions of civil society. The literature links the processes used in partnership models, more effective and accountable government, and increased capacity building as particularly important to environmental decision-making and democratic governance.

**Survey of State Park Directors**

The collective results from the Survey of State Park Directors reveal three main reoccurring structures that appear to be most advantageous to conservation preservation and protection in park systems. They are (1) an advisory committee with decision-making power, (2) a formal process for public involvement, and (3) a system-wide strategic management plan. Furthermore, the survey shows a linkage between the presence of these structures and their usage in guiding state park systems.
According to the survey, the advisory committee with decision-making powers (AC-D) has greater influence on park policy and budgetary decisions and operates with greater independence when compared to the advisory committee with strictly advisory powers (AC-A). The survey results also show the advisory committee with decision-making powers (AC-D) utilizes mechanisms for public involvement and conservation of natural resources. The survey results suggest the use of a legislated formal process for public involvement (FP-L) provides for greater use of mechanisms for including input from the public, greater agency accountability, and greater use of conservation management strategies.

Survey results show over two-thirds (71.7%) of the state park systems have and utilize strategic management plans. Of those state parks with strategic management plans, the survey shows over two-thirds (70.3%) of the state park’s plans influence park policy and over half (55.6%) influence park budgetary decisions. Survey responses suggest a linkage between strategic management plans and advisory committees as governing structures. It appears that different structures can be implemented for managing the state park system and utilized to meet its needs. For example, according to survey results, a direct relationship exists between the absence of an advisory committee and the presence of a strategic management plan suggesting the use of differing structures providing guidance to park systems. A strategic management plan may act in place of an advisory committee, somewhat filling management voids. This is further supported in that there is little difference in survey responses between parks using different advisory committees (no advisory committee, advisory committee with strictly advisory powers or advisory committee with decision-making powers) and their actions related to the
importance of conservation. Also, the survey shows those groups with no formal process for public involvement are more likely to not have an advisory committee and more likely to have a strategic management plan reflecting managerial rather than participatory governance mechanisms.

The survey results show that most park systems have room for improvement in doing more to protect ecologically sensitive areas given their statements of conservation being of high importance. This became evident from survey results from question 27 in what restrictions are used in ecologically sensitive areas. Over a quarter of the U.S. park systems (28.3%) do not restrict construction in ecologically sensitive areas, and over half of the park systems (58.7%) allow foot-traffic in these areas.

**Personal Interviews**

The statements from the personal interviews pointed to two overarching needs for the Tennessee State Parks system. These are the need for (1) comprehensive and independent system-wide decision-making to guide the state park system and (2) a reliable funding source.

The interviewees felt that such decision-making needs to be established by legislation, shielding it from future administrative changes and swings. The interviewees also felt this model needed to have decision-making authority, operate independently from both legislative and executive branches, and adhere to preserving and protecting the ecosystem and natural resources as the main obligation of the state park system. Furthermore, they would like to see this decision-making authority require the creation and implementation of mechanisms for strategic management planning, effective and
continuing public involvement, transparency of operations, agency accountability to the public, and professional qualifications for key employees (e.g. directors and managers, including park managers).

The interviewees felt that many of the state park system’s problems are linked to the lack of reliable, stable and sufficient financial support for the state parks. They stated the funding mechanism needs to be less vulnerable to political maneuvers and manipulation to allow the parks to operate more efficiently and effectively and adhere to the Organic Act and the mission statement. Furthermore, this would allow park professionals to make decisions and actions on good science and public values rather than political influence. The interviewees felt this would help to prevent the future abuse of the state park system and further development and/or exploitation of individual parks and natural areas.

The combined results of the three sections of the research are, from the literature review, (1) partnership models, (2) more effective and accountable government, (3) increased capacity building; from the survey, (1) an advisory committee with decision-making authority, (2) a formal process for public involvement, and (3) a system-wide strategic management plan; and from the personal interviews, (1) a decision-making model and (2) a reliable funding source. These concepts point to a desire for a process that is less political and managerial, but rather a more participatory approach to governance. These concepts will be further discussed in recommendations.
Current Tennessee State Parks Governance

Just as knowledge and understanding of the past is important, so too is gaining a sense of the present to create innovative and effective ideas for the future. To fully appreciate the research findings and properly apply them to the Tennessee State Parks system, it is important to understand the current situation in Tennessee State Parks governance.

Modifications have been implemented within TDEC to provide the basic organizational structures to provide for a more effective chain of command, and improve conservation management and accountability. Previously dispersed workgroups and long-time park professionals have been regrouped, allowing their collective institutional knowledge to greatly benefit the park system. Also, key positions are now staffed with trained park or natural resource management professionals. However, current staffing and funding is still not adequate to meet the required assignments and goals. For example, the planning department has requested the addition of staff positions which have yet to be approved or funded. Due to this lack of staff and funding, the new public forums scheduled to begin in spring 2005 have not begun and may or may not be held by autumn 2005 (TDEC official, personal communication, June 2005).

According to Tennessee’s response to the Survey of Park Directors, the state does not currently have a strategic management plan, does have an advisory committee that is strictly advisory, and does have a formal process for public involvement that is required by legislation.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Tennessee does have a Master Plan for State Parks 1999-2009, and although the park system may be implementing some of what is
recommended in the plan, the plan is not being followed to any significance. The 4-year
Strategic Plan that it was to be a part was completed in 1999 but was never fully
implemented or followed (TDEC official, personal communication, June 2005).

The TDEC Conservation Committee acts as an advisory committee to all of
TDEC, including the Tennessee State Parks system; no advisory committee is specific to
the state park system. This committee was formed in 1953 (by Public Acts Chapter
248, Sub Title 2) and is currently scheduled to sunset in September 2009 (Carol H.
Thompson, personal communication, July 2005). The Conservation Commission’s
mission is to “serve as an avenue to promote the protection and preservation of
Tennessee’s natural and cultural resources though guidance, direction and
communication between local communities and the Tennessee Department of
Environment and Conservation” (Conservation Commission’s Mission Statement). Its
function is “to make such studies and recommendations concerning the conservation
program and policies as it may deem appropriate to a sound conservation program”
(Tennessee Code Annotated 11-2-101, p. 310). The commission functions only in an
advisory capacity and has no decision-making powers. The fifteen members are
appointed by the governor, serve a three year term, meet quarterly or as called by the
chair, and are compensated only for actual traveling expenses for attendance at meetings.
The TDEC commissioner is ex-officio member (Tennessee Code Annotated 11-2-101).
The meetings and list of commission committee members are open to the public (Carol
H. Thompson, personal communication, November 2004).

However, there are no qualifications of any kind listed for commission members
in Tennessee Code Annotated 11-2-101 or Tennessee Conservation Commission By-
Laws. With no statement made pertaining to a preferred background or experience for commission members, those appointed and given the responsibility to advise, guide, direct, study and recommend may lack expertise and formal education in natural resource or park management. Furthermore, little was said about this advisory committee by the interviewees, and what was stated was negative. One interviewee stated the Conservation Committee is not particularly effective and has no formal oversight on budget. Another interviewee opined the current Conservation Commission is set up for failure; the appointment of three years gives the members little chance of understanding the mission or of being efficient in the function of their duties. A third interviewee stated she had no information about or access to the Conservation Committee.

The Survey of State Park Directors response from Tennessee stated the advisory committee (Conservation Committee) has a significant level of influence in guiding park policy but not budgetary decisions. The response was neutral when asked if it operated independently from the state legislative and executive branches when making policy decisions.

Tennessee’s public involvement process is legislated by Tennessee Code Annotated 11-3-120, requiring public hearings to be held in each of the nine development districts in Tennessee for creating a master plan for Tennessee. According to the survey response, it was agreed that public involvement plays an important role in influencing state park policy and decision-making in Tennessee. However, few categories’ (e.g. park personnel, park users) input were included in the decision-making processes affecting natural resource conservation, major new construction, or substantial improvements to infrastructure within the state parks. Park personnel’s input was included in each case,
with park users and gateway community leaders’ (the only other categories checked) input being included once each. According to these responses, Tennessee ranks as one of the states including the least amount of public input into these decisions. Also, Tennessee tied for the second lowest of all states in the use of mechanisms for public involvement. This supports the statement in Chapter 1 that public and stakeholder involvement mechanisms are mandated but are not in place and input is not routinely gathered. The newly created Tennessee State Parks Friends Groups/Volunteer Coordinator actively works to establish individual park Friends Groups and acts as a liaison between these groups and the park system. However, as stated by an interviewee, the Friends Group program is still fragmented, only about a year old and will take time to grow in force and gain power.

According to the survey, conservation of Tennessee’s natural resources is of the highest importance relative to other priorities in the park system. The use of biological inventories and conservation management strategies used in ecologically sensitive areas support this statement. However, additional mechanisms are not being used to the full extent, such as eco-regional planning and geographic information systems.

**Recommendations for Tennessee State Parks Governance**

The overall research points to and supports the following recommendations for a process that is less political and managerial, and more participatory in its approach to governance. There exists a need for (1) comprehensive and independent system-wide decision-making and (2) a reliable funding source.
Comprehensive, system-wide thinking and decisions are needed to ensure inclusion of sociological, economic and environmental aspects of state park issues for a system that operates and plans on a state-wide level. Individual state parks are interconnected to and function as a part of the whole state park system, not as local islands. While the usage of individual parks may reflect local desires, these uses should reflect and comply with the comprehensive system-wide framework of the state park system.

To facilitate the implementation of concepts and decisions, an independent, less politically vulnerable, decision-making organization could be created by the legislature. This organization would be guided by the Organic Act of 1937 and the Tennessee State Parks Mission Statement, good science and best-management practices, and have the protection and preservation of natural resources/ecosystem as the main obligation of the state park system. This organization would be comprised of qualified individuals with natural resource/conservation or park planning/management backgrounds and/or degrees. These individuals need to be appointed by various authorities for the organization to remain balanced, e.g. three members each appointed by executive, legislative, business/industry, environmental NGOs, Friends Groups, or the public at large.

Two main duties of this organization would be (1) policy decision-making and (2) funding. The organization would be charged with the creation of an independent, reliable, stable and sufficient financial support mechanism for the state park system. This organization would also create and implement mechanisms for strategic management planning, effective and sustaining public involvement, transparency of operations including structured agency accountability to the public, professional qualifications for
key employees (e.g. directors, managers, including park managers), and mechanisms to retain long-term professional park employees, including providing civil service protection.

Additionally, the research findings reveal reoccurring concerns for (1) public involvement and (2) agency accountability and their effects on (3) conservation. This research upholds the importance of rectifying Tennessee’s lack of mechanisms for gathering and including public input and encouraging public involvement in its decision-making processes. This research also supports at least three major points, listed below, for agencies to consider when dealing with public lands and natural resources. To attempt to improve public involvement, gather more effective public input, and foster better working relationships between and among stakeholders and institutions, the following recommendations are put forth. (1) Design and implement a planning and management model that ensures the incorporation of public values into decisions while improving the substantive quality of decisions. (2) Design and implement mechanisms that improve and build relationships that include resolving conflict and building trust among competing stakeholder interests and between stakeholders and agencies/institutions. (3) Design and implement mechanisms to increase capacity of the public to be a more effective partner/collaborator through education and information, and of agencies/government to be a more effective partner/collaborator through the development of accountability mechanisms that meet specific minimum standards and goals.

Taken as a whole, these above recommendations call for a partnership model for state park governance linking government legislative, administrative, and respective
agencies with the civic/public sector for the planning and management of publicly owned and/or managed park and natural areas. These recommendations will further provide better policy and management to oversee the parks and better serve the taxpayer. All of the above recommendations are supported by the literature, surveys and personal interviews.

**Concluding Reflections**

Achieving the above recommendations will, in itself, possibly become a long arduous task requiring effective planning and tenacious players. From this research, it appears to be extremely important to craft a public relations position within Tennessee State Parks to educate the legislators and the NGOs as to what the state park system and individual state park needs are. There seems to be a disconnect between what the TDEC employees see as the needs, what the NGOs currently know about the needs, and what the legislators are willing to do to meet the needs of the state park system. Many TDEC interviewees feel there now exists a window of opportunity to reshape the state park system into a more stable, efficient, and more ecosystem friendly organization.

During this time, legislators must be educated to understand the basic and requisite needs for the state park system, especially the logic of and need for system-wide park planning. This education will be imperative to convince the legislators to approve an independent, self-sustaining, decision-making organization to oversee the Tennessee State Parks system. Coupled with this, public relations personnel must also educate the NGOs and Friends Groups as to the benefits of these goals and timeliness of their actions, and gather their active and vocal support to help convince the legislators to act. The
NGOs and Friends Groups are a vital link to the protection of the park lands, and their presence is greatly needed. Tennessee State Parks are considered the crown gems in a bejeweled state; tremendous work is needed to enable them to shine to their full potential.

This research recommends specific mechanisms be implemented and followed to ensure adherence to established guiding principles. However, no matter how good a system may be, it is subject to human interpretation, implementation, use and abuse. It is easy to discuss improvements for ecosystems management, but the actual creation and implementation of even a well-defined and executed process encounters unforeseeable problems, requiring protracted and resourceful solutions. Focus, flexibility and fairness are essential elements to any process before any successful results can occur.

Our legislators and Governor are elected representatives of the people of Tennessee and carry the political responsibility for overseeing public lands. The citizenry also bears responsibility in ensuring accountability of their elected and appointed officials, and sound mechanisms and processes are needed to enable their actions and empower their position. Tennessee’s strong guiding principles for the state park system are the Organic Act and Tennessee State Parks Mission Statement. Processes are still needed to ensure the fair and self-less interpretation of these principles by responsible legislative and executive branches, a diverse and active public, and legislated accountability procedures. These are vital to an equitable process guaranteeing adherence to preserving and protecting in perpetuity the natural conditions and inherent recreational value of Tennessee State Parks and natural areas.
REFERENCES


Mascarenhas, Michael and Rik Scarce. “‘The Intention Was Good’: Legitimacy, Consensus-Based Decision Making, and the Case of Forest Planning in British Columbia, Canada” Society and Natural Resources 17 (2004): 17-38.


Tennessee Code Annotated 11-2-101

Tennessee Code Annotated 11-3-120.

Tennessee Public Act of 1937.


Thompson, Carol H. Personal communication. 23 November 2004, 8 July 2005.

APPENDIX 1:

Form B Consent Forms
For Interviews
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Evaluation of Tennessee State Park Governance:
Public Involvement, Agency Accountability and Conservation Implications

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to identify and evaluate governance and decision-making processes in how Tennessee implements State Park mandates of natural area and park protection and provision of outdoor (resource based) recreation experiences.

INFORMATION

Limited one-on-one personal interviews will consist of interviewing Tennessee state park personnel, influential and knowledgeable legislators, state executives who hold key decision-making powers, and stakeholders such as employees of non-governmental organizations, park users, and gateway community leaders. The researcher will facilitate these reflective conversations and document a brief and basic historical synopsis of state park decision-making processes and procedures. Extensive in-depth historical interviews are beyond the scope of this thesis.

Approximately one hour will be required of you per session and for the total duration of study.

Approximately eight participants are participating in the interview part of the research.

Taping of the conversation will be done only with your consent.

COMPENSATION

For participating in this study, you will receive $0 in compensation.

__________ Participant’s initials (place on the bottom front page of the two-sided consent form)
RISKS
There are no foreseeable risks of the procedures to be used in the study.

BENEFITS
Personal interviews are being held to help identify governance and decision-making processes that have determined the direction of and investments in major programs of the Tennessee State Parks system.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The information in the study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless you specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise.

CONTACT
If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study,) you may contact the researcher, Mary M. Long, at 274 Ellington Plant Science Building, Knoxville, TN 37996, and (865) 984-4626 or mlong19@utk.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Research Compliance Services section of the Office of Research at (865) 974-3466.

PARTICIPATION
Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT
I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I have received a copy of this form.

Participant's name (print) ____________________________________________

Participant's signature ______________________________________________

Date ______________
APPENDIX 2:

Survey of State Park Directors
Survey of State Park Directors

1. What is your title or position? ________________________________

2. Which state park system do you work for? ________________________________

3. Please provide the following information about the types of areas managed within your state park system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>TOTAL ACRES</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Parks</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Natural Areas</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Recreation Areas</td>
<td>______</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Historical Areas</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Archeological Areas</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other (Please specify)</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>______</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4. Does your state park system have a current strategic management plan? (A strategic management plan refers to any comprehensive, long-term, system or statewide plan providing general policies and directives for guiding park policy and/or budgetary decisions.)

# No (Skip to question 7)
# Yes

5. To what degree is the state park system strategic management plan actively being followed?

# Not at all
# Limited degree
# Some degree
# Considerable degree

6. How long has this strategic management plan been in effect?

# Less than one year
# One to five years
# Six to ten years
# More than ten years

7. Does your state park system have an advisory committee or commission?

# No
# Yes  ➔ Please check which of the following best describes the role of the advisory committee or commission:

# Strictly advisory
# Decision-making and/or policy setting powers
8. Does your state park system have a formal (one required by either legislation or administrative policy) process for public involvement?

- No
- Yes

Is this process required by legislation?

- No
- Yes

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your state park system by placing an X in the box closest to how you feel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. The state park advisory committee or commission has a significant</td>
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<td>level of influence in guiding park policy decisions.</td>
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<td>10. The state park advisory committee or commission has a significant</td>
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<td>level of influence in guiding park budgetary decisions.</td>
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<td>11. The state park advisory committee or commission operates independently</td>
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<td>from the state legislative and executive branches when making policy</td>
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<td>decisions.</td>
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<td>12. The strategic management plan provides significant direction to state</td>
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<td>park policy decisions.</td>
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<td>13. The strategic management plan provides significant direction to state</td>
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<td>park budgetary decisions.</td>
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<td>14. Public involvement plays an important role in influencing state park</td>
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<td>policy and decision-making.</td>
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<td>15. The park system has formal (required by legislation or administrative</td>
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<td>policy) procedures in place to ensure agency accountability to the</td>
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<td>public regarding major policy and/or budgetary decisions.</td>
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</table>
Conservation of natural resources is of high importance relative to other priorities in the park system.

Biological inventories are used in areas of the park system to determine the presence of threatened or endangered species.

Biological inventories are used in areas of the park system to determine the presence of unique or fragile habitat.

Park managers have discretion to make decisions impacting the natural resources within their park without consulting a regional or state level manager.

Eco-regional planning is an integral part of park planning.

GIS is used as a tool in data management.

Please answer questions 22 – 27 by checking all answers that apply.

22. Whose input is normally included in the decision-making process for the strategic management plan for your state park system? (If you do not have a strategic management plan, please skip to Question 23). (PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)

- Park personnel
- Park users
- Gateway community leaders
- General public
- Environmental organizations
- Non-governmental organizations
- Business owners or representatives
- Industry representatives
- None of the above
- Others (please name)_____________________________________________
- Don’t know
23. Whose input is normally included in the decision-making process concerning natural resource conservation for your state parks? (PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)

# Park personnel
# Park users
# Gateway community leaders
# General public
# Environmental organizations
# Non-governmental organizations
# Business owners or representatives
# Industry representatives
# None of the above
# Others (please name) ____________________________________________
# Don’t know

24. Whose input is normally included in the decision-making process for major new construction within your state parks? This may include construction of golf courses, restaurants, hotels, swimming pools, campgrounds, or visitor centers. (PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)

# Park personnel
# Park users
# Gateway community leaders
# General public
# Environmental organizations
# Non-governmental organizations
# Business owners or representatives
# Industry representatives
# None of the above
# Others (please name) ____________________________________________
# Don’t know

25. Whose input is normally included in the decision-making process for substantial improvements/changes to physical infrastructure within the parks? (PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)

# Park personnel
# Park users
# Gateway community leaders
# General public
# Environmental organizations
# Non-governmental organizations
# Business owners or representatives
# Industry representatives
# None of the above
# Others (please name) ____________________________________________
# Don’t know
26. What mechanisms, if any, are used for public involvement? (PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)

# Town or park meetings
# Public comment period on changes in policy decisions
# Interactive kiosks located at park centers
# Park personnel whose primary job description includes public involvement
# Toll-free access telephone number
# Survey questionnaire boxes located in parks
# Comment boxes located in parks
# Interactive website, e.g., 'contact us' or other communication link
# Personal interview with park visitors
# Telephone surveys
# Mail surveys
# None of the above
# Others (please name) ________________________________
# Don’t know

27. What resource management strategies, if any, are used in ecologically sensitive areas? (PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.)

# There are no known ecologically sensitive areas in the park system.
# There are no restrictions in ecologically sensitive areas.
# Ecologically sensitive areas are off limits to personal foot traffic.
# Ecologically sensitive areas are off limits to vehicle or boat traffic.
# Ecologically sensitive areas are off limits to construction.
# Other strategies (please specify) ________________________________
# Don’t know

28. List up to five state park systems in the U.S. that in your opinion are the best at involving the public in state park decision making and providing agency accountability to the public regarding agency decisions.

> __________________________________________
> __________________________________________
> __________________________________________
> __________________________________________
> __________________________________________

29. List up to five state park systems in the U.S. that in your opinion are the best at providing protection of their natural resources.

> __________________________________________
> __________________________________________
> __________________________________________
> __________________________________________
> __________________________________________
30. If you are aware of any park systems outside of the U.S. that are particularly good at involving the public in park decision making and providing agency accountability to the public regarding agency decisions, please list them below.

➤ ___________________________________________
➤ ___________________________________________
➤ ___________________________________________

31. If you are aware of any park systems outside of the U.S. that are particularly good at providing protection of their natural resources, please list them below.

➤ ___________________________________________
➤ ___________________________________________
➤ ___________________________________________

If you have additional comments or information regarding the topics covered in this survey, please write them in the space below and add additional sheets as necessary. Feel free to clarify any answers or comment on this survey. **THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP!!!!**
Please complete the information below if you would like to receive the results of this survey.

THANKS AGAIN!!!

Name: ________________________________________________________________
Title: ________________________________________________________________
Address: ______________________________________________________________
City: ___________________________ State: _______ Zip: __________
Telephone: ________________________________
E-mail address: ________________________________

To ensure confidentiality, this section will be removed upon receipt. Your personal information will not be linked to your responses.
APPENDIX 3:

Interview Questions for Tennessee State Park Decision-Making
Interview Questions for Tennessee State Park Decision-Making

November 13, 2004

(The main question is in bold font, and the prompts for me are in italics)

The goal of this research is to identify and evaluate governance and decision-making processes in how Tennessee implements State Park mandates of natural area and park protection and provision of outdoor (resource based) recreation experiences.

To do this, I am attempting to document a brief and basic historical synopsis of state park decision-making processes and procedures through interviews with knowledgeable and involved individuals like you.

I am asking for your perspective on how major decisions are made for the Tennessee State Park system regarding the protection of natural and park areas.

The mission statement of the Tennessee State Parks is to, “preserve and protect in perpetuity, unique examples of natural, cultural, and scenic areas, and to provide a variety of safe, quality outdoor experiences through a well-planned and professionally managed system of State parks.”

• 1. MAIN QUESTION: From your perspective, to what degree do you think the mission statement is guiding the decisions of the TSP system?
  ○ Can you give me examples of why you think this?
2. **MAIN QUESTION:** Are there overarching strategic agendas that influence or guide the TSP decision-making?

Example: ‘To provide recreation outdoor activities/services to all areas of the state (in some balanced way so that persons living across the state have somewhat equal access)

- Who influences these decisions?
- Can you give me examples?
- If not, should there be?
- How would such agendas be determined?

3. **MAIN QUESTION:** What are your thoughts and perspectives on the accountability of the TSP system to the general public?

- How accountable is the system?
- What mechanisms are used to communicate to the public that the TSP system is carrying out its mission statement?

Part of this research is to determine the extent of **public involvement** in the decision-making processes in the TSP system.

4. **MAIN QUESTION:** What is your perspective of public involvement in the state park decision-making processes?

*By public involvement I mean formal or informal ways that individuals/groups attempt to influence decision-making.*

- How does this take place?
- For what kind of decisions? (Policy? Budgetary?)
- How does this differ from the past (timeframe)?
5. MAIN QUESTION: Who (groups/individuals) have had influence on these decision-making processes?
   - What role did they play?
   - Current?
   - Past?
   - Have you or your agency been targeted for input on specific issues or questions dealing with policy or decisions?
   - Is public input specifically sought for certain decisions?

6. MAIN QUESTION: Are you familiar with what mechanisms are available for public input? (Refer to survey list if needed)
   - For what kind of decisions? (Policy? Budgetary?)
   - Other ways the public is involved?
   - How does this differ from the past (timeframe)?
   - Is current extent of public input adequate?

7. MAIN QUESTION: What is your perspective on what happens to the public input that is gathered?
   - How are suggestions or complaints handled?
   - Do you know if your input has been incorporated into state park decisions or policies?
   - Can you give me examples?
According to the Director and Planner of the TSP system, there is no *strategic management plan* currently being followed.

- **8. MAIN QUESTION:** From your perspective how do you think this is affecting the TSP system and individual parks?
  - *Can you give me specific examples (timeframe)?*
  - *How do you perceive system wide planning is accomplished?*
  - *Who is involved?*
  - *Should the state have a strategic plan or agenda to guide state park systems decisions/direction?*

- **9. MAIN QUESTION:** What changes have you seen in state park policy decisions and governance?
  - *Specific examples?*
  - *Positive or negative?*

- **10. MAIN QUESTION:** What other perspectives would you like to add about TSP policy and governance in regards to public input, agency accountability, or conservation implications?
VITA

Mary Mallinson Long was born and raised on the Virginia coast. She attended Walters State Community College in Morristown, Tennessee, graduating with an Associate of Science degree in Production Horticulture. She transferred to The University in Tennessee at Knoxville graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture, majoring in Plant and Soil Science. She served as President of Sweet Hollow Landscaping, Inc. for nearly twenty years before returning to school to pursue a Master of Science degree in Forestry, with a minor in Environmental Policy.