

OFFICE OF STATE PARKS

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, RECREATION,
AND TOURISM

PERFORMANCE AUDIT SERVICES

Issued July 12, 2023

**LOUISIANA LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR
1600 NORTH THIRD STREET
POST OFFICE BOX 94397
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70804-9397**

LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR
MICHAEL J. "MIKE" WAGUESPACK, CPA

FIRST ASSISTANT LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR
BETH Q. DAVIS, CPA

DIRECTOR OF PERFORMANCE AUDIT SERVICES
KAREN LEBLANC, CIA, CGAP, MSW

PERFORMANCE AUDIT MANAGER
KRISTA BAKER-HERNANDEZ, CIA, CGAP, CRMA, MPP

AUDIT TEAM
KRISTEN JACOBS, CIA, CGAP, MA
LAUREN WHATLEY, CIA, MBA
PHILIP FACH, MPA

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July 12, 2023

The Honorable Patrick Page Cortez,
President of the Senate
The Honorable Clay Schexnayder,
Speaker of the House of Representatives

Dear Senator Cortez and Representative Schexnayder:

This report provides the results of our performance audit of the Office of State Parks (OSP), which is housed within the Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism (CRT). It is the third in a series of reports on CRT.

The purpose of this audit was to evaluate how OSP manages Louisiana's state parks and historic sites.

We found that low staffing levels present challenges for OSP, which can ultimately affect visitation levels to the state's parks and historic sites. While OSP has found alternatives to work around the decreased manpower, such as cross-training employees and temporarily loaning staff from one park to another, the office has had difficulty recruiting new employees because of a smaller pool of candidates and higher salary demands since the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, since 2010, OSP has been required to spend money from the Louisiana State Parks Improvement and Repair Dedicated Fund Account on operations. Using these funds for operations has helped OSP rely less on state general fund dollars, but it also has contributed to a backlog of repair and improvement needs. According to OSP, it needs approximately \$42 million to keep parks and historic sites operating at expected service levels.

We also found that OSP does not have a current master plan, which would provide the office with a framework to set priorities and determine where to allocate resources. Additionally, while OSP has implemented maintenance strategies that save time and money, it should develop a formal process to document repair and improvement decisions.

We found that, despite lower visitation numbers, OSP's revenue increased 42.9% from fiscal years 2016 through 2022, largely due to short-term revenues, including COVID-19 relief funds. While the pandemic resulted in increased visitation, recent hurricanes have reduced the number of visitors, because some parks were closed or damaged.

In order to sustain the state's parks and historic sites and meet the needs of visitors, OSP should evaluate fee adjustments and pricing strategies. Since fiscal year 2017, OSP has increased various fees and implemented differential pricing, but further increases may be warranted.

We found as well that, during fiscal years 2019 through 2022, OSP took in \$350,424 from revenue-generating agreements, including public-private partnerships to provide services that improve visitors' experience. OSP should continue to seek revenue-generating agreements as a way to increase visitation and revenue.

In addition, a more cohesive marketing strategy, including developing a marketing plan and having dedicated marketing staff, could improve OSP's efforts to increase visitation and revenue.

The report contains our findings, conclusions, and recommendations. I hope this report will benefit you in your legislative decision-making process.

We would like to express our appreciation to OSP for its assistance during this audit.

Respectfully submitted,



Michael J. "Mike" Waguespack, CPA
Legislative Auditor

MJW/ch

OSP

Louisiana Legislative Auditor

Michael J. "Mike" Waguespack, CPA



Office of State Parks

Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism

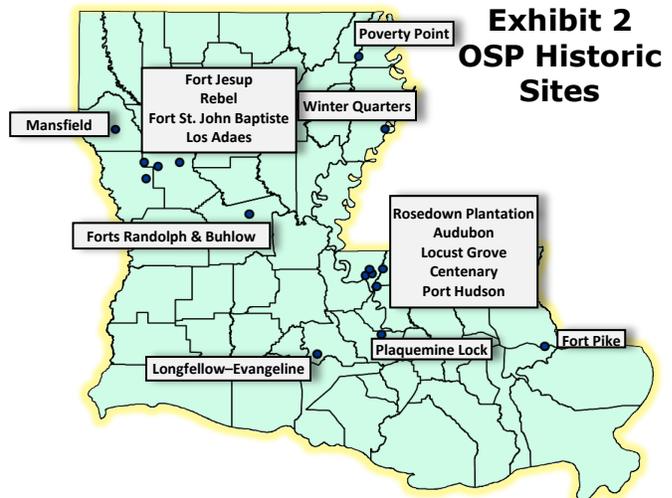
July 2023

Audit Control # 40210035

Introduction

We evaluated the Office of State Parks' (OSP) management of Louisiana's state parks and historic sites. OSP is housed within the Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism (CRT), which is led by the Louisiana Lieutenant Governor. We conducted this audit because state parks help facilitate the connection between the public and Louisiana's natural environment, and state parks were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and recent hurricanes. This report is the third in a series of reports on CRT.¹

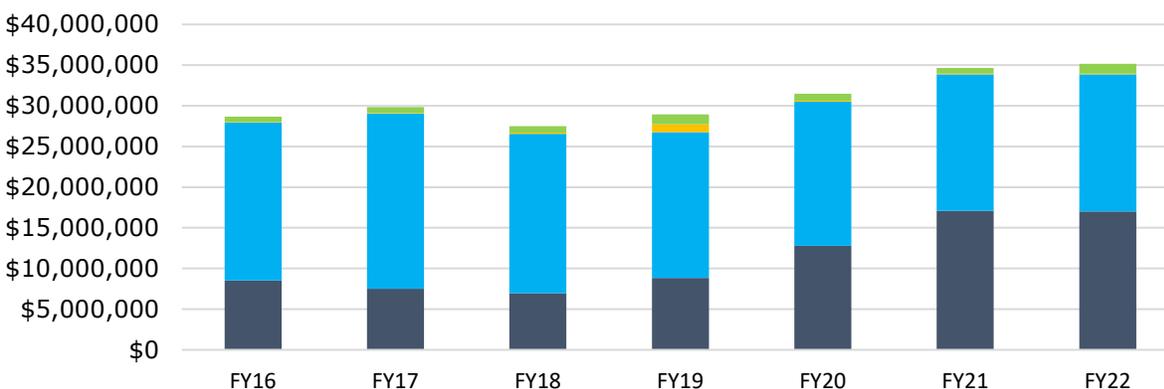
Overview. OSP oversees 21 state parks and 16 historic sites across Louisiana. Exhibit 1 identifies locations of state parks and Exhibit 2 identifies locations of historic sites. OSP's mission is to: (1) Preserve and interpret natural areas of unique or exceptional scenic value; (2) Plan, develop, and operate sites that provide outdoor recreation opportunities in natural surroundings; (3) Preserve and interpret historical and scientific sites of statewide importance; and (4) Administer intergovernmental programs related to outdoor recreation and trails.



¹ The first report, issued December 7, 2022, was on the [Louisiana Office of Tourism](#). The second report, issued March 8, 2023, was on the [Office of State Museum](#).

Funding. Between fiscal years 2016 through 2022, OSP's budget was, on average, \$30.9 million per year. OSP is primarily funded through state general funds and through fees and self-generated revenues from the Louisiana State Parks Improvement and Repair Dedicated Fund Account.² In fiscal year 2022, 48.0% of OSP's means of financing came from state general funds, 48.4% from fees and self-generated revenues, and 3.6% was from a combination of federal funding and interagency transfers. Exhibit 3 shows OSP's revenue sources from fiscal years 2016 through 2022.

Exhibit 3
OSP Revenue Sources
Fiscal Years 2016 through 2022



- Federal Funds (Land and Water Conservation Fund, CARES Act, etc.)
- Interagency Transfers (Department of Health and Hospitals, Office of Tourism, Department of Transportation and Development for administration of the Recreational Trails Program, etc.)
- General Fund
- Fees & Self-Generated Revenues (729 Fund, Sale of Items at Camp Stores, etc.)

Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information provided by OSP.

Staffing. Staffing levels have steadily decreased for OSP, with full-time, authorized positions decreasing 17.4% from 316 in fiscal year 2016 to 261 in fiscal year 2022. Full-time authorized positions have decreased over the last 15 years by 47.2%, from 494 positions in fiscal year 2007 to 261 in fiscal year 2022. According to OSP, the decrease in positions has required administrators and park staffers to consolidate or develop alternative methods of operating in order to maintain services to the public.

² The LA State Parks Improvement and Repair Dedicated Fund Account is sometimes referred to as the "729 fund."

Impact of COVID-19 and Hurricanes. Parks across the country experienced an increase in visitation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As indoor interactions were restricted and mask mandates implemented; outdoor activities provided relief for the public with state, local, and national parks benefiting as a result. However, during this period, Louisiana also experienced multiple hurricanes that impacted its parks and historic sites, including Hurricane Laura, which damaged parks across the western part of the state in August 2020, and Hurricane Ida, which damaged parks in the eastern part of the state in August 2021.

The objective of this audit was:

To evaluate how the Office of State Parks manages Louisiana’s state parks and historic sites.

Our results are summarized on the next page and discussed in detail throughout the remainder of the report. Appendix A contains OSP management’s response. Appendix B includes our scope and methodology. Appendix C contains visitation revenues by revenue category. Appendix D contains non-visitation revenues by revenue category. Appendix E contains visitation revenues by park. Appendix F contains visitation revenues by historic site. Appendix G contains total visitation by park. Appendix H contains total visitation by historic site. Appendix I contains a list of revenue-generating agreements.

Objective: To evaluate how the Office of State Parks manages Louisiana's state parks and historic sites.

Overall, we found the following:

- **Low staffing levels present challenges for administering parks, which can ultimately affect visitation levels. In response to staffing cuts, OSP found alternative methods, such as cross-training park employees and temporarily loaning staff from one park to another, for operating parks with decreased manpower.** OSP has had difficulty recruiting new employees post-COVID-19 due to a smaller pool of candidates and higher salary demands.
- **Since 2010, OSP has received reduced general fund appropriations and has been required to spend funds from the Louisiana State Parks Improvement and Repair Dedicated Fund Account on operations. While the use of funds from this dedicated fund account helps OSP rely less on state general fund dollars, a lack of overall funding has contributed to a backlog of repair and improvement needs. OSP should better track expenditures from this dedicated fund account to show how much is being spent on operations rather than on needed repairs and improvements.** According to OSP, the amount needed for improvements to keep parks and historic sites operating at expected service levels is approximately \$42 million.
- **OSP does not have a current master plan, which would provide OSP with a framework to set priorities and determine where to allocate resources. In addition, while OSP has implemented maintenance strategies that save time and money, it should implement a formal process to document repair and improvement decisions.** According to OSP officials, it is difficult to develop and implement a new master plan with its limited resources and other on-going issues, including dealing with the impact of recent hurricanes.
- **Despite lower visitation, OSP revenue increased by 42.9% from fiscal years 2016 through 2022, largely due to short-term revenues, including COVID-19 relief funds. While the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in increased visitation, recent hurricanes have reduced the number of visitors as some parks were closed or damaged.** OSP generates visitation revenues through sources like

cabins, campsites, and day use admissions and non-visitation revenues such as COVID-19 relief, leases, royalties, and timber sales.

- **In order to sustain parks and historic sites and meet the needs of visitors, OSP should evaluate fee adjustments and pricing strategies. Since fiscal year 2017, OSP increased various fees and implemented differential pricing, but further increases may be warranted.** Fees are critical to OSP's budget, which has relied more heavily on fees and self-generated revenues in recent years.
- **During fiscal years 2019 through 2022, OSP generated \$350,424 from revenue-generating agreements, including public-private partnerships to provide services that improve the visitor experience. OSP should continue to seek revenue-generating agreements as a way to increase visitation and revenue.** OSP contracted with 14 vendors during this time period to provide services, such as recreational equipment rentals and guided tours, to visitors. Beginning in fiscal year 2022, OSP signed agreements with three cruise lines to provide tours at certain historic sites. OSP officials expect significant revenues from these contracts in the coming years.
- **A more cohesive marketing strategy, including developing a marketing plan and having dedicated marketing staff, could improve OSP's efforts to increase visitation and revenue.** While OSP does not have a formal marketing plan, it does have a marketing strategy on where to spend marketing funds. However, a more cohesive marketing strategy and dedicated resources could further highlight state parks and historic preservation sites and increase patronage and revenues.

Our findings and our recommendations are discussed in more detail in the sections below.

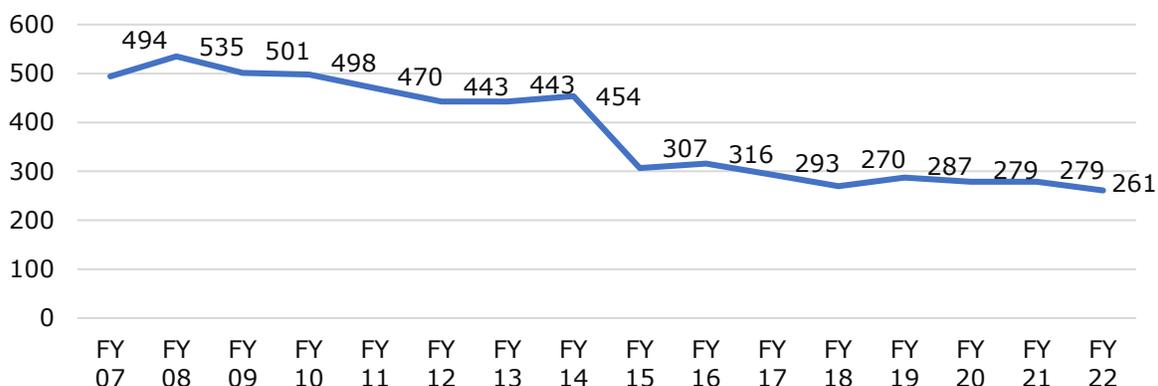
Low staffing levels present challenges for administering parks, which can ultimately affect visitation levels. In response to staffing cuts, OSP found alternative methods, such as cross-training park employees and temporarily loaning staff from one park to another, for operating parks with decreased manpower.

Staffing levels are important to providing optimal service across state parks. Frontline staff help answer visitors' questions, collect admission fees, register campers, clean the parks, including cabins and bathroom facilities, as well as mow

grass, maintain trails, and keep visitors safe. However, multiple factors have led to staffing shortages, which have greater impacts during peak times of the year and weekends. OSP has made requests to the legislature for additional funding and positions, but a majority of these requests have not been approved.

Low staffing levels present challenges for administering parks. From fiscal year 2007 to fiscal year 2022, the number of full-time parks staff decreased 47.2%, from 494 positions in fiscal year 2007 to 261 in fiscal year 2022.³ According to OSP officials, the steep decrease in staff in fiscal year 2015 was because the agency could no longer afford to employ seasonal workers who worked 40-hour weeks. Before that time, parks used these workers because visitation at parks fluctuated throughout the year. However, OSP could no longer afford these positions due to benefit requirements as a result of the Affordable Care Act. Exhibit 4 shows the decrease in full-time OSP staff from fiscal years 2007 through 2022.

Exhibit 4
Number of Full-Time OSP Staff
Fiscal Years 2007 through 2022



Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information provided by OSP.

In addition to low staffing levels, integral positions, such as park rangers and interpretive rangers, have been cut. Park rangers are POST-certified positions with the same duties as police officers and enforce OSP rules and policies at the parks. Park ranger positions have decreased 34.6%, from 26 positions in fiscal year 2016 to 17 positions in fiscal year 2022. Interpretive rangers guide the natural, cultural, and historical aspects of parks. These positions have decreased 15.4%, from 26 positions in fiscal year 2016 to 22 positions in fiscal year 2022. According to OSP, the legislature approved eight new positions and \$526,206 in additional funding for park rangers for fiscal year 2024.

³ During our audit scope, full-time parks staff decreased 17.4% from 316 in fiscal year 2016 to 261 in fiscal year 2022.

In response to staffing cuts, OSP found alternative methods, such as cross-training park employees and temporarily loaning staff from one park to another, for operating parks with decreased manpower. OSP has difficulty recruiting new employees post-COVID-19 due to a smaller pool of candidates and higher salary demands. It has attempted to alleviate the lack of staff by cross-training park employees and temporarily loaning staff from one park to another based on an immediate need. For example, an employee may lead a tour group at one park and then tend to the grounds at a different park the next day. Some parks have streamlined their services in order to free up staff to focus on other areas. Bogue Chitto State Park replaced many smaller trash receptacles with larger dumpsters. According to OSP, this saves the park around \$10,000 per year and decreases the hours needed for staff to empty trash cans.

According to OSP, it has also relied more on part-time staff and volunteer work due to staff shortages. Between fiscal years 2016 through 2022, part-time positions increased 80.4%, from 56 part-time positions in fiscal year 2016 to 101 in fiscal year 2022. Exhibit 5 shows the number of full-time and part-time staff during fiscal years 2016 through 2022.

Exhibit 5
OSP Staffing: Full-Time vs Part-Time
Fiscal Years 2016 through 2022



Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information provided by OSP.

Matter for Legislative Consideration: The Legislature may wish to consider increasing funding for interpretive and park ranger positions for OSP to operate in a more efficient and effective manner, and to ensure the safety of park visitors.

Since 2010, OSP has received reduced general fund appropriations and has been required to spend funds from the Louisiana State Parks Improvement and Repair Dedicated Fund Account on operations. While the use of funds from this dedicated fund account helps OSP rely less on state general fund dollars, a lack of overall funding has contributed to a backlog of repair and improvement needs. OSP should better track expenditures from this dedicated fund account to show how much is being spent on operations rather than on needed repairs and improvements.

Maintaining current facilities and infrastructure, as well as building additional facilities, infrastructure, and amenities, are important for Louisiana's state parks and historic sites to sustain and attract new visitors. State law⁴ established the Louisiana State Parks Improvement and Repair Dedicated Fund Account ("729 Fund") for the purpose of financing improvements and repairs⁵ to state parks. State law also establishes how monies in the 729 Fund are to be allocated with half of the total Fund to be disbursed to individual parks based on the amount of fees and other self-generated funds generated by that park. The other half of the 729 Fund is to be allocated for use throughout the state park system on a priority need basis, as recommended by OSP's assistant secretary.⁶ However, the same state law also provides that any 729 Fund disbursements are subject to legislative appropriations.⁷ Since fiscal year 2010, the legislature has given OSP fewer state general fund dollars, so OSP has had to rely on 729 dollars to make up the difference.

Our August 2012 performance audit* on OSP also reported on repair and improvement funding issues. We found that while there were 110 maintenance and improvement projects funded in fiscal year 2009, by 2012 the number of funded projects had decreased to eight. Again, the number of projects had decreased because funds dedicated to maintenance and improvement projects had been used by the legislature to fund operational costs at state parks.

* See [Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, Office of State Parks](#) for this report.

⁴ Louisiana Revised Statute (R.S.) 56:1703

⁵ "Repairs and improvements" can include anything from general maintenance, such as painting or adding signage, to capital projects, such as adding hiking trails, boat launches, or reroofing facilities.

⁶ The priority basis for these allocations is as follows: (1) protection of life and property, (2) general repairs and improvements to existing facilities, (3) addition of new facilities, (4) acquisition of property to expand park areas, and (5) maintenance and operations. The "maintenance and operations" category was added by ACT 420 of the 2013 Regular Legislative Session.

⁷ Due to the language "subject to appropriation by the legislature" in R.S 56:1703, OSP is required to follow legislative appropriation acts for direction on how to spend 729 funding. As a result, OSP cannot spend 50% of self-generated revenues of each park on that park's needs unless funds are appropriated funds for that purpose.

Since fiscal year 2010, a portion of 729 Funds have gone towards operational costs although it is the lowest priority category outlined in state law. Prior to fiscal year 2010, OSP used 729 Funds according to state law in terms of spending 50% of the self-generated revenues of each park on that park's improvements and repairs needs. However, OSP's annual state general funds have decreased by 12.9%, from \$19.4 million in fiscal year 2016 to \$16.9 million in fiscal year 2022. As OSP received fewer state general fund dollars, the agency began relying more on self-generated revenues in the 729 Fund, to fund operations. According to OSP, prior to 2010, staff would determine what repairs and improvements they could fund each year based on estimated revenues into the 729 Fund, but the agency now waits to see how much in 729 Funds it will receive through annual appropriations then subtracts operational costs to determine how much is left for repairs and improvements.

OSP does not clearly track the amount of 729 Funds used for operational costs, and repairs and improvements. Staff only separately track expenditures for Major Repairs,⁸ which they define as projects/repairs which require greater effort and/or knowledge toward any buildings, grounds, or systems.⁹ OSP includes other repairs and improvements in its operational costs because of the way it tracks expenditures. In reviewing financial reports for the 729 Fund, we identified expenditures that should be included as repairs and improvements, such as building maintenance costs and acquisitions of maintenance/construction equipment, but OSP instead includes these as operational costs. We also identified other expenditure categories that were vague and may include repair and improvement expenditures. Better tracking of 729 Funds expenditures would help identify the actual amounts spent on operations rather than on parks and historic sites' repair and improvement needs.

Because OSP must rely on 729 Funds for operations, it has fewer dedicated dollars for repairs and improvements. As of March 2023, OSP has a repair and improvements list totaling approximately \$14 million. However, OSP staff say this is only a list of projects that they can realistically complete based on current funding levels as the true amount needed for improvements to keep parks and historic sites operating at expected service levels is three times this amount (approximately \$42 million). In addition, included in the list are repair projects to aging facilities and infrastructure that OSP says actually need to be replaced, but the agency cannot afford replacement costs. For example, the Department of Transportation and Development condemned three bridges in Bayou Segnette state park. As a result, OSP was forced to close one entrance and re-route visitor traffic to another entrance. According to OSP, the cost to replace these bridges is more than \$1 million. Other examples that OSP staff provided are buildings that are not ADA compliant that should be addressed, but OSP does not have the funds.

⁸ The total amount of expenditures from the Major Repairs category from fiscal years 2010 through 2022 was \$4,184,432.

⁹ This category does not include 729 Funds sent directly to the Office of Facility Planning & Control (OFPC) to be used for parks and historic sites capital projects. The total amount of 729 Fund monies sent to OFPC for OSP capital projects from fiscal years 2010 through 2022 was \$13.5 million.

If Louisiana's state parks and historic sites want to sustain and attract new visitors, at a minimum, aging facilities and infrastructure must be addressed. As the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) notes, lacking investment in capital assets "makes it increasingly difficult to sustain the asset in a condition necessary to provide expected service levels. Ultimately deferring essential maintenance or asset replacement could reduce the organization's ability to provide services. In addition, as the physical condition of assets decline, deferring maintenance and/or replacement could increase long-term costs and liabilities." According to OSP, it is already dealing with this issue as several projects on its current improvements list were originally classified as repairs but now are considered in need of replacement.

Recommendation 1: OSP should clearly track the amount of 729 Fund expenditures used for operational costs, and parks and historic sites' repairs and improvements.

Summary of Management's Response: OSP agreed with this recommendation and stated that it has made changes to its existing tracking system to improve tracking of expenditures of 729 Funds. See Appendix A for OSP's full response.

OSP does not have a current master plan, which would provide OSP with a framework to set priorities and determine where to allocate resources. In addition, while OSP has implemented maintenance strategies that save time and money, it should implement a formal process to document repair and improvement decisions.

It is important to prioritize repair and improvement needs of parks in order to facilitate efficient allocation of limited resources. OSP tracks needed repairs and improvements and prioritizes these projects into three categories: health/safety, repair/renovate, and new. Other states also have processes to review needed repairs and improvements usually on some type of review schedule. For example, North Dakota has two-year review cycles for maintenance projects and a master plan for capital projects. Other states also have processes to prioritize goals set in their park system master or strategic plans. For example,

Exhibit 6
Fontainebleau State Park



Source:

www.louisiananorthshore.com/hotels/campgrounds-cabins/

Montana, per its strategic plan, created a park classification system to help guide resource allocation decisions.

Developing a master plan for Louisiana’s state parks would help OSP set priorities, link them to the selection of major improvement projects, and demonstrate park and historic site needs to the legislature and public.

According to OSP, limited funding and staffing resources have not allowed them to develop a recent plan. OSP’s last system-wide Master Plan was developed in 1997 and covered years 1997 through 2012.¹⁰ The purpose of the plan was to guide the acquisition, development, and management of the parks system and included an action plan to achieve stated objectives. A master or strategic plan lays out an organizational framework for improving park facilities and services to better serve the public with the overall purpose of developing a comprehensive vision for a park system. Developing a new plan would provide a formal vision and framework for Louisiana’s park system to guide current and future management of OSP when prioritizing resources. Other states have a master or strategic plan for their parks system. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has a five-year strategic plan that contains operational goals and action plans, as well as a statewide capital plan. South Carolina also has a plan that documents and prioritizes capital improvement and maintenance needs.

According to OSP officials, it is difficult to develop and implement a new master/strategic plan with its limited resources and other on-going issues, including dealing with the impact of the recent hurricanes, as the cost for developing a system-wide plan would be expensive. For example, the cost to develop a master plan for only one park, Poverty Point, is approximately \$400,000, which OSP is currently developing with federal funds. OSP officials also mentioned better funded states have dedicated staff for developing and executing master/strategic plans or contract out this function to consultants. OSP does not have adequate staff to devote to this function or funds to hire outside consultants.

While OSP has a process for determining which repair and improvement projects to fund, it should develop formal policies and procedures, including documenting why projects are chosen.

According to OSP, its prioritization process for repair and improvement projects has changed as available funding for such projects has decreased. When repair and improvements were funded more consistently, the process for selecting projects would consist of a facility planner, district manager and park manager annually going through the parks and compiling a list of projects needed at each park. A committee would

**Exhibit 7
Jimmie Davis State Park**



Source: <https://www.lastateparks.com/parks-preserves/jimmie-davis-state-park>

¹⁰ OSP also stated that certain parks had individual master plans from the same time period.

decide what projects to fund using a 729 Fund voting form. Safety needs were the first priority. As the backlog of projects has grown, the prioritization process has shifted. Currently, OSP's assistant secretary, director of operations and facilities, and two landscape architects select projects, with safety issues continuing to receive priority followed by repairs/renovations then new capital projects. They decide which projects to fund and send that list to the Lieutenant Governor for approval. OSP officials noted that their selection process must be flexible in order to consider hurricane-related needs as they arise.

OSP has not formalized its process for selection of projects, which could lead to the appearance of a lack of transparency. When asked why certain new projects were funded before other repair/renovation projects, OSP officials provided reasonable explanations but this information is not documented. Developing and adhering to policies and procedures to formalize OSP's prioritization and selection of repair needs and improvement projects would help increase transparency and ensure continuity of the processes in place. This includes the systematic review/reassessment of repair and improvement project needs, and documenting why funded projects are selected.

OSP also needs to improve its tracking of on-going and completed repairs and improvement projects. OSP does not maintain a total list of completed projects. OSP officials provided documentation that tracks payments made and money owed on individual projects going back to fiscal year 2019; however, it is not clear when some of these projects were finished and the list did not include ongoing and completed projects overseen by the Office of Facility Planning & Control (OFPC) on behalf of OSP. According to OSP, funds are transferred to the OFPC for major projects, where OFPC uses these funds to bid on projects, pay vendor invoices, and monitor the construction process. OSP could not provide a list of all OSP projects overseen by OFPC. Formal tracking of all repair and improvement projects would provide transparency and show OSP's progress in maintaining and improving parks and historic sites.

OSP formed traveling maintenance and repair teams that save time and money by completing smaller projects instead of contracting out for these projects. In fiscal year 2016, OSP formed teams composed of approximately 20 total staff split between a northern team and a southern team. These teams complete smaller jobs, such as A/C repair, sewage pumps, electrical issues, and some small roofing repairs but may also complete larger projects, such as rebuilding bridges or overlaying roads. Many of the repairs that were originally intended to be contracted out have been remedied by the travel teams. According to OSP, travel teams have completed 26 of these projects. OSP is in the process of implementing a system where the travel teams travel to a park and repair as much as they can in a one-month period before traveling to another park.

In fiscal year 2023, OSP began using 30 travel trailers to temporarily house travel team staff at parks when a project at that park is expected to have a longer completion time. OSP maintains a log of which travel team members are currently using trailers, and when the trailers are not in use each has a designated park

where they are housed. However, OSP does not have a process in place to track the location of loaned trailers during assigned projects. While this practice saves time and money by getting projects completed more efficiently, OSP should implement additional controls around the use of the travel trailers to ensure these travel trailers are not used outside of their intended purpose.

Recommendation 2: OSP should develop a master or strategic action plan to document parks and historic sites' needs, and to provide a framework to set priorities and help determine where to allocate resources.

Recommendation 3: OSP should formalize the process for selecting maintenance and capital outlay projects including documenting why projects are selected and tracking all completed projects.

Recommendation 4: OSP should implement additional controls over the use of travel trailers by traveling maintenance and repair teams to ensure trailers are not used outside of their intended purpose.

Summary of Management's Response: OSP agreed with these recommendations and stated that it will explore hiring an outside firm to develop a new master plan when additional funding becomes available. OSP also stated that it will develop and implement a policy to ensure travel trailers are used for intended purposes. See Appendix A for OSP's full response.

Despite lower visitation, OSP revenue¹¹ increased by 42.9% from fiscal years 2016 through 2022, largely due to short-term revenues, including COVID-19 relief funds. While the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in increased visitation, recent hurricanes have reduced the number of visitors as some parks were closed or damaged.

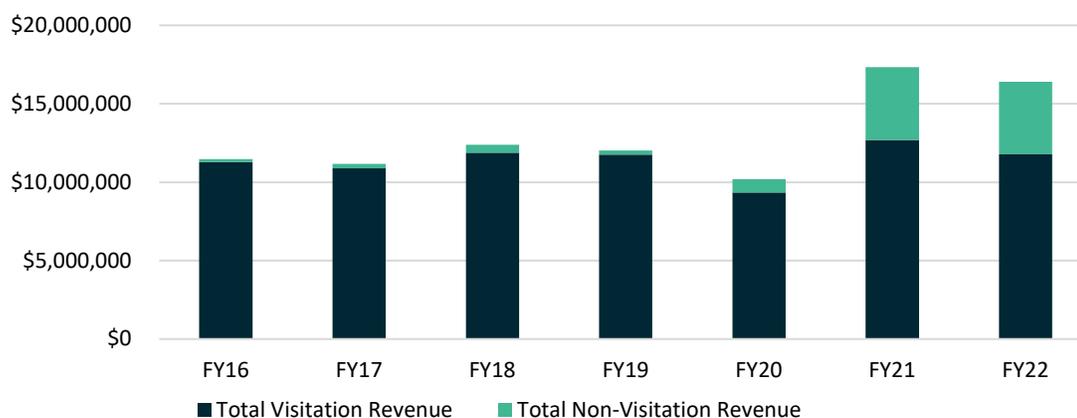
Besides state general fund monies, OSP relies on visitation and non-visitation revenue sources, with a majority of revenue coming from visitation sources. Examples of visitation revenue sources include admission fees, cabin rentals, and campsite rentals. Non-visitation revenue sources include federal funds, royalties from oil and gas, and timber sales. Both types of revenue are important, as they help OSP become less reliant on state general funds.

¹¹ This excludes any state general fund appropriations.

During fiscal years 2016 through 2022, non-visitation revenue increased by \$4.4 million, while visitation revenue increased by \$474,227.

Total revenue, excluding state general fund appropriations, increased by 42.6%, from \$11.5 million in fiscal year 2016 to \$16.4 million in fiscal year 2022. Overall, 87.5% of non-general fund dollars were from visitation services and amenities such as cabins, campsites, and day passes. The remaining 12.5% were non-visitation revenues including royalties from oil and gas and timber leases, revenue generating contracts, federal funding, etc. Visitation revenue increased 4.4%, from \$11.3 million in fiscal year 2016 to \$11.8 million in fiscal year 2022. Non-visitation revenues increased by 2,589.0%, from \$171,871 in fiscal year 2016 to \$4.6 million in fiscal year 2022. Exhibit 8 summarizes visitation and non-visitation revenue. Appendices C and D provide a breakdown of visitation and non-visitation revenues by revenue category.

Exhibit 8
OSP Total Visitation and Non-Visitation Revenue*
Fiscal Years 2016 through 2022



*Excludes state general fund appropriations.

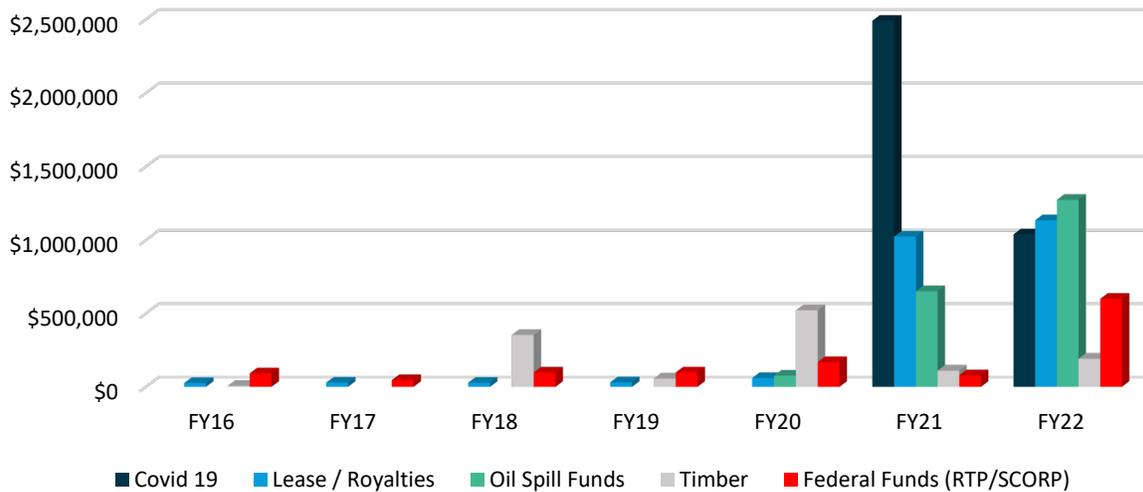
Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information provided by OSP.

The leading sources of non-visitation revenue were COVID-19 relief funds, followed by oil leases and royalties, oil spill funds, and timber sales; however, OSP does not foresee these revenue streams continuing at the current trend. COVID-19 funds made up \$3.5 million (38.0%) of the \$9.3 million non-visitation revenue in fiscal years 2021 and 2022. In addition, revenue from oil and gas leasing and royalties increased from \$25,768 in fiscal year 2016 to \$1.1 million in fiscal year 2022, but these revenue streams fluctuate and their current trend is not guaranteed.¹² Because non-recurring revenues were a large percentage of the non-visitation revenue, OSP needs to factor in the loss of these revenues as it plans for the future. Exhibit 9 shows the leading non-visitation

¹² Lease / Royalties may include gas well leases, royalties from oil and gas, cell tower leases and other mineral royalties.

revenue sources from fiscal year 2016 through fiscal year 2022. For a complete list of non-visitation revenues, see Appendix D.

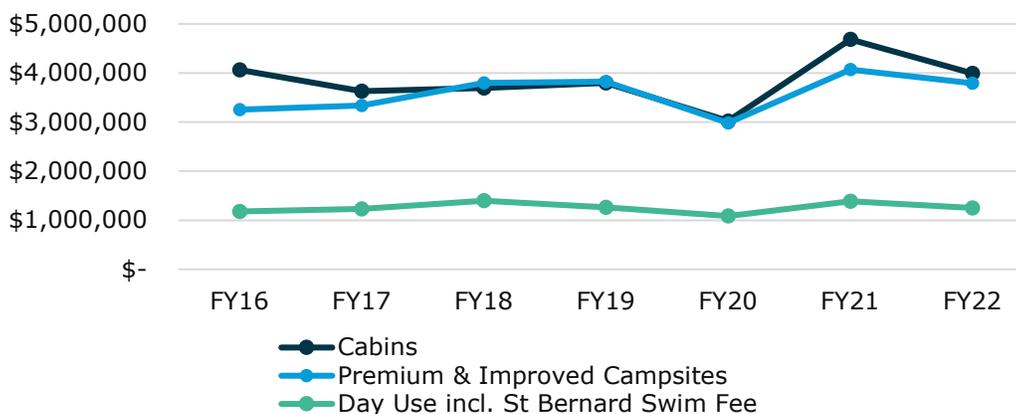
Exhibit 9
Leading Sources of Non-Visitation Revenue
Fiscal Years 2016 through 2022



Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information provided by OSP.

During fiscal years 2016 through 2022, \$60.7 million (76.3%) of \$79.6 million in visitation revenue were from cabins, premium RV campsites, and day use admissions. OSP has cabins at 18 state parks. Premium RV campsites may include sewage hookups for RVs and cost a higher fee than many of the other overnight RV camping options. Since sewage hookups are in high demand among RV patrons, OSP is adding individual sewage hookups at five additional state parks. Exhibit 10 shows the top three sources of visitation revenue. Appendix C shows a breakdown of visitation revenues by revenue category.

Exhibit 10
Leading Sources of Visitation Revenue
Fiscal Year 2016 through Fiscal Year 2022



Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information provided by OSP

While state parks experienced an increase in visitation as a result of the pandemic, numbers have since declined to lower than pre-pandemic levels, with hurricanes affecting multiple sites resulting in at least a decrease of approximately 216,000 visitors and \$1.9 million in revenue.

Visitation at state park sites decreased 30.3% statewide, from 1.8 million in fiscal year 2016 to 1.3 million in fiscal year 2022. However, visitation increased 2.2% from fiscal year 2019¹³ to fiscal year 2021, likely as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The decrease in visitation numbers during fiscal year 2022 may be due to the impact of hurricanes that hit Louisiana in 2020 and 2021, which required closures of varying lengths at all state parks. For example, Sam Houston Jones State Park in southwest Louisiana was closed from August 25, 2020, to June 30, 2022, due to damage from Hurricane Laura, and its visitation revenue decreased by 88.1%, from \$410,840 in fiscal year 2020 to \$48,758 in fiscal year 2022. In addition, Grand Isle State Park remains closed from Hurricane Ida, and the cabins at Fontainebleau State Park are closed pending repairs from Hurricane Ida damage. Exhibit 11 shows visitation throughout the audit scope. Appendices E and F provide visitation revenues by individual park and historic site. Appendices G and H provide total visitation numbers by individual park and historic site.

¹³ Fiscal year 2019 was the last fiscal year unaffected by fluctuations in visitation trends. Visitation numbers in fiscal year 2020 were significantly below other years likely due to the impact of park and historic site closures in the spring/summer of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All of Louisiana's state parks and historic sites were closed to visitors from March 24, 2020 through May 14, 2020 with three state parks, Chico State Park, Lake Bistineau State Park, Bayou Segnette State Park, remaining closed for a longer period in order to house COVID-19 positive patients.

Exhibit 11
State Park Visitation
Fiscal Years 2016 through 2022



Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information provided by OSP.

Recommendation 5: OSP should continue to expand consistent, non-visitation revenue streams in order to become less reliant on state general fund dollars with fluctuating visitation to parks and historic sites.

Summary of Management's Response: OSP agreed with this finding and stated it currently utilizes various funding sources and it continues to explore expanding these partnerships. For example, OSP is currently opening new gift shops and expanding existing gift shops. See Appendix A for OSP's full response.

In order to sustain parks and historic sites and meet the needs of visitors, OSP should evaluate fee adjustments and pricing strategies. Since fiscal year 2017, OSP increased various fees and implemented differential pricing, but further increases may be warranted.

OSP increased admissions fees for state parks in February 2017 from \$2 per person per day to \$3 for noncommercial vehicles, walk-in visitors, and visitors on bicycles and increased the fee for buses from \$60 to \$75 per bus. In addition, OSP increased fees for campsite rentals twice since fiscal year 2016, and increased rental fees for cabins and lodges in September 2022. However, OSP has not increased admission fees to most historic sites since 2010. Fees are critical to OSP's budget which has relied more heavily on fees and self-generated revenues in recent years. While OSP does not want to price out potential visitors, it may need to further evaluate increasing admission fees, fees for amenities, and rental prices in order to sustain current park facilities and provide optimal park services in order to

keep and attract new visitors. Exhibit 12 summarizes current fees for state parks and historic sites.

Exhibit 12 Fee Schedule for State Parks and Historic Sites As of May 1, 2023	
Fee Category	Entrance Fee
State Parks	
Admissions Fees*	\$3 / Day – Per Person
Admissions Fees (Visitors Arriving by Bus)	\$75 / Day – Per Bus
Premium Campsites	\$25-\$33**
Improved Campsites	\$20-\$28**
Unimproved Campsites	\$18
Backcountry Campsites	\$9
Standard Cabins	\$85-\$95**
Deluxe Cabins	\$150-\$175**
Standard Lodges	\$155-\$210**
Deluxe Lodges	\$175-\$225**
Historic Sites	
Daily Rates***	\$4 - Per Person
Rosedown Plantation House (Price varies by age)****	\$6-\$12 - Per Person
Rosedown Surrounding Gardens (Price varies by age)****	\$5-\$7 - Per Person
Audubon Plantation House (Price varies by age)****	\$5-\$10 - Per Person
Audubon Plantation Grounds (Ages 4 and Over)****	\$5 - Per Person
<p>*Children 3 and under and seniors 62 and older receive free admission. **Prices vary by time of year and weekday/weekend. ***Children 12 and under, seniors 62 and older receive free admission. Locust Grove and Los Adaes do not have admissions fees. Audubon and Rosedown Plantation rates are set differently than the other state historic sites. ****Children 3 and Under receive free admission to the houses and surrounding grounds at Audubon and Rosedown Plantation. Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information provided by OSP.</p>	

Further fee adjustments and pricing strategies may be necessary in order to sustain parks and historic sites and meet the needs of visitors. Our previous performance audit on OSP in 2012¹⁴ included recommendations on how OSP could determine whether or not increases to fees were necessary. For example, the report recommended that OSP analyze visitation and cost per visitor data to determine if certain parks would benefit from operational and fee changes. The report also recommended that OSP evaluate whether fees could be adjusted based on seasons. Since the 2012 report, OSP now ranks parks based on revenue generated as well as the cost and revenue per visitor. OSP also introduced differential pricing for rentals and amenities by adjusting fees based on seasons,

¹⁴ See, [Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, Office of State Parks](#) for the 2012 performance audit.

peak and non-peak times, and amenities associated with the premium campsites. Although OSP has made some fee increases in the past, it may want to further evaluate the need for fee increases for admission, amenities, and rentals.

While OSP currently uses differential pricing for rentals and amenities, using dynamic pricing to reflect changing market conditions may further encourage visitors during months with lower visitation and increase revenues for periods of higher demand, such as festival season.¹⁵ While state law allows for dynamic pricing,¹⁶ OSP has been hesitant to implement this strategy as a common practice.¹⁷ However, other states rely on dynamic pricing. For example, South Carolina assigns two employees to help manage its dynamic pricing system and ensure that rates are in line with a fair market value.

Recommendation 6: OSP may want to further evaluate the need for increases to admission and amenities fees, as well as rentals.

Recommendation 7: OSP should evaluate implementing further dynamic pricing strategies to encourage patronage and increase revenues.

Summary of Management's Response: OSP agreed with these recommendations and stated that it will evaluate strategies like fee increases and dynamic pricing to increase revenue while keeping the statutory mission of the agency and within the boundaries set forth by the state legislature. See Appendix A for OSP's full response.

¹⁵ Differential pricing relies on customer characteristics and buying behavior and can vary based on geographic locations or product variations. Examples of differential pricing include seasonal and group discounts. Dynamic pricing is more focused on market conditions.

¹⁶ LAC: 25 IX-503 (B) allows for additional surcharges based on demand.

¹⁷ OSP uses online promotional codes to encourage visitation in the off-seasons.

During fiscal years 2019 through 2022, OSP generated \$350,424 from revenue-generating agreements, including public-private partnerships to provide services that improve the visitor experience. OSP should continue to seek revenue-generating agreements as a way to increase visitation and revenue.

OSP uses revenue-generating agreements including cooperative endeavor agreements (CEAs), contracts, vendor agreements, memos of understanding (MOUs) along with public-private partnerships (PPPs) as a way to provide amenities that are not already provided by OSP. Services including recreational equipment rentals, horseback riding, guided tours, and particular types of lodging allow OSP to entice visitors with an expanded array of activities to enhance the parks experience. These agreements typically include OSP receiving a percentage of the vendor's sales. For example, OSP has an agreement with Tentrr to provide "glamping" lodging at eight state parks, and OSP receives 10% of Tentrr's sales. These agreements help OSP increase visitation and revenues. See Appendix I for a list of OSP's revenue generating agreements that provide services to park visitors.

**Exhibit 13
Tentrr Site at Fontainebleau
State Park**



Source: <https://www.Tentrr.com>

OSP has written policies and procedures for contracting, soliciting, and terminating revenue generating agreements with prospective vendors. OSP utilizes documented internal policies and procedures for all revenue generating agreements. PPP agreements are reviewed by CRT general counsel to ensure that no state funds are used as a part of the agreement. Contract monitors are assigned to oversee vendor agreements. The volume of PPP requests required OSP to implement additional bandwidth¹⁸ for review and response. This allows vendors to access historical data and GIS information about individual parks to assist in determining if a site is suitable for the business's operations.

¹⁸ opportunitiesinLouisiana.com is the portal used for prospective vendors.

From fiscal year 2019 to fiscal year 2022, OSP generated \$350,424 through revenue-generating agreements, including \$296,800 for filming permits.

Of the \$350,424, \$53,624 (15.3%) is from 14 vendors that OSP contracted with to provide services to park visitors. OSP is currently pursuing additional revenue-generating agreements to provide zip lines, self-serve kayaks, and ropes courses. Beginning in fiscal year 2022, OSP signed agreements with three cruise lines to provide tours at certain historic sites such as Audubon and Rosedown plantations. OSP officials expect significant revenues from these contracts in the coming years. According to OSP, the cruise contracts have already resulted in approximately \$369,000 in total revenues from July 2022 through May 2023.

**Exhibit 14
Horseback Riding at
Bogue Chitto State Park**



Source:

<https://www.explorelouisiana.com/state-park/boque-chitto-state-park>

Ten parks and historic sites have associations with friends' groups.

Currently, three state parks and seven historic sites have active, affiliated friends' groups. While not directly a revenue generating function, friends' groups provide functions including promoting tourism initiatives, maintaining facilities and grounds and managing gift shops. For example, Friends of Bogue Chitto State Park is allowed to organize fundraisers, solicit donations of services, property, monies, historical artifacts, and also apply for grants and other assistance that would benefit the state. Presence of friends' groups at state parks could help OSP by raising additional funds.

Recommendation 8: OSP should continue to explore and promote additional revenue-generating agreements as a way to improve the visitor's experience and help increase visitation and generate revenues.

Recommendation 9: OSP should continue to build relationships with friend's groups in order to promote parks and historic sites and gain more funding.

Summary of Management's Response: OSP agreed with these recommendations and stated that it is actively exploring new public-private partnerships for the purpose of enhancing the visitor experience and increasing revenue. See Appendix A for OSP's full response.

A more cohesive marketing strategy, including developing a marketing plan and having dedicated marketing staff, could improve OSP's efforts to increase visitation and revenue.

One of OSP's performance measures is to sustain annual visitation of at least two million visitors served by the state park system by the end of fiscal year 2025. As visitation increases, revenue should also increase. Marketing can be a key component to meeting this goal by drawing in visitors and revenues through making the public aware of what the park system has to offer.

OSP does not currently have full-time marketing staff or a formal marketing plan. The last OSP master plan, implemented in 1997 and utilized through 2012, contained the action goals "hire an in-house marketing specialist" and "develop a marketing strategy to increase public awareness of the Louisiana State Parks System." However, OSP does not currently have full-time marketing staff and does not have a document that outlines its marketing plan. OSP relies on a combination of two staff, including the public information director, whose job duties include communications and marketing, as well as staff at each park to generate marketing content. Each park has its own social media account, and there is a general state parks account. While the public information director is charged with overseeing all of OSP's social media accounts, park staff mostly manage individual park accounts. OSP uses the Office of Tourism's advertising contractors to market parks through television, radio, and social media. During COVID-19, the Office of Tourism highlighted state parks and amenities, such as Tentrr, as individuals were looking for outdoor activities during the pandemic. For example, a recent fall media campaign contained an RV component aimed at increasing overnight stays at state parks. Exhibit 15 shows an advertisement developed by the Office of Tourism during COVID-19.

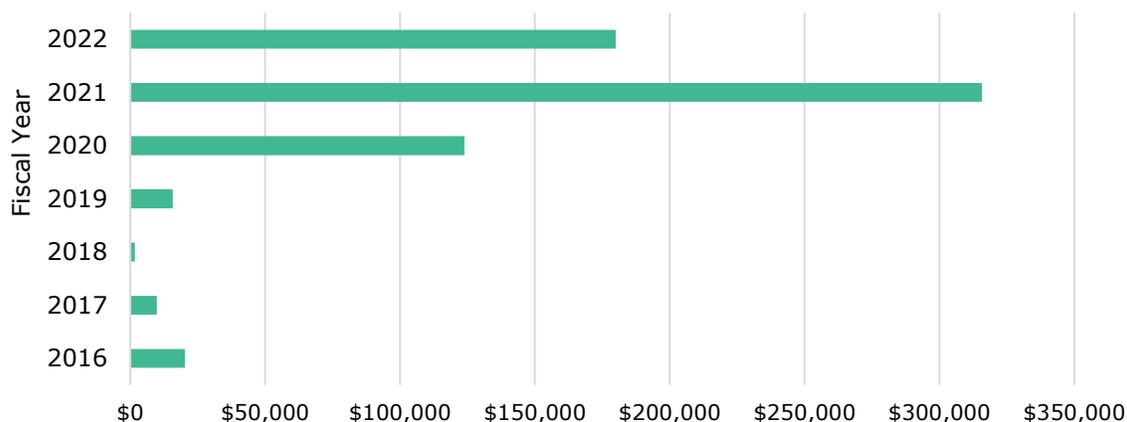
Exhibit 15
Office of Tourism Advertisement during COVID-19



Source: <https://www.explorelouisiana.com>

OSP's marketing expenditures for fiscal years 2016 through 2022 totaled \$667,002, with a significant increase beginning in fiscal year 2020. Exhibit 16 summarizes the OSP marketing expenditures for fiscal years 2016 through 2022.

Exhibit 16
OSP Marketing Expenditures
Fiscal Years 2016 through 2022



Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information provided by OSP

A more cohesive marketing strategy and dedicated resources could further highlight state parks and historic preservation sites. OSP has made a point of expanding cabins and improving campsites in an effort to drive visitation to its higher revenue amenities, and highlighting these improvements to the public can help drive patrons to the parks. As OSP's 1997 master plan stated, "While the Office of State Parks is within the same department as the Office of Tourism, the agencies have different agendas. The Office of State Parks should have a specialist who understands state parks, state commemorative areas, and state preservation areas to develop and maintain an in-house strategy for marketing facilities and resources." According to OSP staff, while it does not have a formal marketing plan, it does have a marketing strategy on where to spend marketing funds. Staff continuously review park visitation numbers to determine where to focus marketing.

Other states either devote resources or use specific methods to market their state park systems. While other states' park systems benefit significantly from private grants and taxes such as Arkansas,¹⁹ others without dedicated revenue streams have found ways to market their systems with the resources available. For example, South Carolina dedicates two full-time employees to marketing through its tourism department. The state monitors park attendance throughout the year to direct marketing to different parks, and is currently focused

¹⁹ Arkansas state parks are primarily funded by an 1/8 of 1 cent conservation sales tax that also funds Keep Arkansas Beautiful, the Division of Arkansas Heritage, and the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission.

on marketing to under-represented populations in an effort to attract new visitors and sustain attendance.

Recommendation 10: OSP should develop a strategic marketing plan and consider implementing elements from the previous master plan, such as hiring an in-house marketing specialist.

Summary of Management's Response: OSP agreed with this recommendation and stated it will pursue developing a strategic marketing plan but hiring an in-house marketing specialist will require additional funding and TO. See Appendix A for OSP's full response.

APPENDIX A: MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSE



BILLY NUNGESSER
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

State of Louisiana
OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, RECREATION & TOURISM
OFFICE OF STATE PARKS

BRANDON BURRIS
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

July 5, 2023

Michael J. "Mike" Waguespack, CPA
Louisiana Legislative Auditor
P.O. Box 94397
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9397

Re: Audit Title: Office of State Parks
Audit Report Number: 40210035

Dear Mr. Waguespack:

Please accept this letter as our response to the LLA's audit report on the Office of State Parks (OSP). We concur with the findings and recommendations outlined in the report.

As indicated in the report, OSP has operated for several years with a lack of sufficient funding and staffing. More recently, OSP has faced several additional challenges, including extended closures to multiple parks due to damages caused by several hurricanes, while simultaneously providing quality services to an increased number of visitors looking for outdoor activities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. OSP has faced all of these challenges head on in order to provide quality outdoor experiences to the people of Louisiana. We appreciate the recommendations made by the LLA to further improve OSP's operations and will implement them where resources allow.

***Finding 1:** Low staffing levels present challenges for administering parks, which can ultimately affect visitation levels. In response to staffing cuts, OSP found alternative methods, such as cross-training park employees and temporarily loaning staff from one park to another, for operating parks with decreased manpower.*

OSP concurs with this finding. If the state legislature allocates additional funding and TOs, it would allow OSP to sufficiently staff sites to further facilitate guest enjoyment and enhance visitation levels. OSP will continue to cross train and move staff to sites where needed most to maximize operations and continue to best serve the public.

***Finding 2:** Since 2010, OSP has received reduced general fund appropriations and has been required to spend funds from the Louisiana State Parks Improvements and Repair Dedicated Fund Account on operations. While the use of funds from this dedicated fund account helps OSP rely less on state general fund dollars, a lack of overall funding has contributed to a backlog of*

repair and improvement needs. OSP should better track expenditures from this dedicated fund account to show how much is being spent on operations rather than on needed repairs and improvements.

Recommendation 1: *OSP should clearly track the amount of 729 Fund expenditures used for operational costs, and parks and historic sites' repairs and improvements.*

OSP concurs with the finding and recommendation. OSP has made changes to its existing tracking system to improve tracking of expenditures of 729 funds.

Finding 3: *OSP does not have a current master plan, which would provide OSP a framework to set priorities and determine where to allocate resources. In addition, while OSP has implemented maintenance strategies that save time and money, it should implement a formal process to document repair and improvement decisions.*

Recommendation 2: *OSP should develop a master or strategic action plan to document parks and historic sites' needs, and to provide a framework to set priorities and help determine where to allocate resources.*

Recommendation 3: *OSP should formalize the process for selecting maintenance and capital outlay projects including documenting why projects are selected and tracking all completed projects.*

Recommendation 4: *OSP should implement additional controls over the use of travel trailers by traveling maintenance and repair teams to ensure trailers are not used outside of their intended purpose.*

OSP concurs with the finding and recommendations. OSP will explore hiring an outside firm to develop a new master plan upon additional funding becoming available. Additionally, OSP has made changes to its existing maintenance and capital outlay project tracking system to include additional details based on the LLA's recommendations. OSP will develop and implement a policy to ensure travel trailers are used for their intended purpose.

Finding 4: *Despite lower visitation, OSP revenue increased by 42.9% from fiscal years 2016 through 2022 largely due to short-term revenues, including COVID-19 relief funds. While the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in increased visitation, recent hurricanes have reduced the number of visitors as some parks were closed or damaged.*

Recommendation 5: *OSP should continue to expand consistent, non-visitation revenue streams in order to become less reliant on state general fund dollars.*

OSP concurs with the finding and recommendation. OSP currently utilizes various funding sources, including public-private partnerships, and will continue to explore opportunities to expand these partnerships in order to increase non-visitation revenue. For example, OSP is currently expanding merchandising opportunities through the opening of new gift shops and expansion of existing gift shops.

Finding 5: *In order to sustain parks and historic sites and meet the needs of visitors, OSP should evaluate fee adjustments and pricing strategies. Since fiscal year 2017, OSP increased various fees and implemented differential pricing, but further increases may be warranted.*

Recommendation 6: *OSP may want to further evaluate the need for increases to admission and amenities fees, as well as rentals.*

Recommendation 7: *OSP should evaluate implementing further dynamic pricing strategies to encourage patronage and increase revenues.*

OSP concurs with the finding and recommendations. OSP will evaluate strategies like fee increases and dynamic pricing to increase revenue in keeping with the statutory mission of the agency and within the boundaries set forth by the state legislature.

Finding 6: *During fiscal years 2019 through 2022, OSP generated \$350,424 from revenue-generating agreements, including public-private partnerships to provide services that improve the visitor experience. OSP should continue to grow revenue-generating agreements as a way to increase visitation and revenue.*

Recommendation 8: *OSP should continue to explore and promote additional revenue-generating agreements as a way to improve the visitor's experience and help increase visitation and generate revenues.*

Recommendation 9: *OSP should continue to build relationships with friend's groups in order to promote parks and historic sites and gain more funding.*

OSP concurs with the finding and recommendations. OSP is actively exploring new public-private partnerships for the purpose of enhancing the visitor experience and increasing revenue. OSP is actively involved with friend's groups and will continue to expand relationships within communities surrounding sites.

Finding 7: *A more cohesive marketing strategy, including a marketing plan and dedicated marketing staff could improve OSP's efforts to increase visitation and revenue.*

Recommendation 10: *OSP should develop a strategic marketing plan and consider implementing elements from the previous master plan such as hiring an in-house marketing specialist.*

OSP concurs with the finding and recommendation. OSP will pursue developing a strategic marketing plan, however; hiring an in-house marketing specialist would require additional funding and TO.

We thank the LLA for its efforts to evaluate OSP and make recommendations to further strengthen its operations. Please let us know if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'BB', is positioned above the typed name.

Brandon Burris
Assistant Secretary
Office of State Parks

APPENDIX B: SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

This report provides the results of our performance audit of Louisiana Office of State Parks (OSP). We conducted this performance audit under the provisions of Title 24 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, as amended. This audit covered fiscal years 2016 through 2022 but also includes information for prior fiscal years and fiscal year 2023. Our audit objective was:

To evaluate how the Office of State Parks manages Louisiana’s state parks and historic sites.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally-accepted *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We believe the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective.

We obtained an understanding of internal control that is significant to the audit objective and assessed the design and implementation of such internal control to the extent necessary to address our audit objective. We also obtained an understanding of legal provisions that are significant within the context of the audit objective, and we assessed the risk that illegal acts, including fraud, and violations of applicable contract, grant agreement, or other legal provisions could occur. Based on that risk assessment, we designed and performed procedures to provide reasonable assurance of detecting instances of noncompliance significant to those provisions.

To answer our objective, we performed the following audit steps:

- Reviewed Louisiana state laws regarding state parks, including but not limited to, operations funding and fee structures.
- Interviewed OSP management and staff to understand park operations, and visited two parks and two historic sites.
- Obtained and analyzed OSP staffing information from ISIS/HR for fiscal years 2007 through 2022.
- Analyzed the mechanisms and processes for funding operations and maintenance objectives throughout the parks system.
- Obtained and analyzed data on funded and unfunded repairs and improvements project requests at parks and historic sites.

- Obtained and analyzed visitation data for fiscal years 2016 through 2022.
- Obtained and analyzed visitation and non-visitation revenue data for fiscal years 2016 through 2022.
- Obtained and analyzed revenues into and expenditures from the Louisiana State Parks Improvement and Repair (729) Dedicated Fund Account.
- Obtained and reviewed documentation on OSP's revenue sharing agreements and information regarding friends' groups between fiscal year 2016 and fiscal year 2022.
- Conducted best practices research on parks operations and reviewed audits on park systems in other states.
- Contacted other states to gather information on their park system operations. We received responses from South Carolina, Arkansas, Georgia, and New Mexico.
- Provided OSP our results to review for accuracy and reasonableness.

APPENDIX C: VISITATION REVENUES BY REVENUE CATEGORY FISCAL YEARS 2016 – 2022

Row Labels	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	Grand Total
Cabins	\$4,062,856	\$3,628,160	\$3,696,291	\$3,799,562	\$3,023,156	\$4,683,690	\$3,994,683	\$26,888,398
Premium & Improved Campsites	\$3,250,876	\$3,339,967	\$3,797,582	\$3,827,035	\$2,982,837	\$4,068,980	\$3,792,140	\$25,059,417
Admissions Fees incl. St. Bernard Swimming Fee	\$1,180,816	\$1,228,297	\$1,396,773	\$1,262,463	\$1,085,374	\$1,386,147	\$1,249,426	\$8,789,296
Reserve America Fees	\$511,364	\$463,777	\$381,805	\$423,621	\$367,865	\$528,864	\$456,849	\$3,134,145
Group Camps	\$473,515	\$416,592	\$461,094	\$538,819	\$317,868	\$316,486	\$447,552	\$2,971,926
Lodges	\$407,283	\$403,712	\$419,486	\$415,004	\$271,974	\$330,995	\$374,138	\$2,622,592
Cancel & Transfer Fees	\$319,333	\$283,266	\$299,181	\$318,069	\$303,679	\$466,986	\$418,234	\$2,408,748
Museum Fees	\$287,887	\$334,651	\$347,859	\$369,886	\$241,991	\$251,455	\$334,168	\$2,167,897
Marina Slips & Unimproved Campsites	\$174,577	\$142,540	\$168,279	\$139,919	\$119,665	\$179,407	\$150,442	\$1,074,829
Gift Shop & Store	\$104,540	\$107,032	\$100,997	\$97,928	\$80,034	\$81,493	\$95,785	\$667,809
Satelite, Film Phot., Adj. Misc, etc	\$55,103	\$55,043	\$325,217	\$53,791	\$82,914	\$19,192	\$26,698	\$617,958
Meeting Rooms	\$83,156	\$92,461	\$89,501	\$97,478	\$63,755	\$85,013	\$76,496	\$587,860
Wave Pool S.G. Misc	\$117,767	\$121,450	\$135,664	\$145,327	\$47,980	\$0		\$568,188
Annual Permits	\$54,960	\$68,145	\$66,895	\$78,805	\$79,600	\$100,967	\$93,430	\$542,802
Boat, etc Rental Deposit	\$95,325	\$90,677	\$62,338	\$67,403	\$61,300	\$92,404	\$73,261	\$542,708
Pavilions	\$79,804	\$82,822	\$86,860	\$83,691	\$38,571	\$74,781	\$79,777	\$526,306
Promotional Gift Cards	-\$461	\$1,425	\$3,707	\$23,190	\$162,158	-\$14,063	-\$10,061	\$165,895

Row Labels	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	Grand Total
Reservation State & Parish Taxes	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$95,699	\$95,699
LOOP Royal/Log Outreach	\$24,635	\$22,075	\$24,439	\$0	\$0	\$0		\$71,149
Washer Dryer	\$10,045	\$7,133	\$7,005	\$6,253	\$6,212	\$0	\$8	\$36,656
Tentrr	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$30,528	\$4,972	\$35,500
T-Shirts	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$4,530	\$17,413	\$21,943
Concessionaire	\$6,417	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$125	\$6,542
Restitution	\$220	\$181	\$430	\$375	\$120	\$613	\$3,010	\$4,949
Total	\$11,300,018	\$10,889,406	\$11,871,403	\$11,748,619	\$9,337,053	\$12,688,468	\$11,774,245	\$79,609,212
Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information provided by OSP.								

APPENDIX D: NON-VISITATION REVENUES BY REVENUE CATEGORY FISCAL YEARS 2016 – 2022

Row Labels	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	Grand Total
COVID-19 Relief Funds	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$2,490,280	\$1,039,175	\$3,529,455
Leases / Royalties	\$25,768	\$28,528	\$27,860	\$30,507	\$60,231	\$1,023,877	\$1,134,616	\$2,331,387
Oil Spill Funds	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$76,088	\$651,213	\$1,274,049	\$2,001,350
Timber	\$6,696	\$0	\$353,491	\$56,551	\$521,245	\$109,944	\$190,920	\$1,238,847
Federal Funds (RTP/SCORP)	\$91,558	\$45,248	\$97,663	\$98,078	\$168,548	\$78,660	\$599,660	\$1,179,415
ORM/Storm Claim/FEMA	\$36,704	\$184,366	\$29,328	\$0	\$1,010	\$164,003	\$82,244	\$497,655
Filming	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$55,400	\$241,400	\$296,800
Hunting Tags	\$0	\$7,495	\$5,141	\$14,105	\$14,305	\$21,525	\$23,890	\$86,461
Other	\$2,886	\$15	\$30	\$60,270	\$924	\$14,164	\$6,394	\$84,683
Refunds/Reimbursements/Return of Appropriation	\$8,258	\$11,369	\$8,860	\$1,918	\$2,976	\$13,971	\$6,958	\$54,310
Revenue-Generating Agreements	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,675	\$5,291	\$24,329	\$22,330	\$53,625
Total	\$171,870	\$277,021	\$522,373	\$263,104	\$850,618	\$4,647,366	\$4,621,636	\$11,353,988

Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information provided by OSP.

APPENDIX E: VISITATION REVENUES BY PARKS FISCAL YEARS 2016 – 2022

State Park	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	Grand Total
Fontainebleau	\$1,460,795	\$1,468,098	\$1,682,618	\$1,649,381	\$1,313,099	\$1,947,238	\$1,158,886	\$10,680,115
Chicot	\$986,592	\$917,580	\$1,026,851	\$1,010,287	\$693,300	\$983,413	\$1,040,242	\$6,658,265
Bayou Segnette	\$594,429	\$960,223	\$1,158,763	\$1,234,878	\$643,736	\$931,206	\$1,058,554	\$6,581,789
Poverty Point Reservoir	\$709,636	\$636,358	\$656,726	\$691,132	\$549,086	\$839,286	\$771,049	\$4,853,273
Jimmie Davis	\$701,644	\$778,952	\$831,081	\$535,789	\$319,704	\$498,159	\$846,399	\$4,511,728
Bogue Chitto	\$481,961	\$461,908	\$549,707	\$544,445	\$539,002	\$918,679	\$871,328	\$4,367,030
South Toledo Bend	\$646,893	\$676,797	\$639,826	\$613,408	\$558,696	\$738,849	\$380,374	\$4,254,843
Palmetto Island	\$490,368	\$549,558	\$585,288	\$567,021	\$494,651	\$661,802	\$653,229	\$4,001,917
Lake D'Arbonne	\$611,081	\$608,510	\$552,545	\$495,345	\$427,209	\$608,617	\$655,841	\$3,959,148
Lake Claiborne	\$409,208	\$469,378	\$473,988	\$443,205	\$435,739	\$631,832	\$584,718	\$3,448,068
North Toledo Bend	\$369,781	\$411,629	\$432,569	\$411,375	\$301,578	\$448,266	\$497,891	\$2,873,089
Fairview-Riverside	\$340,352	\$384,248	\$434,638	\$407,435	\$317,409	\$454,521	\$418,235	\$2,756,838
Sam Houston Jones	\$538,662	\$577,784	\$535,024	\$539,835	\$410,840	\$47,046	\$48,758	\$2,697,949
Tickfaw	\$399,180	\$96,934	\$200,345	\$339,583	\$326,204	\$530,283	\$337,554	\$2,230,083
Grand Isle	\$319,381	\$313,517	\$380,182	\$395,561	\$293,762	\$408,202	\$49,326	\$2,159,931
Lake Fausse Pointe	\$649,955	-\$8,587	\$40,171	\$299,230	\$295,037	\$369,584	\$476,320	\$2,121,710
Chemin-A-Haut	\$174,199	\$153,992	\$189,668	\$246,842	\$272,975	\$327,002	\$396,164	\$1,760,842
Cypremort Point	\$217,698	\$182,015	\$226,389	\$206,556	\$182,980	\$266,101	\$287,528	\$1,569,267
Lake Bistineau	\$142,899	\$116,072	\$134,783	\$230,399	\$107,536	\$275,699	\$327,775	\$1,335,163
St. Bernard	\$119,395	\$136,112	\$169,132	\$175,671	\$123,631	\$184,935	\$263,507	\$1,172,383
Lake Bruin	\$102,172	\$106,862	\$121,667	\$110,288	\$155,264	\$257,420	\$234,292	\$1,087,965
Hodges Gardens ²⁰	\$351,002	\$349,852	\$23,922	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$724,776
Bayou Seg. Wave Pool	\$90,435	\$121,450	\$135,664	\$145,327	\$55,226	\$5,610	\$0	\$553,712
Total	\$10,907,718	\$10,469,242	\$11,181,547	\$11,292,993	\$8,816,664	\$12,333,750	\$11,357,970	\$76,359,884

Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information provided by OSP.

²⁰ Hodges Gardens State Park closed on October 1, 2017 and was transferred from the state to private holding in February of 2018.

APPENDIX F: VISITATION REVENUES BY HISTORIC SITE* FISCAL YEARS 2016 – 2022

Historic Site	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	Grand Total
Rosedown	\$209,777	\$223,799	\$240,136	\$268,908	\$188,699	\$142,743	\$193,152	\$1,467,214
Poverty Pt SHS	\$26,061	\$49,708	\$48,745	\$45,349	\$36,797	\$47,023	\$57,300	\$310,983
Audubon	\$41,360	\$35,182	\$33,139	\$38,462	\$28,547	\$34,235	\$69,277	\$280,202
Port Hudson	\$22,767	\$23,369	\$24,963	\$23,367	\$35,940	\$36,109	\$37,300	\$203,815
Fort St. Jean	\$15,223	\$19,121	\$19,065	\$18,850	\$14,014	\$9,276	\$12,245	\$107,794
Longfellow Evan	\$10,262	\$8,962	\$8,931	\$8,190	\$8,570	\$6,746	\$7,437	\$59,098
Fort Pike	\$12,012	\$11,850	\$7,875	\$7,050	\$7,550	\$6,936	\$2,000	\$55,273
Mansfield	\$7,047	\$10,797	\$8,514	\$8,166	\$6,696	\$5,334	\$6,036	\$52,590
Forts Randolph & Buhlow SHS	\$4,400	\$4,233	\$5,266	\$6,972	\$6,117	\$10,236	\$11,696	\$48,920
Centenary	\$418	\$256	\$378	\$66	\$30	\$12,026	\$370	\$13,544
Rebel	\$2,485	\$2,764	\$2,429	\$710	\$304	\$479	\$915	\$10,086
Fort Jesup	\$509	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$881	\$1,281	\$2,671
Total	\$352,321	\$390,041	\$399,441	\$426,090	\$333,264	\$312,024	\$399,009	\$2,612,190

* Plaquemine Lock, Locust Grove, Los Adaes, and Winter Quarters are not listed as they are either closed to the public or don't charge admission fees.

Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information provided by OSP.

APPENDIX G: TOTAL VISITATION BY PARK FISCAL YEARS 2016 – 2022

Park	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
Fontainebleau	235,717	218,710	223,938	215,760	179,405	269,117	213,599	1,556,246
Bayou Segnette	147,757	145,633	146,819	154,697	92,620	98,121	87,072	872,719
Jimmie Davis	116,355	129,534	140,157	95,092	72,012	100,380	108,275	761,805
Chicot	129,550	126,610	106,586	105,669	79,553	99,554	107,461	754,983
Poverty Point Reservoir	154,076	117,517	85,061	85,416	69,453	68,021	62,999	642,543
Bogue Chitto	86,860	78,534	77,393	76,218	77,056	123,908	110,224	630,193
Palmetto Island	86,448	81,397	78,738	71,139	63,995	80,183	73,897	535,797
Sam Houston Jones	112,725	94,938	80,878	89,174	82,096	16,333	790	476,934
Lake D'Arbonne	81,059	67,809	61,028	63,446	52,673	56,567	60,314	442,896
Grand Isle	75,945	68,282	71,859	72,412	54,064	68,489	16,804	427,855
Lake Claiborne	68,125	65,958	56,592	53,929	50,261	67,131	54,173	416,169
Fairview-Riverside	61,685	62,410	57,400	52,354	41,541	60,951	51,618	387,959
Tickfaw	68,579	29,571	39,236	54,314	52,196	76,004	36,759	356,659
South Toledo Bend	62,601	58,148	53,294	51,168	43,523	54,639	27,203	350,576
North Toledo Bend	54,400	43,780	35,830	34,814	27,143	35,496	40,712	272,175
St. Bernard	50,982	43,619	31,173	30,227	22,386	32,990	42,712	254,089
Cypremort Point	42,853	31,985	33,889	35,720	26,888	36,555	33,340	241,230
Lake Bistineau	27,739	23,068	27,092	30,122	22,908	42,040	47,215	220,184
Lake Bruin	32,547	29,888	30,106	25,380	21,295	36,635	41,545	217,396
Lake Fausse Pointe	59,676	12,981	6,396	20,163	22,502	25,339	28,377	175,434
Chemin-A-Haut	18,722	19,873	21,656	21,595	19,249	22,493	27,360	150,948
Hodges Gardens ²¹	52,469	51,829	6,376	-	-	-	-	110,674
Total	1,826,870	1,602,074	1,471,497	1,438,809	1,172,819	1,470,946	1,272,449	10,255,464

Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information provided by OSP.

²¹ Hodges Gardens State Park closed on October 1, 2017 and was transferred from the state to private holding in February 2018.

APPENDIX H: TOTAL VISITATION BY HISTORIC SITE* FISCAL YEARS 2016 – 2022

Historic Sites	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
Audubon	14,140	10,439	8,124	8,392	6,282	4,872	8,177	60,426
Centenary	3,232	2,319	1,322	555	259	42	38	7,767
Fort Jesup	711	0	0	0	0	1,266	1,385	3,362
Fort Pike	52	11	0	0	2	0	0	65
Fort St. John Baptiste	12,047	10,722	9,810	9,622	6,244	4,148	6,350	58,943
Forts Randolph and Buhlow	16,312	14,032	12,144	10,830	9,518	7,279	11,283	81,398
Longfellow-Evangeline	7,907	8,431	7,582	7,583	5,343	4,062	5,337	46,245
Mansfield	5,227	6,865	5,735	5,695	5,397	3,942	4,258	37,119
Port Hudson	17,708	13,861	13,361	15,248	7,798	15,041	16,413	99,430
Poverty Point	13,372	15,734	15,434	15,223	12,332	11,763	12,170	96,028
Rebel	2,864	2,106	1,251	0	2	210	200	6,633
Rosedown Plantation	30,732	29,010	28,292	31,533	18,418	17,028	18,484	173,497
Total	124,304	113,530	103,055	104,681	71,595	69,653	84,095	670,913
<p>* Plaquemine Lock, Locust Grove, Los Adaes, and Winter Quarters are not listed as they are either closed to the public or visitation is not tracked. Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information provided by OSP.</p>								

APPENDIX I: REVENUE GENERATING AGREEMENTS FISCAL YEARS 2016 – 2022

Vendor	Affiliated Park / Historic Site	Start Date	End Date	General Purpose
American Queen Steamboat Company	Rosedown Plantation State	8/1/2021	1/3/2023	Tours, Shoreside Services, & Activities
Bayou Adventure*	Fontainebleau	4/19/2019	4/19/2024	Rentals, Guided Tours, & Retail Sales
Bouge Chitto Horse Rentals, LLC	Bouge Chitto	7/15/2019	7/15/2024	Horse Rentals & Wagon Ride Operations
Canoe and Trail Adventures Inc.	Fontainebleau State Park	7/17/2021	7/17/2022	Paddlesport Tours & Rentals
Dirty Coast, LLC	Grand Isle, Bogue Chitto, Fontainebleau	3/16/2021	3/31/2023	Retail Sales of T-Shirts, Patches, & Hats
Hotel Lodge at Black Bear**	Restaurant at Black Bear Management	5/27/2020	5/27/2025	Hotel Management Services
Keltech, Inc.	All state parks except for Cypremort State Park	1/1/2020	12/31/2030	Coin-Operated Washers & Dryers
LA Tours & Rentals, LLC	Fairview-Riverside	11/1/2019	10/31/2022	Pontoon Boat Charters
Luckett Farms, LLC*	Rosedown Plantation	2/1/2018	6/30/2028	Maintaining Grounds & Farm Stand, Cultivating Crops and Bees

Vendor	Affiliated Park / Historic Site	Start Date	End Date	General Purpose
Tauck, Inc. (Audubon)	Audubon	8/18/2021	12/24/2021	Guided Tours
Tauck, Inc. (Rosedown Plantation)	Rosedown Plantation	9/10/2021	12/21/2021	Guided Tours
Viking Cruise Lines	Audubon, Poverty Point, Rosedown Plantation	9/1/2022	1/30/2024	Tours, Museum Admissions, & Painting Classes
Rocky Bottom Tubing, LLC*	Bouge Chitto State Park	5/23/2017	5/22/2022	Rentals & Shuttle Services
Tentrr, Inc	Fontainebleau, Lake Fausse Pointe, Sam Houston Jones, Chicot, Jimmie Davis, Lake Claiborne, Lake D'Arbonne, Grand Isle	10/1/2020	9/30/2025	Camping Facilities
Tubing in the Park, LLC	Bouge Chitto State Park	11/1/2019	10/31/2022	Rentals & Shuttle Services
<p>*These vendor agreements are currently inactive. **Black Bear Golf Course is operated by CRT. Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information provided by OSP.</p>				