

El Dorado State Park

Master Plan 2021



Purpose

The purpose of this master plan is to guide current and future operations and development at El Dorado State Park. Reference to this plan will ensure that operations at El Dorado State Park meet the needs identified in the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) 2020. This plan is required by the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF); accepting such funds dedicates the park in perpetuity to outdoor recreation. Many LWCF funds were utilized in the development of El Dorado State Park after its initial completion in the mid 1980's. Grant funding from LWCF, the Recreational Trails Fund, and many others are critical to development of recreational opportunities in all Kansas state parks.

Guidance from this plan also ensures that development will be in alignment with the Department mission statement:

- Conserve and enhance Kansas's natural heritage, its wildlife and its habitats—to ensure future generations the benefits of the state's diverse, living resources;
- Provide the public with the opportunity for the use and appreciation of the natural resources of Kansas, consistent with the conservation of those resources;
- Inform the public of the status of the natural resources of Kansas to promote understanding and gain assistance in achieving this mission.

Park history and background

El Dorado State Park is a 4,000-acre facility located adjacent to the 8,000 surface acre El Dorado Reservoir. Adjacent to the park is the 4,000-acre El Dorado Wildlife Area. The lake encompasses almost 100 miles of shoreline, depending on water level. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began recreational facility development in May of 1981. The Kansas Park and Resources Authority (merged with the Kansas Fish and Game Commission into what is now the Kansas Department of Wildlife Parks and Tourism-KDWPT) was granted a lease to operate and maintain the facilities in 1980. The current lease is due for renewal on January 31st, 2030.

The park is located two miles from El Dorado, Kansas, easily accessible from U.S. Highway 54 and the Kansas Turnpike (I-35). In fact, the Turnpike crosses the upper reaches of El Dorado Lake. It is located about 30 minutes from the largest city in Kansas, Wichita, home for many visitors to the park and a draw for many statewide and regional events. The City of El Dorado has a population of about 13,000; the primary business is oil refining, although a robust economy supports this and other businesses. A trail within the City connects to the park's trail network, allowing easy access for walkers and bicyclists. Work on the refining facilities often brings workers who take advantage of the park's seasonal campsites during their stays.

Facilities

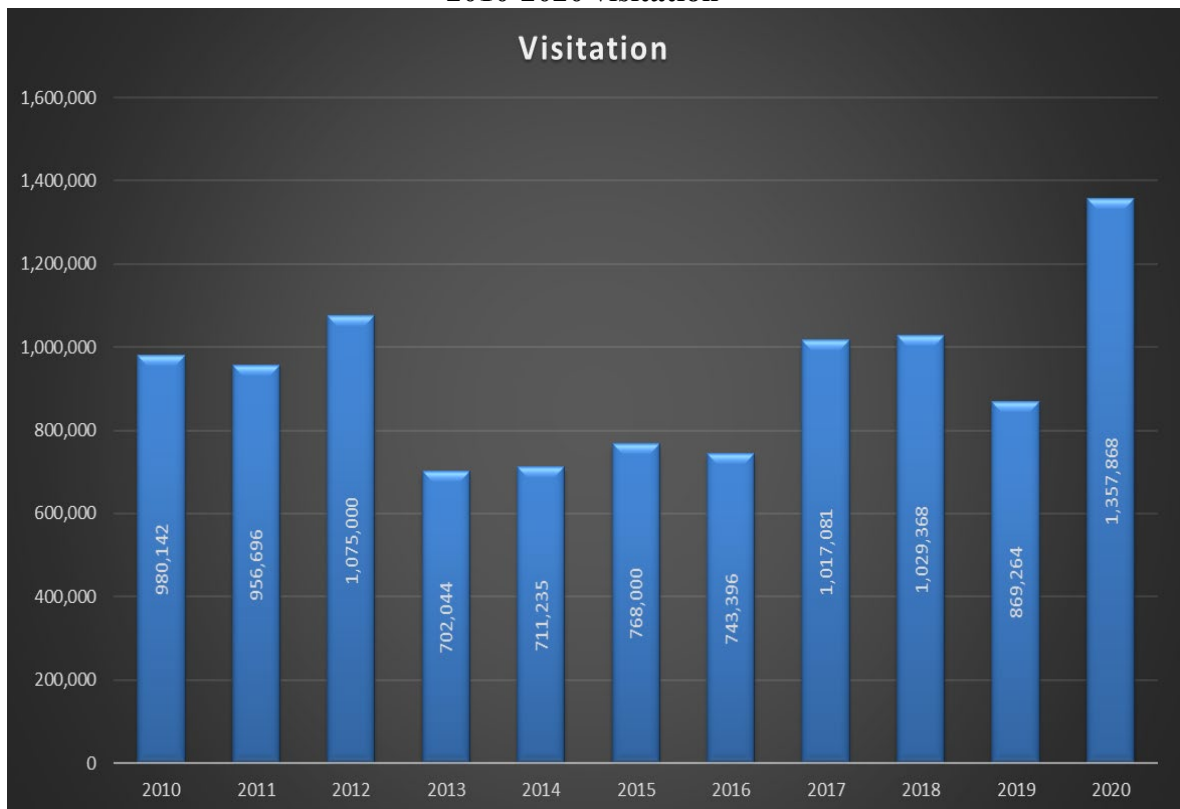
Over 1,100 campsites offer visitors a huge variety, from primitive to full utility hookups, located throughout four campgrounds: Walnut River - 170 sites, Bluestem Point - over 500 sites, Shady Creek – 75 designated sites, three undesignated areas, Bemis Creek – 24 sites and Boulder Bluff – 150 sites. Approximately 470 campsites offer electric and water hookups and over 160 of these also have sewer hookups available. Several of the campsites have 50/30/20 amp electric services while others have 30/20 amp service. Over 500 primitive campsites, with no utilities, are also available.

The multiple facilities at El Dorado State Park include two swimming beaches, 16 group shelters, seven boat ramps with 12 load/unload lanes, courtesy docks at all boat ramps, a large amphitheater with dual stages, a designated horse campground with an arena, and seven trails for hikers, bikers and horse riders totaling about 32 miles. The park also offers 10 cabins available for use year-round. Five of the cabins are one room log cabins and the other five are deluxe cabins offering kitchens, a bedroom, and bathrooms. A full-service marina with 220 slips at the Shady Creek Area operates under a concession agreement. Another marina is home to the Walnut Valley Sailing Club, which has 80 slips available for sailboats. The Friends of El Dorado Shooting Range operates a 54-lane handgun, shotgun, and rifle shooting range near the park entrance adjacent to the park office. Users of the range are required to have a park permit. The range was built with a grant through the Pittman-Robertson Act.

Operations

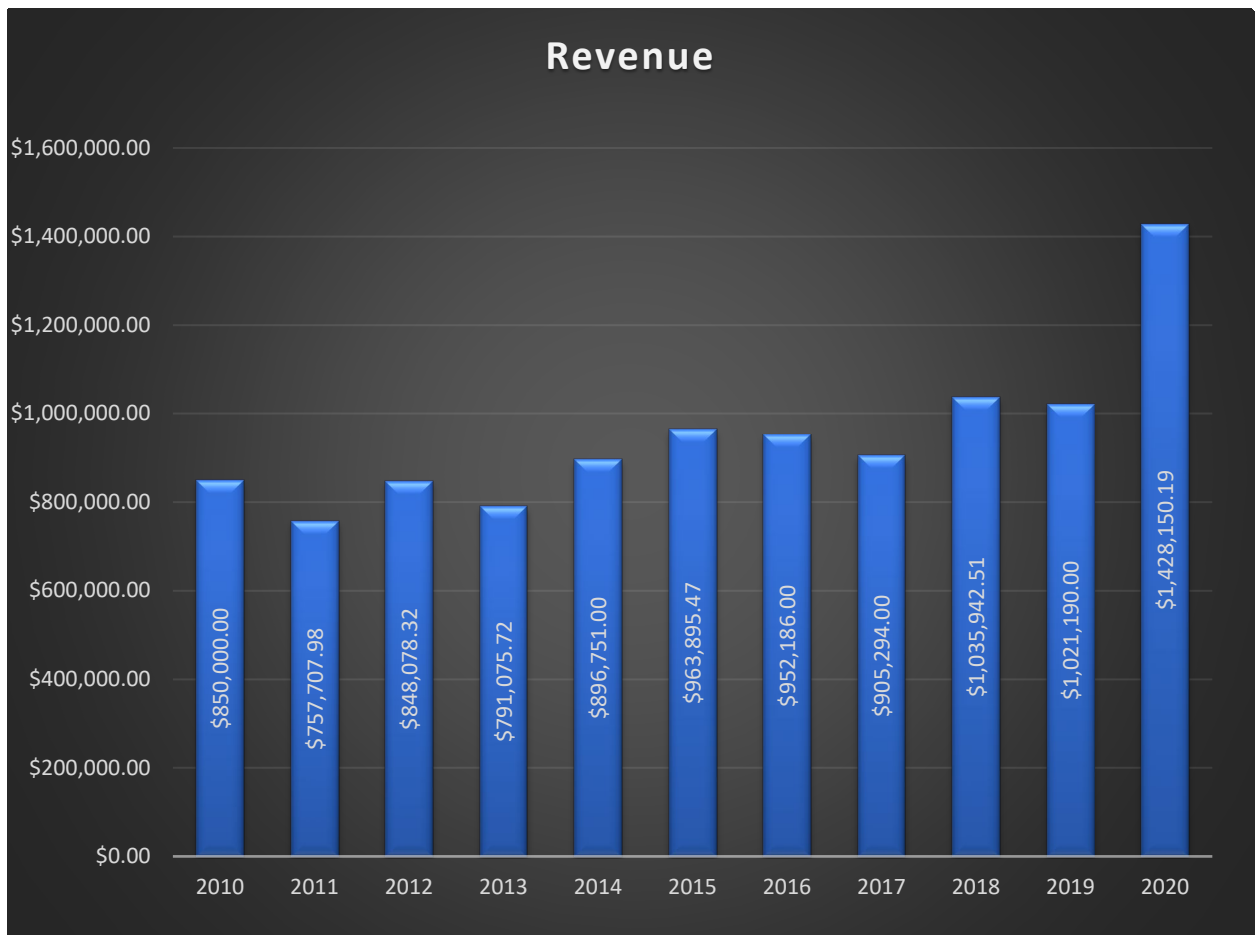
Visitation has varied over the past decade or so, a direct reflection of the vagaries of weather and the economy, averaging 900,000 to one million annually. Visitation is measured by pneumatic counters at the 11 park entrances. Visitation actually means the calculated visitor usage days, estimated from the number of counts at entrances by a calculation taking into account the average number of visitors per vehicle and the number of times each vehicle enters the park. While the numbers may not be a precise measurement, the methodology is consistent; it shows trends up and down. A slight downward trend is often noted after a price increase, while good weather and no flooding over major summer holidays bring an upward trend. Interestingly, the Coronavirus pandemic increased visitation at most of our parks as people used the park to social distance and find solace in the outdoors.

2010-2020 visitation



Collection of revenue has changed over the past decade, from most permit sales and campsite reservations collected in person at the park office to the majority of sales handled through internet sales. This means much revenue is collected off site. However, this shift has led to higher revenue per park overall, as users can reserve sites in mid-December for the following calendar year. It gives them the opportunity to ensure that they have the sites they want on the dates they want. It also allows us to correctly track the number of uses on annual and 14-night camping permits, as well as highlights when campers stay past the nights paid for. Permit compliance has been enhanced. The new CampIt Kansas app allows campers to check availability and reserve sites from their smartphones, or from the actual site itself. The trend is moving away from fee collection at gatehouses, offices, and camp hosts to the internet. Revenue closely mirrors visitation, with weather events often an extenuating factor. The Kansas Legislature approves the budget and funding is often subject to political trends. No State General Fund (tax revenues) have been allocated to state parks for the past several years, and only a small amount from lottery revenues. Therefore, the Kansas State Park system is largely self-supporting from user fees. El Dorado State Park revenues from 2010 to 2020.

2010-2020 Revenue



The El Dorado State Park Operations and Maintenance budget has remained fairly stable over the years, mirroring available revenues.

2009-2020 O&M Budget



Staffing

El Dorado State Park is the largest state park in Kansas, and one of the largest in the United States (based on number of utility campsites). With so much ground and so many buildings to care for, staffing is vitally important to El Dorado State Park. Over the years, positions at El Dorado have been moved to cover other needed positions in different parks or lost entirely by the Department as government has downsized. Additionally, El Dorado State Park once housed a minimum-security facility for Kansas Department of Corrections. This facility was placed on park property with the understanding that they would provide up to 45 inmates per day to help with the maintenance of the park. Due to budget cuts, KDOC elected to mothball the facility. Following is a comparison of original numbers of employees at El Dorado and current numbers:

Original

Park Manager

Park Ranger (2 total)

Administrative Assistant (1/2 time)

Facilities Maintenance Supervisor (2)

General Maintenance Repair Tech (12)

Minimum security Inmates (45)

Volunteers – various

Current

Park Manager

Assistant Park Manager

Park Ranger (2 total)

Administrative Specialist

Facilities Maintenance Supervisor (1)

Facilities Specialist (3)

Volunteers – various

Facilities and Equipment

Like most state parks in Kansas, El Dorado State Park must maintain many of the services of a city. In fact, over the Memorial Day weekend, El Dorado State Park is often the fourth largest city in the state. At this distance from initial development, many of the facilities are struggling to keep up with demand. The park contains 91 lane miles of roads, over 330 miles of electrical line, 300 miles of water line, and 150 miles of sewer line. The sewage lagoons have been refurbished, accomplished by park staff, who then assisted other parks with refurbishment of their aging lagoons. Sewer lift stations fail unexpectedly and are a large expense usually managed at the statewide, rather than parkwide level.

Trash disposal, too, is a city-like concern. Where available at a reasonable cost, we contract with trash disposal services. Such contracts must be bid out for the lowest bid. Because parks are often located far from cities, the bids are often quite high. In some cases, it is more cost effective to purchase trash trucks and transport the waste ourselves. This expense must be managed closely. Since 2010, the average yearly cost of trash service at El Dorado has been \$42,200/year.

The park's location on the edge of the Flint Hills gives it large expanses of open prairie, as well as wooded draws. Whenever possible, staff conducts prescribed burns on approximately 1/3 of the grassland per year, to control noxious weeds and woody invasive such as Eastern Red Cedar. Regular burning promotes a healthy native grassland and reduces the fuel load to make control of range fires easier. Firebreaks established for prescribed burning efforts also help protect the park and neighbor's property from wildfires.

Large numbers of migrating eagles and waterfowl make the lake their temporary home. Whitetail deer, turkey, quail, many species of songbirds and a wide variety of wildlife populations are found within the park. Much of the timber in the valley when the lake was filled remains standing and provides habitat for plentiful fishing. The lake is large enough that water sports such as sailing, skiing, and personal watercraft are popular as are kayaks. Two swimming beaches are also popular.

Several music events are held at the outdoor amphitheater. In 2018, the park hosted Toby Keith at the Dam Music Festival. Other special events held at the park include: Kansas Veterans

and Family Reunion, Friends of El Dorado Lake Mud Run, Fishing has No Boundaries, and OK Kids Day and numerous reunions, weddings and fishing tournaments held annually. The park also hosts numerous bike events, the Storm the Dam race, 5K and 10K races and marathons in recent years. The Fishing Has No Boundaries event serves to introduce individuals with mobility issues to fishing.

The following is an itemized listing of all facilities located within El Dorado State Park:

Acres of Land/Water

Ponds	3	Grassland	3200	Public Hunting	1500
Wetlands	1	Timber	20	Subleased	40
Reservoir	8000	Cropland	0	Prescribed Burns	3800
Streams	4	Other	780		

Number of Structures

Office Building	1	Pedestrian Bridges	5	Sewer Lift Stations	28
Maintenance Building	4	Boat Ramps	7	Water Hydrants	600
Storage Building	5	Courtesy Docks	6	Drinking Fountains	0
Shower Houses	15	Breakwaters	1	Electrical Pedestal	500
Vault Toilets	24	Grills/Fire Rings	1800	Trash Dumpster (rent)	40
LG Shelter House	9	Picnic Tables	1200	Amphitheater	1
SM Shelter House	12	Permit Gates	4	Parking Lot Spaces	1000
Marinas	2	Campsites	1100	Vehicle Bridges	2
Playgrounds	2	Cabins	10	Earth Piers	5
Sewage Lagoons	11	Fish Cleaning Station	1	Dump Stations	4
Pump House	1	Water Storage Tower	2		

Miles of:

Water Lines	300	Paved Roads	91	Horse Trail	24
Electrical Lines	330	Gravel Roads	2	Bike Trail	28
Sewer Lines	150	Rip Rap	5	Pedestrian Trail	35
Boundary Fence	18	Shoreline (park)	50		

Equipment

Due to the size of El Dorado State Park and the number of employees based here, the facility supports a large equipment inventory. From law enforcement equipped four-wheel drive crew cab pickups to road graders, the park vehicles are very diverse. The vehicles and tractors of El Dorado State Park are in fair condition; however, many of them need replacement in a

prioritized, phased, budgeted plan. Some vehicles, such as maintenance vehicles and trash trucks, may not be driven many miles and can be quite old. In many cases, a used vehicle can serve adequately for certain maintenance needs. Law enforcement vehicles need to be new or close to new and in optimum condition. Some can be passed down for other uses when they pass the mileage limit for law enforcement use.

The park also utilizes large numbers of hand and small power tools. This many high use acres requires several large mowers. The park purchases the same brand of mowers for operational efficiency of maintaining an inventory of parts.

The most recent list of equipment is included in Appendix A.

Future Development

Shady Creek Cabins:

Park staff has developed a plan for the installation of new modern cabins in Shady Creek Area 1. This area is currently open for day use only and has several of the original development concrete “toad-stool” shelters placed throughout it. As recreation needs have changed, use of this style of shelters has become minimal. The plan for addition of 5-7 cabins has already been put through USACE and approved. El Dorado State Park has been home to 10 cabins for many years, starting in 1997. These cabins are either a single room primitive cabin or the trailer-house version of a modern cabin. Although not placed in the best of locations and a product not equal to our current modern cabins installed around the state, these cabins average around 35% occupancy for primitive cabins and 41% occupancy for deluxe cabins. All cabins at El Dorado have repaid their original Friends Group investment many times over.

It is believed that if El Dorado State Park were to put in seven large “stick-built” cabins that could host either multiple families or several company individuals on a retreat type of event the occupancy rates would be in the 50% range. With the addition of a meeting room area centrally located in the area, the park could market to local businesses to entice corporate retreats to the area. The proposed area could easily be gated off and reserved exclusively for corporations to hold retreats when renting all cabins and the meeting facility. Additionally, the area could be marketed for weddings; the event to be held in the meeting area and then receptions at a cabin or multiple cabins. The picturesque scene overlooking the reservoir would make a brilliant backdrop for wedding pictures. Potentially, at a later date, small courtesy docks could be added in the protected cove next the area and could be assigned for use by specific cabins. This could entice rental from boating families, fishermen, and tournament fishermen.

Currently, the largest cabin at ELDP will house up to 6 adults and 2-4 children and rents for \$110/night. If larger style cabins that would house up to 10 adults were installed it is proposed that the rental rate could bring \$200/night easily. On average, the cabins at ELDP are available for 3400 nights per year (10 cabins*365 days=3650 less 25 nights/cabin for closures due to maintenance/special events/weather events/etc. If the new cabins maintained 50% occupancy based on 2380 nights/year this would be an additional \$238,000/year revenue (7 cabins * 365 days = 2,555-175 closure night =2,380 available nights*50%=1190 rentals/year).

Additionally, if a central meeting facility was incorporated in this project, it could likely be rented for \$75-\$100/day. Most other facilities in El Dorado rent for minimum of \$100/day so

we could set our rate at \$75/day and pick up some additional rentals. If this facility rented for 150 days/year this would increase revenue \$11,250.

Preliminary cost estimates for construction of cabins is approximately \$90,000/cabin and \$100,000 for the meeting facility. These estimates included costs for infrastructure, the cabin itself, decking, sidewalks to the existing toad-stool shelters, and landscaping.

Infrastructure work could be done in-house by ELDP staff and would take approximately 8-10 weeks to complete. It would be best to contract the construction of the cabins and meeting facility to ensure timely completion of the project as they would likely take several months to build. Park staff could then complete the finishing touches including landscaping, decking, and interior decoration. The project would likely be funded in part by LWCF funds and would likely be completed in phases.

Addition of 50 Amp Electrical to Bluestem Area 5

Bluestem Area 5 is a popular campground at El Dorado State Park. Currently, a portion of the interior sites in this area have 50-amp electrical service available. The remainder of the sites, approximately 37 sites, are waterside sites that have only 30 amp electrical available. One of the main questions we receive from people calling to make reservations is if there are any pull-thru 50-amp sites available. Currently, there are only 2 such sites offered out of the 471 utility sites at El Dorado.

Cost estimates for addition of 50-amp are for materials only. Work would be done by State Park staff. Total costs to add 50-amp service to 37 sites would be approximately \$60,000. It is approximately \$1500/site for the pedestals, wire, and upgraded main panel boxes. The additional \$4,500 is to cover any incidental costs such as conduit, splices, etc.

If occupancy were to double to the predicted 16%, the project would pay for itself within one year and make an additional \$14,000 in revenue. If the occupancy did not increase past the current 8%, it would take approximately 1.5 years to pay off this project. Further, at the 16% occupancy rate, visitation would increase by approximately 1500 people/year.

This project would be completed by park staff. Due to the disturbances in the campground, work would have to be performed during the off season. Park staff estimates 2-3 weeks for installation of electrical components.

Development of 3D walking archery trail

With the tremendous success of the archery range at El Dorado State Park it is time to expand the archery opportunities. Park staff have designed a 3D walking trail course that would simulate natural hunting conditions. Most private and several public facilities charge various fees or earn passive income from annual passes and/or fees to enter the park. The only cost to users at El Dorado State Park will be an annual or daily vehicle permit.

The installation will include a multi-use concrete walking path with 12 stations of various distances with 3-D archery targets and signage along the path. The path will be constructed out of concrete with a width of 8 feet. The concrete will be 4" thick with fiber mesh in the concrete. Each target will have concrete surfacing to the 3-D Target. The surfacing to the target will be 5 feet in width and range from 10-80 yards long. The path will also comply with ADA requirements.

The installation of an archery walking course in El Dorado State Park would benefit park users by increasing and enhancing recreational opportunities. A walking archery course would

provide an inexpensive form of recreation for people of all age and skill levels and be a much-needed addition to the recreational facilities at El Dorado State Park.

The total cost of this project would be in the form of materials, targets, and concrete and is estimated at \$50,000. All work would be done in-house by park staff.

Addition of 50 Amp Electrical to Boulder Bluff Area 2 – North Loop

Boulder Bluff Area 2 has long been a primitive campground only at El Dorado State Park. Several years ago, an NRT grant allowed for the addition of 20 water and electrical sites in the south loop of Boulder Bluff 2. These sites have become extremely popular. Park staff would like to add an additional 41 electric and water sites to the north loop of Boulder Bluff area 2.

Several of these sites were damaged in the flood of 2019, which would necessitate the rebuild of most of the sites and some moving of sites. Cost estimates for the addition of electrical, water, and site rebuild would be around \$5,000/site or \$205,000. There would also need to be some repairs on the roads in the campground. Park staff estimates \$100,000 for road repairs in the area.

The electric and water portion of the project would be completed by park staff. Due to the disturbances in the campground, work would have to be performed during the off season. Park staff estimates 5-6 weeks for installation of electrical and water components.

Road work would have to be bid and completed by an outside contractor.

Trout Stream Dam

One of the best winter fisheries at El Dorado State Park is the trout fishing program. The trout stream is in the Walnut River campground between areas 1 and 4. The stream is stocked bi-weekly from Oct 1 – April 15 by the district fisheries biologist. For the last several years park staff have been assisting in keeping the 25-year-old dam in shape to hold enough water back for a successful trout program.

Recently, a proposal was developed to replace the aging structure with an up-to date dam. An outside engineering company was contracted to provide options to staff. Of the options presented, moving the structure approximately 200 feet downstream and building a new one was the most feasible option. The total cost for rebuild in the new location is estimated at \$400,000.

All of this work would be done by outside contractors.

Visitors Center and Park Office

El Dorado State Park averages almost 1 million visitors per year and hundreds of thousands of these visitors pass through the park office. Over the last 30 years, the office has been added on to and remodeled countless times. Staff have been collecting mounts, furs, old park memorabilia, and pictures that are displayed through out the office. There have also been several upgrades of the phone system and the internet which has resulted in a maze of cables in the attic.

The park would benefit greatly from a new visitor's center and office. The ability to spread out the animal mounts and add new ones to the park collection would give many people a chance to see animals up close that they may never have seen before. Additionally, this would allow park staff to give tours and classes to local school districts.

A new visitors center and office is estimated to cost \$750,000 and all work would be contracted.

Future Events

Concert Events

El Dorado State Park was formerly the host for the Dam Music Festival. This event hosted big-name acts including Toby Keith, Lynard Skynard, and Hank Williams Jr. The average attendance for the event was 10-15,000 people. Unfortunately, the event's private event organizers chose not to continue the event for labor and financial reasons after year three. From the park standpoint, the event was a huge success as it filled campgrounds throughout the park and brought in thousands of visitors that normally may not have used the park.

Cross Country Events

Several years ago, the Park was approached by El Dorado High School about putting in a cross-country course to be utilized by the school. The course was built in Bluestem Point Area 1. The school has hosted many successful invitational cross-country meets and several regional meets at the park. People that attend the events are generally impressed with the park in terms of the various trails we offer that can be utilized for running. The state meet is currently held in Wamego. There has been talk of moving the event. Should that opportunity arise, the park should be ready to bid for the event.

Additionally, the local community college has been talking about finding a new home course. Should this opportunity arise the park should move to secure the event. This could lead to hosting bigger regional events and potentially the NJCAA championship event.

Archery Events

The park has been contacted by Sutherlands of El Dorado about hosting a 3D archery shoot. The ability to host these events makes the development of the 3D archery trail more imperative. Archery is one of the fastest growing sports in the last 10 years. The cost of hosting these events would be minimal; the exposure and visitation could be significant.

Appendix A

<u>Vehicle #</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Make</u>	<u>Model</u>	<u>Mileage</u>	<u>Condition</u>	<u>Primary Use</u>
16891	2015	Ford	1/2ton	76233	Good	FTE Ranger Lauppe
16401	2014	Ford	1/2ton	96482	Good	FTE Ranger Lowry
15340	2013	Chevrolet	1/2 ton	133,177	Good	FTE Ranger
13503	2009	Chevrolet	1/2 Ton P/U	141,382	Good	FTE Ranger Turner
14019	2005	Ford	Crown Vic	128,487	Fair	Seasonal LE
12174	2007	Chevrolet	Trailblazer	150,249	Fair	Seasonal LE
14020	2002	Ford	3/4 ton	249,560	Good	FTE Groom
15485	2007	Dodge	3/4 ton utility bed	92,270	Fair	FTE Funk
14972	1999	Chevrolet	3/4ton	211,525	Fair	FTE Jacobs
O5952	2002	Chevrolet	1/2 ton	232,214	Fair	FTE Haga
O3230	1993	Chevrolet	3/4 ton P/U	184,825	Fair	seasonal/AmeriCorps
O4020	1992	Chevrolet	3/4 ton	189,047	Fair	seasonal/AmeriCorps
O9320	2003	Ford	1/2 ton P/U	152,600	Fair	seasonal/AmeriCorps
O7141	1989	Ford	L8000	2,222,284	Fair	material hauling
O7078	1985	Chevrolet	5/4 ton 4x4	78,791	Fair	snow removal
4977	1983	Chevrolet	1 ton Dump bed	160,352	Fair	fuel truck
O4215	1992	Dodge	3/4 Ton PU	183,039	Fair	fire truck
O3382	1985	Chevrolet	2 ton trash truck	154,270	Poor	trash truck
3766	1992	Chevrolet	1 ton dump bed	113,850	Fair	material hauling
16597	2009	Ford	E350 van	107,935	Good	inmate/staff transport
O4959	1998	Ford	Expedition	183,000	Fair	inmate/staff transport
14511	2005	Chevrolet	Malibu	70017	Good	office staff
18072	2008	Dodge	5500 bucket truck	189540	Good	tree and electrical work
24395	1994	Ford	L8000	175,962	Fair	material transport
6167	1968	Kaiser	5 ton dump	42,502	Fair	material transport

Tractors

<u>Vehicle #</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Make</u>	<u>Model</u>	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Condition</u>	<u>Primary Use</u>
O749	1983	John Deere	670A Grader	2,608	Fair	grader
817	2007	John Deere	Tractor w/bucket	3304	Good	mower tractor/general use
924	2016	New Holland	Tractor	611	New	mower tractor
818	1989	Case 580K	Backhoe	8040	Fair	backhoe
866	1989	Case	High loader	5891	Fair	heavy material mover
783	2004	John Deere	320 skid steer	3,535	Fair	misc

Appendix B

