



New River Trail State Park
176 Orphanage Drive
Foster Falls, Va. 24360

NEW RIVER TRAIL STATE PARK MASTER PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2011 UPDATE



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Division of Planning and Recreation Resources
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This master plan is intended to set forth a clear vision for the future phased development of New River Trail State Park while fulfilling the narrative text requirements of Chapter IV of the Virginia Capital Outlay Manual and the *Code of Virginia* §10.1-200.1. The Department of Conservation and Recreation began in 1990 to develop a long-term, 20-year plan for the development and management of the park. The plan was revisited in 1998 and modified to adjust for changing conditions and new land acquisitions. Public input sessions were conducted to ensure public understanding and support of the plan. In 2003, the plan was updated again due to several significant land acquisitions. A citizen advisory committee reviewed the previous master plan and developed a park purpose statement and goals and objectives that set a direction for the park and identified some specific development proposals that were presented to the public.

“The purpose of New River Trail State Park is to provide in perpetuity, a premiere non-motorized, shared-use path for pedestrians, bicyclists, and horseback riders; to facilitate access to the adjacent New River; to provide a range of supporting land and water-based outdoor recreational and educational facilities and programs; and to protect and interpret the scenic, natural, historical, and cultural resources of the New River Valley of Virginia.”

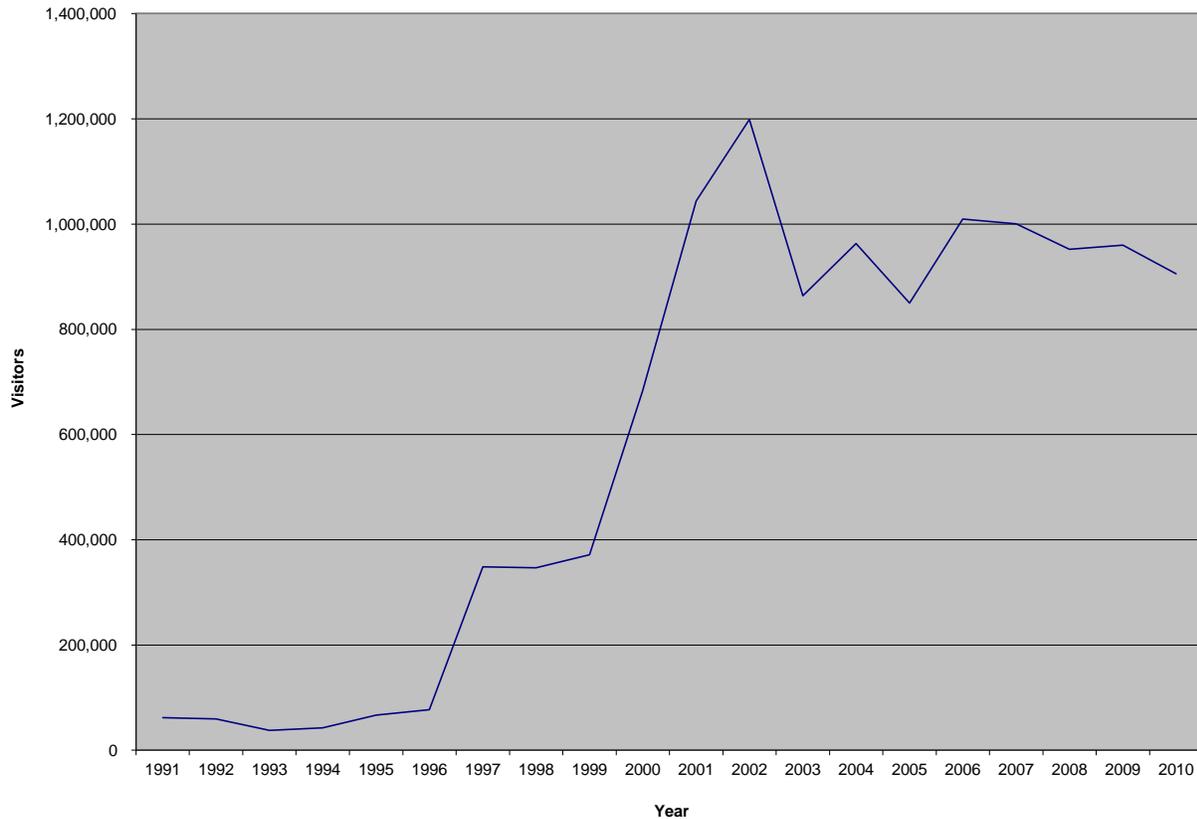
The majority of the recommendations in the original 1991 development plan and the 2003 update have been completed. The current update envisions the desired future condition for the park when it is fully developed. This updated 2011 Master Plan will define management emphasis and set guidelines for future development. This report will reflect both the mission and the future direction of the park.

This 1,337-acre linear park traverses Pulaski, Wythe, Carroll and Grayson counties in the Mount Rogers and New River Valley planning districts. It straddles the Blue Ridge and the Ridge and Valley provinces of Virginia. The park lies along 39 miles of the New River, and along 12 miles of Chestnut Creek, a beautiful rocky stream. Other portions of the trail border Peak Creek and the highly popular recreational lake, Claytor Lake. The trail passes beneath Interstate 81 near Pulaski; Draper is the closest access point to Interstate I-81, (about 60 miles south of Roanoke). The trail passes beneath Interstate 77 near the historic Shot Tower (about 80 miles from Winston-Salem, NC).

New River Trail State Park is Virginia’s National Millennium Legacy Trail. It has been designated a National Recreation Trail by the Secretary of the Interior. It is eligible for inclusion on the National Historic Landmarks Register. Several designated historic landmarks exist within the park and many other sites along it also qualify. The New River, which shares the valley with the park, is one of the oldest rivers in the world and is Virginia’s only American Heritage River (see Executive Order 13061). So many accolades have been used to describe this park and its environs that it is easy to see why almost a million visitors enjoyed the use of New River Trail State Park in 2010. These visitors contributed an estimated economic impact to the area of just under \$15 million.

Attendance at New River Trail State Park has leveled off after peaking in 2002, likely reflecting a reluctance to travel long distances due to increased gas prices. Attendance is measured using vehicle counters at major accesses, and is probably an underestimate, since many people access the trail by walking, riding or paddling to it (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Annual Attendance at New River Trail State Park



The Commonwealth of Virginia acquired the New River Trail State Park in 1986 as a donation from the Norfolk-Southern Corporation. The majority of the 57-mile long park consists of an 80-foot wide corridor with a 12-foot wide cinder surfaced trail passing through it. The trail follows the course of the abandoned North Carolina Branch of the Norfolk & Western Railroad, which was constructed from Pulaski to Galax, Virginia in the late 1800s. A spur line, added to serve the textile mill in Fries in the early 1900s, was also donated for the park. The trail passes through several historic towns and villages.

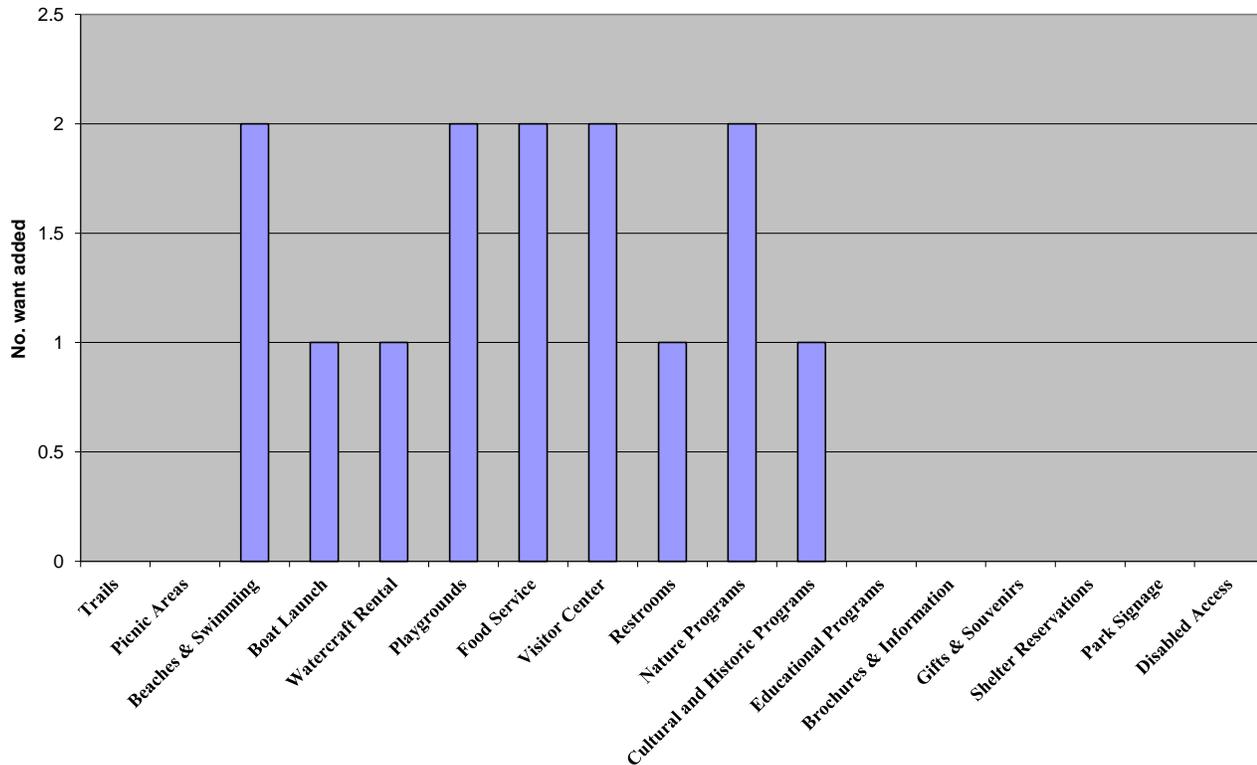
Running north to south, trail mile markers begin at Dora Junction outside of Pulaski. The Town manages a spur trail that connects the park to the renovated train depot where visitor services, including a bicycle shop, are available. From Dora Junction, the trail travels through the railroad villages of Draper and Allisonia; past the historic Shot Tower; through the historic mining towns of Austinville, Foster Falls, and Ivanhoe; and past the Buck and Byllesby hydroelectric dams to Fries Junction. At this point, the trail splits, with one section branching off to follow Chestnut Creek to Galax and the other continuing along the New River to Fries. Bicycle shops and other visitor services are available in both Galax and Fries.

The New River Blueway runs south to north along with the river's current, and—as captured on the 2008 USGS map-- begins south of Boone, North Carolina and runs through New River Gorge to Fayetteville, West Virginia. Along the trail, boat access points with parking are available at Fries, Byllesby Dam, Buck Dam, Ivanhoe, Austinville, Foster Falls, and Allisonia, and are proposed at Barren Springs and Byllesby at Route 737. Primitive, canoe-in campgrounds are located along the

trail at Cliffview, Double Shoals, Foster Falls Millrace, and Baker’s Island, and are proposed for Hanes Island, Chiswell Hole, Big Reed Island and Hiwassee Island (see New River Blueway map). Development will be limited on these sites within the floodplain.

In the 2010 study of visitor satisfaction, 98% expressed satisfaction with natural/historic resources, 96% expressed satisfaction with activities, and 97% were satisfied with the facilities. Slightly less (94%) expressed satisfaction with cleanliness. 98% were satisfied with staff assistance, and 95% were satisfied with security.

Figure 2 Desired Visitor Service Items



The park’s current headquarters is located at Foster Falls, which can be reached from the Poplar Camp exit off Interstate 77 near its intersection with Interstate 81 southwest of Roanoke. The park is divided into three management areas: a *southern management area* operated out of the Cliffview office near Galax, the *central management area* in Foster Falls, and a *northern management area* temporarily at Foster Falls, which will move to Horseshoe Bend when that office is available. Full service campgrounds are proposed in the southern and northern management nodes. At the central node, the 1887 hotel and the historic village of Foster Falls will become an attractive period hospitality center and interpretive area. The village concept includes overnight accommodations, a hospitality hotel and rental cottages.

The private sector is an important partner offering overnight accommodations and other visitor services along the trail. An RV campground in Fries, equestrian camping at Ivanhoe, an upcoming full-service Jellystone campground near Foster Falls, and a number of rental cabins complement the New River Trail experience. Outfitters also provide a range of services including camping, rentals, food, and skill development.

Public sector partners also enhance the trail experience. The U.S. Forest Service owns the New River Forest Service Campground where the Virginia Highlands Horse Trail intersects the New River Trail, and they provide other campgrounds and cabins in the area. Many trail users would like to see the New River Forest Service Campground re-opened—it has been closed since 2006. State efforts to lease the property have not been successful, so the future of this facility remains uncertain.

Although none of the New River is designated a Virginia Scenic River, it is a designated blueway, and provides a full-service water trail with access sites, rest areas, campsites, re-supply areas, and maps to assist users with trip planning (available through DGIF, USGS or on the National Committee for the New River's Web site at www.ncnr.org). There is interest in developing sluiceways around the Buck, Byllesby and Fries dams to improve the white-water experience (currently this river in Virginia is ideal for the novice and intermediate paddler). Improvements to portages are also needed around these three dams.

A management structure is needed to fully capitalize on the water trail as an ecotourism asset. New River Trail State park personnel assist with the management of access sites in partnership with American Electric Power (AEP), DGIF and local jurisdictions. This structure could assist with volunteer coordination so that partners like the Boy Scouts could assist with trail and blueway maintenance and programming.

This 2011 update focuses on connecting the New River Trail to other resources in the community and expanding partnership efforts. Nearby public lands include the Blue Ridge Parkway and the George Washington and Jefferson National Forest (which includes the Virginia Highlands Horse Trail and the New River Campground). The Appalachian Trail is nearby, and other major trails in close proximity to the park include the Huckleberry Trail, the Radford Riverway, and Interstate Bike Route 76. The park connects to several loops of the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' Birding and Wildlife Trail. Extensions to the trail are complete in Pulaski and Galax, and are under development to Randolph Park in Dublin and along the river in Fries. There is interest in connecting the trail to Rural Retreat, the Blue Ridge Parkway on the southern end, and the Huckleberry Trail (and perhaps eventually the Appalachian Trail) on the northern end. All extensions are independent of the state park facility.

Carroll County has designated some roadways for use by equestrians. Between these roads and the available trail network, there is great endurance riding for equestrians. Ride-in campsites are available at Cliffview, New River Campground (USFS) Ivanhoe (private), and Foster Falls, and they are proposed at Horseshoe Bend. There is a potential for horse camping at Fries unless this need is met by the private sector. Horse trailers may be parked overnight at Cliffview Ranger Station, Draper, Fries, Pulaski and Foster Falls. The Mark E. Hufeisen Horse Show and Arena (formerly Jackson Ferry) will provide equestrian event camping only. Because of development limitations in the floodplain, proposed improvements may depend on future land acquisition or private partnerships.

With the TransAmerica Bicycle Route (Bike Route 76) and a network of bicycle facilities in the New River Valley, endurance riding for bicyclists is also abundant. Bicycle shops are available in Fries, Galax, and Pulaski. Rentals are also available in Foster Falls. Partnerships should be developed with tourism officials to encourage more paddlers, hikers, equestrians and bicyclists to visit the area.

New River Trail State Park received Federal Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF) in 2001 to acquire some land adjacent to the park. In compliance with the LWCF Act of 1965 and amendments thereto, the Commonwealth of Virginia is required to maintain this park for public outdoor recreation in perpetuity.

New River Trail State Park is only 80-feet wide for most of its length. For the majority of its 57-mile long course, the setting is pastoral, with long views of the New River Valley, attractive farmsteads, and blankets of forested land. However, the very scenic nature of the setting is attracting second home developments, subdivisions, and other forms of development that permanently alter and diminish the quality of the setting. In an effort to provide a more secure setting for the park, the master plan recommends that efforts be made to work with local governments, landowners, and conservation organizations to implement scenic overlay zoning, setback requirements, and vegetative screening. The placement of conservation easements on adjacent property to preserve the natural resources, cultural landscapes, and scenic resources in close proximity to the park is encouraged. A “Friends” group is needed to help coordinate this level of protection for the park and help DCR work with private landowners to manage habitat, pursue conservation easements, and protect water quality and quantity.

Additional land acquisition is recommended in this park to address irregularities in the park’s boundary, as well as to enhance park offerings, buffer the park from inappropriate development or protect valued viewsheds. All proposed land acquisition will only be negotiated with willing property owners. In working cooperatively with neighboring landowners, the park will be enhanced and protected over time. An emphasis is placed on protecting lands that lie between the park and the New River.

Along with land protection, the park’s bridges and tunnels require periodic but significant investment. A sustainable recreation framework is needed to ensure that adequate resources are available to maintain these features along with the rest of the park system for the long term. The three spheres that frame sustainability - environmental, social, and economic – are part of the agency’s focus and overall mission. Program delivery must be balanced on a base of appropriated funds utilizing user fees, volunteers, private providers, and partners in the nonprofit sector to keep the New River Trail and blueway open and rewarding to the public.

A visitor experience plan will be developed within the sustainable recreation framework. Audio-visual features and three-dimensional artifact and interactive displays will complement wayside exhibits and signs that help tell the story of life along the New River and connect people to this remarkable valley.

Park improvements since the 2003 update include a new water system at Foster Falls, an access road and day-use parking at Horseshoe Bend, canoe-in campsites at Baker’s Island, day-use parking, horse arena and a connector trail at the Mark E. Hufeisen Horse Complex and Arena, a connecting bridge to Dannelly Fitness Park, a staff residence in the southern management area, a connection to Riverside Park in Fries, a group camp area in Millrace Campground (to be expanded), and a connection to the repurposed train station in Pulaski. Equestrian trailer parking is currently under development at Ivanhoe. Picnic areas and comfort stations have been installed at regular intervals along the trail, along with improvements to bridges, gates, mileposts, trail surface, and signage. Primitive campgrounds are located at Double Shoals, Foster Falls, and Baker’s Island, and developed campgrounds are located at Cliffview and Fosters Falls. A sketch of the park showing the relative location of each development node is attached.

This master plan update represents both new facilities and improvements to existing facilities. New facilities are sited to minimize impacts to the park. To the greatest extent possible, Virginia State Parks strives to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards.

Building and site design will implement green energy standards using energy-efficient and sustainable materials and process to the greatest extent possible. Green design initiatives will be considered during the design process for park renovations and new construction. These facilities will be carefully sited to manage vegetation/habitat and minimize impacts to the views of the park from adjacent lands. Development activities will comply with requirements set forth by the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Best Management Practices (BMP) Handbook for Erosion and Sediment Control in order to protect water quality.

The following list presents the projects that have been identified by the public and the 2003 Master Plan Advisory Committee that will need to be completed to bring the park to its desired future condition. The most recent public meeting was held on September 14, 2011 to solicit input on the plan. The projects are listed in priority order by phases. The estimated cost is shown for each phase. The total cost to bring New River Trail State Park to its desired future condition is \$66,777,890.

PHASE I

Assess well, add water/septic system at Horseshoe Bend and Mark E. Hufeisen Horse Complex and Arena.

Demolish two existing structures at Austinville.

Add restroom at launch site in Foster Falls for use by campers at Baker's Island.

Develop access road, connector trail, and parking area at Big Reed Island.

Work with County to Close Rt. 737 from Byllesby Power House to Grayson Station and develop parking access and car top boat launch.

Develop restroom, fishing nodes and picnic area at Double Shoals.

Expand canoe-in/hike-in campsites and improve landing at Double Shoals.

Acquire suitable lands and properties in the Foster Falls area.

Renovate the Foster Falls Hotel Complex and the parsonage at Foster Falls. Stabilize the Industrial Village and raceway.

Develop a picnic area at Foster Falls with one shelter, restroom, and parking.

Demo existing house, make site improvements, and construct Replica train station for contact station/store at Galax.

Upgrade parking at Rt. 693 for paddler use of Hiwassee Island.

Develop canoe-in campsites at Hiwassee Island.

Build contact station at Horseshoe Bend and develop interior road network.

Demo Cobb House, store and pool at Horseshoe Bend.

Build connector trail between Horseshoe Bend parking lot and the Trail.

Construct two picnic shelters at Horseshoe Bend.

Develop restrooms, shower and car/spectator parking at the Mark E. Hufeisen Horse Complex and Arena if sufficient land is available.

Upgrade safety at all road crossings.

Develop a visitor experience management plan for the park and improve the visitor experience at Foster Falls, Galax, Fries and Dora Junction (trail termini).*

Continue bridge evaluation and maintenance, decking and substructure.

Continue tunnel evaluation and maintenance.

Adapt an existing building for a park administrative office at Foster Falls.

Total cost of Phase I - \$21,561,158.

PHASE II

Evaluate house at Draper for possible demolition or renovation as biker's hostel.
Develop new parking areas and improve access road to picnic areas at Austinville.
Expand canoe-in camping at Baker's Island.
Develop a maintenance area and park administrative office for the southern management area.
Develop a YCC bunkhouse in the southern management area.
Add staff residence in the northern management area.
Build a bathhouse at Foster Falls.
Develop a maintenance area and a park administrative office at Horseshoe Bend.
Develop canoe-in campsites, landing and vault toilet at Chiswell Hole.
Develop a connector trail, picnic areas and bank fishing at Chiswell Hole.
Continue developing the event horse camp at the Mark E. Hufeisen Horse Complex and Arena with 60 covered stall units and partner to establish a dome cover over existing arena if land is available.
Purchase and develop property at McAdam Crossing for parking and trail access.
Develop interior exhibits in Foster Falls.
Acquire additional land and build visitor center/park office at Shot Tower.
Develop Shot Tower visitor experience exhibits in conjunction with the visitor center.*
Evaluate future improvements to the Shot Tower structure and tunnel for living history demonstrations.
Develop the new connector trail from the Shot Tower to the river and add bike racks and horse hitching rails to Shot Tower parking area.
Build a well at Ivanhoe.
Develop a wayside exhibit plan and wayside exhibits throughout the park and continue bridge maintenance.

Total cost of Phase II - \$19,390,433.

PHASE III

Develop the visitor experience in the Southern and Northern Management nodes.*
Develop day use amenities and a restroom beside the river at Austinville.
Develop a connector trail and equestrian Parking at Austinville Mine Office site.
Develop restroom, picnic areas and bank fishing at Big Reed Island.
Develop canoe camping and access at Big Reed Island.
Renovate or build an environmental education outpost at Byllesby.
Develop picnic shelters and restroom on Southern Management Area.
Develop educational outpost at Cliffview Campground.
Construct depot to serve as park contact station in Draper.
Construct picnic shelter at Draper.
Construct picnic shelter and restroom at Fries.
Develop a YCC Bunkhouse and small amphitheater at Horseshoe Bend.
Develop full service campground at Horseshoe Bend.
Develop horse camp, stable and trailer parking at Horseshoe Bend.
Continue bridge maintenance and restoration.

Total cost of Phase III - \$17,688,224.

PHASE IV

Provide access to the river at Horseshoe Bend.
Renovate carpenter's shed near mine entrance and add adjacent restroom at Austinville.
Develop the visitor experience at Austinville.*
Develop parking area and accessible boat access at Barren Springs Station.
Renovate village homes for rental cabins at Foster Falls.
Expand group camping offerings from the Millrace campground.
Develop canoe-in campsites, pit toilets, picnic area and landing on Hanes Island for New River Blueway.
Continue bridge maintenance and restoration.

Total cost of Phase IV - \$8,138,075.

The total cost to bring New River Trail State Park to its desired future condition is \$66,777,890.

*Developing the visitor experience includes but is not limited to items like 3-D exhibits and displays, sound and video recordings, electronic or standard kiosks, interpretive signs, and Web content. A more detailed description of recommended improvements at each node will be provided by the visitor experience plan, when developed.

STAFFING AND OPERATIONAL COSTS

Staffing and operational costs at New River Trail State Park are presently budgeted at \$1,093,000 annually, including salaries for 9 staff positions. With the current facilities and operational requirements, the park has an identified need for 15 additional positions and \$679,000 in funding. At complete build-out of the proposed 4 phases of development, 4 additional staff and an additional \$740,000 in operating funds will be needed. In order for the park to operate effectively and efficiently at full build-out, the park must be provided the projected staffing and operating cost identified as "existing additional needs" and the costs for the 4 development phases. The total budget for New River Trail at full build-out is projected to be \$2,512,000 with 28 staff positions. See Chart on next page.

NEW RIVER TRAIL STAFFING AND OPERATING COSTS

EXISTING (FY 12)	EXISTING ADDITIONAL NEEDS *	PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4	FULL BUILD OUT
STAFFING						STAFFING
Park Manager						Park Manager
Asst. Park Mgr (2)						Asst. Park Mgr (2)
Chief Ranger (2)				Chief Ranger		Chief Ranger (3)
	Educ. Specialist (2)					Educ. Specialist (2)
Park Ranger (3)	Park Ranger (10)		Park Ranger	Park Ranger		Park Ranger (15)
	Business Manager					Business Manager
Office Manager						Office Manager
	Program Support Tech. (2)		PST			Program Support Tech. (3)
SALARY TOTAL						SALARY TOTAL
\$446,000	\$624,000		\$77,000	\$90,000		\$1,237,000
WAGE TOTAL						WAGE TOTAL
\$358,000	\$41,000	\$76,000	\$127,000	\$88,000	\$35,000	\$725,000
OTPS TOTAL						OTPS TOTAL
\$289,000	\$14,000	\$26,000	\$140,000	\$54,000	\$27,000	\$550,000
TOTAL BUDGET (FY12 dollars)						TOTAL BUDGET (FY12 dollars)
\$1,093,000	\$679,000	\$102,000	\$344,000	\$232,000	\$62,000	\$2,512,000

NOTE – All costs (salary, wage, OTPS (Other than Personnel Services)) are based on FY12 budget projections.

* Existing additional needs represents staff shortages that were identified as part of the 2002 re-benchmarking effort, and/or staff positions and operating costs

New River Trail State Park Development Nodes 2011 Master Plan Update

