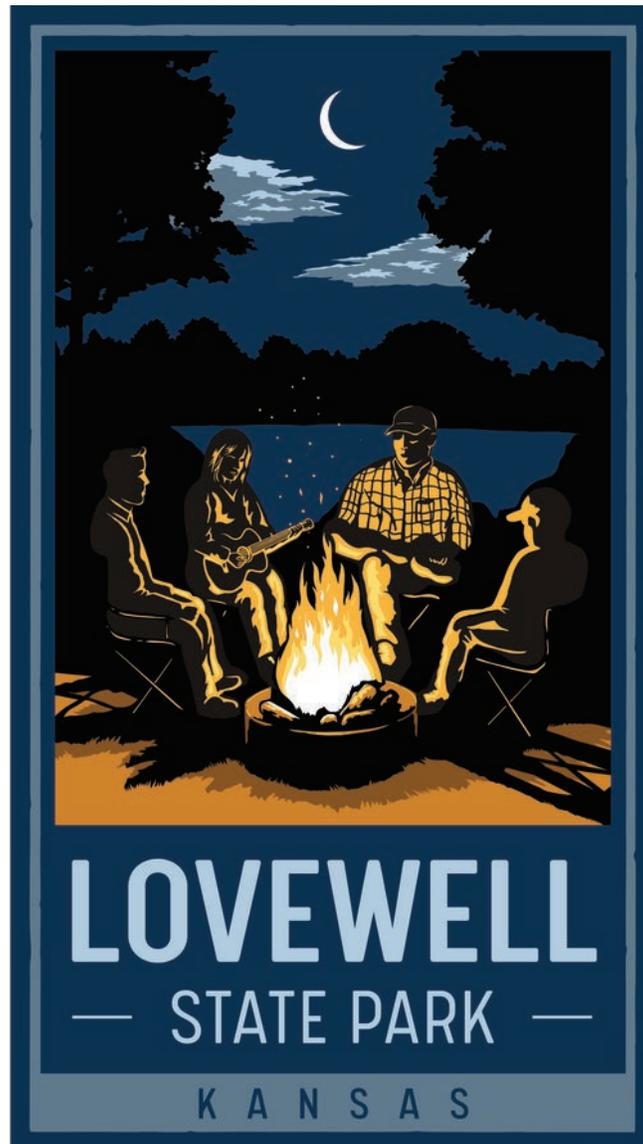


Lovewell State Park

Master Plan 2021



Purpose

The purpose of this master plan is to guide current and future operations and development at Lovewell State Park. Reference to this plan will ensure that operations at Lovewell 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 initial and continuing development of Lovewell State Park. 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

Lovewell Reservoir was built by the Bureau of Reclamation in 1957 as an Irrigation and Flood Control Project. Located in North Central Kansas on the White Rock Creek in Jewell County, Lovewell State Park was established in 1967 on Bureau of Reclamation property. The initial lease from the Bureau by the State of Kansas, Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism was for 25 years beginning January 1, 1965. It was renewed for another 25 in 1990, to provide outdoor recreational opportunities to the public. Lovewell State Park consists of approximately 1126 acres and has 2, 986 acres of water surface area and 44 miles of shoreline.

Its location only seven miles from the Kansas/Nebraska state line brings visitors from both states. Visitation consistently averages about two-thirds from Nebraska and one-third from Kansas and other states. Constituent interests, recreational trends, environmental impacts and other concerns all have influence on the park's future operations.

Water levels, as maintained by the Bureau of Reclamation and the Kansas Bostwick Irrigation District, are integral to the success of Lovewell State Park. When pool levels are consistently near conservation pool, all facilities are accessible. Many families have made camping and recreation at Lovewell State Park a tradition. When water levels are normal, these traditions continue. Flooding renders some facilities unusable while drought and extensive irrigation drawdowns also cause issues.

Facilities

The Department administers 60 private cabin sites in the Lovewell State Park Private Cabin area of the park. These are lots leased for construction of personally-owned cabins on Bureau of Reclamation property. The Department took steps in 2017 to bring the fees on these

leases more in line with actual values through a gradual increase in lease fees. Compliance with stepped up enforcement of existing building codes has been good. The adoption of an amendment to the permit allowing additional construction on the lots brought improvements to the cabins. Frontage distances and height restrictions are maintained.

Larger camping units with more conveniences require higher electrical capacity than many of our older campgrounds provide. The earliest development at Lovewell was campsites with no utilities, but today's units demand 50-amp electrical service, water and often sewer. The park currently has 88 50-amp sites and 35 30-amp sites. The park has 28 electric, sewer and water sites.

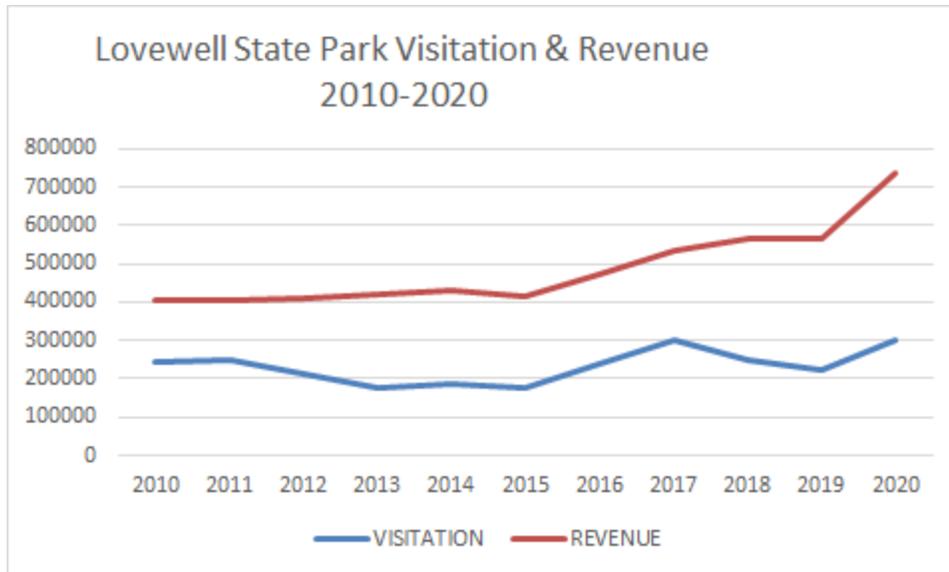
Operations

The COVID-19 19 pandemic had an amazing impact on park revenues and visitation. Early in the year, mass cancellations led to decreased revenue, but then, as other states closed parks and people adjusted to the new "normal," they flocked to Kansas state parks. Parks saw an increase in first-time users as well as an increased inclination to use the online permit purchase and reservation portal. We anticipate that this trend will continue if the pandemic's first-time users become regular customers.

Blue-green algae blooms, due to warm water temperatures and high nutrient loads, require that access to the reservoir surface be restricted. Because many visitors come for the fishing, swimming, water skiing and other water sports, they often cancel reservations due to the algae.

The implementation of the Unconventional Vehicle Permits, defined as golf carts and utility vehicles, has led to increased sales of UCV permits. Rather than drive vehicles to restrooms and other facilities, permit holders can drive these smaller, quieter, more fuel-efficient vehicles on park roadways.

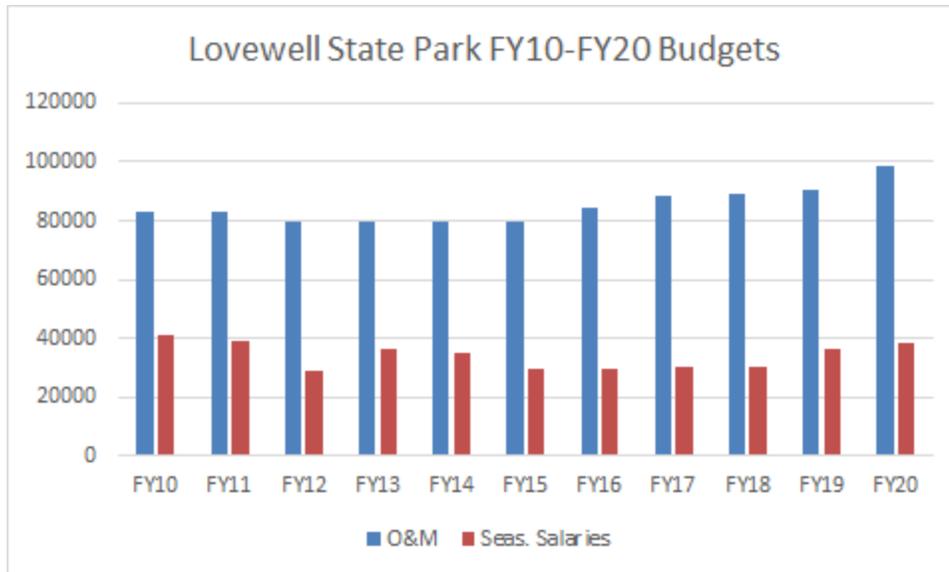
2010-2020 Visitation and Revenue



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 remainder of the 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 monies (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.

The Lovewell State Park Operations and Maintenance budget has remained stable over the years, seeing a slight increase in Fiscal Year 2020. However, staff conserved 5% of the budget to be prepared in case of unforeseen expenses. Statewide cabin fee funds are used to pay several months of utility bills. This fiscal conservatism is a cause for concern as aging facilities need more costly repairs more often.

Seasonal salary budgets remain level, but not quite adequate to complete maintenance work and provide for seasonal ranger coverage. The volunteer camp hosts must log increased hours of service to cover their campsite fees. Increased use of cabins and more stringent COVID-19 cleaning procedures require more staff time for cleaning and tracking check-ins and check-outs.



A Motorboat Access funded Capital Improvement Project for the rock jetty at Cedar Point Boat Ramp was completed in March of 2020 and is extremely popular. A solar security light was added in May at the end of the rock jetty. The jetty serves to reduce the shoreline erosion in that area from boat wakes and serves as an efficient launch point for the Fireworks Display event because of the grass fire hazard that it eliminated. Statewide Cabin funds were utilized for replacement of deteriorating exterior siding for the Sunrise Camping Cabin. The Cabin Fee Fund finances repairs and renovations to the cabins, as well as several months utilities when Park Fee Fund balances are low. Parks Division funds were also secured to replace the deteriorating septic system at the Willow Utility Campground, which was completed in June of 2020. The nine-hole disc golf course at Pioneer Day Use Area was relocated and stretched out through an undeveloped portion of the state park to the north of its originally starting point. This layout will be more challenging and attractive to disc golf enthusiasts.

A marina is operated as a contracted concession within the park. Normally, the marina serves weekend breakfast, an assortment of prepared foods, groceries and equipment rentals. However, the social distancing of COVID-19 so severely impacted the business, that they ceased equipment rentals during the season. Damage to the facilities from a previous flood were completed in 2020. The marina makes the concession payment in full in a timely manner. The marina operation is an asset to the park and enhances the visitor experience as well as bringing in a few customers just for the dining.

The park administers a private cabin lease area that began many years ago. The 60 private cabins have made many improvements over the years, as the Department has stepped up enforcement of the terms of the leases with the result of good compliance.

To bring in extra revenue and to reduce the fire load in undeveloped areas of the park, the park leases some areas to be hayed. The proceeds are utilized to purchase supplies and some equipment for the park.

Staffing is a constant concern, as customer satisfaction depends on mowed grass, clean showers and toilets and operational utilities. A shift from paid positions to more volunteers has enabled the park to continue meeting customer satisfaction while staying within the allotted staffing budget. Paid seasonal staff augmented permanent and volunteer labor. The additional cleaning protocols from COVID-19 made it impossible to open more than one restroom in 2020 until late in the season. AmeriCorps members provide additional benefits to the park when members can be recruited. The park's rural location often makes recruitment difficult.

Constituents also want to feel safe while camping, so having law enforcement personnel on patrol is critical. Both the Park Manager and Park Ranger are law enforcement certified and patrol the park in addition to their management and maintenance duties. However, finding both the personnel and budget for seasonal rangers during the peak months is difficult; the gap may leave the park without patrol during parts of the weekend. Dedicated volunteers who serve as camp hosts to check in and out campers and answer questions are essential. They perform these duties and maintenance, such as mowing and cabin cleaning, in return for the park providing a campsite with utilities.

Law Enforcement

Lovewell State Park's law enforcement philosophy is to be proactive with a highly visible profile and making numerous positive public contacts with constituents. This strengthens cooperation and compliance from visitors. The park enforcement staff works closely with the local sheriff's department and other local law enforcement agencies. In sparsely populated rural areas such as Jewell County, each agency must serve as back up to the others. While most cases made are alcohol related, officers may work accidents, wildlife violations, boating infractions, and theft and drug cases. KDWPT officers are fully certified statewide. KDWPT officers may serve as backup to local law enforcement or be called upon to serve in other areas of the state.

Special Events and Activities

Lovewell State Park ordinarily has a full slate of events all year long, from First Day Hikes to Earth Day Cleanup, Kids2Parks Day, Float Your Boat contest, Fun Day, Fireworks Display for July 4, Campground Christmas in August. These events are popular and well attended. COVID-19 cancelled most of these events for 2020, but the cancellations left shelters open for reservation. As a result, many family events occurred at the shelters, leading to a comparable number of visitors. This shows that people want their outdoor celebrations, whether organized by park staff or not. Non-denominational church services are held in the park at the Rosehill School shelter each weekend from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

Facilities and Equipment

There were no Capital Outlay expenditures for Lovewell State Park in 2020.

Lovewell State Park provided a wide variety of facilities and amenities for both day users, campers and fishermen. Facilities include:

- State Park Office – Built in 1991

- Park Maintenance Shop – Built in 1965
- Rosehill School – National Register of Historic Places in May of 2019 (National Park Service)
- Walleye Point Bathroom/Shower House – Built 1998 (Parks 2000 funding)
- Southwinds Bathroom/Shower House – Built 2000 (Parks 2000 funding)
- Cottonwood Bathroom/Shower House – Built 2008 (CXT Cheyenne)
- Willow Bathroom/Shower House – Built 2005 (CXT Cheyenne)
- Marina Vault toilet – Built 2006 (CXT)
- Twin Coves Vault toilet – Built 2008 (CXT)
- Frontier Primitive Camping Cabin – Built 1999 (converted mushroom shelter)
- Pine Ridge Primitive Camping Cabin – Built 2000 (converted mushroom shelter)
- Pioneer Primitive Camping Cabin – Built 2001 (converted mushroom shelter)
- Sunrise Primitive Camping Cabin – Built 2002 (converted mushroom shelter)
- Southwinds Primitive Camping Cabin – Built 2003 (converted mushroom shelter)
- Pilgrim Camping Cabin (Modern FEMA trailer) Installed 2009
- Lookout Camping Cabin (Modern FEMA trailer) Installed 2009
- Scout Camping Cabin (Modern FEMA trailer) Installed 2009
- Settler Camping Cabin (Modern FEMA trailer) Installed 2009
- Southwinds Group Shelter – Built 2000 (30'x 60' covered)
- Beach Group Shelter – Built 2002 (converted mushroom restroom)
- Willow Group Shelter – Built 2007 (30'x 60' enclosed)
- Walleye Point Utility Campground – Built 1997 (39 utility sites)
- Southwinds Utility Campground – Built 2009 (6 EWS 50/30/20-amp sites)
- Cedar Point Utility Campground – Built 1983 (upgraded in 2015 with Bureau of Reclamation T-28 funding) 32 EW 50/30-amp sites
- Cottonwood Utility Campground – Built 1975 (upgraded in 2014 with T-28 funding) 30 EW 50/30/20-amp sites
- South Willow Utility Campground – Built 2000, 15 EWS 50/30/20-amp sites
- North Willow Utility Campground – Built 2006, 32 EWS 30/20-amp sites
- Pioneer Fish Cleaning Station – Built 1998 (table and basket)
- Rosehill Fish Cleaning Station – Updated in 2019 to Barracuda grinder and table (Bureau of Reclamation T-28 funding)
- Marina boat ramp (two lanes) – Built 1965
- Cedar point boat ramp (two lanes) Built 2004
- Pioneer Playground equipment – Installed in 2016 (family donation)
- Rosehill Trailer Sanitation Station – Built in 1985, updated leach field in 2019
- Walleye Point Trailer Sanitation Station – Built in 1980, updated leach field in 2010
- Cottonwood/Willow Trailer Sanitation Station – Built in 2018 (Bureau of Reclamation T-28 funding)
- Archery Range – Updated in 2017 with five targets and stands
- Pioneer Disc Golf Course – nine-hole course built in 2020

- Swimming Area and Beach
- 300+ picnic tables
- Four miles of water line, 45 freeze proof hydrants and 96 water risers
- Three miles shoreline rip rap
- 117 acres of mowed areas
- 5.51 miles of asphalt roadway

Equipment

- 2015 Ford F-150 (Law Enforcement)
- 2019 Ford F-150 (Law Enforcement)
- 1994 Chevy ¾ ton (maintenance)
- 2007 Chevy trailblazer (maintenance/cleaning)
- 2007 Chevy Impala (travel/maintenance)
- 1993 Ford Trash Truck
- 1997 Ford 1-ton
- 2018 New Holland tractor
- 1981 John Deere 302-A (Backhoe)
- 1974 John Deere 301-A
- 2003 Kawasaki Mule
- 2004 Kawasaki Mule
- 2002 Road Hog trailer 12'
- 2002 Hustler 3200 mower (converted to sprayer)
- 2006 Hustler Super Z 60" mower
- 2009 Hustler Super Z 72" mower
- 2013 Hustler Super Z 72" mower
- 2015 Hustler Super Z 60" mower
- 2018 Hustler Super Z 72" mower

Future Development

The aging facilities, such as water and electric lines, will have to be replaced at some point in the future. As constituents discover new recreational pursuits, the park needs to stand ready to provide what we can, such as the extension of the disc golf course. Funding for such improvements should be secure. User fees are not quite sufficient to make all the needed upgrades, so additional revenue streams are required.

Constituents like to purchase souvenirs of their visits. The Outdoor Store merchandise currently displayed in our offices should be updated and new merchandise added at all price points. It should also be available for purchase online.

Plans

- Four unused FEMA trailers were purchased and installed in 2009 to be used as modern rental cabins. These cabins have proven to be very successful in occupancy over the last 11 years. High demand and usage for these cabins have put a lot of wear and tear on the structures, as these structures were not made for long-term permanent dwellings. Minimal insulation in the structures have made them very costly in utility usage as well as unusable in wintertime due to pipes freezing. ADA compliance is also not met as these structures do not comply with ADA guidelines. The goal is to remove these four cabins from inventory and to implement a plan to replace these four cabins with more suitable cost-effective cabins that can be rented throughout the year and will also meet ADA requirements. These cabins can be built working with corrections or trade school programs.

- **CONVERT WILLOW GROUP SHELTER BUILDING TO ADA ACCESSIBLE GROUP CAMPING CABIN**

Lovewell State Park's Willow Group Shelter facility was built in 2007 at a cost of approx. \$70,000. It was anticipated that this facility would generate a large amount of revenue from rentals for large family reunions. The Willow Group Shelter has generated only an average of \$400 per year in rental fees since completion. In addition, NONE of the deluxe camping cabins at LOVP (with kitchen and bath/shower facilities) are handicapped accessible. Only the rustic camping cabins are ADA compliant regarding entrance access. They have heat/air and electricity only. Those who are physically challenged are currently unable to enjoy a barrier free camping experience, with the modern amenities that are vitally important to their quality of life. In addition, the trend for camping cabin rentals at Lovewell State Park has shown a tendency for large family reunions to rent up most of the camping cabins, leaving very few cabins available for other constituents to enjoy. This proposal is to remodel the existing Willow Group Shelter into a Group (Multi-Family) Camping Cabin which would sleep 16-20 people, include ADA compliant bath/shower room and full kitchen amenities. Preliminary estimates are that this facility would generate approx. \$20,000+ per year in park fee fund revenue, and a benefit of additional \$2000 per year in cabin maintenance assistance funds direct to Lovewell State Park.

Cost estimate \$100,000

- A large part of Lovewell's visitation, cabin rentals, and campgrounds are from large family gatherings who come to the park to hold their annual family reunion. At times most if not all cabins and several utility sites are reserved ahead of time to accommodate their reunion. These family groups are wanting to be in the same campground and by each other, but much of the time they must spread out in the park as other reservations have been made in utility area that they seek. Staff wants to develop a utility campground with 8 to 12 electric and water sites that are available for group reservations. This utility site can be opened and used for holiday/weekends if all utility sites are taken and no group reservations have been made in the area. This will help accommodate families who want to camp together near each other and be away from other campers in the park. We feel that this service would be in high demand and would be met very well with our park constituents.

Cost estimate \$25,000 - \$30,000

- The park needs asphalt overlay on our current park blacktop roads and parking lots. Over the last several years, the park has developed new parking areas for restrooms, boat ramp and cabins that are currently road rock parking lots susceptible to erosion from heavy rain events. It has been over 18 years since the park has received an asphalt overlay and the roads are starting to crack and heave along with breaking off on the sides of the roadway making it a dangerous situation for vehicles and pedestrians alike.
Cost estimate \$700,000

- Currently the park has around 300 picnic tables in the park. Most of the tables were made by corrections and topped with dimensional lumber. These tables require yearly maintenance to replace broken and rotten boards along with rusted or bent frames. Current lumber prices make repairs very expensive and time consuming. The park would like to start a picnic table replacement program to replace all wood tables to aluminum frames and composite or aluminum tops. This would not only be more user friendly but would lower maintenance issues over the long-term.
Cost estimate to replace all tables \$210,000