

Department of  
Environment &  
Conservation  
Strategic Plan

2020-  
2024

# Table of Contents

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Commissioner Message..... 1

Mission, Vision, Values Overview..... 2

Goal 1: Positively Impact the Environment and Quality of Life of Tennessee Communities..... 3

Goal 2: Cultivate Strong Internal and External Relationships ..... 6

Goal 3: Ensure Fiscal Responsibility and Sustainable Funding..... 8

Goal 4: Pursue Organizational Performance Excellence ..... 11

Goal 5: Ensure Positive Experiences for Customers, Guests, and other Stakeholders ..... 13

Goal 6: Implement Strategic Use of Technology..... 13

Implementation Schedule..... 15

# Commissioner Message

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Our friends at the Farm Bureau are fond of saying, “You can’t predict the future, but you can prepare for it.” This is why we’re grateful you asked our department to take on the challenge of creating a four year strategic plan that moves us forward today and also lays a foundation for Tennessee’s success across future generations.

It is not a simple task to develop a road map for a diverse department like TDEC, but I have been encouraged by the energy and effort invested in our strategic plan. Every member of my executive leadership team has embraced this process and engaged their management teams in this comprehensive initiative. I’m confident the end result presented here has been enhanced by the expertise invested by many committed, talented people.

Our strategic plan aligns with the broader priorities for Tennessee state government: support for rural communities, great customer service, performance excellence, and leading with innovation. The direction and expectations laid out in this plan flow from our mission and employees’ shared purpose to make Tennessee a recognized leader in environmental stewardship and home of the best managed state parks system in the nation. The building blocks for realizing this desired future are identified in our plan’s goals:

- Positively impact the environment and quality of life of Tennessee communities
- Cultivate strong internal and external relationships
- Ensure fiscal responsibility and sustainable funding
- Pursue organizational performance excellence
- Ensure positive experiences for customers, guests and other stakeholders
- Implement the strategic use of technology

Our department looks forward to working with you over the next four years – and longer – as we protect our environment, conserve critical natural resources, and provide diverse outdoor recreational opportunities, all while working together to make Tennessee an even better place to live, work, and play for current and future generations.

# Mission, Vision, Values Overview

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**Mission:** TDEC's mission is to enhance the quality of life for citizens of Tennessee and to be trustees of our natural environment by:

- Protecting and improving the quality of Tennessee's air, land, and water through a responsible regulatory system;
- Protecting and promoting human health and safety;
- Conserving and promoting natural, cultural and historic resources; and
- Providing a variety of quality outdoor recreational experiences.

**Vision:** Working together, we will protect our environment and conserve critical natural resources for future generations while we make Tennessee an even better place to live, work, and play.

**Values:**

- Team TDEC, One Tennessee
- Commitment to excellence
- Accountability
- Customer focus
- Relationships and partnerships
- Data driven decision-making

We are also focused on creating a culture committed to empowering employees, transparency, and collaboration.

**Competencies**

- Customer focus
- Integrity and trust
- Drive for results
- Decision quality
- Problem solving
- Motivating others
- Organizational agility
- Managing and measuring work

# Goal 1: Positively Impact the Environment and Quality of Life of Tennessee Communities

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**Objective 1:** By June 30, 2021, the Bureau of Environment (BOE) leadership team will develop an implementation plan for TN H2O, a statewide plan for future water availability in Tennessee.

**To meet this objective:**

- On an annual basis, participate in “Imagine a Day Without Water” campaign to heighten public awareness of the importance and value of water resources.
- Form and begin regularly convening a TN H2O Implementation Committee by January 31, 2020.
- Review TN H2O roadmap and identify potential projects by February 29, 2020.
- For U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Partnership Agreement Study (PAS) projects, identify metrics, measurable, milestones, and responsible parties for implementation by December 31, 2020.
- Assess status of PAS projects by June 30, 2021.

**Objective 2:** By December 31, 2021, the BOE and the Office of External Affairs will develop and implement an approach to enhance and promote TDEC’s role in the site selection process used to recruit businesses to Tennessee.

**To meet this objective:**

- Identify TDEC responsibilities in the site selection process and programmatic connections between TDEC and the Department of Economic and Community Development (ECD) by June 30, 2021.
- Identify opportunities to enhance TDEC’s role in the site selection process and promote collaboration between TDEC and ECD programmatic connections by June 30, 2021.
- Implement opportunities for enhancing TDEC’s role in the recruitment and site selection process by December 31, 2021.

**Objective 3:** By December 31, 2023, TDEC will enhance the technical assistance provided to Tennessee communities, with a specific emphasis on rural communities.

**To meet this objective:**

- Develop and launch a State Revolving Fund toolkit which will facilitate water infrastructure planning in all communities, with an initial focus on communities in need identified through their Ability to Pay Index score, by June 30, 2021.
- Develop more mechanisms for building technical expertise in the department, pooling of technical resources across divisions, and providing technical expertise to Tennessee communities by establishing a technical workgroup to bring together scientists and engineers from across TDEC divisions by December 31, 2021.
- Identify opportunities and develop associated resources for enhancing programs and services offered to the Tennessee agribusiness sector by TDEC’s Small Business Environmental Assistance Program and the Office of Policy and Sustainable Practices (OPSP) in collaboration with Agriculture and others by January 31, 2021.

- Complete development and launch of OPSP’s voluntary sustainability business mentoring program, with a focus on pairing businesses with established sustainability practices with businesses without sustainability practices, by June 30, 2021.
- Through December 31, 2023, use the technical workgroup to identify and execute non-regulatory projects that result in significant environmental impacts and demonstrate best practices in environmental improvement and collaboration with partners, with an emphasis on projects in state parks and natural areas where possible.

**Objective 4:** By December 31, 2023, the Bureau of Parks and Conservation (P&C) will double its economic impact in distressed counties<sup>1</sup> (collectively as a group).

**To meet this objective:**

- Establish a Rural Development Task Force that will visit every distressed county to meet with the local leaders to better understand opportunities for positive impact on local economies and identify at least one major project for each distressed county by September 30, 2020. Implement identified projects by December 31, 2023.
- Develop a plan to include Tennessee State Parks (TSP) assets in tourism efforts and to execute new initiatives to ensure that P&C assets are recognized, marketed, and used to optimize tourism with an emphasis in distressed counties. Begin executing the plan by June 30, 2021 and continue plan implementation through December 31, 2023.
- Build an economic impact model to accurately measure TSP’s impact on a respective local community’s economy by June 30, 2020. Use the economic impact model to help focus P&C resources to increase economic impact in distressed counties.

**Objective 5:** By December 31, 2023, P&C will work to encourage outdoor recreation by youth and increase education of youth across the state, with a focus on youth in distressed counties.

**To meet this objective:**

- Implement the Healthy Parks Healthy Person (HPHP) program in all TSP counties by collaborating with the Departments of Health and Education and local county school districts by December 31, 2020. Enhance the technology supporting the HPHP program to better track participation and demographics and provide a better user experience by December 31, 2020.
- Increase support of local parks in distressed and at-risk counties through Recreation Educational Services grants and other TDEC funding for local park projects that provide children recreational opportunities by December 31, 2023.

**Objective 6:** By December 31, 2023, P&C will complete trail construction for the Cumberland Trail State Scenic Trail to provide a continuous trail of more than 300 miles from Chattanooga, Tennessee, to the Cumberland Gap National Historic Park on the northeast border of Tennessee and Kentucky.

**To meet this objective:**

- Continue the process to acquire all lands that the state currently lacks to complete trail construction through December 31, 2023.

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<sup>1</sup> Distressed counties identified as the participants at the Governor’s Rural Opportunity Summit held in August 2019 - Lake, Lauderdale, Hardeman, McNairy, Perry, Wayne, Jackson, Clay, Grundy, Bledsoe, Fentress, Morgan, Scott, Hancock, Cocke, and Van Buren counties.

- Complete construction on the state-owned tracts currently lacking trail-routes by December 31, 2023.

**Objective 7:** By December 31, 2023, the Office of Energy Programs will improve transportation efficiency, reduce vehicle emissions, and strengthen the resiliency of the transportation sector by supporting the development of a statewide electric vehicle charging network.

**To meet this objective:**

- Collaborate with Drive Electric TN (DET) participants to finalize a statewide electric vehicle charging infrastructure needs assessment by June 30, 2020, including identification of potential geographic areas for electric vehicle charging infrastructure at or near rural tourism destinations and/or Tennessee State Parks and Natural Areas.
- By September 30, 2020, collaborate with DET participants to identify additional funding to support electric vehicle charging infrastructure. By January 31, 2021, secure said funding via MOA and/or grant commitment to TDEC.
- Release first solicitation for light duty electric vehicle charging infrastructure projects under the Volkswagen Diesel Settlement Environmental Mitigation Trust by June 30, 2021.
- Supplement existing electric vehicle charging infrastructure along major interstate corridors to achieve Fast 50 designation<sup>2</sup> by September 30, 2023.
- Supplement existing electric vehicle charging infrastructure along select U.S. and State highway routes to achieve Fast 50 designation by September 30, 2023.

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<sup>2</sup> Fast 50 guidance suggests that non-proprietary electric vehicle DC fast charging sites (with minimum power levels of 50 kW or higher) will be located no more than 50 miles apart along a given corridor or route.

# Goal 2: Cultivate Strong Internal and External Relationships

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**Objective 1:** By December 31, 2021, the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) will develop and implement an approach for promoting collaborative communications and interactions with other state agencies.

**To meet this objective:**

- Identify primary points of contact and programmatic connections between TDEC and each peer state agency by December 31, 2020.
- Identify opportunities to streamline communications and/or enhance collaboration between TDEC and peer state agency programmatic connections by June 30, 2021.
- Implement at least three opportunities by December 31, 2021.

**Objective 2:** By December 31, 2023, the ELT will maintain efforts to break down silos and encourage the collaborative pursuit of common goals through regularly scheduled meetings with leadership teams and visits to non-central office locations.

**To meet this objective:**

- Develop and implement a process that captures and responds to employee feedback collected during meetings and site visits by February 28, 2021.
- Develop a plan to promote and implement a department-wide culture of “Team TDEC, One Tennessee” by June 30, 2021.
- Members of the ELT engage in monthly meetings with their respective bureau/unit leadership teams to communicate critical department information to leadership teams and subsequently employees through December 31, 2023.
- Members of the ELT visit every environmental field office annually to seek employee input and communicate critical department information through December 31, 2023.
- Members of the ELT visit at least 23 parks annually to seek employee input and communicate critical department information through December 31, 2023.

**Objective 3:** By December 31, 2023, the ELT and other members of the department leadership team will meet at least quarterly with external stakeholders to seek input and communicate critical departmental information.

**To meet this objective:**

- Develop and implement a process that captures and responds to external stakeholder feedback collected during meetings by March 31, 2021.
- BOE, with the support of the Office of External Affairs, will hold quarterly external stakeholder roundtables for business and industry, non-governmental organizations, academia, and local elected officials through December 31, 2023.
- Engage with TSP external stakeholders based on individual park needs.
- Engage in regular interactions with key federal agencies with whom the department frequently works, such as U.S. Department of Energy, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, and others through December 31, 2023.

- Members of the ELT, legislative liaisons, and other department personnel as coordinated through our legislative team to engage in regular interactions with the General Assembly through December 31, 2023.

# Goal 3: Ensure Fiscal Responsibility and Sustainable Funding

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**Objective 1:** By December 31, 2020, P&C will develop a plan with criteria for future parks and land acquisitions.

**To meet this objective:**

- Prepare a detailed list of criteria to be used to guide P&C in the evaluation and consideration of any new state parks by June 30, 2020. Evaluate any existing need for a new state park by August 31, 2020.
- Prepare a detailed list of criteria to be used to guide P&C as land acquisition opportunities become available by December 31, 2020.
- Analyze P&C's current needs for land acquisitions and develop a list of priority acquisitions by December 31, 2020.

**Objective 2:** By December 31, 2023, P&C will eliminate its highest priority deferred maintenance items in Tennessee State Parks (\$36 million of the existing \$82 million on the deferred maintenance list as of October 1, 2019) and continue to address emerging high-priority maintenance needs.

**To meet this objective:**

- Identify deferred maintenance projects, develop plan for execution of projects, and seek appropriations for top priority deferred maintenance projects through December 31, 2023.
- Complete deferred maintenance projects in order of priority through December 31, 2023.

**Objective 3:** By December 31, 2023, Tennessee State Parks (TSP) Operations Division will increase its annual net gain by \$2 million.

**To meet this objective:**

- Review current retail rates at campgrounds, marinas, swimming areas, group camps, shelters, program fees, and other recreational retail offerings by February 29, 2020.
- Implement dynamic pricing/yield management practices for campgrounds before May 25, 2020 (Memorial Day).
- Develop a plan to manage expenditure growth while meeting operational goals by June 30, 2020 and implement this plan through December 31, 2023.
- Study the potential savings in the restructure of facilities maintenance as a lower cost alternative to outsourcing and recommend a course of action by September 30, 2020.
- Identify and develop an implementation plan for at least one new revenue source with the potential to contribute at least \$50,000 to net gain at State Parks by September 30, 2020.
- Share the vision and impact of the Bureau of Parks and Conservation with half the members of the General Assembly, including all the members of the House and Senate oversight committees, by September 30, 2020.

**Objective 4:** By December 31, 2023, TSP Hospitality Division will increase its annual net gain by \$5 million.

**To meet this objective:**

- Develop and execute a plan to re-envision TSP Lodge operations with the re-opening of the renovated Montgomery Bell and Pickwick Landing Lodges, and applying the same vision across all TSP Lodges through December 31, 2023.
- Implement dynamic pricing/yield management practices for cabins before May 25, 2020 (Memorial Day).
- Restructure TSP hospitality operations to better align with industry standards<sup>3</sup> by December 31, 2020.
- Establish a maintenance reserve to ensure renovated and re-built properties remain competitive and able to contribute to Parks long-term net gain by December 31, 2020.
- Develop and implement a plan for a proactive group sales initiative by December 31, 2020.

**Objective 5:** By December 31, 2023, TSP will obtain or assist with obtaining \$5 million in total annual direct donations to the Tennessee State Parks Fund and Tennessee State Parks Friends Groups, collectively.

**To meet this objective:**

- Develop and implement a plan to better support and grow Tennessee State Parks Friends Groups, specifically their ability to acquire and apply donations on behalf of the park, by September 30, 2020.
- Develop and implement a plan to enhance park-level charitable fundraising skills to create more avenues for guest donations at all state parks by June 30, 2020.
- Partner with the Tennessee State Parks Conservancy to hire an Executive Director for major gift fund-raising and develop and begin executing programs to raise donations by September 30, 2020.
- Implement donation and charitable fundraising plans through December 31, 2023.

**Objective 6:** By December 31, 2023, the BOE leadership team will identify division-specific budget issues, shortfalls, and opportunities, and implement plans to address such.

**To meet this objective:**

- Division of Air Pollution Control - Pursue a major source fee increase through Board rulemaking and obtain additional minor source funding through legislation, budget negotiations or otherwise.
- Division of Remediation, Oak Ridge Oversight – Continue engagement with U.S. Department of Energy and federal congressional offices to address funding threats/shortfall and, if possible, secure additional and sustainable sources of funding.
- Division of Remediation – Review opportunities to support division through fee adjustments and cost recovery.
- Division of Solid Waste Management – Identify and implement strategies to establish more robust financial assurance to fund landfill clean-up activities led by the division. Support revenue generation opportunities from training programs.
- Division of Water Resources – Develop and implement a memorandum of understanding between DWR and TDOT for the processing of TDOT permits.

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<sup>3</sup> Specifically, standards and best practices suggested in the CHM Government Services Portfolio Analysis. CHM Government Services is a consulting firm that partners with public agencies in the United States who are responsible for visitor and mission-critical facilities and services to develop and implement sustainable strategies to operate, maintain, and improve these hospitality and recreation assets and programs.

- Division of Underground Storage Tanks – Identify and implement opportunities for fee reductions and adjusting deductibles.

**Objective 7:** By December 31, 2023, TDEC will use a collaborative approach to identify bureau-specific or department-wide opportunities for optimizing the department’s financial position.

**To meet this objective:**

- Identify opportunities to streamline Consolidated Fees Section services for BOE programs by March 31, 2021. Implement at least two opportunities by December 31, 2021.
- Identify potential opportunities to realize cost savings associated with the provision of administrative services across the department and within BOE by March 31, 2021. Implement at least three opportunities by December 31, 2021.
- Identify and implement building space utilization changes and rent reduction opportunities by December 31, 2023.

# Goal 4: Pursue Organizational Performance Excellence

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**Objective 1:** By January 31, 2023, Tennessee State Parks will exceed the standards for Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA).

**To meet this objective:**

- Develop a Tennessee State Parks Master Plan that incorporates CAPRA standards and includes standards and benchmarks above those required by CAPRA by December 31, 2020.
- Execute Master Plan requirements prior to CAPRA reaccreditation in 2023.

**Objective 2:** By December 31, 2023, the ELT and Office of People and Organizational Development (POD) will work collaboratively with TDEC's programs and divisions, and the Department of Human Resources (DOHR), to ensure policies and procedures which support recruitment and retention of top talent, a strong organizational workforce, and a workplace capable of executing the mission.

**To meet this objective:**

- Develop an implementation plan for TDEC's Diversity and Inclusion Initiative by June 30, 2021.
- Ensure the continued viability of BOE dual career track through proactive collaboration with DOHR and assess potential dual career track for P&C by June 30, 2021.
- In coordination with DOHR, identify opportunities to update current enterprise wide administrative positions or establish TDEC specific administrative positions to best leverage administrative support of the agency and its goals by June 30, 2021.
- Engage in succession planning and implement plans to facilitate institutional knowledge transfer for all divisions and programs by December 31, 2023.

**Objective 3:** By December 31, 2023, TDEC will increase process efficiency across all divisions and programs.

**To meet this objective:**

- Evaluate opportunities to increase efficiency and consistency in permitting and inspections in each BOE division, such as development of streamlined processes and best practices, information sharing across divisions, enhanced central and field office coordination, delegation of consistent and collaborative decision-making, by June 30, 2021 and summarize these opportunities in a deliverable.
- Implement at least three BOE identified opportunities by December 31, 2022.
- Evaluate opportunities to increase efficiency and consistency in all department-wide service divisions by December 31, 2021 and summarize those opportunities in a deliverable.
- Implement at least one identified opportunity per department-wide service division by December 31, 2022.

**Objective 4:** By December 31, 2023, the ELT will work to increase employee engagement and satisfaction across the department by 10%.

**To meet this objective:**

- Evaluate employee engagement and satisfaction by completing an employee engagement survey by June 30, 2021.
- Based on opportunities identified in the survey results, develop and implement a plan for increasing employee engagement across the department by December 31, 2021.

**Objective 5:** By December 31, 2023 the ELT will pursue implementation of Alternative Workplace Solutions (AWS).

**To meet this objective:**

- Identify and prioritize opportunities to AWS across the department by June 30, 2020.
- Develop a department-wide AWS policy, FAQs, and other resources for TDEC employees and managers by September 30, 2020.
- Continue cultural implementation of AWS where deemed appropriate through December 31, 2023.
- Attend regularly scheduled AWS coordinator multi-agency meetings through December 31, 2023.
- Convene TDEC's AWS working group at least quarterly to coordinate policies, processes, and potential space reconfiguration associated with AWS implementation through December 31, 2023.

# Goal 5: Ensure Positive Experiences for Customers, Guests, and other Stakeholders

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**Objective 1:** By December 31, 2023, P&C will identify 7 million “WOW moments” (equal to one for each Tennessean) as an indicator of creating lifelong memories for our citizens through Tennessee State Parks, local parks, Natural Areas, and Archaeological sites.

**To meet this objective:**

- Build a guest satisfaction survey and develop an implementation method designed to get feedback from guests at the local level by March 31, 2020.
- Evaluate the opportunity for social media monitoring as a means of identifying WOW moments from P&C assets and activities, and implement it if a cost-effective opportunity is identified by December 31, 2020.
- Develop P&C area-specific plans for WOW-moment programming and featured activities to provide a WOW-moment opportunity to every guest that visits that P&C area by December 31, 2020.
- Track and measure WOW moments through December 31, 2023.

**Objective 2:** By December 31, 2023, P&C will surpass the hospitality industry’s average guest satisfaction in Tennessee State Parks hospitality operations.

**To meet this objective:**

- Build a guest satisfaction survey and develop an implementation method designed to get feedback from guests at the local level by March 31, 2020.
- Develop and implement a WOW hospitality service training program modeled after an industry leading program designed to provide exceptional hospitality customer service by December 31, 2020.

**Objective 3:** By December 31, 2023, TDEC will engage in public participation efforts that are inclusive, clear, and consistent.

**To meet this objective:**

- Evaluate opportunities to update and streamline public participation protocols and resources by December 31, 2020.
- Implement at least three identified opportunities by December 31, 2021.

# Goal 6: Implement Strategic Use of Technology

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**Objective 1:** By December 31, 2023, TDEC will implement a consolidated data management system to be utilized by various departments and divisions to help TDEC better serve citizens, local governments, businesses and other stakeholders through increased effectiveness, efficiency, and transparency.

**To meet this objective:**

- In collaboration with Strategic Technology Solutions (STS), engage a knowledge services vendor by March 30, 2020, to assess department needs and develop project recommendations.
- Establish and regularly convene a technology steering committee to guide the department's technology transformation by March 30, 2020.
- Establish working groups, as needed, to support the department's pursuit of innovative technology use.
- Identify prior and existing efforts to assess and enhance the department's technology resources by June 30, 2021.
- Research and summarize innovative technology use by the private sector, state park systems, and environmental regulatory agencies by June 30, 2021.
- Identify opportunities for enhancing and/or coordinating GIS and spatial analysis functions across the department by December 31, 2021.
- Identify opportunities for improved process efficiency as part of the implementation of technology solutions by December 31, 2021.
- In collaboration with STS, engage vendor(s) to develop and implement technology solutions by June 30, 2022.

**Objective 2:** By December 31, 2023, P&C will strengthen the quality and access to Tennessee's natural and archaeological resource data.

**To meet this objective:**

- Complete GIS analysis to determine base-line of ecological communities protected on 100% of TDEC lands and develop an SOP for community mapping by December 31, 2020.
- Select sites for inventory and physically verify presence and distribution of ecosystems while searching for rare species and exemplary examples of natural communities by June 30, 2021.
- Complete vegetation community mapping on at least 2,000 acres and develop GIS vegetation map with management recommendations by January 31, 2023.
- Continue to digitize Archaeological data from 20% of current site information files by December 31, 2023.