

Kansas State Parks Master Plan



The purpose of this master plan is to guide current and future operations and development within the Kansas State Parks system. Reference to this plan will ensure that operations within Kansas State Parks meet the needs identified in the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) 2016 and 2021. After LWCF funds were authorized in 1965, Kansas state parks have utilized these funds in the development of infrastructure. Grant funding from LWCF, the Recreational Trails Fund, Bureau of Reclamation and many others are critical to development of recreational opportunities in all Kansas state parks.

Kansas state parks encompass much of the limited public land in Kansas. Currently, only 2% of the state's land mass is open to the public. The state park system includes 28 state parks, with 32,224 land and 25,000 water acres. Most are highly developed for camping and other recreational use. Aging facilities continue to be upgraded through grants matched with capital improvement funds. Studies show that at least two-thirds of all Kansans utilize state parks in some capacity. Geographic distribution of parks largely mirrors population distribution, and most are associated with bodies of water. Operations and development are conducted to conform to the following directions:

Parks Mission Statement:

The mission of the state parks division is to: Enhance or conserve the natural, historical, cultural, and wildlife resources, through good stewardship, while providing for quality outdoor recreation experiences. We will provide public service which includes courtesy, cleanliness of facilities, protection of resources, and safety, being responsive to the needs of the people and the resource.

Parks Vision Statement:

Parks will effectively balance recreation with preservation, wildlife and environmental concerns while leading in environmental awareness through conservation, education and resource protection through involvement of the public in support of our Department's mission.

Summary of Kansas State Parks Management Philosophy

Four factors will shape the future: demography, lifestyle, technology, and resources. Parks will employ policies which are responsive to the changing resources, public, and educational needs while demonstrating leadership and stewardship through cooperation with the public, other agencies, and private enterprise. Parks will lead in entrepreneurial governance by utilizing a comprehensive management plan to improve the quality of the experience and education, stimulate the economy, and encourage more people to become involved in partnerships.

Mission of the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism

Parks, fish, wildlife and outdoor recreation are important to the quality of life for all Kansans and to the Kansas economy. As a public steward of Kansas natural resources, the mission of the Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism is to:

Conserve and enhance Kansas' natural heritage, its wildlife and its habitats -- to assure future generations the benefits of the state's diverse, living resources;

Provide the public with opportunities 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.

Department and Division missions and goals closely align with the SCORP. This section of the plan will detail how the Parks Division will contribute to furthering the mission of the Department by addressing the critical issues identified in the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. These issues are:

GOAL A: To measurably enhance outdoor recreation opportunities closer to where people live.

Strategy: Utilizing the data from the SCORP and economic impact studies, evaluate possibilities of purchasing, leasing, or obtaining by donation additional park properties. Evaluate recreational needs and opportunities on existing properties based on recreational trends and surveys.

In 2017, the Department accepted a donation of 160 acres of primarily native prairie land in southeast Kansas. Management planning is still ongoing. In 2018, the Flint Hills Trail and Little Jerusalem Badlands were designated as state parks. An additional parcel of native prairie in an urban area is in the works.

GOAL B: To more effectively utilize the data available in the state's comprehensive outdoor recreation geo-database, along with population and health statistics; and to gather additional information, if appropriate, to continue to address gaps in access to outdoor recreation experiences.

Strategy: Analyze the data to identify gaps and survey staff and users to identify solutions.

By analyzing use patterns in data available through the Outdoor Recreation Management System, we were able to adjust prices on cabins on weekdays and offer seasonal camping on underutilized sites. We listened to users and offered the Unconventional Vehicle Permits, which allows users to drive golf carts and UTV's etc. for easier access within our parks. As the Covid pandemic changed user patterns, staff found ways to conduct special events virtually and provided socially distance activities.

GOAL C: Encourage stakeholder advocacy efforts that regularly address significant outdoor recreation issues facing the state of Kansas.

Strategy: Build on existing partnerships with stakeholders (communities, businesses, clubs, friends groups) near parks. Encourage their advocacy by including them in planning events. Have staff participate in community organizations such as chambers of commerce.

During the process of Flint Hills Trail development, stakeholders near the trail provided input as to uses and potential problems. The Flint Hills Trail Advisory Council contains many of these stakeholders as well as legislators. In partnership with The Nature Conservancy, we are managing Little Jerusalem Badlands as a conservation education area.

GOAL D: To explore and implement a sustainable source of outdoor recreation funding for both operations and capital projects.

Strategy: Continually evaluate budgets, permit pricing and recreational options offered for opportunities to add new events or sports in response to public or staff input. Pursue grants not only with Federal entities, but also with foundations and cost-sharing with local groups.

Investigate corporate sponsorships of facilities or establishment of an endowment fund for parks.

We have practiced judicious use of funds and have adjusted pricing of various offerings, lowering cabin prices for weekdays, increasing the price of the annual camping permit, and offering seasonal camping and unconventional vehicle permits.

The division management team will provide agency-supported programs for a system of state parks operating uniformly to accomplish the mandates of legislation and the mission of the Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism. The management team will be accessible to identify, communicate, plan and develop the natural, cultural, wildlife and recreational needs of the state. The team will foster and encourage creativity, efficiency and effectiveness through continuous

improvement in the management and administration of the division.

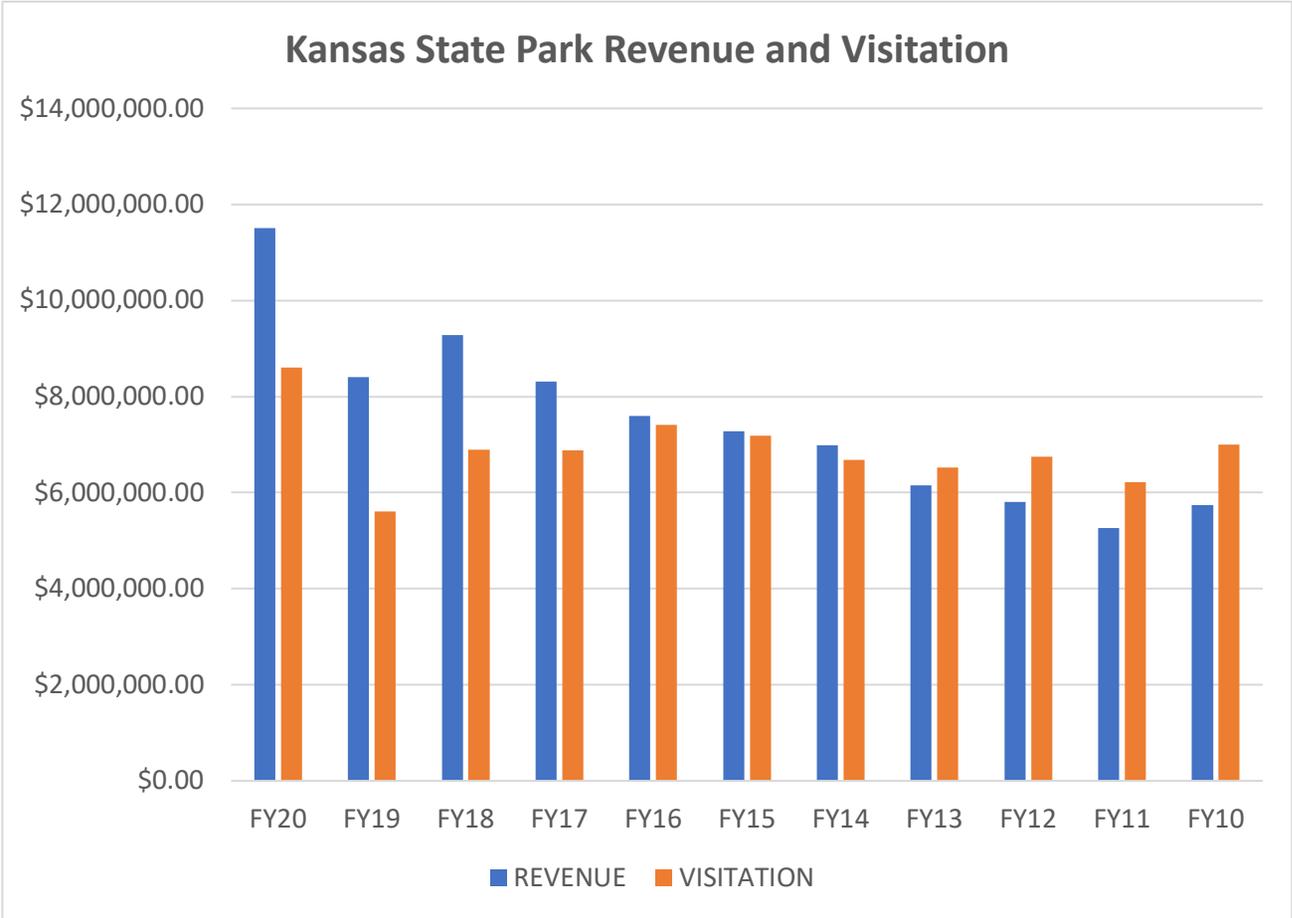
The division management team consists of the director, program services administrators, administrative specialists, region supervisors, and the individual managers. The management team for the individual parks will consist of the respective region supervisor, park manager, and employees on the area. Over 280 seasonals and camphosts help each year during our prime season. The local biologists from Fisheries and Wildlife Division, and the respective division regional supervisors will be called on to assist as needed. How the teams successfully perform and what the future holds is as much in the hands of employees as leaders.

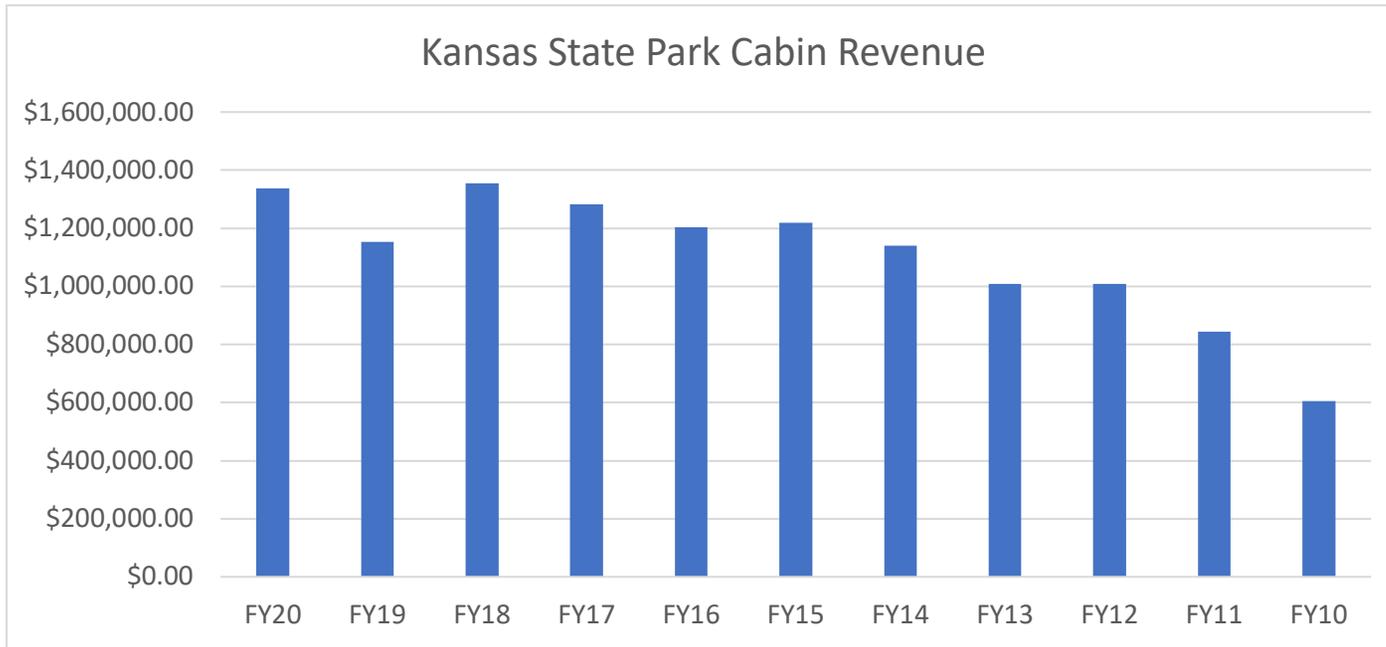
In 2011, the state parks team were asked to work on operating with less state general fund. State general fund was replaced with the Economic Development Initiative Funds at a reduced amount. The cash balance was not able to support payroll so the challenge was significant. The staff all came together to reduce spending and work on bringing more constituents into our state parks system. The current outlook is much brighter today despite the 2019 historical flooding. A favorable cash balance is realized and revenue and visitation are at historical levels. The challenge is not over. We intend to:

DEMONSTRATE LEADERSHIP that encourages and supports experimental initiatives and anticipates problems or opportunities that allow innovative solutions to be explored and implemented. **PROVIDE LEADERSHIP** that demonstrates collaboration and the sharing of responsibility with all levels and divisions of the organization. **BUILD TRUST** through positive communication, recognizing the value of free and open exchanges of information. **FOSTER A PARTICIPATIVE MANAGEMENT** style with a philosophical framework for change in paradigms. **PRACTICE GOOD STEWARDSHIP** by teaching good stewardship and by preparing solid, annual management work plans for each area. **PROVIDE QUALITY** customer service to all customers. **QUALITY ACTION TEAMS** of short duration will be continued and empowered to complete a number of quality improvement projects. Teams will be comprised of all levels of the organization and will have specific tasks, guidelines and time constraints.

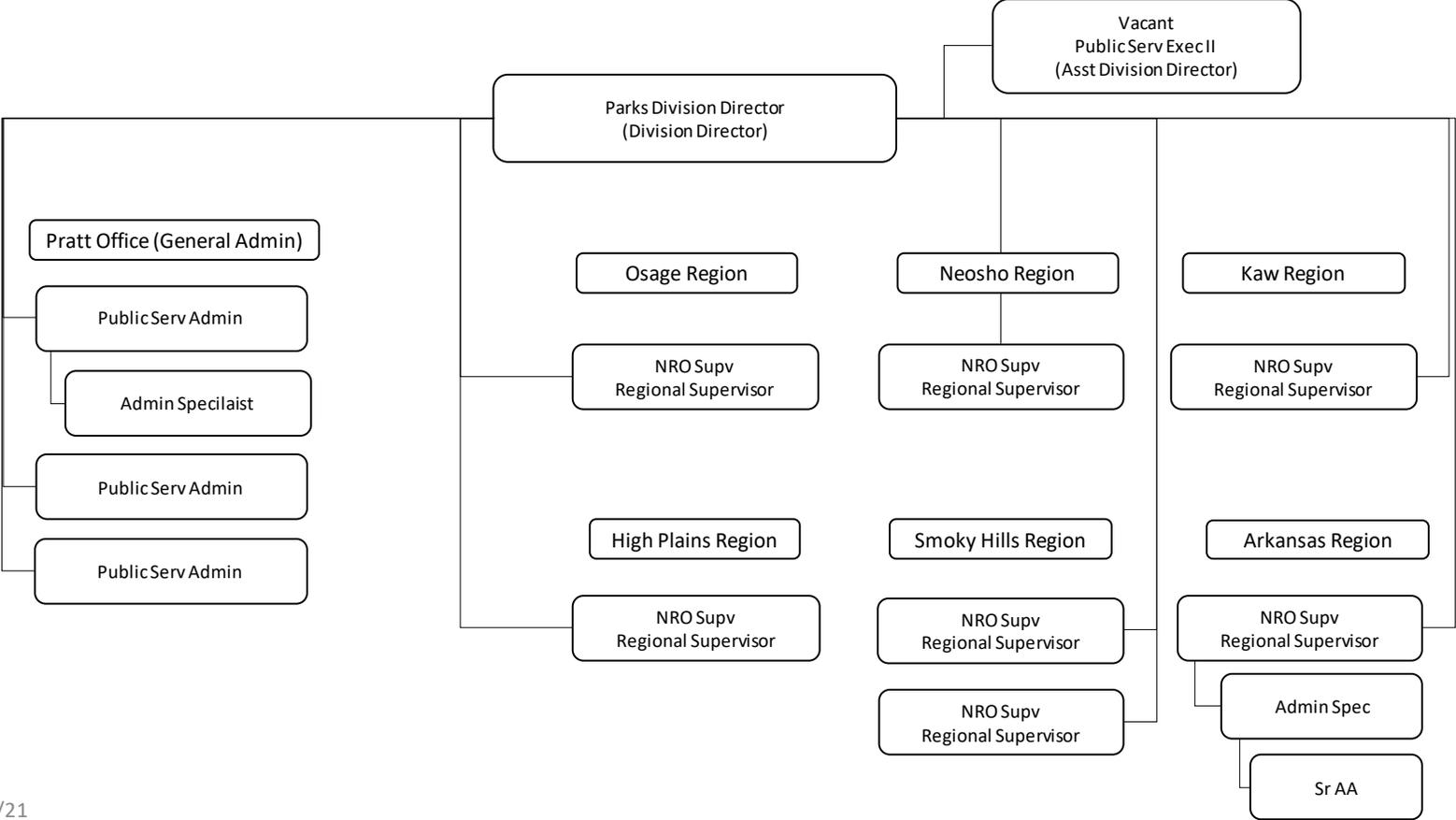
Adequate funding and staffing are critical to meeting all of these goals. The Division, as always, does its best to meet them despite obstacles such as flooding, tornadoes, ice storms, competing events and any other factors that impact revenue and visitation. Continually re-addressing these goals will keep us focused on progress toward meeting them.





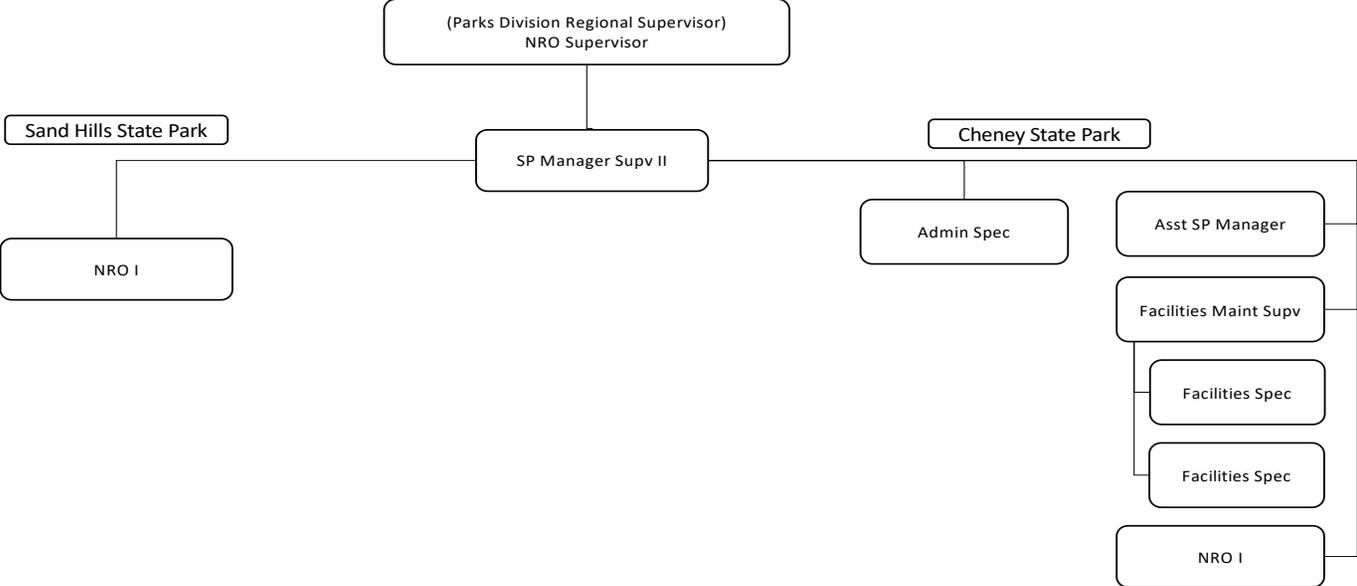


Parks Division

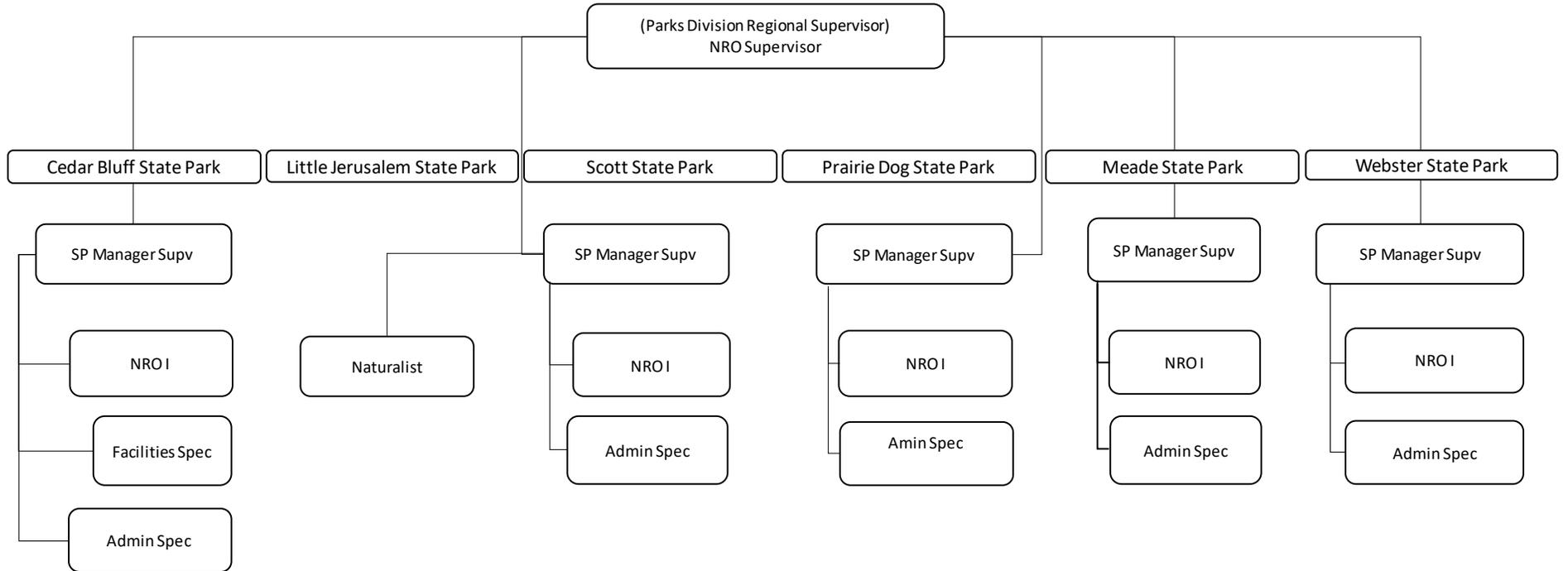


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Arkansas River Region

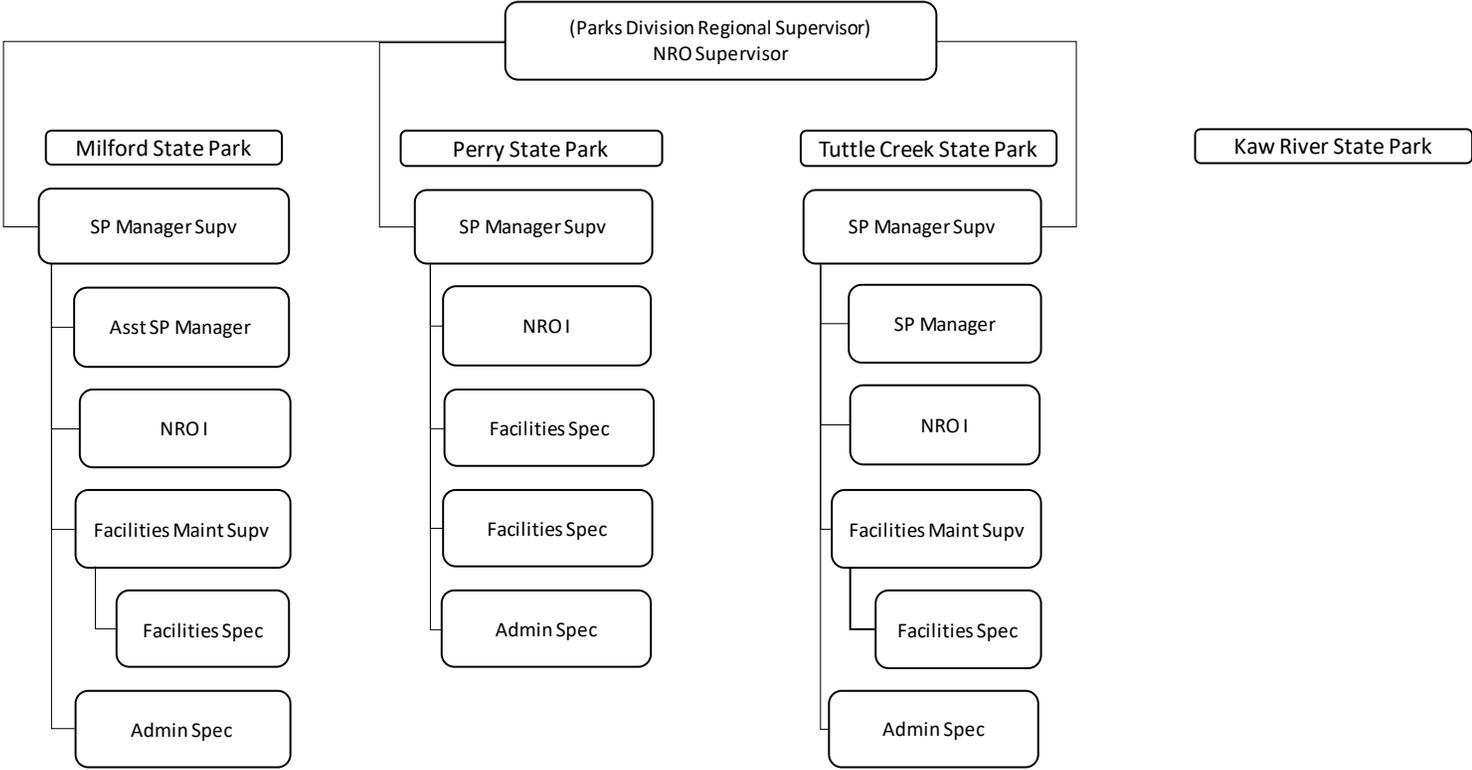


High Plains Region



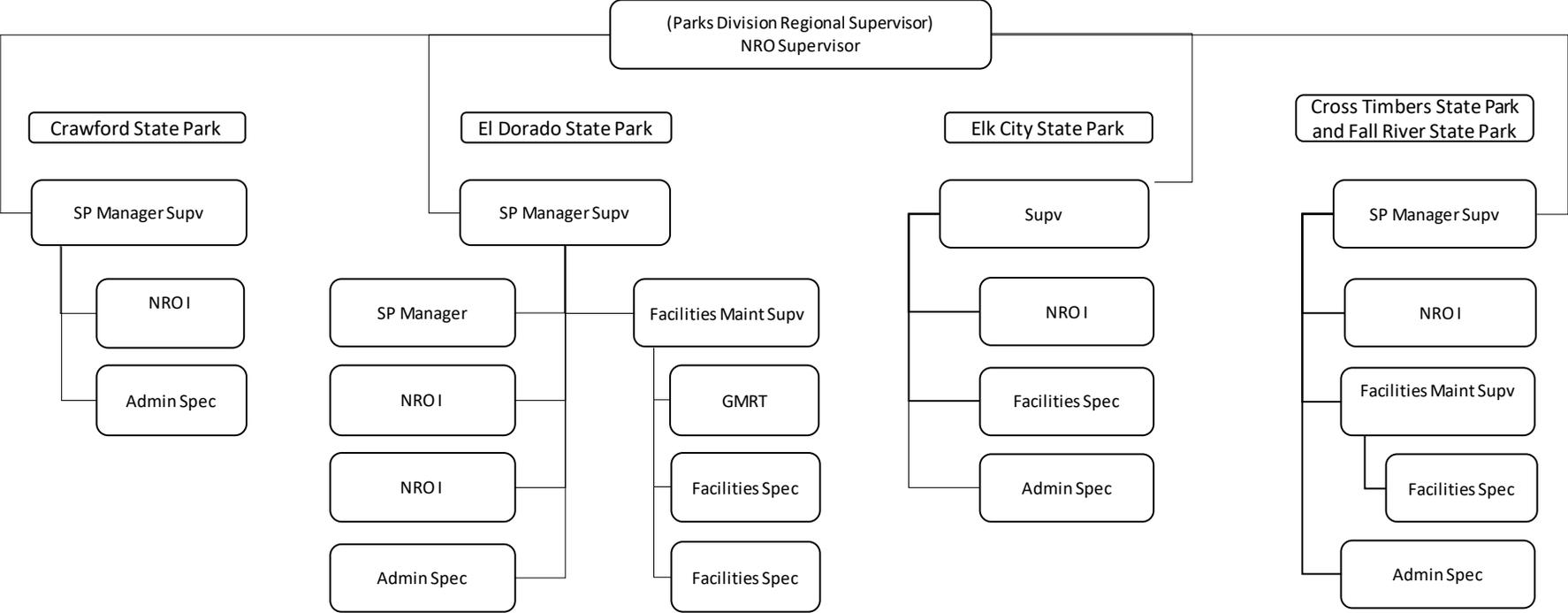
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Kaw River Region



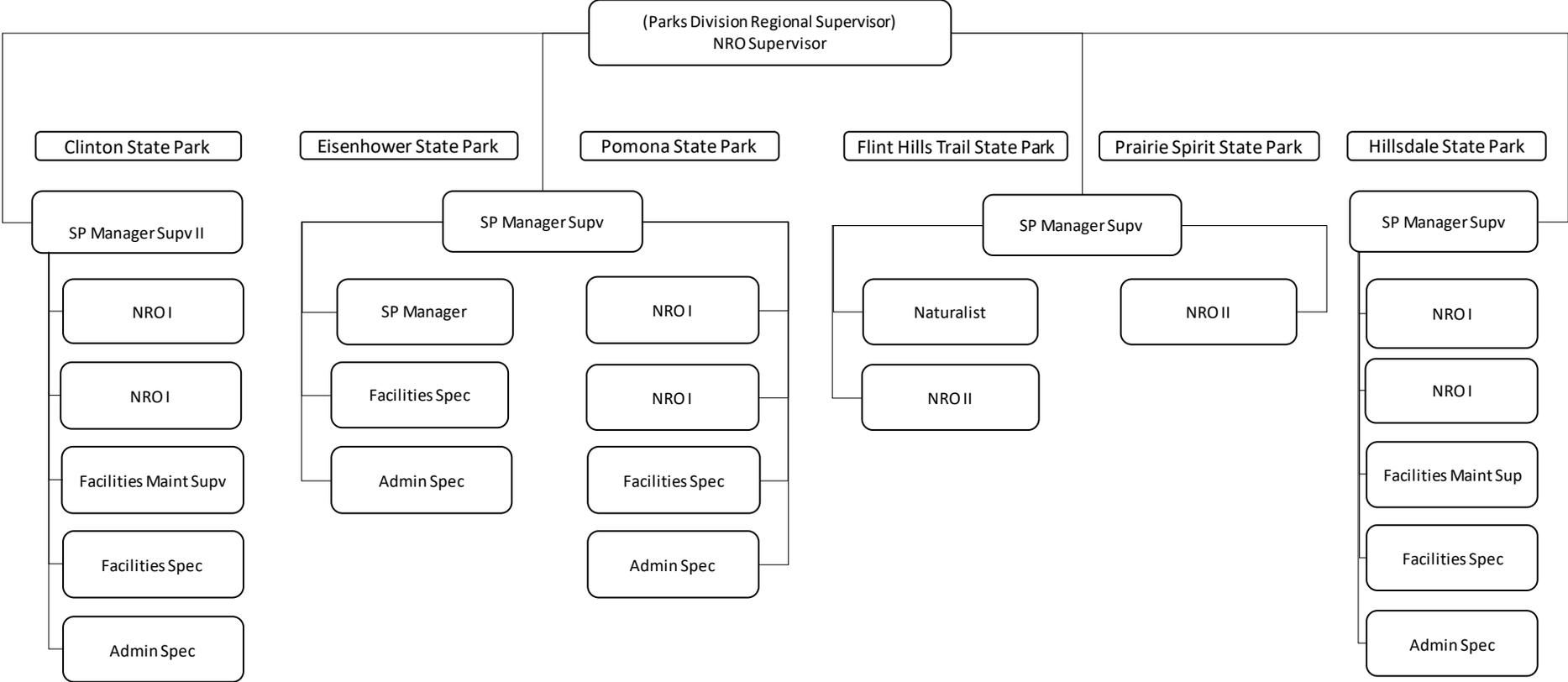
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Neosho River Region



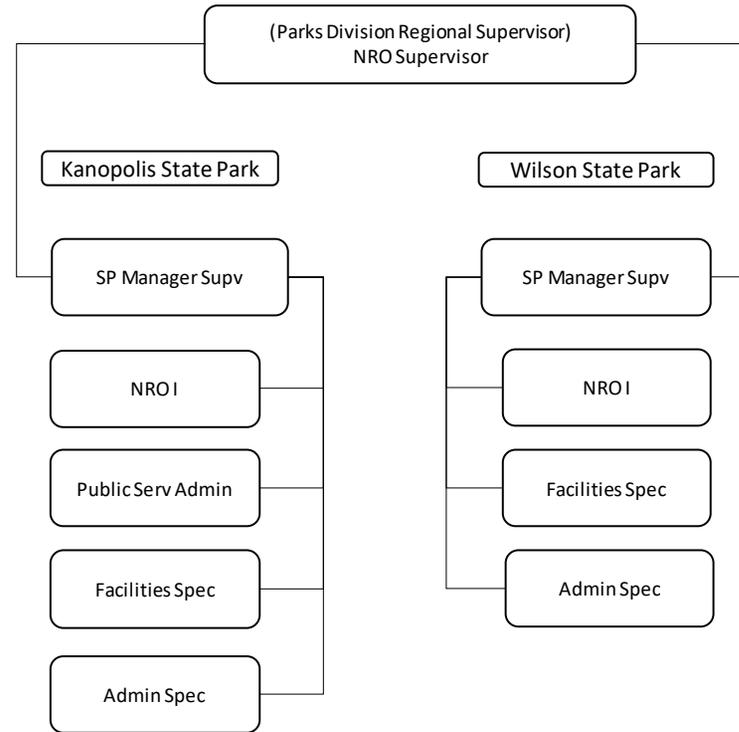
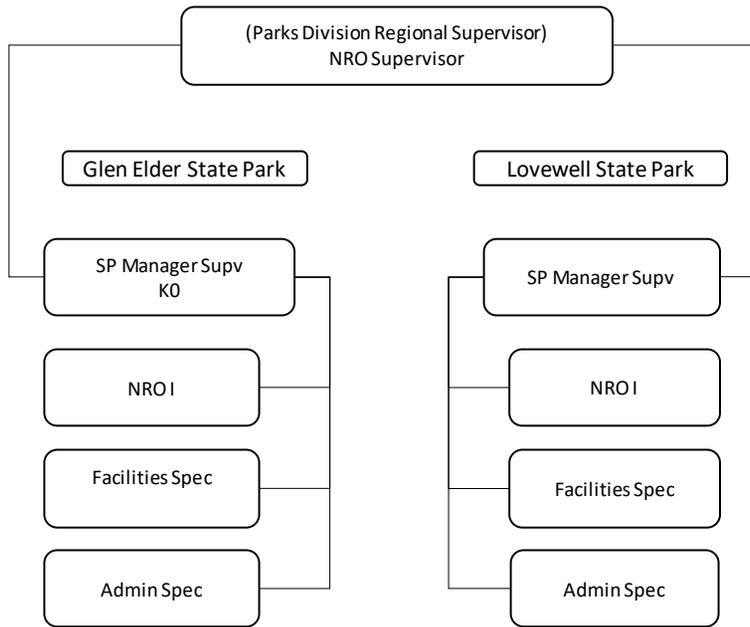
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Osage Region



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Smoky Hills Region



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Kansas State Parks Special Events

