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**AN AMENITY ASSESSMENT MODEL FOR EVALUATING
STATE PARK TOURISM ASSETS**

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ABSTRACT

Creative, quick and inexpensive assessment models based on sound methods that yield practical applications can be of great utility to the administrators of both public and private sector outdoor recreation resources in their decision-making tasks. This paper presents a case study on the development of a tourism amenity assessment model designed for application to state and regional parks and historic sites. The five-step process utilized in developing and applying the model is discussed. The findings yielded as a result of application of the model to state parks in southeastern Georgia (USA) are enumerated, and the recommendations made to Georgia Department of Natural Resources decision makers are presented. A concluding discussion identifies the wider managerial utility of the model.

INTRODUCTION

Creative, quick and inexpensive assessment models based on sound methods that yield practical applications can be of great utility to the administrators of both public and private sector outdoor recreation resources in their decision-making tasks. This paper presents the development and application of a tourism amenity assessment model that was developed and utilized to evaluate fourteen state parks and historic sites under the auspices of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The delimitations placed by the DNR on the model were that it be developed from a sound foundation and that interpretations of findings be presented in layperson's language. In addition, the DNR desired that a team of external tourism and park management professionals conduct the process. With those delimitations as guiding principles, the DNR contacted the authors to explore the possibility of developing and testing an assessment model that would fulfill their needs and requirements.

The purpose of this paper is not, per se, to present and discuss the findings of the DNR study conducted by the authors, but rather to present a description of the process employed to develop the assessment model that was used to conduct that study. The authors anticipate that national, state, and regional park and recreation decision makers will find utility in the application of the model as a whole, or the adaptation of its component parts, to their particular agency setting.

STUDY BACKGROUND

The state parks and historic sites administered by the Georgia Department of Natural Georgia parks, which are located in a distinctly different physiographic region and are more closely proximate to intensely developed urban areas. In general, the anecdotal assessment was that visitors perceive and expect the north Georgia parks to provide a sizable diversity of quality outdoor recreation opportunities and service amenities while the south Georgia parks were viewed to be deficit in such opportunities and amenities (12).

Hence, the DNR concluded that a need existed for the objective assessment by external agents of the activity- and amenity-based expectations of south Georgia (also referred to as the coastal and/or eastern lower piedmont zones) tourists. In addition, it was determined that an assessment of how or if the existing and potential assets of Georgia's coastal and piedmont zone state parks could meet tourists' expectations should also be conducted. Such information would be useful in developing a marketing strategy for parks in south Georgia that was different from the single, general promotional campaign that was employed (at that time) to promote all the Department's parks and his-

Resources are recognized as an essential and economically important component of the state's tourism infrastructure. In the course of internal discussions aimed at analyzing how well state parks and historic sites meet the expectations of travelers to Georgia, the DNR arrived at several conclusions, based on anecdotal evidence supplied by state park managers, concerning the visitation and use of the parks. A major conclusion of these discussions was that visitor expectations concerning the recreational opportunities and amenities available at parks in south Georgia's coastal and lower piedmont zones was apparently "different" from the expectations regarding recreational opportunities and amenities available at north Georgia's historic sites, both in the north and south of the state.

To fulfill this need a study team consisting of the authors was directed to develop a model capable of yielding an inventory and assessment of the existing and potential tourism-related assets at the fourteen state parks and historic sites located in the coastal zone (CZ) and the eastern lower piedmont zone (ELZP) of south Georgia. The model would also yield recommendations regarding the development and promotion of those tourism assets. The findings of this assessment effort would be utilized by DNR planners in decision-making concerning the allocation of park development and promotion funds.

In studying the DNR request and delimitations, the investigators determined that the most appropriate approach would be to develop a model that was a) centered on the assessment of *destination attributes*--particularly as they were related to established user expectations and use patterns--associated with state park amenities, and b) derived from secondary data sources and

field investigation. From that premise, a model was developed that followed the steps presented in Figure 1.

In summary, the task of the study requested by DNR and conducted by the authors was to two-fold. First, the practical and time-sensitive task was to identify (via secondary sources) the tourism destination attributes desired by southeastern U.S. coastal tourists. Second, to use those attributes as a basis for assessing the degree to which the amenities of the Georgia coastal zone and eastern lower piedmont zone parks could provide fulfillment of tourist expectations. Those findings would be of immediate utility in fund allocation decisions for park development and promotion efforts.

STUDY REGION DESCRIPTIONS

Table 1 provides a list of the state parks and historic sites evaluated in this study. Figure 2 provides a map delineating the location of the state parks and historic sites.

The Eastern Lower Piedmont Zone (ELPZ) includes thirteen counties that span the mid-section of the Savannah River border between Georgia and South Carolina. The Interstate 20 corridor, an important tourism access and “awareness” mechanism, traverses the northern most section of the region. The focal points of the region’s tourism activities are the Savannah River reservoir-based parks, small town heritage touring, rural nature-based pursuits, and the City of Augusta.

The Coastal Zone (CZ) includes twelve counties that span the area from the southeastern section of the Savannah River to the St. Mary’s River on the Georgia-Florida border. The Interstate 95 Corridor, an im-

portant tourism access and “awareness” mechanism, traverses the eastern most section of the region. The focal points of the region’s tourism activities are the resort islands, low country heritage and nature-based pursuits, and the City of Savannah.

DEVELOPMENT AND APPLICATION OF THE MODEL

As presented in Figure 1, a five-step methodology was employed to conduct the study. Step 1 consisted of conducting a literature review to understand current, use driven notions concerning the concept of a “destination attribute.” In addition, the term “destination attribute” was defined in layperson’s terms in order to establish a baseline definition that would be readily understood by DNR personnel utilizing the findings of this study. Step 2 entailed the development of an inventory and assessment instrument that would be used in the field research task. This instrument was based upon the findings of a literature review and discussion with recreation resource academics and professionals with knowledge of asset inventory and assessment methods. During Step 3, the study team conducted an on-site inventory and assessment of the existing and potential assets and amenities at each state park in the study area. This step utilized the instrument developed in Step 2 and yielded numeric scores for the assets present in the state parks. Steps 4 and 5 consisted of analyzing the findings of the field research and generating recommendations regarding the identification of target markets for existing and potential assets in CZ and ELPZ state parks.

Step 1. Definition and Identification of Destination Attributes

Step 1 consisted of two tasks. First, the investigators conducted a comprehensive review of academic, popular, and government sponsored research and/or literature with an emphasis on coastal region tourism and recreation. The purpose of this review was to establish base of information regarding the activities cited as being routinely engaged in by recreationists and/or tourists during their visits to coastal regions (2-3, 6, 9-10, 14-15, 17-18, 20-21, 26-27). In addition, the literature was analyzed to identify coastal recreation related trends. The identification of both self-reported tourist activities and tourism activity trends provided insights to the user's view of desirable destination attributes. Of particular importance in establishing the foundation of the model was the analysis of empirical data secured via a 1994 DNR study of Georgia state park visitors (16) and Travelscope data (13). Summaries of data from those sources most relevant to this study are presented in Tables 2 and 3. The activity/trend data compiled from this literature review served as a base from which the analysis of the services and assets that were, or could be, available at CZ and ELPZ state parks was conducted. The destination attributes utilized in this study are listed in Table 4 and are again based on data compiled from the 1994 DNR study and Travelscope data. In order to identify and assess the amenities in each state park, an inventory instrument was developed. The development of that instrument is discussed in the following section.

The literature review also provided the basis for establishing a working definition for the "destination attribute" concept that could be readily understood and applied by both field and headquarters DNR personnel. As de-

defined by the authors, a "destination attribute" is a characteristic inherent in a destination (such as a state park) that influences tourists' choices and experiences at that destination. Attributes encompass the natural and built environment as well as the activities and opportunities offered at the destination. In addition, attributes can be both positive (a nature trail that is used for bird watching) and negative (a lack of activities or opportunities for children). An attribute, then, is the manifestation of the destination's assets, amenities, or resources.

Given that definition, the study team operated from the premise that to conduct an assessment of the tourism destination attributes of state parks in the study area, an investigator must know the following: 1) the attributes desired by potential tourists to the coastal and/or eastern lower piedmont zones (as identified or derived from primary or secondary sources); and 2) the amenities possessed by each state park in located in Georgia's CZ and ELPZ capable of creating or supporting a given attribute (as determined via field research).

Step 2. Development of the Inventory and Assessment Instrument

The focus of Step 2 was to identify existing methodologies and instruments that could be useful in developing the inventory/assessment tools that would be employed in the data collection phase (Step 3) of the study. Of particular interest were those methodologies and instruments that focused on the type, quantity, and quality of park and tourism assets or attributes available in state and national park settings.

Development of the instrument was initiated by a literature search of existing outdoor recreation and tourism asset/amenities invento-

ries. Most of the useful literature on assets/amenities was found in the informational materials and maps of federal and state resource management agencies. Investigators secured inventories of the National Park Service (19), Florida State Parks (7), South Carolina State Parks (22), Alabama State Parks (1), and the Chattahoochee National Forest (5). In addition, a tourism attraction inventory was utilized from a publication by the U.S. Department of Commerce (23) on tourism planning and development. Phone conversations with recreation resource and tourism researchers at Arizona State University and the University of Florida (24, 11) provided additional insight into assets/amenities to be included in the inventory.

Based on this information, the investigators met on three occasions to draft and revise the instrument. During these meetings, the investigators also developed a state park managers survey (Figure 3). The purpose of this survey was to ascertain each state park manager's perception of potential, or undeveloped, assets/amenities in their park and to verify the information collected during the park inventories.

The inventory and assessment instrument developed as a model for this type of study is essentially a two-page spreadsheet with 37 asset/amenity categories next to which the investigator could record the "Amount/Type" of each asset/amenity found during site visits to each state park and any "Comments" relevant to the asset/amenity. Under the "Comments" section the investigator was directed to include statements about the quality, condition, and image of the attribute/asset and its potential for being promoted as a tourism attraction. Space was made available at the bottom of the second

page of the inventory for "General Comments."

Step 3. Application of Inventory and Assessment Instrument

The inventory and assessment task consisted of three related tasks. First, published data (e.g., promotional materials) related to each park was compiled and analyzed to establish a base of information regarding assets and attributes that the DNR currently perceives (and promotes) each park to have and provide (8). Second, a telephone or personal interview with the manager of each park was conducted to verify the information secured from secondary data sources and to ascertain the manager's perception of potential, or undeveloped, assets in their park. Third, the investigators conducted an on-site inspection of each of the 14 parks or historic sites to collect data on asset and attribute type, quantity, and quality. The table-oriented evaluation instrument that lists existing and potential park assets and attributes, as well as a quality assessment, was produced in Step 2 and used to compile data during this inventory step. The completed instruments (one for each park) served as the basis for determining the findings of the study.

The outcome of this step was an inventory and assessment that provided two views of state park assets – one from the DNR site manager's perspective and one from the perspective of the investigators.

Step 4. Data Findings

The goal of this step was to relate the destination attribute expectations of tourists (Step 1) to the assets of the state parks (Step 3); then to draw conclusions that would help make recommendations for decision makers (Step 5). This was accomplished via the

analysis of the field inventory findings against the context of the literature review findings. To facilitate this process, a numerical evaluation (0 to 3) which indicated the extent to which the asset, in general, was capable of creating or supporting a related tourism destination attribute was assigned to each park asset (Table 5). Application of the rating system to each park represents a qualitative “grade” assigned by the study team based on data collected during on-site visits and interpretations of the literature review conducted in Steps 1 and 2.

The outcome of this data analysis step is presented in Table 6. This summary provides the numerical evaluation of park assets and destination attributes of state parks in the CZ and ELPZ. The names of each attribute/asset category in the table are the same as those presented in Table 4 and have been shortened to allow a condensed presentation of the data. For example, the asset category “Natural Setting/Quiet” has been shortened to “NS/Quiet.”

Step 5. Recommendations for Decision-makers

In keeping with the DNR’s desire to have the findings presented in layperson’s terms that would be readily understood and applicable by personnel throughout the organization, several layers of findings were presented. At the first level, brief summaries of the attributes of parks in the study area were written (Tables 7 and 8). From these summaries, specific recommendations followed (Table 9). The recommendations provided by the authors spanned the range of immediate, site-specific suggestions, to strategic recommendations. All recommendations were focused on the enhancement of existing assets and/or the development of potential assets, aimed at meeting the tour-

ist’s expectations regarding destination attributes of south Georgia parks.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS AND MANAGERIAL APPLICATIONS

In summary, this paper has presented the methodology employed to design and operationalize a state park and historic site tourism amenity assessment model. Client specified delimitations required that the model be based on established assessment practices and secondary data, yield findings presented in layperson’s language for utilization by field personnel, and be developed and executed as frugally as possible. Given those constraints, the authors developed a five-step process that yielded a series of assessment analysis tools (site manager perception survey, field assessment inventory forms, numeric amenity grade scale, etc). The application of these tools and the analysis of the resulting data enabled the researchers to provide the client *assessments* of existing and potential park and historic site amenities from the context of visitor expectations (as established from secondary data sources incorporated in the assessment model). In addition the model enabled the researchers to provide a series of regional- and site-specific *recommendations* for enhancing the amenities of the resources. These recommendations provided the Department of Natural Resources specific actions centered on addressing the perceived notion that south Georgia parks and historic sites were “amenity deficit” in comparison to north Georgia parks and historic sites. The recommendations also provided specific actions for upgrading existing amenities and expanding the amenity base in order to better meet the expectations of CZ and ELPZ tourists.

In terms of wider managerial applications, the application of this model fulfilled the Georgia Department of Natural Resource's desire for a simple, straightforward methodology that would provide an externally generated appraisal of their intuitions regarding the disparity in visitor use and satisfaction between parks and historic sites located in the northern and southern regions of the state. Subsequent to the receipt of this

study, the DNR implemented a series of amenity enhancement initiatives for Georgia's coastal zone and eastern lower piedmont zone parks and historic sites (25). Given that level of validation, tourism, park, and/or recreation area administrators may find utility in the application or adaptation of this model to site or agency specific applications.

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Figure 1
Steps in Establishing a State Parks Tourism Amenity Assessment Model

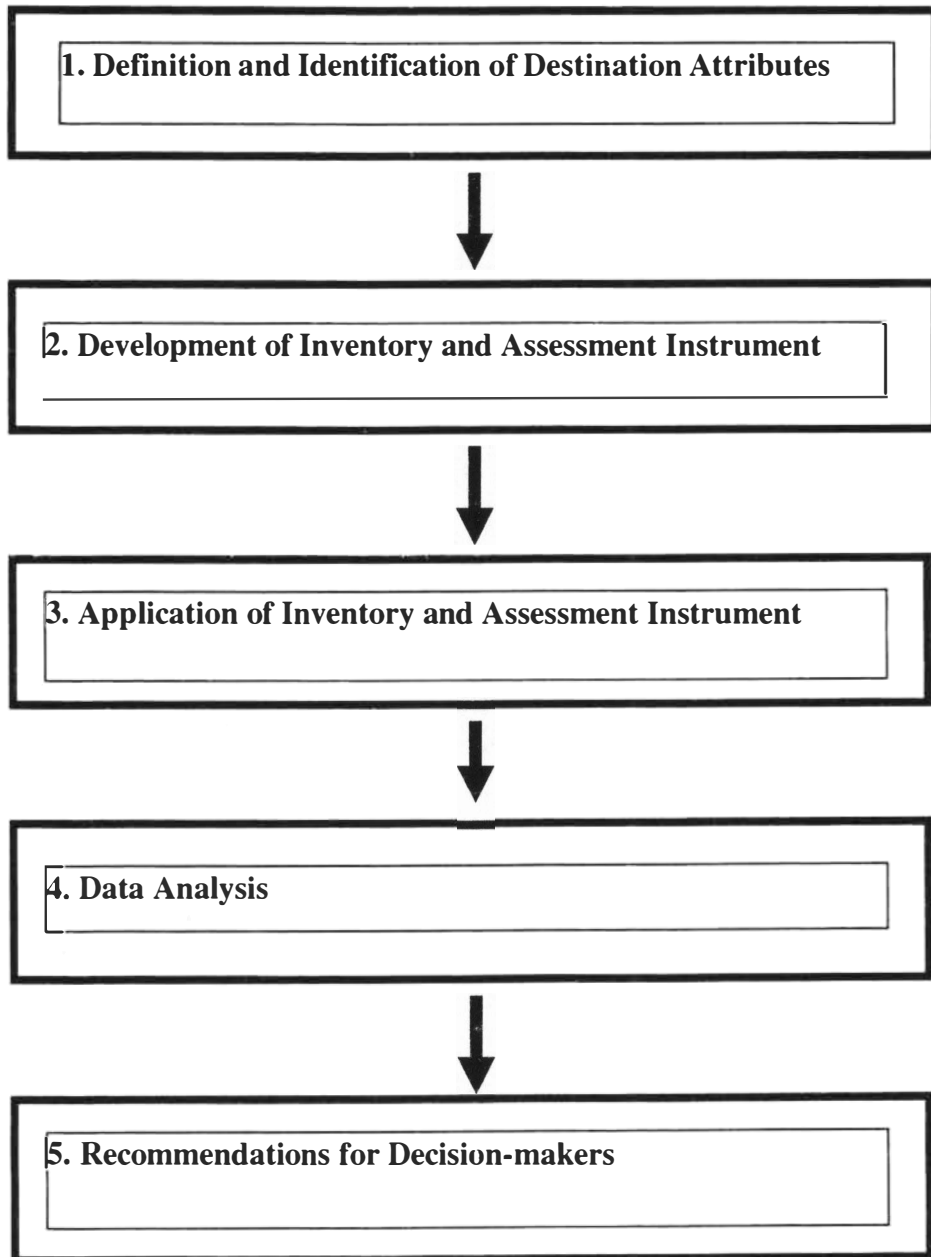
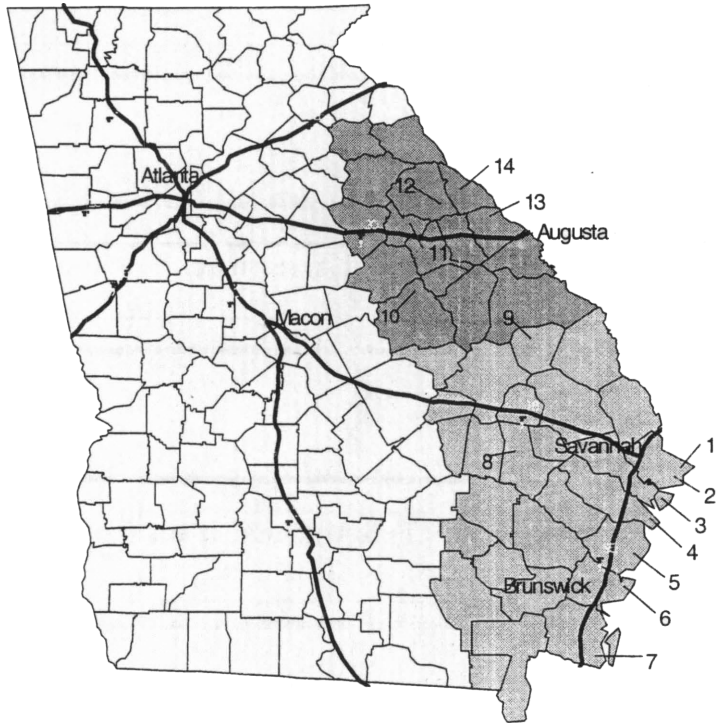
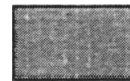


Figure 2
Study Area – Eastern Lower Piedmont Zone (ELPZ) and Coastal Zone (CZ)



Coastal Zone

Eastern Lower Piedmont Zone



- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Wormsloe Historic Site | 8. Gordonia Alatomaha State Park |
| 2. Skidaway Island State Park | 9. Magnolia Springs State Park |
| 3. Fort McAllister State Park | 10. Hamburg State Park |
| 4. Fort Morris Historic Site | 11. A.H. Stephens Historic Park |
| 5. Fort King George Historic Site | 12. Robt. Toombs House Historic Site |
| 6. Hofwyl Broadfield Plantation Site | 13. Mistletoe State Park |
| 7. Crooked River State Park | 14. Elijah Clark State Park |

Figure 3
State Park Managers Survey

ICAPP Project
State Park Manager Questions

Manager's Name:
Park:

Based on your experience managing the park and interacting with its visitors, please react to the following questions:

1. What are the three or four most popular activities that visitors come here to do?

2. What requests or questions do you receive from visitors about services/facilities/activities that **currently are not provided in your park?** (Do people ask to do things that you currently don't provide?)

3. What **existing** services/facilities/activities **could be improved/upgraded** in the park to better serve the recreation needs of the visitor?

4. What do you believe is the most important service/facility/activity that **could be provided** to draw more visitors into your park?

5. If/when visitors leave the park for services/facilities/activities/attractions, where do they typically go or what do they typically do?

TABLE 1
State Parks and Historic Sites in the Study Area

Coastal Zone (CZ)

Crooked River State Park
 St. Marys, GA

Fort King George Historic Site
 Darien, GA

Hofwyl Broadfield Plantation Site
 Brunswick, GA

Fort Morris Historic Site
 Midway, GA

Fort McAllister Historic Park
 Richmond Hill, GA

Wormsloe Historic Site
 Savannah, GA

Skidaway Island State Park
 Savannah, GA

Eastern Lower Piedmont Zone (ELPZ)

A.H. Stephens Historic Park
 Crawfordsville, GA

Elijah Clark State Park
 Lincolnton, GA

Mistletoe State Park
 Appling, GA

Robert Toombs House Historic Site
 Washington, GA

Hamburg State Park
 Mitchell, GA

Magnolia Springs State Park
 Millen, GA

Gordonia Alatamaha State Park
 Reidsville, GA

TABLE 2
Summary of Travel Trends Compiled from the 1994 Georgia State Parks Visitor Survey

- Visitors to Coastal Zone parks tend to be older than visitors to Eastern Lower Piedmont parks (50.6 years vs. 46.3 years).
 - A much higher percentage of visitors to Coastal Zone parks are non-Georgia residents than those who visit Eastern Lower Piedmont parks (42% vs. 22%).
 - 40% of the visitors to Coastal Zone parks characterize their visit as a “mid-vacation stop” and 51% have traveled more than 200 miles from their residence.
 - 33% of the visitors to Eastern Lower Piedmont zone parks characterize their visit as a “day-outing” and 64% travel less than 100 miles from their residence.
 - An asset/amenity labeled “Natural Setting/Quiet” has strong attraction power in both zones (51% in Coastal Zone, 58% in Eastern Lower Piedmont).
 - The asset/amenity labeled “Education” is rated higher than the “Activities” asset/amenity by Coastal Zone visitors (41% for education, 32% for activities).
 - The asset/amenity labeled “Activities” is rated higher than the “Education” asset/amenity by Eastern Lower Piedmont zone visitors (43% for activities, 35% for education).
 - Visitors to all Georgia state parks indicate that the six activities of highest interest are hiking, nature study, wildlife education, local history, camping, Native American history.
 - Of the six highest interest activities, four are of a natural or cultural heritage education character while only two are of a traditional outdoor recreation activity character.
-

TABLE 3
Summary of Travel Trends in the Study Area Compiled from Travelscope Data

- The Coastal Zone has four times as many travelers (4.2 million) as the Eastern Lower Piedmont Zone (870,000). A major contributing factor contributing to this difference is undoubtedly the presence of Interstates 16 and 95 in the Coastal Zone as well as the large volume of Florida destination traffic on Interstate 95.
 - Travelers to the Coastal Zone have a much higher participation rate in leisure activities than travelers to the Eastern Lower Piedmont Zone (21.4% vs. 9.7%).
 - Approximately one-third of Coastal Zone travelers report visiting historical places or museum as a primary trip activity.
 - Approximately one-third of the travelers to both regions report shopping as a primary activity.
 - Travelers to the Coastal Zone stay longer (2.5 days vs. 2.2 days), spend more money (\$293.00 per trip vs. \$244.00).
 - The population of travelers to the Coastal Zone contains slightly more retirees than the Eastern Lower Piedmont population (18.2% vs. 15.7%).
 - The population of travelers to the Eastern Lower Piedmont contains a much higher frequency of African-American travelers than the Coastal Zone (19.6% vs. 7.8%).
-

TABLE 4
Tourism Destination Attributes Desired by Tourists to State Parks in the Study Area

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Natural Setting/Quiet</p> <p>Convenience</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Proximity to other attractions</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Convenient stop</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Proximity to outside park services</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Proximity to interstate</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Proximity to shopping</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Proximity to entertainment</p> <p>Lodging</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Campsites</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Cottages</p> <p>Programs/Events/Festivals</p> | <p>History/Culture Interpretation</p> <p>Living History Interpretation</p> <p>Eco/Wildlife Interpretation</p> <p>Hiking</p> <p>Camping</p> <p>Fishing</p> <p>Swimming</p> <p>Boating</p> <p>Biking</p> |
|---|---|

TABLE 5
Evaluation Scale for Tourism Attributes & Assets of State Parks in the Study Area

0 = Park has no opportunity to fulfill the expectations of potential tourists for this asset or related attribute.

1 = Park minimally fulfills the expectations of potential tourists for this asset or related attribute.

2 = Park reasonably fulfills the expectations of potential tourists for this asset or related attribute.

3 = Park exceeds the expectations of potential tourists for this asset or related attribute.

TABLE 6
Evaluation of Tourism Destination Attributes at CZ and ELPZ State Parks

| | N/S Quiet | ProxAttrc | ConvStop | Proxser | ProxInter | Proxshop | ProxEnt | Campsite | Cottage |
|---------------------------------|--------------|-----------|----------|---------|-----------|----------|---------|----------|---------|
| Easter Lower Piedmont | | | | | | | | | |
| A.H. Stephens Hist.Park | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 |
| Elijah Clark State Park | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| Mistletoe State Park | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| Robert Toombs House HS | 0 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Hamburg State Park | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Magnolia Springs State Park | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| Gordonia Altamaha State Park | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Coastal | | | | | | | | | |
| Crooked River State Park | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Ft. King George Hist Site | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Hofwyl Broadfield Platation | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Ft Morris Historic Site | 3 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ft McAllister Historic Park | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 0 |
| Wormsloe Historic Site | 3 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Skidaway Island State Park | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 0 |

TABLE 6, continued
Evaluation of Tourism Destination Attributes at CZ and ELPZ State Parks

| | Prg/Event | H/C Interp | Liv History | Eco/WL | Hiking | Camping | Swimming | Fishing | Boating | Biking |
|--------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| Easter Lower Piedmont | | | | | | | | | | |
| A.H. Stephens Hist.Park | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Elijah Clark State Park | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| Mistletoe State Park | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| Robert Toombs House HS | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Hamburg State Park | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| Magnolia Springs State Park | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Gordonia Alamaha State Park | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Coastal | | | | | | | | | | |
| Crooked River State Park | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Ft. King George Hist Site | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Hofwyl Broadfield Platation | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ft Morris Historic Site | 2 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ft McAllister Historic Park | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 1 |
| Wormsloe Historic Site | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Skidaway Island State Park | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 2 |

TABLE 7
Summary of Tourism Attributes in Eastern Lower Piedmont Zone State Parks

Five of these seven parks (Elijah Clark, Mistletoe, Hamburg, Magnolia Springs, Gordonia Alatomaha) in the ELPZ are characterized as traditional rural setting, outdoor recreation provision parks with an emphasis on fishing, boating and camping. The outdoor recreation services and activity opportunities provided at each of these parks have been assessed as capable of at least meeting visitor expectations.

Aesthetically, the ELPZ parks typically provide the visitor opportunities to view rolling Piedmont landscapes and freshwater ecosystems. With the exception of the parks located within small towns (Toombs and Stephens) all these parks provide a high degree of “quiet” and provide a natural setting.

The two historic sites in this region are the Robert Toombs House and A.H. Stephens Historic Park. Each site provides heritage education opportunities capable of least meeting visitor expectations. Given its location in historic Washington, GA, the Toombs House is well positioned to fulfill expectations regarding shopping and multiple stop heritage-focused tours. A.H. Stephens Historic Park provides a diverse mix of quality opportunities for both heritage education and outdoor recreation expectation fulfillment.

An overall shortcoming of the ELPZ parks regarding the expectations of out-of-state visitors/tourists is in the Convenience attribute cluster. With the exception of A.H. Stephens (and perhaps Robert Toombs), all these parks are well distanced from an Interstate highway, other attractions, and services. In addition, the provision of opportunities for Ecosystem/Wildlife education has been assessed as below visitor expectations in this region.

TABLE 8
Summary of Tourism Attributes in Coastal Zone State Parks

Aesthetically, coastal zone parks typically provide the visitor opportunities to view tidewater and/or ocean front ecosystems. With the exception of the parks located within Savannah, all these parks provide a measure of “quiet” and can be considered to provide a natural setting.

Five of the seven parks in this region are Historic Sites. Given that mission, the focus of these parks is not on providing lodging amenities or traditional outdoor recreation activities, but rather on historic preservation and interpretation. The heritage interpretation services and facilities currently provided at each of these parks are outstanding and capable of exceeding visitor expectations regarding heritage education experiences.

The location of Wormsloe Historic Site and Skidaway Island State Park in urban Savannah presents somewhat of an anomaly with regard to what may be the traditional “rural/natural setting” perception of state parks. Wormsloe provides an outstanding heritage interpretation program. However, given its distance and indirect accessibility from Interstate 95, Wormsloe can not be assessed as a tourist destination, but rather a component of a tour/vacation based in the Savannah area. Skidaway Island provides excellent opportunities for camping, developed recreation activities such as swimming and picnicking, tidewater ecosystem study, and respite from its urban surroundings. Like Wormsloe, Skidaway Island is not directly accessible from Interstate 95. However its campground can provide an opportunity for camping-oriented Interstate 95 travelers seeking a mid-vacation stopping point.

The non-Savannah parks have been assessed as capable of at least meeting visitor expectations regarding proximity to Interstate 95, proximity to shopping and services, and in the provision of either heritage education programming or traditional outdoor recreation activities.’ The provision of opportunities for Ecosystem/Wildlife education has been assessed as below visitor expectations in this region.

TABLE 9
Amenity Enhancement and Differentiated Marketing Strategy Recommendations

1. Visitor profile and destination attribute data support differentiating between the Coastal and Eastern Lower Piedmont zones in promotional materials and efforts.
2. Future DNR research efforts should utilize Georgia Department of Industry, Trade, and Travel tourism zone designations (Colonial Coast, Magnolia Midlands, etc.)
3. Acknowledge that the attributes of certain parks are best suited to serve resident population, regional outdoor recreation needs and it may not be appropriate to market them as out-of-state tourist destinations. Such parks include Hamburg, Magnolia Springs, Gordonia Alatomaha, and perhaps Skidaway Island. Analysis suggests that these parks are too distant from interstate highways and lack the critical mass of outside park attractions and services necessary to fulfill the expectations of long distance (over 100 miles) travelers or tourists.
4. Recognize and capitalize on emerging coastal tourism activity trends that match existing or potential park attributes. The following activity trends appear to match existing or potential study area park attributes.
 - a. Activity/theme oriented vacation and/or long weekend packages
 - b. Outdoor experiences with modern accommodations (air conditioned cottages)
 - c. Nature-based tourism
 - d. Heritage-based tourism
 - e. Fitness related activities (passive) and/or experiences
 - f. Wildlife and bird watching
5. Recognize the importance of “attraction clusters” and aggressive collaboration with nearby tourism resources. Park managers should receive training and encouragement to become aggressive leaders in local/regional tourism promotion organizations and efforts. Examples of such relationships include Fort Morris and the Historic Liberty Trail, Fort King George/Hofywyl and the Golden Isles tourism promotion agency, etc. In addition, it may be useful to designate a “local tourism liaison” staff member at the regional level or in the Atlanta office to lead and supervise these efforts.
6. Continue to invest in existing and potential nature-based and/or heritage-based education staff, program and facility development

7. Develop park specific promotional materials that highlight “point of difference” attributes unique to selected parks. For instance, highlight the:
 - a. Outstanding interpretive programs in place at Wormsloe, Fort Morris, Fort King George
 - b. Outstanding outdoor recreation opportunities at the Savannah River reservoir parks
 - c. Walking and fitness opportunities at parks
 8. Develop and promote opportunities for health and fitness oriented activities (walking, jogging, biking, etc.) at all *historic sites*
 9. Accelerate development of rustic cottages with modern conveniences at parks where appropriate (for example, A.H. Stephens, Mistletoe, Elijah Clark)
 10. Develop and promote opportunities for passive outdoor activities (fishing, casual walking, seascape, landscape, and/or wildlife viewing, non-motorized watercraft launching/use, etc.) at historic sites where appropriate. This could occur with little resource investment at parks such as Fort Morris, Fort King George, and A.H. Stephens
 11. Consider A.H. Stephens State Historic Park as a demonstration area for new ideas in the development of tourism trend linked “activity/experience packages” designed for selected markets (for example, a “Fitness in the Outdoors” experience targeted to health/fitness conscious markets in the Atlanta, Athens and Augusta urban centers)
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