

A photograph showing two mountain bikers riding through a dense forest. The biker in the foreground is wearing a blue shirt and black pants, while the biker in the background is wearing an orange shirt and black pants. They are riding on a wet, muddy trail surrounded by tall, mossy trees.

**Recreation,
Education &
Interpretation
Program**

**Strategic Plan
2023–2026**



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Planning Team

Multiple staff from within the State Forest Division were consulted during early phases of this planning process including program staff, the State Forest Division chief, several district foresters and district forest operations coordinators, public affairs staff, one Board of Forestry member, the State Forests Trust of Oregon executive director, the State Forests Trust of Oregon encore fellow, and a few select constituents from the public use community. Most of the planning work was completed by Recreation, Education and Interpretation Program leadership staff:

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Recreation, Education and Interpretation (REI) program is the result of a significant workforce reorganization the State Forest Division of the Oregon Department of Forestry underwent in 2018. This reorganization came to be known as Workforce Futuring. The result was the *Work Force Futuring Blueprint*, which laid out a new way of doing business for the division. This reorganization aimed to ensure financial viability, increased efficiencies, and



decreased overall operational costs. Before this workforce reorganization, recreation was managed by individual state forest districts and the education and interpretation services were managed largely by the Tillamook Forest Center. These two work units were brought together under one organizational structure, the REI Program. Comparatively, the program is still young. As such, State Forest Division leaders determined a strategic plan would be essential for a more unified and integrated program. This document is the product of an REI planning effort facilitated by Oregon Consensus, a program of the Mark O. Hatfield School of Government at Portland State University. Staff from the State Forest Division was consulted during early phases of the planning. These early phases focused on drafting a guiding vision for the program. Later phases included identifying several high-level goals and developing associated strategies and tactics to accomplish the goals.

1.1. Mission and vision

The first phase of planning focused on revisiting the program's mission, which was created by a subgroup of the Wokforce Futuring effort. The original mission was endorsed and the planning team focused on crafting a vision to guide the program into the future. The current guiding vision and mission for the REI program are as follows:

- *Our vision is to be the pathway for all to explore, learn about, and enjoy Oregon's state forests.*
- *Our mission is to create lasting and diverse outdoor recreational, interpretive, and educational opportunities that inspire visitors to enjoy, respect, and learn about Oregon's state forests.*

1.2. Foundational principles

After the visioning exercise, the planning team developed the following guiding principles to lead their work together.

Principles:

- **Integrated**—Work of the REI program will be fully integrated across the landscape, and integrated with other State Forest Division work.
- **Inclusive**—REI program services, infrastructure, and programming will be reflective of a diverse audience.
- **Adaptable**—Workflows and business improvement pathways will be nimble and stay flexible to respond to change.
- **Sustainable**—Program needs will continuously align with available resources and capacity to ensure durability and stability over time.
- **Welcoming**—Recreational, educational, and interpretive programs and services will advance accessible, equitable, and diverse opportunities on state forests.
- **Professional**—Respectful, courteous, and open-minded curiosity will be the cornerstones of all customer relations.

1.3. Current conditions

A modified SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) was conducted to identify the program's conditions. It identified current opportunities as well as constraints. While completing this analysis the planning team identified knowledge gaps and workflow processes that were needed to ensure full integration of the program internally across the landscape, and full integration of the program into the overall work of the division. This phase of the planning level-set expectations between staff and established necessary sideboards to ensure strategic goal development was realistic and attainable long term. The assessment revealed the following:

Opportunities:

- Highly skilled, experienced, and committed staff
- Existence of a supporting nonprofit, State Forests Trust of Oregon
- Consistent service delivery across the landscape
- Addition of two senior-level managers to ensure program alignment across district boundaries and integration with broader State Forest Division work, and addition of a Community Engagement Coordinator to ensure sustained community support and stewardship

Constraints:

- Lack of internal alignment around REI program as a sanctioned business line within the State Forests Division
- Consistent long-term funding for facilities and services maintenance and upgrades; backlog of unaddressed work
- Competing priorities; unsustainable workloads; divisional policy development compounding unsustainable workloads
- Lack of internal workflows and work products to support deeper integration between the recreation unit and the interpretation and education unit

- Lack of internal workflows, processes, and procedures (including governance and decision-making) between the newly established program and the larger division
- Existing staff vacancies and continual turnover in seasonal staff; lack of capacity

1.4. Strategic goals

Next the planning team developed several high-level goals to ensure short-term core business was getting done, in addition to establishing more long-term aspirational goals. Several strategies and tactics were developed for each goal, and some cross over between functional work units (i.e., recreation operations, Tillamook Forest Center operations, and community engagement activities). Many of the goals are designed to create a fully unified and integrated program.



The REI program goals are as follows:

Goal 1: Update and enhance current interpretation and education services and the Tillamook Forest Center facility with an eye toward future expansion to foster understanding, connection, and stewardship on all state forests.

Goal 2: Develop diverse and sustainable funding resources that provide for stable programming and increased financial capacity.

Goal 3: Systematically grow partnerships and public engagement for ownership, support, and capacity to advance program goals.

Goal 4: Reimagine and integrate the REI story into all aspects of the program and provide public information to foster understanding, support, and ownership.

Goal 5: Reimagine and adapt recreation, education and interpretation infrastructure across state forests to meet program objectives and the needs of recreationalists.

Goal 6: Develop a deeper understanding of visitor use and the social and economic benefits and value of recreation, education, and interpretive opportunities on state forests.

1.5. Strategic plan priorities

The REI program is still in early development and aims to complete the following priorities over the short-term (1-4 years). Other strategies will take longer to complete, given current staff capacity and workloads, and current funding levels.

Short-term priorities:

- Development of a short-term Recreation Operations Plan
- Completion of an integrated Recreation Master Plan
- Development of an Interpretive Master Plan; revised education and interpretation programs and services at the Tillamook Forest Center to reflect new state forest policy changes
- Development of a Tillamook Forest Center Facilities Maintenance Plan
- Completion of a Community Engagement Plan that aligns with State Forests Trust of Oregon's donor relations strategies
- Development of a long-term staffing plan to address emerging staffing needs identified in the integrated Recreation Master Plan, and the Interpretive Master Plan
- Completion of a Volunteer Management Plan
- Completion of a pilot Visitor Use Monitoring Project at the Black Rock Mountain Biking Area

1.6. Summary

As with any strategic plan, its utility directly correlates with making regular and consistent progress on goals and strategies. A dashboard will be built that incorporates milestones and a timeline for each of the priorities outlined above. As progress is made on each priority, milestones will be documented on the dashboard to reflect overall progress toward short-term and long-term plan completion. REI program leadership will meet quarterly to review progress towards milestones and update the dashboard accordingly. An annual progress report will be completed and shared internally and with select external constituents. Given the number of external forces that influence the overall work of the REI program, such as available funding and staff capacity, this plan will likely be revised to respond to shifting agency needs, divisional priorities, and other unforeseen program limitations.

2. HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

In 2018 the State Forest Division of the Oregon Department of Forestry rolled out the Work Force Future Blueprint. It articulated a new way of doing business for the division that focused on increasing efficiencies and decreasing overall operational costs. In the past, division work, such as planning and coordination around timber sales and harvest activities, was largely done at the district level. Under the Blueprint those functions were centralized. Several other functional units, such as the roads unit and the reforestation and young stand management unit were consolidated and no longer managed at the divisional level. Similarly, the Blueprint also placed the recreation unit and the interpretation and education unit under one organizational and management structure, known as the Recreation, Education & Interpretation Program (REI program) of the State Forest Division.



Several factors led up to this comprehensive planning effort, including the following:

- Increased public demands for ecosystem services
- Fluctuations in the timber market
- International competition
- Costs of lawsuits
- Escalating administrative costs
- Unsustainable employee workloads (In 2008, in response to financial challenges of the times, the division downsized and has not significantly increased the number of employees since. This change has caused stress for the remaining workforce; so the division established a Workforce Future team to address these concerns.)

Previously, interpretation and education services were delivered at forest locations. Later these services became largely limited to the Tillamook Forest Center. That change left a gap between the recreation operations unit and the interpretation and education unit. Under the current organizational structure, the REI program is poised to function as one unit outside the district-managed model.

In 2018, a subgroup of Oregon Department of Forestry staff (with one external stakeholder) developed a mission for the REI program. The State Forest Division leadership endorsed it. That subgroup started drafting a vision for the program. However, due to competing priorities of the *Blueprint* implementation, the subgroup was not able to proceed.

As part of the division reorganization, the REI program gained three new senior-level management positions under the new program structure. These managers were responsible for setting the overall strategic direction for the REI program and ensuring the program was integrated across forest management disciplines in operations, planning, and leadership. A fourth position was added to advocate for and market the benefits of recreational, interpretive, and educational opportunities on state forests. The intent of this position was to increase community level support that could eventually translate into financial support for the program.

By early 2021, REI program staffing was in place and the program began functioning as one unit, despite working under agency-wide workplace constraints due to the pandemic. As a result, new workflows, communication, and business processes are still under development to integrate the program internally and with other forest management disciplines.

With input from the division, REI program leaders saw a need for a strategic plan. They hired Oregon Consensus (a program of the Hatfield School of Government at Portland State University) to facilitate the planning process. Early on, it became clear the program had additional planning needs, including identifying what core business functions would look like under a unified program. The planning process exceeded the original scope of a strategic plan.

3. REI PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The REI program today is engaged in recreation and interpretive planning, operating, maintaining, and developing recreation facilities and trails, engaging communities and volunteers, developing partnerships, and delivering forestry education and natural resource interpretation programs.

The REI program manages and maintains over seventy-five recreation facilities, including campgrounds, picnic areas, trailheads, boat launches, river access areas, target shooting lanes, interpretive sites, and viewpoints. The program also manages close to 500 miles of off-highway vehicle trails and just over 145 miles of non-motorized trails for hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking.

The program also oversees the world class Tillamook Forest Center, the visitor center for the Oregon Department of Forestry. Through this visitor center, the program delivers programs that help shape a lifelong appreciation and understanding of state forests and their management.

Through recreation opportunities, REI program services, and community engagement, the program introduces people to Oregon Department of Forestry. This work highlights the program's role in achieving the agency's overall mission: *"To serve the people of Oregon by protecting, managing, and promoting stewardship of Oregon's forests to enhance environmental, economic, and community sustainability."*

4. MISSION & VISION

The planning process began with a visioning exercise.¹ Through a series of Oregon Consensus discussions and interviews, participants working on the vision considered the following question: What will the relevance of the REI program for the Oregon Department of Forestry be in the next five years and beyond? Using a single question generated robust conversation. Concurrently, participants reviewed the previous program mission and determined it was still pertinent. The group met its goal and program leaders endorsed the following vision and mission for the unified REI program:

Vision: Our vision is to be the pathway for all to explore, learn about, and enjoy Oregon's state forests.

Mission: Our mission is to create lasting and diverse outdoor recreational, interpretive, and educational opportunities that inspire visitors to enjoy, respect and learn about Oregon's state forests.

5. FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

Once the vision was complete, program leaders developed foundational principles to guide further strategy development. Staff committed to embed the following principles into all operations and planning:

- **Integrated:** Embrace new workflows and business improvements to integrate recreation, education, and interpretation planning and operations with other state forest disciplines (e.g., reforestation, timber sales, and young stand management). Commit to intentionally integrating recreation planning and operations with interpretive education planning and operations.

¹ The exercise included REI program staff, the State Forest Division Chief, select staff from several other forest disciplines, one Board of Forestry member, the Executive Director of the State Forests Trust of Oregon, an Encore Fellow for the trust, and select constituents from the recreation use community.

- **Inclusive:** Develop and adapt policies, programs, and practices to be more just, diverse, inclusive, connected, and responsive to a broader audience and changing demographics.
- **Adaptable:** Create continuous business improvement that allows the program to stay nimble and adapt to changing conditions.
- **Sustainable:** Continue to right-size all REI program areas to match needs with available financial resources and capacity to ensure durability and stability over time.
- **Welcoming:** Advance accessible, equitable, and diverse opportunities for people to safely visit and connect with state forests.
- **Professional:** Deliver a high standard of customer service in all spaces, particularly in how the program interfaces with the public and each other. Aspire to build and maintain a highly skilled, diverse workforce.

6. NEEDS AND CONDITIONS

After foundational principles were established, program leaders spent time on a situational assessment, identifying the program's current conditions. Staff conducted a modified SWOT analysis, and staff was encouraged to look for opportunities within apparent threats or constraints. Staff identified what was realistic and achievable in the short and long term.

The following opportunities and constraints were identified:



Opportunities:

- Highly skilled, experienced, and committed staff
- Existence of a supporting nonprofit, the State Forests Trust of Oregon
- Consistent service delivery across the landscape
- Addition of two senior managers to ensure program alignment across district boundaries and integration with broader State Forest Division work; addition of a community engagement coordinator to ensure sustained community support and stewardship

Constraints:

- Lack of internal alignment around the REI program as a sanctioned business line within the State Forest Division
- Lack of consistent long-term funding for facilities and services maintenance and upgrades, and a backlog of unaddressed work
- Competing priorities, unsustainable workloads, divisional policy development compounding unsustainable workloads
- Lack of internal workflows and work products to support deeper integration between the recreation unit and the interpretation and education unit

- Lack of internal workflows, processes, and procedures (including governance and decision-making) between the newly established program and the larger division
- Existing staff vacancies and continual turnover in seasonal staff resulting in a lack of capacity

With a new staffing structure in place, the program has opportunities to elevate its value to division leaders and external audiences through the work of the community engagement coordinator.

Additionally, senior-level program staff will have the opportunity to incorporate program considerations into critical policy work. Lastly, under this new organizational structure, the program is better positioned to integrate across a broad landscape and fully integrate with other forest management activities and planning.

Currently, program leaders have been directly involved in drafting two key policy documents for the State Forest Division: a new forest management plan (FMP) and accompanying habitat conservation plan (HCP). These provide ripe opportunities to integrate program considerations into the overall policies. Concurrent drafting of the new FMP and the program's strategic plan helps to ensure the new FMP has an eye towards the program's desired future conditions, particularly to reflect evolving societal values and needs.

Should the new HCP be adopted, it will invariably influence what REI program services will be permissible on state forests. The most significant changes include establishment of habitat conservation areas and riparian conservation areas, both of which will dictate the types of activities permissible in these critical areas. Correspondingly, under a new FMP, all interpretive messaging and educational services will need to reflect this new management approach. Concurrently, facility services and delivery systems will need to be modernized. More specifically, new operationally focused program plans such as a recreation master plan and a master interpretive plan will need to be created to reflect these impending policy changes.

The State Forest's Trust of Oregon, whose sole mission is to support the work of the REI program, was identified as one of the program's greatest assets. The trust, previously known as the Tillamook Forest Heritage Trust, was responsible for raising funds to build the Tillamook Forest Center, and several years later, the Education Pavilion. The trust continues to be a significant program benefactor. Long term, the trust will play a large role in helping the program achieve its mission and objectives.

Over the years, the program has built wide support from an array of user groups. These groups are some of the program's greatest assets. With the addition of the community engagement coordinator, these partnerships could be expanded and leveraged to pursue additional legislative support.

Program leaders quickly identified a significant constraint facing the program: the business model that supports the State Forest Division's work, including the work of the REI program. The program is largely funded through the State Forest Division's Forest Development Fund. By statute, the State Forest Division is mandated to distribute two-thirds of the revenues generated by timber sale contracts back to the counties, and the remaining one-third supports the work of the State Forest Division through the Forest Development Fund. Other financial support comes from the State Forest Trust of Oregon.

Additionally, the program receives a biennial transfer allocation from the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department to support the program's off-highway vehicle program, and two seasonal Tillamook Forest Center employees. The program also brings in supplemental funding through various grants.

Other significant constraints included competing priorities and unsustainable workloads and difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified staff.

7. STRATEGIC GOALS: CORE BUSINESS AND LONG-TERM

Next, Oregon Consensus led the planning team through a process to develop high-level goals to help the program get core business done and actualize the vision and mission long term. Strategies were also developed to reach goals. Several of the strategies cross over between functional work units (i.e., recreation operations, Tillamook Forest Center operations, and community engagement activities). They are designed to more fully unify the program. The REI program's strategic goals are as follows:

7.1. Update and enhance current interpretation and education services and the Tillamook Forest Center facility with an eye toward future expansion to foster understanding, connection, and stewardship on all state forests.

The vision for the Tillamook Forest Center grew out of a desire to share the unique and meaningful story of the Tillamook State Forest landscape with future generations.



Planning for the center began in 1996 and the center opened in 2006. Long before the facility was developed, Oregon Department of Forestry offered innovative education and interpretation programs for schools and forest visitors, reaching more than 6,000 people each year, often at forest sites.

The Tillamook Forest Center was funded in part through a partnership facilitated by the State Forests Trust of Oregon and the Oregon Department of Forestry. Several foundations, individuals, businesses, and organizations contributed to the original capital campaign. Then and now, the center's primary goal is to maintain high quality services and information, while serving as the face of the Oregon Department of Forestry.

The center and the REI program support the Oregon Department of Forestry in maintaining public permission to manage state forests for the greatest permanent value through experiences that help shape a life-long appreciation of forests. Visitor engagement is designed to help visitors understand the role of forests, the continuum of forest ownership and management, and how the Oregon Department of Forestry protects sixteen million acres from wildfire and administers the Forest Practices Act.

Key messaging at the center will need to reflect impending policy changes (e.g., new forest management plan, habitat conservation plan, and carbon and climate plan) as well as reflect the changing societal values driving the overall direction of the State Forest Division's work. That work includes adaptive approaches to natural resource management. In addition, as the agency transitions to a new way of managing state forests, exhibits at the center will need to be refreshed to reflect these policy changes.

Current priorities at the center include building a new staff due to significant turnover, in part related to the after-effects of the pandemic. Once the Tillamook Forest Center team is rebuilt, and when capacity and resources allow, the focus will expand to include statewide interpretation and education services on all state forests. Implementation will begin with a focus on the role of fire on the landscape, restoration efforts, and telling the story of the historic Labor Day fires of 2020. The following are strategies and actions for the Tillamook Forest Center:



Strategies and actions:

- a. Design and implement a new interpretive master plan to expand education and interpretation to state forests beyond northwest Oregon.
- b. Develop a facilities maintenance plan to ensure the Tillamook Forest Center is functionally operational well into the future and reflects the initial investment made by multiple donors.
- c. Update technological systems to increase staff capacity (e.g., scheduling systems and volunteer management systems).
- d. Update interpretation and education programs, curriculum, and messaging to include the new forest management plan, habitat conservation plan, private forest accord, fire prevention and protection, and other forestry programs and initiatives.
- e. Plan for expansion of interpretation and education services statewide beginning with implementation of temporary interpretive media and preliminary services on the Santiam State Forest.

7.2. Develop diverse and durable funding resources that provide for stable programming and increased financial capacity.

REI program efforts on state forests are currently funded by revenue generated from timber harvest operations on state forests—revenues that fluctuate with the market. To stabilize and increase funding capacity for its services, the REI program must pursue diverse funding resources that capitalize on the value that state forests provide to all Oregonians and visitors.

User-generated revenue is currently limited to campground fees. The program's biennial budget is \$6.7 million. User fees represent \$240,000 per biennium, a small fraction of total operating costs. Significant increases in user fees would not meet the program's access and equity goals and are not a viable means for increasing funding. Funding efforts will instead focus on corporate partnership opportunities, merchandising, brand licensing, grant writing, and private philanthropy.

The State Forests Trust of Oregon was founded in 1999 to support fundraising for construction of the Tillamook Forest Center. Since that time, the trust has raised funds for projects as diverse as recreational infrastructure development to wildfire recovery. To this point, the trust has been conservative. It has accepted gifts from members of the public in support of REI program goals but has not pursued efforts to expand beyond passive giving. The trust offers another opportunity for funding diversification for the program. Strategies for developing stable funding include the following:

Strategies and actions:

- a. Collaborate with State Forests Trust of Oregon to develop a diverse funding portfolio: monetize experiences at the Tillamook Forest Center and beyond; expand Tillamook Forest Center gift shop sales; expand into e-commerce with new branding.
- b. Develop marketing plan in concert with State Forests Trust of Oregon to better leverage trust dollars, including localized and cross-promotional fundraising strategies and events.
- c. Curate existing partnerships and cultivate new partners and business relationships for long-term financial support.
- d. Leverage state forests branding and pursue corporate sponsorship opportunities. Explore endowment opportunities through the trust.

7.3. Systematically grow partnerships and public engagement for ownership, support, and capacity to advance program goals.

Oregon's state forests embody the Oregon Way of shared ownership, resiliency, and compromise. Volunteerism and a sense of individual stewardship of state forests are part of what makes these lands special for many Oregonians. Each year on state forests, volunteers donate over 14,000 hours of their time clearing trails, serving as camp hosts, and welcoming visitors to the Tillamook Forest Center. The REI program is committed to maintaining volunteer program efforts and providing opportunities for all Oregonians to get their hands dirty while stewarding state forests.

Many of the trail stewardship efforts, organized races, and other happenings on state forests are hosted by external stakeholder groups. Recognizing the critical support and structure these external efforts play in welcoming visitors to state forests, the REI program will prioritize continued outreach to stakeholder communities and will actively welcome new and unreached communities through the development of a Community Engagement Plan. Critical to REI's community engagement efforts will be strategies to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion and development of a partnership strategy for improving access to state forests among underrepresented groups. To help guide program efforts and

strategic planning, REI will establish a recreation, education, and interpretation advisory committee to ensure external voices are incorporated into program plans.

Particular focus over the next three years will be on updating and expanding REI's Volunteer Stewardship Program. Previous volunteer efforts lacked uniformity between the Oregon Department of Forestry's forest districts. REI program staff will create uniform policies and procedures to guide volunteer program efforts and will conduct a systemic review of the volunteer program offerings. Strategies for growing partnerships and public engagement include the following:

Strategies and actions:

- a. Develop a community engagement plan across the state beyond northwest Oregon; foster relationships with Oregon State University and other research entities and students.
- b. Develop a diversity, equity, and inclusion engagement strategy to improve access to state forests, and to further sensitize future programs and infrastructure to reflect diverse audiences.
- c. Continue to evolve a statewide volunteer program and focus on expansion into all forests.
- d. Establish permanent funding for a volunteer coordinator.

7.4. Reimagine and integrate the REI story into all aspects of the program and provide public information to foster understanding, support, and ownership. For the program to develop diverse and durable funding resources for stable programming and growing its capacity, the program itself must develop a brand value to foster the public's understanding, support, and ownership of state forests. Given the fact that state forests make up only 3 percent of all Oregon forests, there is frequent misunderstanding of what state forests are and what their function is. State forests are legally bound to provide social, economic, and ecological benefits to Oregonians. To date, the Oregon Department of Forestry has not focused on telling its own story to fully educate people about the value provided by Oregon's working state forests. State forests provide critical habitat for threatened and endangered species, protect drinking water sources, provide timber-related jobs, and generate revenues for local taxing districts, in addition to providing spaces and places for people to explore, recreate, and learn about active forest management.

The importance of developing a brand identity and narrative is far-reaching. It will not only assist in helping more Oregonian's fully understand the many interrelated values of state forests, but also capitalize on the ways in which most visitors enjoy state forests. Over the long run, the program will be able to leverage public experiences into positive financial gain to support program goals. Once a brand identity and supporting narrative have been developed, all social media assets can be united under one brand to build community support for state forests and the program. Strategies for advancing the brand include the following:

Strategies and actions:

- a. Develop state forest brand and narrative that highlights recreation, education, and interpretation as the portal to broader division and agency work.

- b. Integrate the REI story into all aspects of the program (e.g., Tillamook Forest Center exhibits, programs, recreation signage, uniforms, and infrastructure design).
- c. Establish website and populate with Tillamook Forest Center content, recreation content, state forest related messaging, and information about high-level agency work.
- d. Assist State Forest Trusts of Oregon with development of a case statement that further promotes and builds upon program identity.
- e. Develop a communication plan with public affairs to market new brand identity to internal and external partners.

7.5. Reimagine and adapt recreation, education and interpretation infrastructure across state forests to meet program objectives and the needs of recreationalists.

For over 70 years, visitors have been enjoying the diversity of recreation opportunities on state forests. Recreation forms the basis for many Oregonians' connection to their forests. Much of the recreational infrastructure is more than a generation old. There have been significant changes in recreation trends, audience (visitors), demand, demographics, technology, forest management, and best management practices for natural resource protection and enhancement. The recreation program has not kept pace with the changes.

This goal, and the strategies and actions to achieve it, are focused on catching up, and reimagining recreation opportunities in response to the changes and recreation demands of the 2020s.

As work toward achieving this goal progresses, the REI program will anchor into the foundational principles, particularly shaping all future infrastructure and services around being inclusive, adaptable, sustainable, and welcoming.

More specifically, work over the next three to five years will be focused on conducting an inventory and assessment of existing opportunities, development of operational best management practices, updating recreation facility design standards, and developing recreation management and trail system plans in collaboration with the use community. These plans will inform management, future improvements, development, and distribution of recreation opportunities across the state forests and ultimately lead to more welcoming, accessible, and accommodating recreation opportunities for all visitors. Strategies for reimagining recreational infrastructure include:

Strategies and actions:

- a. Develop a short-term operations plan (one to three years) that specifically identifies program objectives and further identifies prioritization of operational work (i.e., maintenance, improvement, and resource protection and impacts).
- b. Develop internal and external mechanisms to ensure inputs from other forest disciplines are factored into operational plans and decision-making.
- c. Establish an updated inventory database of existing infrastructure complete with cost values for construction, replacement, and maintenance.

- d. Develop a recreation operations manual that standardizes core operations and maintenance functions and processes.
- e. Develop a facilities standards manual that defines standards, guidelines, and best management practices for design and construction of recreation facilities and facility infrastructure.
- f. Assess existing recreation facilities and identify site design modifications and enhancements to improve visitor access and accommodation, improve operational efficiency, reduce maintenance costs, and reduce impacts on aquatic and wildlife resources.
- g. Incorporate standards, guidelines, and best management practices into planning and design of new recreation facilities and trails.
- h. Establish internal communication processes and governance that ensures integration of recreation management across districts and disciplines.
- i. Develop a Recreation Management Plan and Trail System Plans that will inform maintenance, improvement, distribution, and development of recreation facility and trail opportunities and delivery of recreation program services.
- j. Examine and evaluate staff, partner, and resource capacity needs necessary to achieve program goals and objectives.

7.6. Develop a deeper understanding of visitor use and the social and economic benefits and value of recreation, education, and interpretive opportunities on state forests.

State forests provide diverse opportunities for recreation, education, and interpretation. As recreation increases in popularity, it is becoming more critical that visitor-use levels, and visitor characteristics and preferences be better understood and, more importantly, that the social and economic value this recreation creates be well defined. Currently, it is not well understood. This goal and the associated strategies and actions will help the program develop a deeper understanding of visitor use. That understanding is necessary to effectively manage, plan, design, develop, and maintain recreation opportunities. It is also critical for developing recreation opportunities that welcome an evolving, growing, and more diverse audience.

This data will also help the program articulate its own contribution to greatest permanent value. It will also inform resource management decisions and decisions related to program investments, foster partnerships and fundraising efforts, support efforts to diversify program funding mechanisms, inform planning and management, and contribute to program sustainability. Strategies for developing a deeper understanding include the following:

<i>Strategies and actions:</i>

- a. Implement the Black Rock Mountain Bike Area visitor use monitoring pilot project to inform development of visitor use monitoring methodologies and development of a visitor use monitoring plan.
- b. Develop and implement a visitor use research and monitoring plan.

- c. Establish a budget line item for ongoing implementation of the visitor use research and monitoring plan.
- d. Develop tools and mechanisms to articulate and share visitor use research and monitoring findings.
- e. Partner with local and regional research institutions to assist in research design strategies and implementation.

8. STRATEGIC PLAN PRIORITIES

The REI program is still in development and aims to complete the following priorities over the short-term (one to four years), while other strategic goals and associated strategies will take longer, given staff capacity and current funding levels. The completion of more long-term goals is dependent on accomplishing several foundational priorities outlined above. It is important to note the top priorities for the immediate future are to focus all energies on deeper integration across the REI program, filling current vacancies, onboarding, and training new staff, and completing relevant portions of the new forest management plan. Additional priority work includes developing internal workflows and work products to ensure the program's activities are well integrated with other forest management operations. The following list of short-term priorities is not exhaustive but captures some of the more important work products that will ensure the program is well integrated across the landscape and well-integrated within the State Forest Division. Completing the following priorities will position the program to pursue long-term goals (five years and beyond).



Short-term priorities:

- Develop a short-term Recreation Operations Plan.
- Complete an integrated Recreation Master Plan.
- Develop an Interpretive Master Plan and revise education and interpretation programs and services at the Tillamook Forest Center to reflect new state forest policy changes.
- Develop a Tillamook Forest Center Facilities Maintenance Plan.
- Complete a Community Engagement Plan that aligns with State Forests Trust of Oregon's donor relations strategies.
- Develop a long-term staffing plan to address emerging staffing needs identified in the Integrated Recreation Master Plan, and the Interpretive Master Plan.
- Complete a Volunteer Management Plan.
- Complete a pilot visitor use monitoring project at the Black Rock Mountain Biking Area.

9. IMPLEMENTATION

As with any strategic plan, this document will serve as a road map to help ensure the REI program actualizes its mission and vision. Several other work products must be developed before full implementation of the plan. It should be noted that several of these work products will be further developed in concert with the State Forests Trust of Oregon. As a primary supporter of the program, the trust's input will be invaluable in ensuring overall program success.

10. SUMMARY

As with any strategic plan, its utility directly correlates to making regular and consistent progress on each goal and associated strategies. To that end a dashboard will be built that incorporates milestones and a timeline for each of the objectives outlined above. As progress is made on each of the objectives, milestones will be documented on the dashboard to reflect overall progress toward short-term and long-term plan completion. REI program leaders will meet quarterly to review progress towards milestones and update the dashboard accordingly. An annual progress report will be completed and shared internally and with select external constituents. It is important to note, however, that given the number of external forces that influence the overall work of the program, such as available funding and staff capacity, this plan may be revised to respond to shifting agency needs, divisional priorities, and other unforeseen program limitations.