THE FY 2018 TO FY 2021 STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
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<td>Tom Crimmins</td>
<td>Hayden Lake, Idaho</td>
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IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION (IDPR)

What We Do

IDPR manages thirty state parks throughout Idaho. IDPR also administers the recreation sticker programs for boats, snowmobiles and other off-highway vehicles. Money from these sticker programs goes back to customers to develop and maintain trails, facilities, and education programs for snowmobilers, boaters and off-highway vehicle operators. IDPR administers non-motorized trail programs like Park N' Ski. IDPR also assists in the Department of Agriculture Invasive Species program. Furthermore, IDPR manages several outdoor recreation grant programs that provide facilities and services to a wide variety of recreationists and the local governmental and nongovernmental organizations that serve them. We are a diverse agency with diverse constituents, but when one combines it all together, we are recreation leaders in Idaho.

Mission and Vision

The mission of the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation is to improve the quality of life in Idaho through outdoor recreation and resource stewardship. We are innovators in outdoor recreation, committed to excellent service and resource stewardship. We foster experiences that renew the human spirit and promote community vitality.

Core Values

Core values are the essential and enduring tenets of an organization. They are its guiding principles. For the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, our core values are integrity, compassion, service, stewardship and commitment. We protect the resources entrusted to us, we strive to help visitors experience those resources in a positive way, and we endeavor to be vital members of our communities in which we operate.

Why this is Important

The Idaho Park and Recreation Board and the IDPR employees identify with and support the mission, vision, and core values of the organization. IDPR employees are proud to call ourselves public servants. The Board and employees value the public we serve and continually aim to improve our service to them. We enjoy our jobs, and as the work day ends, we feel good about what we accomplished that day. That is our organizational culture, and that is the culture we aim to preserve.
Through this plan, IDPR seeks to strategically position itself for the future in a coordinated, fiscally responsible manner that will increase the quality and breadth of the experiences we offer our current customers, foster new customers, and preserve the organizational culture.

THE STRATEGIC PLAN

IDPR develops a four-year strategic plan and updates it annually, as required by state statute. A strategic plan sets an organization’s direction and guides its allocation of resources. The effective date of this strategic plan begins July 1, 2017 (the first day of Fiscal Year 2018) and extends through June 30, 2021 (the last day of Fiscal Year 2021).

The Content of the Strategic Plan

The intent of the strategic plan is to provide direction for the Department and set measurable goals regarding performance over a four-year period. The plan must also identify those key factors external to the Department and beyond its control that could significantly affect the achievement of the strategic plan goals and objectives. The word “measurable” in the previous section is critical to the intent of the strategic plan. State Code gives several requirements regarding how to create measurable standards. First, the strategic plan must address all major divisions and core functions of the Department. Second, the plan must include objectives and/or tasks that indicate how the Department will achieve its goals. Third, the strategic plan must include performance measures that assess the Department’s progress in meeting those goals. Finally, the plan must be updated annually (Idaho Code §67-1903).

Using the Strategic Plan

It is important that the strategic plan be structured in a manner that makes it useful to IDPR throughout the year—not just at budget time or when updated. State code mandates that the plan include performance measures that are also included in IDPR’s annual budget request (Idaho Code §67-1904). Additionally, the plan should guide IDPR in setting work expectations at all levels—the Board, the Director, and all staff. For example, if IDPR receives a large endowment without spending restrictions, how should those monies be used to best meet Department strategic goals?

The strategic plan is made a part of our daily work lives in a number of ways. The Recreation Bureau programs and all parks have annual reports that specifically reference the strategic plan objectives. This reporting mechanism reinforces the importance of the strategic plan and gives us the ability to measure our performance from year to year. Additionally, all parks and programs have annual work plans that mirror strategic plan objectives. These park and program level work plans become the basis for the individual work plans and performance evaluations. Most importantly, the strategic plan provides guidance to staff and the Board in setting our budget and how we choose to focus limited public funds. Finally, the strategic plan includes initiatives from our Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.
(SCORP) that are tailored to IDPR. These relationships and how they coordinate are shown in the following diagram.

**THE PLANNING PROCESS**

The process of preparing a plan is as important as the final document itself. Only with the support of the individuals that make decisions daily regarding the operation and administration of the Department, can the document truly become a useful tool. All Department staff from the executive level to the field have the opportunity to participate in drafting the plan.

The strategic plan is also presented to the Park and Recreation Board for review at a noticed meeting as set forth in Idaho Code §67-2343. The final plan is then sent to the appropriate legislative bodies, distributed to staff, and posted on the Department website.

**ORGANIZATION**

This document focuses on three goals: experience, access, and stewardship. The remainder of this document is organized around those goals. Each goal has at least one associated objective and performance measure. The plan also details a number of tasks associated with meeting the objective and performance measures.
EXPERIENCE

Goal: Foster experiences that renew the human spirit and promote community vitality.

IDPR provides not only quality experiences associated with its recreation opportunities for the public, but also recreation experiences through education and interpretation on a wide range of topics such as star gazing, nature photography, wild flower identification, bird watching, junior ranger skills, ice fishing, hunting academy, state history, environmental education, canoeing, kayaking, paddleboards, yoga, safety and instruction classes for off-highway vehicles and boats, and avalanche awareness and safety classes for snowmobile users, skiers, snowshoers, and other winter-time, back-country recreationist. These experience-based programs are opportunities to develop new customers, promote community partnerships, and increase park revenue.

OBJECTIVE 1: PROVIDE DIFFERENT AND UNIQUE OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES.

Wider range of park and recreation audiences.

Staff is encouraged to identify potential new or underserved audiences as well as new activities and experience-based programs that tap into the emotions of our customers and foster a sense of adventure. The new activity or program should have an emphasis on youth and first-time customers, should be geared to the setting, and should be a high-quality experience that meets current trends while respecting the past and the ability of the state facilities to hold the activity. If necessary, the required resources shall be identified as a budget priority or redirected from existing activities that fail to meet stated goals and objectives.

Task 1: Cultivate a relationship with Hispanic community leaders and ask for input on how to better serve that population within our parks and recreation programs. Fold that input, and any partnership opportunities into annual work plans as appropriate by March 2019.

Task 2: In addition to working with the Hispanic community, identify another underserved population within the parks and recreation programs by July 2020, and then cultivate a relationship with leaders and ask for input on how to better serve that population within our parks and recreation programs. Fold that input, and any partnership opportunities into annual work plans as appropriate by March 2021.

Task 3: By June 2018, evaluate park annual reports and recreation program feedback relative to current experience-based programs to determine relative demand for the program—whether it be increasing, maintaining, or decreasing. Work with park and program managers to replace programs that have decreased participation.
OBJECTIVE 2: PROVIDE IMPROVED PARK VISITOR AND RECREATION CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES

Visitor connection to park resources.
For many park visitors, interacting with staff in an educational or interpretive program greatly enhances their experience. New resources are available to staff, including interpretive planning assistance at their park, Department-sponsored interpretive trainings, and interpretive manuals that (when used) will upgrade the quality of interpretive presentations and interpretive exhibits.

Task 4: Provide an Introduction to Interpretation training (with accompanying manual) to 20 staff and volunteers each year.

Task 5: Publish and distribute a Developing Interpretive Projects guide by June 2018.

Task 6: Develop interpretive plans for a minimum of three parks by December 2018, with a five year schedule to cover all parks in the system.

Performance Measure:
Increase the number of participants in park and recreation programs by 3% each year through July 2021 from the benchmark of 264,000 participants.¹

¹ Benchmark of 264,000 participants set in 2015.
Capacity thresholds for parks and programs.
IDPR has made great strides in the last five years to increase the number of people visiting our parks and participating in our education and recreation programs. Given population increases and the popularity of the Passport program, we anticipate that our number of customers will continue to increase. However, our parks and programs have a fixed capacity. Our natural resources cannot support an unlimited number of people at any given time—they have capacity limits. It is important that IDPR understand and manage to these limits.

Task 7. Work with park managers to understand capacity limits specific to each park or park unit and establish protocols for once that threshold is exceeded. Complete the protocols for half the parks by March 2019 and the remainder by March 2020.

Technology improvements geared toward park and recreation customers.
In the past parks and recreation have been about disconnecting from urban life and embracing the natural environment. Yet technology often is perceived as a large part of that urban life. The continual question we face is, “How do we embrace technology in our parks and recreation programs while still embracing the natural environment?” We believe the answer is to use technology to leverage delivery of information to our customers regarding their particular park or recreation experience.

Task 8: Develop information on the Department website regarding park and recreation program activities, legal requirements, and safety tips that can be easily downloaded and used on mobile devices by July 2018.

Task 9: Provide reliable WiFi hotspots for park customers to access and download Department website information by July 2018.

Task 10: By January 2019, offer assistance in trip planning by enhancing customer on-line access to—and purchase of—associated activities or programs.

Task 11: By July 2021, work to have the Legislature adopt statutes that facilitate advertising on mobile applications supported and developed by the Department. The advertising is necessary to fund the development and upkeep of those programs.
ACCESS

Goal: Protect and improve public access to outdoor recreation statewide.

Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation can and does provide access to outdoor recreation through a variety of means. The term “access” as used here includes not only a point of entry, but also the full recreational opportunity. IDPR impacts all recreationists, not only those that enjoy state parks for thousands of reasons but also those that enjoy motorized and non-motorized recreation of all types throughout Idaho. IDPR also seeks public and private partnerships and sponsorships with willing groups and agencies for the purpose of expanding access to recreational opportunities and ensuring continued access to existing opportunities.

OBJECTIVE 3: PROTECT AND IMPROVE ACCESS TO VALUABLE RECREATIONAL FACILITIES THROUGHOUT THE STATE.

Access issues and possible closures may result through changes to local, state and federal budgets, plans, and management strategies.

Strategic partnerships.

IDPR currently engages in many strategic partnerships with our federal land management partners—from our leased park locations to our Idaho City Yurt program to trail maintenance throughout the state. It is important that IDPR not only continues our conventional partnership opportunities, but that we also challenge ourselves to identify new and different opportunities that stretch the definition of how we can and should work together.

Task 12: Enter into a Good Neighbor Authority agreement with a federal partner by December 2018.

Motorized and non-motorized access to recreational trails.

Task 13: Develop a method, process, or program to enhance awareness about loss of trail access to the motorized recreation community by December 2017. Implement that method, process, or program by December 2018.

Task 14: Work with service organizations that employ young adults and teenagers to maintain at least 20 miles of non-motorized trails annually. As financial resources become available, increase the target from 20 miles. This relationship not-only improves non-motorized trail access, but also fosters the next generation of resource stewards.

Task 15: Continue to hire trail rangers and equipment operators to maintain motorized trails. For fiscal year 2019, increase the target to 2,000 miles.
Performance Measure:  
Maintain at least 1,500 miles of motorized trails annually.

Public access to safe and convenient boating facilities.

Task 16: Inventory boat launches statewide to identify those in need of repairs and upgrades by July 2020.

Task 17: Life jacket loaner stations provide a convenient, free access to life jackets for those that do not have them. Continue to improve boating safety by installing life jacket loaner stations until we meet a point of saturation.

Performance Measure:  
Add at least five new life jacket loaner stations annually.

Pedestrians and cyclists.

IDPR has the opportunity to work with the Idaho Transportation Department, local highway districts, and other park and recreation agencies to develop additional paved bicycle and pedestrian paths into our parks—particularly those that are within an urban area or that adjoin a community. For example, connecting the City of Hagerman to Billingsley Creek or the City of Eagle to Eagle Island. Similarly we have the opportunity to connect units of dispersed parks, such as Lake Cascade. Finally, we have the opportunity to work with other organizations and businesses to support bicycle adventures.

Task 18: Develop or assist in the development of an average of ¼ mile of recreational trails or pathways each year that provide a meaningful connection between the park or facility and the community.

Task 19: Promote at least one special event or bicycle adventure in conjunction with a park each year starting July 2018. The promotion might include working with local bike shops and other event organizers.
OBJECTIVE 4: BE LEADERS IN ADVOCATING FOR AND PROVIDING RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES THROUGHOUT IDAHO.

Leaders in recreation improve the quality of life in Idaho through outdoor recreation and resource stewardship. They are innovators in outdoor recreation, committed to excellent service and resource stewardship. They foster experiences that renew the human spirit and promote community vitality.

We are recreation leaders. We increase recreation access and opportunities throughout the state. As recreation leaders we have the courage to innovate new programs and activities—even if those programs and activities may be perceived as “not what we do”. We exemplify good government through our cost efficiency and streamlining in providing recreation opportunities. We are the Department that reaches out to other land managers, schools, and health agencies to collaborate and inform.

Broaden our scope of knowledge and involvement.

In order for IDPR to remain leaders in providing recreation opportunities throughout Idaho, it is important that staff has the opportunity to understand trends and new developments in a variety of disciplines. It is equally important that we share our successes with others. As always, budget funds are limited and, therefore, attendance at any one conference or training should be limited to key personnel that can then report out results.

Future park properties and recreation opportunities.

Our current emphasis is to take care of our existing parks and facilities. However, acquisition funds may become available at any time, and it is important that IDPR is prepared to act on that availability. In particular, Eastern Idaho is underserved and should remain a priority. As opportunities arise to acquire additional park properties, IDPR will act quickly to determine if the properties potentially have outstanding natural, scientific, cultural, historic, or recreation value worthy of being a state park.

When the railroads consider abandonment of rail lines, IDPR has the opportunity and duty to work with and lead other organizations in preserving that right-of-way for future trail use. Although IDPR may not choose to manage the facility in the long term, it is critical that we are active key players in the preservation effort.
STEWARDSHIP

Goal: Be responsible stewards of the natural resources and funds entrusted to Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation.

OBJECTIVE 5: BE GOOD STEWARDS OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES AND ASSETS ENTRUSTED TO IDPR.
For the purposes of this objective, stewardship of natural resources, includes but is not limited to, care and maintenance of campground and day use facilities, control of invasive species (plants, snails, etc.), planting trees, fuels management, erosion control, care and maintenance of historic and cultural properties and structures, and riparian restoration projects. Our resources are finite, and the failure to care for these important resources is generally the cause for complaint and dissatisfied customers.

Satisfied customers.
When we are being good stewards of our parks and facilities, our customers are more satisfied with their visitor experience. Tracking customer satisfaction accurately monitors our stewardship successes.

Task 20: Survey our recreation program customers starting in July 2020 and annually thereafter in order to determine (at a minimum) the following: Who are we attracting and not attracting? How do they rate the experience? What are the negative connotations about our programs we need to overcome? What are the positive aspects of our programs we need to keep?

Task 21: Within appropriate parks, develop overnight accommodation sites for cyclists by 2021.

Performance Measure:
Maintain or improve our overnight customer satisfaction rating of 4.11 (with 5 being a rating of excellent).

Natural resource management safety within our parks.
As stewards of our parks, we must not only protect the people within the parks but also our natural resource. The steps in improving safety within our parks include removing hazard trees, decreasing the fire fuel load, establishing forests and range lands that are more fire-resistant, and creating fire breaks to protect parks.
Task 22: Apply natural resource management assessment tools to prioritize parks for forest management and fuel load reduction. Create a detailed, prioritized list by July 2018.

**Backlog of deferred maintenance.**
IDPR has a large backlog of deferred maintenance projects. The goal is to eliminate the backlog and maintain an up-to-date list of needs.

Task 23: Seek additional funding each of the next five years (starting FY 2019) to specifically address the deferred maintenance backlog.

**Performance Measure:**

*Decrease the total value of deferred maintenance projects by a minimum of 20% annually.*

**OBJECTIVE 6: BE GOOD STEWARDS OF THE FUNDS ENTRUSTED TO IDPR.**

*Additional revenue from dedicated funding sources, the passport program, fundraising, and general fund support.*

Staff is continually looking for new ways to increase revenue. Methods include: maximizing occupancy rates in camping, cabins, yurts, and marinas; increasing revenue from retail sales, special events, concessions, leases and donations; and greater outside commitments of support through grants, corporate sponsorships, and donations. IDPR also needs to be poised to solicit, request, and accept large donations and bequests by either working with an existing foundation or developing one specific to IDPR needs and functions.

Task 24: Evaluate and document Passport Program revenues and consider opportunities to increase such revenue through additional advertising, increased fees, or additional sales outlets. Present results to the Board annually.

Task 25: Determine net profit or loss per visitor by park by September 2017, and consider the merits of including the metric as a performance measure for the 2019 strategic plan.

Task 26: Present a proposal to the Board by February 2018 on what we would need to accomplish a foundation devoted to IDPR and how such an organization would be structured.

**Performance Measure:**

*Increase park revenue by an average of 3% annually.*
Performance Measure:
Raise outside funds of at least $75,000 or greater annually.

Technology improvements geared to the business of running IDPR.
IDPR recognizes the opportunity and need to improve our efficiency (such as our efforts to bring our grant application process on-line) and security (such as the new cybersecurity requirements) through technology. IDPR staff are actively participating in the statewide initiative to address cybersecurity set forth in Executive Order 2017-02.

Task 27: Collaborate with other agencies under the umbrella of the Department of Administration to comply with the first five Center for Internet Security controls by June 30, 2018. Our Senior Network Analyst is IDPR’s lead in this effort with other IT members actively participating via biweekly meetings. Current efforts are focused on employee awareness training, evaluation and selection of technology tools to implement the top five critical security controls, and evaluating interagency collaboration where appropriate. There is a potential that IDPR may further collaborate with other state resource agencies to leverage our buying power regarding necessary equipment.

OBJECTIVE 7: RECRUIT, TRAIN, AND RETAIN TOP TALENT THROUGH EXCEPTIONAL JOB EXPERIENCE, OUTSTANDING JOB SATISFACTION, JOB SAFETY, AND THE TOTAL IDPR COMPENSATION PACKAGE.
For Baby Boomers, the work of running state parks and recreation programs provides a rewarding public service job, and this led to a generation of long-time employees. As that generation retires, we must recruit and retain new leaders and provide job satisfaction to a new generation of workers. In some instances this means changing the culture within the organization. In other instances, it means providing an appropriate wage for the work performed.

Competitive wages relative to other state agencies.

Task 28: Develop a training program that recognizes the strengths each individual brings to the organization and use those strengths to develop agile and effective teams. Complete initial training of all staff by July 2019.

Task 29: Request $175,000 additional funding in the FY 2019 seasonal budget.

Task 30: Move our minimum hiring rate to 80% of the state policy rate by July 2019.
OBJECTIVE 8: COMMUNICATE HOW STATE PARKS AND RECREATION PROGRAMS ADD TO THE ECONOMIC, HEALTH, AND SOCIAL VALUE OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES, THE REGION, AND THE STATE.

Economic studies on the impact of state parks and recreation programs.
IDPR recently completed an economic impact study on summertime off-highway vehicle use (ATV, UTV, and motorbike). The next study underway is for parks. Wintertime vehicle use (snowmobiles) and then boats will follow. The purpose of the economic studies is to determine how much a dollar spent participating in IDPR recreation activities and within IDPR parks adds to the Idaho economy.

Task 31: Research and compile information on non-motorized use (including but not limited to, back-country horseman, mountain bikers, snow bikers, skiers and snowshoers) by July 2018.

Task 32: Update the Board as studies are complete and communicate the results of economic impact studies through press releases, Legislative presentations, local chambers of commerce, and budgets.

Task 33: Implement an aggressive informational campaign each year for the next four years to further educate constituents on how the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation puts recreation dollars to work for Idahoans on a local and state-wide basis.
KEY FACTORS EXTERNAL TO THE DEPARTMENT AND BEYOND ITS CONTROL

There are a number of factors external to the Department that may delay or prevent implementation of this strategic plan.

Weather and Disasters

Given that the focus of IDPR is enjoying the outdoors, the weather can greatly impact programs and facilities:

- Weather extremes (very hot and very cold) can affect park attendance.
- Wind and rain storms can down trees and destroy facilities.
- Lightning strikes can destroy electrical systems and start fires.
- Ice build-up can damage docks and increase and/or cause shore erosion.
- Low snow levels may impact funds generated from the recreation registration program.
- Drought may shorten the boating season and can impact IDPR’s ability to sustain desired vegetation and control weeds.
- Natural disasters such as floods, fires, and earthquakes create severe impacts on facilities, customers, and programs. In particular, fires during the peak season can have a drastic impact on our revenues.

In general, staff is accustomed to weather related impacts and can adjust accordingly. However, repair and maintenance activities can be very expensive and outside the spending authority in place at the time.

Legislative and Gubernatorial Support

IDPR is dependent on the support of the Idaho State Legislators and the Governor for its continued operation. Inability to fund programs will obviously impact IDPR’s ability to meet the strategic plan goals and objectives.

State and National

The state and national economy/unemployment rate impact the discretionary income of would-be park attendees and recreationalists to enjoy our facilities and programs. The relative cost of fuel for would-be customers can encourage or discourage out of state visitors and/or motorized recreationists such as motorbikes, boats, ATVs, UTVs, and RV (recreational vehicle) users. A decrease in customers and/or decrease in fuel sales both impact the revenue stream of IDPR.

Access to recreational trails is a very important goal of IDPR. However, most of the recreational trails are on federal properties, and IDPR has very limited direct control over such decisions. Therefore, decisions by federal and other state land management agencies to close access to recreational trails for motorized and/or non-motorized use will affect our ability to meet that goal. As the technology for battery driven vehicles improves, it is unclear if this may have a favorable impact on federal land management policies.
Regional

Regional impacts out of IDPR control include the rising cost of water, fuels, and other utilities. Sharp increases in utilities can impact operating budgets for the parks and recreation programs, reducing on-going preventative maintenance efforts.

IMPLEMENTATION

In making budget requests Administration and staff will consider the priorities outlined in this plan. In making decisions on policy, operations, and administrative issues, Administration and staff will seek guidance from this plan. In making large purchases or hiring decisions, Administration and staff will consider the guidance this plan provides. Noted performance measures will be tracked and reported annually to the Division of Financial Management. Annual reports will be available to the public.