



# Utah Division of State Parks Department of Natural Resources **STRATEGIC PLAN**

Living Document | Originally Published: April 2017 | Updated: August 2022







## State of Utah

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

JOEL FERRY

*Executive Director*

Division of State Parks

JEFF RASMUSSEN

*Division Director*

Dear Friends,

The Utah Board of State Parks and the entire staff at the Utah Division of State Parks are proud to present our updated Strategic Plan! Many things have changed over the past several years in our world, our great country, the State of Utah, and even in our agency. What has not changed is our love for outdoor recreation. Utah State Parks visitation more than doubled in the past five years surpassing 12 million visitors in fiscal year 2021! We remain committed to providing exceptional service to our visitors and self-funding our first-class facilities and grounds through user fees. These priorities shape every Utah State Parks program, resource, and development.

The Utah State Legislature reconfigured the purview of Utah State Parks during the 2019 and 2021 sessions. In 2019, the legislature passed a bill that created the State Monuments Act. This gave Utah State Parks the new duties of overseeing the creation and management of state monuments. In 2021, the legislature created the Division of Outdoor Recreation (DOR) and moved the statewide boating program, the off-highway vehicle program, and all outdoor recreation-related grants into the new agency. The changes brought about by the new law will ultimately bring more funding to outdoor recreation needs across Utah—including our state parks. The boating and off-highway vehicle programs will continue to play a huge part in our state parks' offerings, and we are excited that DOR is now our sister agency at the Department of Natural Resources!

We are proud to continue to offer diverse, top-notch opportunities to help visitors enjoy the outdoors and learn about our natural and cultural resources. Our museums, state monuments, and heritage areas interpret some of the country's most important and fascinating archaeological, historical, and paleontological sites. Our lush golf courses host local golfers and international tournaments with unsurpassed quality. We have expanded our camping options to include more full-service and glamping options—including full hook-up sites, yurts, cabins, and tiny houses. We have created more world-class biking trails through some of the most stunning scenery on earth. And we offer an ever-increasing variety of rentable watercraft at our parks with lakes and reservoirs.

As you read this document, you will notice that it is somewhat different in scope and nature from other strategic plans with which you may be familiar. Contained within these pages are broad statements of our commonly held values and the goals we intend to accomplish. Measurable park-specific strategies for accomplishing the plan's goals and objectives have been omitted with the intent of having individual unit managers actively add these elements on an ongoing basis.

We hope this document will serve as a good foundation for guiding the Division into the future.

Jeff Rasmussen

Director, Utah Division of State Parks

# Table of Contents

Mandate .....2

Living Document .....2

How to Apply the Strategic Plan .....2

Timeline of Utah State Parks History .....3

Mission Statement .....4

Values .....5

Goals .....6

Objectives .....6-8

Map of Utah State Parks .....9



Goblin Valley State Park

## Mandate

The Utah Legislature created the Division of Parks and Recreation in 1957 to be the recreational authority for the state. During the 2021 legislative session, the Legislature working with Utah's newly elected Governor split the Division of Parks and Recreation into two separate divisions, the Division of Outdoor Recreation and the Division of State Parks. The new Division of Outdoor Recreation administers the Boating Program, OHV Program, and recreational grants while the Division of State Parks ("The Division") manages Utah's state park system. The Division's directive to prepare a division-wide comprehensive plan remains in statute and is defined as follows:

***A long range, comprehensive plan and program for the acquisition, planning, protection, operation, maintenance, development, and wise use of areas of scenic beauty, recreational utility, historic, archaeological or scientific interest, to the end that the health, happiness, recreational opportunities and wholesome enjoyment of life of the people may be further encouraged.***

## A Living Document for a New Era

Sixty-five years after the Utah Legislature's original vision, the Division is managing 46 state parks, three state monuments, and supporting programs. This strategic plan meets the spirit and intent of the legislative mandate and the management needs of the Division. It sets expectations and provides guidance for all Utah State Parks employees.

Trends and expectations change over time and flexibility will be needed as the Division of State Parks move into the future. This document can be adjusted and amended as time and circumstances may demand.

## How to Apply the Strategic Plan

Each staff member should carefully review this document and make note of how their duties specifically support the mission, values, and goals outlined here. Whether you are a law enforcement ranger, an interpretive specialist, a curator, an office specialist, a seasonal employee, maintenance staff, a manager or an administrator, you should see what you do each day, and the reasons you do it, reflected in this document.



**Utah State Parks and Recreation  
Commission created by Utah  
Legislature to make a study of areas  
worthy of state park designation**

**1957**

**1967**

**Utah Legislature created the  
Department of Natural Resources &  
the Division of Parks and Recreation**

**The Division grew  
to encompass 43  
recreation areas  
including state  
parks, reserves, &  
historic monuments**

**1975**

**2002**

**Wasatch Mountain State  
Park served as a venue for  
the Winter Olympic Games**

**Annual visitation to Utah  
State Parks exceeds 5 million  
Dark Skies Program created**

**2016**

**2017**

**Utah State Parks celebrates  
60th anniversary**


**2021**

**Historic investment by the legislature of  
over \$200 million  
2 new parks: Utahraptor & Lost Creek  
12 million visitations**

# Utah State Parks Mission

---

**2022**

A photograph of a person standing on a rocky cliff, looking out over a vast landscape under a dramatic, colorful sky at sunset or sunrise. The person is silhouetted against the bright horizon. The sky is filled with soft, wispy clouds in shades of orange, pink, and blue. The landscape below is dark and hazy, suggesting a canyon or a wide valley.

To enhance the quality of life by preserving and providing natural, cultural, and recreational resources for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.



## Values

- Provide high-quality facilities, amenities, educational programs, and recreational experiences for visitors.
- Develop trust through competence and ethical behavior
- Embrace our identity as a trusted brand.
- Enhance our innovative role within the recreation community.
- Provide Public Safety, protection, and stewardship of our assets and resources.
- Facilitate mutually beneficial partnerships with private businesses, government agencies, and citizen groups.
- Support our social and economic contributions to local communities and the State of Utah.
- Hire, manage, and promote passionate, energetic, and innovative employees.
- Continually strive for financial self-sufficiency.



## How the Division of State Parks Embodies These Values

The Division of State Parks encourages employees to improve their skills and provides training opportunities so that staff can provide the most up-to-date services possible.

We employ certified law enforcement rangers to help safeguard our facilities, visitors, and the amenities our visitors come to enjoy. We provide interpretive specialists to help the public learn more about our parks and their natural, cultural, and recreational resources. We retain experienced maintenance personnel to keep our facilities and equipment in excellent condition.

Our board members are appointed by the governor for their knowledge, interest, and experience with parks and outdoor recreation. This nine-member board represents each of the state's eight judicial districts, with one at-large member.

Because of these efforts, Utah's state parks are locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally recognized as spectacular recreation areas.

Through cooperation with other governmental agencies, local communities, our board, and our private partnerships, state parks can provide our guests with an ever-increasing variety of activities. These expanded offerings, combined with system-wide efficiencies, have substantially bolstered the public's enjoyment of parks.

In sum, our brand is recognized for quality, affordability, and benefit to our local and state economies. We pledge to increase this value by becoming even more efficient while becoming even less dependent on taxpayer dollars.

# Goals

The Division strives to provide the visiting public with outstanding outdoor recreation and education experiences at our state parks. This mission is best obtained by focusing on three primary goals that we equate to a three-legged stool.

The success of a stable and functioning stool is dependent on the three legs. The legs of the stool are defined as financial self-sufficiency, facility care, and customer service. All three legs must be equal in strength to ensure the stability of the stool and to obtain our goal of a successful state park system.



## Objectives

The following objectives help ensure the Division has three strong and effective legs that can hold the state park system and associated programs to the highest standards of excellence. Each state park and program will incorporate these objectives into their daily operations thereby ensuring the visiting public is receiving the highest quality and safest, recreation, and education experience. The Division recognizes the following objectives are not an exhaustive list and individual parks may utilize new objectives and creative solutions to achieve the Division's goals.

### **Attain the highest standards in maintenance, health, and safety.**

- The Facilities and Grounds Care and Maintenance Administrative Guideline with Maintenance Standards are in place to direct employees on expectations for maintenance.
- Maintenance personnel perform preventative maintenance and make repairs in a timely manner to extend the useful life of our facilities and safeguard the health and safety of our patrons.
- Region managers perform routine inspections of state parks to ensure compliance with guidelines.

### **Maintain the public's trust through competent stewardship of our facilities and resources, and the ethical behavior of state park staff.**

- Staff will watch for and report misuse, waste, or fraudulent activities.
- The Division operates in an environment of transparency with open and honest communication between the staff and our public.

### **Provide professional, prompt, and courteous internal and external customer service.**

- Our frontline workers answer questions knowledgeably and courteously.
- The Division encourages customer service training of staff and requires timely follow-up on customer comments.
- Employees are empowered to solve problems at the local level where possible.
- Guidelines are in place to direct employees on expectations for customer service.



**Present a variety of education and recreation opportunities for all segments of the population.**

- The Division, with the help of our private and public partners, will constantly seek to create new recreational and educational opportunities at our parks. Our parks are dedicated to the philosophy of providing more people, more fun, in more parks more often.
- Administration and staff realize that the recreational needs and desires of our customers are as varied as the customers themselves. We want everyone to feel safe in and enjoy State Parks, regardless of age, cultural background, socioeconomic status or ability.



**Adapt quickly and creatively to recreational trends and needs.**

- Staff will proactively look for ways to improve visitor experiences through development, management of the resource, and additional recreational opportunities.

**Develop and maintain local, regional, national, and international public/private partnerships that enhance our parks and the visitor experience.**

- Staff will engage with local business organizations, civic groups, governmental entities, and citizen advisory groups to strengthen community ties and build a more robust outdoor recreation and tourism economy.
- With Division guidance, park and program managers may engage with Legislative members, the Governor's Office, State Parks Board, and local officials to share our story and provide information proactively to create better relationships and understanding of Parks.
- Staff will develop relationships with partners to increase visitation to state parks and focus on connecting youth to the state park brand to foster the next generation of park users and supporters.

**Promote the State Parks brand and share our story so the public and our partners will know who we are and what we do.**

- In addition to cooperative marketing efforts with our partners, we promote our singular brand through social and traditional media campaigns, familiarization tours for journalists and tourism professionals, and participation in out-of-park community outreach events.
- By honing our brand, we hope to eliminate confusion and help the public and our partners make the distinction between our amazing state parks and other city, county, and national recreation areas while striving to maintain the character and uniqueness of our park system.
- The Division designed uniform entrance signs to assist with the public's recognition of our unique state park brand. The new signs will be installed at the entrance of each state park.
- Create opportunities to engage communities that have historically not been present in state parks.

**Develop specialized training and professional development opportunities for our employees.**

- Our law enforcement rangers use a proactive and customer-first approach. They prefer informational contacts over confrontational engagement. They constantly inform visitors about the laws and rules designed to promote safe boating, responsible off-highway vehicle use, cultural and natural resource stewardship and enjoyable park visits. This is accomplished through a robust field training program as well as proper supervision.
- The Division will make training opportunities available to any staff who feel a need to acquire a skill set upgrade and better perform their duties. This includes providing education assistance for technical training, a college education, or advanced degrees. It also includes arranging for ongoing on-the-job training in the form of workshops, seminars, job shadowing, and career mobility.

### **Recognize employee contributions and reward exceptional employee performance.**

- We adhere to the notion that advancement and compensation within the Division are both tied directly to an employee's contribution. Outstanding employees should have opportunities to be financially rewarded or recognized for their hard work and salary increases are now directly tied to performance.
- The Division recognizes the state has become a challenging environment for employee compensation and retention. To alleviate pay scale inequities the Division has implemented a performance base salary improvement program that is available to all employees.
- The Division actively pursues salary increases to better position our employees within Utah's economy.
- The state has seen large increases in the cost to purchase and own a home as well as an expensive and competitive rental environment. The Division has begun to work with our partners to develop employee housing where funding and opportunity exists.
- Develop mentorship programs and create on-the-job training opportunities to help employee retention and promotability.
- Reach out to diverse communities to recruit candidates for competitive employment opportunities to broaden and improve our applicant base.

### **Generate sufficient revenue to meet their operational expenses and provide for future park renovation and development.**

- Utah State Parks is also making a name for itself by becoming financially self-sufficient. Managers of all our parks are asked to operate at a profit. This allows for our operational costs to be borne by the people who use our services and frees up scarce general fund money for other state needs. These park units also generate surplus revenue to fund capital improvements of facilities.
- Heritage parks, comprised of our museums and cultural sites, inherently have less of an opportunity to operate at a profit than our other sites. However, managers of these units are still expected to move their operations toward self-sufficiency through a combination of efficiencies, expanded offerings, grant funding and beneficial partnerships.
- It is the goal of the Division to operate as a park system that shares staff and resources among our various park units and supporting programs.





# Utah State Parks & Regions



08-11-2022