

## Community input to the 2018 Big Ridge State Park Management Plan

Retain the existing structures built in 1936 by the Civilian Conservation Corps and market the charm and design of that time in a designated historic portion of the park.

Continue short term goals of improving the existing structures with modern amenities such as air conditioning, heat, broadband, restroom facilities, etc..

Focus improvements on the following six segments of consumers; **Adventure Travelers<sup>1</sup>**, **Ecotourism Seekers<sup>2</sup>**, **Heritage Tourism<sup>3</sup>**, **Corporate and Business Retreats<sup>4</sup>**, **State of Tennessee Business<sup>5</sup>**, and **Programming and Events<sup>6</sup>**.

### Adventure Travelers

#### Short Term:

- Upgrade the existing cabins with heat to allow year round use.
- Add 50 new campsites in the existing park development. Campsites should be equipped and large enough for modern RVs and horse trailers.
- Develop one or more horse only trail experiences.
- Provide modern water-bottle stations at trail heads.
- Add Pet Waste Stations at trailheads and pavilions.

#### Long Term:

- Support and expedite construction of the planned “100 mile” East Tennessee mountain bike trail complex involving Norris Dam State Park, Chuck Swan Wildlife Refuge, Big Ridge State Park and several Norris Lake marinas.
- Develop a new area of the park with assets to include 40 overnight lodging accommodations and a park restaurant, which will feature local food and drink fare, to accommodate the Adventure Traveler.
- Build a modern 100 slip marina.
- Build 40 additional modern lake front cabins along the Norris Lake shores, each with docking facilities.
- Expand campsites an additional 50 in the newly developed area.
- Provide high-speed broadband capability as the service become available.
- Develop niche glamping areas with tiny homes and yurts.

## **Ecotourism Seekers**

### Short Term:

- Enhance and market more nature-based activities in Big Ridge State Park.
- Add additional nature and learning about nature educational experiences to the Big Ridge State Park guided tour program.
- Feature noted conservationist and nature artists in park programs along with local University and government experts.
- Work to decrease pollution and improve the environment by doing some of the park patrolling on bicycles instead of in trucks.
- Have park staff and the Friends of Big Ridge State Park host regularly scheduled litter pickup events.

### Long Term:

- Utilize local farm to table options in the planned park restaurant to stimulate the local farm community and create a unique local food fare.
- Install solar facilities to meet energy needs working towards becoming a sustainable park.

## **Heritage Tourism**

### Short Term:

- Improve, enhance and expand the heritage based activities in Big Ridge State Park.
- Repair the gristmill making the water wheel functional and adding other historic activities such as a moonshine still; build fall festival events such as making molasses, killing hogs, ect..
- Enhance the programs which focus on the regions heritage such as the relocation of assets and graves related to establishment of TVA.

### Long Term:

- Build on the rich music heritage of Union County with development of a modern all weather music amphitheater with seating for 500.
- Develop the venue with corresponding events such as the current bluegrass festival. a fiddle contest, etc. which could become an important part of the local Tennessee Music Pathways experience and the rich music heritage of Union County.

- Work in collaboration with local venues like WDVX to make music at Big Ridge a recurring and special event option for local, regional and national musicians.

### **Corporate and Business Retreats**

#### Short Term:

- Enhance the existing meeting hall with Internet, Wi-Fi, air conditioning and heat.
- Provide audio-visual systems and projection technology as part of the retreat package.
- Provide team building outdoor recreation activities as part of the retreat package.

#### Long Term:

- Build a modern rural retreat to host academic and businesses from the Knoxville Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA); population over 830,000.
- Provide assets to include 40 overnight lodging accommodations, a park restaurant which will feature local food and drink fare, along with multiple meeting rooms and outdoor venues.
- Provide up to date conference center technology and amenities such as cellular service, Wi-Fi, audio-visual systems, and projection technology.
- Ensure adequate parking and access to include ADA accessibility.
- Add additional ball fields and tennis courts accessible to the lodging areas.

### **Federal and State of Tennessee Business**

#### Short Term:

- Enhance the existing meeting hall with Internet, Wi-Fi, Air Conditioning and heat.
- Provide audio-visual systems and projection technology as part of the retreat package.
- Provide team building outdoor recreation activities as part of the retreat package.

#### Long Term:

- Tailor retreat and meeting space options to attract Oak Ridge, The University of Tennessee, and many other state and local government operations in the Knoxville MSA.
- Build a modern rural retreat to host academic and businesses from the Knoxville Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA); population over 830,000.

- Provide assets to include 40 overnight lodging accommodations, a park restaurant which will feature local food and drink fare, along with multiple meeting rooms and outdoor venues.
- Provide up to date conference center technology and amenities such as cellular service, Wi-Fi, audio-visual systems, and projection technology.
- Ensure adequate parking and access to include ADA accessibility.

### **Programming and Events**

#### Short Term

- Enlarged parking areas, plan accommodations and facilities to host the many church, family and group activities that have historically found Big Ridge State Park an ideal location for gathering.
- Add water, electric, and rest room facilities to all existing picnic shelter areas.
- Enhance the existing meeting hall with air conditioning and heat.
- Provide ADA accessibility, adequate paved/concrete parking and graveled parking at each facility.

#### Long Term

- Add four larger shelters with lake views/access with maximum capacity ranges from 50 to 65 people.
- Include recreational activities at all shelters to include volleyball, horse shoes, and kid's activities/play areas.

**1. Adventure Travelers** - Adventure tourism is rapidly growing in popularity, as tourists seek different kinds of vacations. According to the U.S. based Adventure Travel Trade Association, adventure travel may be any tourist activity, including two of the following three components: a physical activity, a cultural exchange or interaction and engagement with nature. Access to inexpensive consumer technology, such as Global Positioning Systems, social networking, and photography has increased the worldwide interest in adventure travel. Research indicates that the adventure traveler, while not a big spender, is a “high value customer” due to the propensity to spend dollars on local lodging, food, guides, crafts, etc.

**2. Ecotourism Seekers** - Generally, ecotourism focuses on socially responsible travel, personal growth, and environmental sustainability. Therefore, in addition to evaluating environmental and cultural factors, an integral part of ecotourism is the promotion of recycling, energy efficiency, water conservation, and creation of economic opportunities for local communities. Ecotourism can provide much-needed revenues for the protection of parks and other natural areas — revenues that might not be available from other sources. Ecotourism can provide a viable economic development alternative for local communities with few other income-generating options.

**3. Heritage Tourism** - History and culture provide a key opportunity for tourism-related economic development. The educational experience from heritage tourism can be partnered with other tourist attractions. The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines heritage tourism as “travelling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past” based on five guiding principles: collaborate; find the fit between a community or region and tourism; make sites and programs come alive; focus on authenticity and quality of experience; and preserve and protect resources.

**4. Corporate and Business Retreats** - Corporate retreats help people find a sense of purpose and encourage an exchange of new ideas, foster camaraderie and cooperation, and reinforce each employee is an integral part of the business. Retreats often involve team building outdoor recreation activities, but also require current up to date conference center technology and amenities such as cellular service, Wi-Fi, audio-visual systems, and projection technology.

**5. Federal and State of Tennessee Business** - Much of Tennessee Parks business is from park based government conferences/training meetings and local and regional return business. State of Tennessee business at State Parks was \$1.2M in FY2011-12, or 11% of the total revenue generated by inn and conference center sales.

**6. Programming and Events** - Family Functions, Weddings, Reunions, Church Groups, and Scouts - Family and group activities, primarily within an hour’s drive of a park location, are a primary source of group visitors. These groups may come to a park for a day, a weekend, or at group camps, a week stay. Nearby location, sense of place, price, and tradition are motivators for this audience.