



Reframing the Role and Relevancy of Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans

FOR THE NEXT 50 YEARS

NARRP is dedicated to the proposition that the welfare of the nation's citizens, visitors, communities, environment, and economy will be enhanced through opportunities for the public to experience and enjoy our nation's lakes, rivers, forests, wilderness, open space, greenways, parks, marine preserves, wildlife refuges, historic sites, heritage areas, and other special outdoor places.

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A POSITION PAPER OF THE
National Association of Recreation Resource Planners

PRESENTED TO THE HONORABLE
Mr. Ken Salazar, Secretary of the Interior

SEPTEMBER, 2011



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Purpose

The America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Report, published in February 2011, prescribed an array of recommendations and actions directed towards reigniting our historic commitment to conserving and enjoying the magnificent natural heritage that has shaped our nation and its people, communities, and economy. This position paper is specifically in response to one of the recommendations and actions:

Recommendation 5.3—Broaden guidelines for Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans (SCORPs) to align with AGO priorities.

Action Item 5.3a: Consulting with local and state governments, federal agencies, and stakeholders, develop new guidelines and criteria for SCORPs that focus a portion of the LWCF stateside program on urban parks and community green spaces, landscape-scale conservation, and recreational blueways, in addition to outdoor recreation.

The National Association of Recreation Resource Planners (NARRP) believes that the union of SCORPs to the AGO is a natural one. SCORPs and the AGO share the same vision of the right of all Americans to enjoy and benefit from America's great outdoors and pass that heritage to future generations.

As SCORPs are developed both conservation and outdoor recreation needs are evaluated to define a connection to the great outdoors. The result is a grassroots approach to protecting our lands and waters and connecting all Americans to their natural and cultural heritage. That is, SCORPs could be a grassroots approach to implementing the AGO recommendations.

The recommendations set forth in this NARRP position paper are intended to make SCORPs more effective and efficient for States and their outdoor recreation community, and for the successful implementation of the AGO.



LWCF Direction

The Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (LWCF) of 1965 provides the legislative direction for statewide comprehensive outdoor recreation planning. The following LWCF text is provided as foundational information.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 states the following:

A comprehensive statewide outdoor recreation plan shall be required prior to the consideration by the Secretary of financial assistance for acquisition or development projects. The plan shall be adequate if, in the judgment of the Secretary, it encompasses and will promote the purposes of this Act. The plan shall contain—

- (1) the name of the State agency that will have authority to represent and act for the State in dealing with the Secretary for purposes of this Act;*
- (2) an evaluation of the demand for and supply of outdoor recreation resources and facilities in the State;*
- (3) a program for the implementation of the plan; and*
- (4) other necessary information, as may be determined by the Secretary.*

The plan shall take into account relevant Federal resources and programs and shall be correlated so far as practicable with other State, regional, and local plans.

NARRP believes that additional Secretarial guidance is necessary and critical to fully realize the utility and benefits that can accrue from an effective and efficient statewide comprehensive outdoor recreation planning process and plan. (Note: For the purpose of brevity, this paper will refer to States as being inclusive of Territories.)

Background on NARRP Engagement

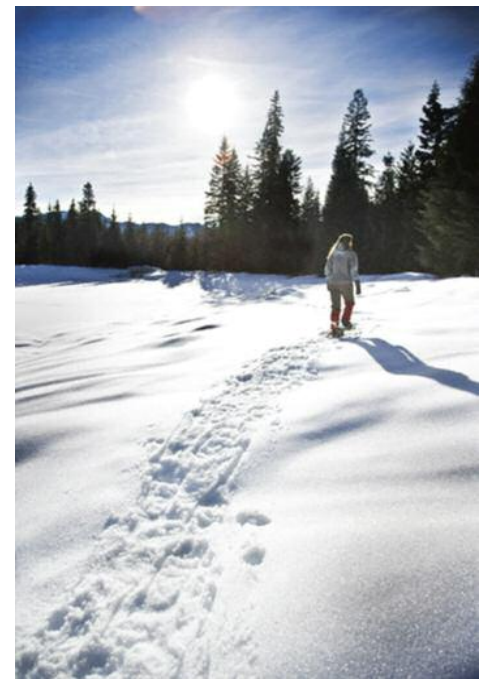
The National Association of Recreation Resource Planners is dedicated to the proposition that the welfare of the Nation's citizens and visitors, communities, environment, and economy will be enhanced through opportunities for the public to experience and enjoy the Nation's lakes, rivers, forests, wilderness, open space, greenways, parks, marine preserves, wildlife refuges, historic sites, heritage areas, and other special outdoor places. It further believes that quality outdoor recreation is dependent on quality natural and cultural resources, and conversely, the sustainability of quality natural and cultural resources are dependent upon an informed, impassioned, and engaged outdoor recreating public.

To that end, in 2008 NARRP began an assessment of the outdoor recreation profession in light of the fact that the 50th anniversary of LWCF was approaching. A major portion of the 2009 29th Annual National Recreation Resource Planning Conference in Pittsburgh was allocated to discussing the future of effective SCORPs. The year-long effort culminated in a position paper submitted to Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar titled *Support for the Great Outdoors America* (September 2009; posted at www.narrp.org) which advanced three core recommendations:

In 2010, NARRP became engaged in the AGO initiative through (a) participation in the White House Summit in April, (b) participation in Interior meetings in June and August in Washington, D.C., and (c) participation by the Board and members in the many AGO public sessions around the nation. The AGO report embraced NARRP's first (#1) recommendation by creating the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation (FICOR) and third (#3) recommendation by calling for the broadening of the SCORP guidelines to align with the AGO priorities.

In May 2011, NARRP convened its 31st Annual National Recreation Resource Planning Conference in Breckenridge, Colorado. Some 200 local, state and federal recreation resource planners and decision makers were present. During the conference, NARRP hosted a break-out session on SCORPs, a plenary session on the State of America's State Parks, and a plenary session and response to the AGO. These three large interactive sessions contributed many diverse ideas to this position paper.

In summary, NARRP has discussed and carefully analyzed how to make SCORPs more effective and efficient to the outdoor recreation community. More recently, NARRP has asked the same question in terms on how SCORPs can contribute to the successful implementation of the AGO. We are pleased to share the following recommendations.



Establish Inter-Departmental National Leadership

Reposition the Land and Water Conservation Fund Program

Reframe the Role and Relevancy of Statewide Comprehensive Planning

NARRP's Recommendations for Reframing the Role and Relevancy of SCORPs

1. SCORP Planning Cycle

SCORPs should be prepared on a 10-year cycle rather than the current five-year cycle. NARRP believes that the guidance, projects, and activities typical of a SCORP have a longer shelf-life and require more time to implement than five years. States would also benefit from a shift in time and dollars from planning to implementation of programs and projects. Conversely, NARRP believes that States and their collaborating planning partners (e.g., federal agencies, recreation and tourism industry, communities, conservation interests) would benefit from a more rigorous planning effort every ten years.

This recommendation presumes that there would be some modest annual progress/accountability reporting requirement. It also presumes there would be a mid-term SCORP update/revision in year five that would allow States to make adjustments to their priorities, actions, and time schedule.

The resultant change is that, on average, five States would initiate SCORP planning in any year.

2. Line-Item Budget for SCORP Planning Grants

The NPS and OMB should establish a line-item budget for SCORP planning grants. The budget amount should be over and above the current 2010 LWCF State-side budget so as to not compete with current development and program dollars, and to provide an incentive to States to seek Tier 2 and 3 level planning grants (see Recommendation #11). There is precedent in the LWCF Federal-side budget for line-item planning grants and for allocating the dollars required for adequate SCORP planning efforts (e.g., Statewide Habitat Conservation Planning Grants).

3. LWCF Monies

Statewide comprehensive outdoor recreation planning is just that-- statewide and comprehensive. As such, SCORPs should be designed and developed to have merit and benefit to all the major outdoor recreation providers and interests, including those federal agencies with a major presence in a state (e.g., BLM, BOR, FWS, FS, NPS, NOAA, and USACE).

Currently, LWCF State-side planning grants fund States for SCORP planning activities. Yet, there is no monetary commitment from federal agen-



cies to support their involvement in this statewide activity. Meaningful federal participation is critical.

NARRP recommends that LWCF Federal-side monies be used by federal agencies to ensure full participation as collaborative planning team members in each SCORP effort. The benefit of this action would be to help align federal resources, priorities and programs with other providers towards building a comprehensive and integrated outdoor recreation and conservation system at the state level. This engagement would particularly help identify gaps and coordinate strategic investments of federal land acquisition that focus on connections between urban and rural settings, improve access to public land and water resources, and respond to other AGO recommendations (e.g., blueways, trails, wildlife corridors).

4. Letter from the Secretary of the Interior to State Governors

The Secretary of the Interior should communicate by letter to State Governors by the end of the eighth year of a 10-year SCORP planning cycle. The purpose of the letter would include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Inform the Governor of the pending start of the SCORP revision process and the importance of the effort, including a list of accomplishments in the past 10 years;
- Encourage the creation of a collaborative planning team comprised of the major local, state and federal outdoor recreation providers and interests in the State;

Recommendations

- Encourage the planning effort to connect to the AGO priorities and recommendations;
- Encourage the Governor to integrate other recreation-related state planning efforts or programs that might benefit from collaborating in this planning effort (e.g. wildlife, watershed, transportation, environmental literacy, economic development, tourism development, public health);
- Introduce the 3-tier planning options (see Recommendation #11) that would be available to each state in order to receive LWCF monies and encourage a strong consideration of pursuing a Tier 2 or 3 planning effort; and
- Invite the State to apply for an LWCF State-side planning grant which includes a due date for the planning grant application with a proposed planning option selected (i.e., Tier 1, 2, or 3).

A copy of the letter should be sent to all the federal resource agencies with a significant presence in that particular State.

5. Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation

Ever since the demise of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation some 40 years ago, there has been no central leadership or coordination of outdoor recreation resources and activities at the national level. AGO recognized this loss and should be commended for establishing the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation. NARRP is very hopeful that FICOR will fulfill many important roles that would be helpful in the preparation and implementation of SCORPs such as:

- Prepare a national outdoor recreation strategy every 10 years by integrating and aligning FICOR agency goals and strategies and by tiering-up the recurring goals and strategies from the State's SCORPs;
- Align federal efforts to measure outdoor recreation participation, trends, visitor profiles, impacts, and other fundamental metrics critical



to federal and state level planning and management. Prepare a national and state profile on outdoor recreation participation and publish as part of the national outdoor recreation strategy previously referenced;

- Develop a standard and unifying process (e.g., tools, metrics, data collection) to measure the benefits of outdoor recreation to the Nation (e.g., jobs, land values, taxes and revenue generation, mental and physical health, environmental stewardship, community stability);
- Assemble outdoor recreation and related best practices employed by the FICOR agencies and post for easy access by the federal agencies, state and local agencies, private recreation and tourism industry, communities, academia and other interests;
- FICOR should encourage regional and statewide comprehensive outdoor recreation and conservation planning as opportunities arise. For example, FICOR should encourage regional and field office participation on collaborative planning teams and encourage their research and technical assistance programs to provide support to SCORP efforts.

6. Technical Planning Assistance

Technical planning assistance is necessary to fully benefit from statewide comprehensive outdoor recreation planning. It would be far more efficient, effective, practical and realistic for a centralized team of planning experts to provide technical support to State SCORP efforts than to expect each state to have all the necessary skill sets and competencies. States would still need to employ the necessary expertise and leadership to facilitate development of the SCORP, however, technical planning assistance would help ensure that states initiate their planning efforts with the necessary tools, information, and framework in place to ensure development of a successful plan. Several options are available.

- The NPS could strengthen the recreation resource planning expertise within the LWCF State-side Program or could broaden the purview and expertise of the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program. Several outdoor recreation planning professionals would be sufficient assuming a 10-year planning cycle and that five states would initiate a SCORP in any given year (see Recommendation #1).
- With support of Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, technical planning assistance could be provided from the USDA Cooperative Extension Service or the State and Private Forestry branch of the U.S. Forest Service. The Cooperative Extension Service has a presence in every state and history of being involved in recreation and tourism development in rural America.
- Technical planning assistance could be outsourced to a professional organization or team of planning experts on a retainer basis.



7. Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Cooperatives

FICOR was established to serve as a conduit or bridge across the seven federal agencies responsible for outdoor recreation resources. The need for a multi-agency/organization bridge at the state level is even greater given the many diverse providers and interests within the public, private and non-governmental sectors. Such cooperatives can help provide a leadership and guidance helpful in developing SCORPs every 10 years, and help to further SCORP (and AGO) implementation on an ongoing basis. Several states have created informal working cooperatives such as the California Recreation Roundtable, the Colorado Outdoor Recreation Resources Project, and the Idaho Recreation and Tourism Initiative.

Secretarial leadership for these networks and collaborative partnerships could be provided in the Secretary's letter to the Governors (see Recommendation #4) and through FICOR activities (see Recommendation #5).

8. Name of SCORP Plan

Future SCORP efforts will likely involve more diverse collaborators and be more integrated and comprehensive in nature. Thus, there may be strategic benefit to title the plan by some other loftier and more inclusive title. States should be empowered to title the planning effort and plan document as they think best, while acknowledging in the credits that the plan is intended to fulfill the requirements of the LWCF Act and serve as the SCORP.

9. Use of Spatial Analysis

NARRP encourages the use of a spatial analysis (i.e., GIS) in SCORP planning and implementation. A geographic information system should allow for a common data collection and archival storage that can be accessed by state agencies, communities, federal agencies and others. Such a system would serve as an important conduit to help foster collaborative planning and implementation on a statewide scale.

For example, a GIS approach would be very helpful to visually and analytically identify locations where there are gaps in the outdoor recreation system (e.g., trails, access facilities, blueways, byways), overlapping or competing facilities, potential conflicts with other resource values (e.g., wildlife, water), locations where the visitor demand exceeds the supply of opportunities (i.e., visitor capacity), the identification of niches or places where outdoor recreation providers and conservation interests could contribute to a statewide system, and for tracking plan implementation and changes over time.



10. Content of a SCORP Plan

NARRP believes there are a number of topics and factors, many of which are inspired by AGO, which should be considered by the States in their SCORP effort, to the extent practical and deemed useful:

- urban parks and community green spaces
- building a system of connections (e.g., trails, rivers, open space, facilities, transportation)
- landscape-scale conservation
- recreational blueways and byways
- children in nature, environmental literacy, K-12 education
- minority, aging, special and disadvantaged populations
- volunteers, youth corps, partnerships
- public access to public land and water resources
- building connections (e.g., physical, programmatic, informational, technological) among local, state and federal outdoor recreation assets
- community-based collaboration in the planning process
- use of a collaborative planning team in the SCORP process
- public access to natural and cultural resources; walking access
- integrate natural and cultural resource values and conservation strategies
- proposals for special designations (e.g., scenic byways, heritage areas, heritage monuments, national trails)
- wildlife corridors and habitat protection
- embrace the conservation community and outdoor recreation industry in the planning process
- linkages to healthcare, K-12 education, transportation, economic development, water resources, tourism, green infrastructure and other outdoor recreation-related industries
- coordination of local, state and federal land acquisition needs
- use of professional recreation resource planning principles and best practices, particularly the use of spatial analysis tools for recreation supply/gap analysis
- the plan content should be action-oriented, outcomes focused, and structured in a manner that allows for easy implementation, monitoring and accountability.

11. SCORP Planning Options

NARRP recognizes that not all SCORP efforts can be nor should be the same. NARRP recommends a sliding-scale of effort depending on the importance, utility and benefit a State wishes to place on the SCORP planning process and resultant plan. States would apply to the NPS for a planning grant based upon the level of effort they wish to expend and benefit they wish to obtain.

NARRP proposes a three-tiered level of effort for SCORP planning. The following text and Table 1 describes the three tiers.



Table 1. Three Tiers of SCORP Efforts

Characteristic	Tier 1 Analysis	Tier 2 Analysis	Tier 3 Analysis
Planning cycle	10 years		
Administrative requirements	Planning grant application to NPS; Annual progress report due to NPS; Mid-term SCORP update/revision due to NPS in year 5 of 10 year planning cycle.		
Expected length of time to prepare a new SCORP	Not to exceed one year	2 years	2–3 years
Scale of planning area	Statewide	Statewide	2 or more states, or large segments of 2 or more states (e.g., watersheds, ecoregions, tourism regions)
Planning lead	Internal staff of LWCF management agency (e.g., state park planner)	Collaborative planning team (e.g., planners from partnering organizations)	
Scope of plan focus	State outdoor recreation resources	All public outdoor recreation resources and other collaborating resources or programs (e.g., wildlife, open space, water, transportation, health)	All public outdoor recreation resources and other collaborating resources or programs (e.g., wildlife, open space, water, transportation, health)
Level of detail	Provide state-level general guidance for LWCF management agency for awarding state-side grants.	Provide general guidance to regions in the state, large communities, and to collaborating agencies.	Provide general guidance to regions in the state, large communities, and to collaborating agencies.
Regulatory authority	SCORPs are intended to provide a common vision and guidance, but do not have any regulatory authority	SCORPs are intended to provide a common vision and guidance to collaborating agencies, but do not have any regulatory authority.	SCORPs are intended to provide a common vision and guidance to collaborating agencies, but do not have any regulatory authority.
Assessment of recreation demand and supply	Required		
Inclusion of implementation program/schedule	Required		
Integration of AGO recommendations into SCORP (see footnote for examples)	YES, several AGO recommendations would be integrated into plan	YES, many AGO recommendations would be integrated into plan	YES, 5 or more AGO recommendations would be integrated into plan
Public & community participation at the regional level (e.g., major metro areas, state economic regions, political districts)	Not required, but strongly recommended	Required	Required
Information Base	Existing data	Existing and original data collection	Existing and original data collection
Use of spatial analysis technology (GIS)	Not required, but strongly recommended	Required	Required
Establishment of a diverse public, community, conservation, and corporate advisory team.	Not required, but strongly recommended	Required	Required
Expected matching percentage to secure LWCF state-side planning grants (match includes in-kind contributions).	50%		
Use of other federal, state, local, private and corporate dollars and contributions to help planning effort (i.e., beyond LWCF state-side monies)	Not required, but strongly recommended.	Required	Required
Maximum LWCF state-side planning grant for each 10-year cycle	\$50K	\$300K	\$650K

(a) Examples of connections to AGO priorities would include urban parks and community green spaces; landscape-scale conservation; recreational blueways; children, youth, and special populations; connections of local, state and federal outdoor recreation assets; community collaboration, multi-agency collaboration; improved public access; natural and cultural resource conservation; special designations (e.g., scenic byways, heritage areas, national trails); wildlife corridors and habitat protection; linkages to healthcare, K-12 education, transportation, economic development, and tourism industries; identification of priority state and federal land acquisition needs; use of spatial analysis tools for recreation supply and gap analysis.

12. Principled SCORP Planning

NARRP believes there are fundamental terms and principles that should underpin the nation's SCORP efforts. After collaborating with recreation resource planners nationwide, the NARRP Board adopted a set of professional recreation resource planning principles in 2009 (www.narrp.org) and believes that professional principles are imperative for good planning:

Professional principles help clarify institutional values and perspectives and provide a common understanding and nomenclature for professionals and interested stakeholders. They serve as a guide and rule of thumb for making decisions and taking action, and they help stakeholders to better understand planning and the recreation planning profession.

NARRP recommends that the following terms and principles be adopted by the LWCF State-side Program (National Park Service) and communicated to the States and Territories.

- a. **Broad Utility.** A statewide comprehensive outdoor recreation plan is a tool that should have utility and benefit to all the major providers of outdoor recreation in a state, such as state agencies, city and county agencies, communities, federal resource agencies, land trusts, conservation groups, outdoor recreation industry, tourism industry, and other stakeholders.
- b. **Comprehensive and Integrated.** Outdoor recreation is inextricably linked to many aspects of our lives, other professions and the outdoor industry. It is important in a comprehensive plan to consider how to integrate and link associated efforts related to, but not limited to, transportation, economic development, health-care, education, volunteerism, children and youth programs, tourism, fisheries, wildlife, water resources, open space, forest and range resources, conservation and other interests.
- c. **Conservation and Outdoor Recreation.** Quality outdoor recreation is dependent on quality natural and cultural resources. Conversely, quality natural and cultural resources are dependent upon an informed, impassioned, and engaged outdoor recreating public. The goals of conservation and outdoor recreation are synergistic.
- d. **Linkages.** SCORPs are not isolated tools but rather should link to and build from other state, local, and federal plans and programs; and conversely, SCORPs should be linked to and contribute to other efforts and programs.
- e. **Collaborative Planning Team.** A SCORP planning effort can be more efficient and effective, and have greater utility to the major providers, when the effort is guided by a diverse multi-agency or collaborative planning team.
- f. **Recreation Resources.** Recreation resources are those features in a setting that define a person's experience, such as the natural resources (e.g., fisheries, wildlife, water, forests), cultural resources, special values attached to an area, facilities, infrastructure, personnel, programs, and management regulations and actions. Recreation resources are planned for and managed in order to provide the prescribed recreation opportunity for an area.
- g. **Recreation Opportunities.** SCORP planners plan for recreation opportunities, defined as an occasion for a person to participate in a specific recreation activity in a particular recreation resource setting in order to enjoy a desired recreation experience and gain the healthy benefits that accrue.
- h. **Resource Stewardship.** SCORP planning should consider how to best design, manage, and interpret settings so as to foster public appreciation, understanding, respect, partnerships and recreation behavior that contributes to the stewardship of an area's natural and cultural resources and special values.
- i. **Recreation Diversity.** Because there is no "average" recreationist, it is important to plan for and maintain a spectrum of diverse recreation opportunities among the many outdoor recreation providers. Because not all people can be accommodated in any one place, SCORP planning helps to focus on the special values and resources of a setting and to define the special niche for providers within the larger spectrum of recreation opportunities.
- j. **Regional and Community Connections.** SCORPs provide a large landscape view of a state. From this perspective, SCORPs can help identify gaps and places when improved connections of recreation resources, facilities, and programs can build a seamless system of opportunities for the public.
- k. **Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Industry.** The outdoor recreation and tourism industry are critical stakeholders and collaborators, and often has skills, data, research, and resources that the public sector does not have. SCORP planning should meaningfully engage this sector.

- l. **Community Collaboration.** The meaningful engagement and exchange with the public is essential throughout the planning process. Collaboration results in a clearer definition of public values, more creative alternatives, improved connections, more reasoned and reasonable decisions, future partnerships, and a constituency that becomes better informed and committed to the plan and its implementation.
- m. **Science-Informed Planning.** It is both a legal requirement and professional imperative to duly consider the best available science and expertise in the planning process and the plan's implementation. Science should inform decision making.
- n. **Best Practices.** SCORPs should be based upon professional planning principles and best practices to the extent practicable (e.g., tools, data, GIS, research, technology, models).
- o. **Activity and Outcomes Focused.** A plan should provide a vision and set of goals and objectives, but should also detail activities and intended outcomes, along with an implementation schedule (i.e., actions, sequence, target date, responsible person) to help ensure implementation, progress and accountability.





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