



The Governor's Office & Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources have established an ambitious goal for Gulf State Park to become:

“An international benchmark for economic and environmental sustainability, demonstrating best practices for outdoor recreation, education, and hospitable accommodations.”

The overarching vision is for every visitor to be able to connect with nature.

Gulf State Park is one of Alabama's most cherished assets; it preserves more than 6,000 acres of pristine coastal scenery and wildlife habitat on the historic Alabama Gulf Coast and has more than 600,000 annual visitors. The Gulf State Park Restoration Project is about improving the economic and environmental sustainability of the park.

PROJECT COST

The Gulf State Park Enhancement Project will be launched through an \$85.5 million allocation of early restoration dollars from BP to compensate for lost recreational use visits to the park during the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. There is no taxpayer funding involved in this project.

PROJECT TIMELINE

At the outset of the project we are undertaking a master plan to ensure everything is thoroughly thought through. The first work to take place will be the dune restoration, expected to begin in 2015. The entire project is expected to be complete by 2018.

PROJECT BENEFITS

- Restoring the shoreline and dunes
- Restoring natural habitat for wildlife (beach mice and nesting sea turtles)
- Creating educational opportunities
- Enhancing sustainable recreation in the park
- Creating new trail connections, making the park more pedestrian friendly
- Creating economic opportunities for the greater community
- Providing construction jobs
- Creating long-term employment opportunities for local residents
- Generating tax revenue
- Increasing the state revenue to fund the operation and maintenance of all of Alabama's 22 State Parks, which currently face a deficit



What is the role of this Master Plan?

The Master Plan provides the long-term vision for Gulf State Park. It is the road-map to making the park an “international benchmark of economic and environmental sustainability.”

The Master Plan integrates the five NRDA early restoration elements with existing park elements. It also identifies additional opportunities to enhance the park as a one-of-a-kind environmental and education destination on the Gulf Coast.



THE MASTER PLAN

CONTAINS:

- **Near-term Projects**
 1. Five NRDA elements, completed by 2018
 2. Other near-term enhancements
- **Additional Enhancements**
 3. Other ideas to improve Gulf State Park

BASED ON:

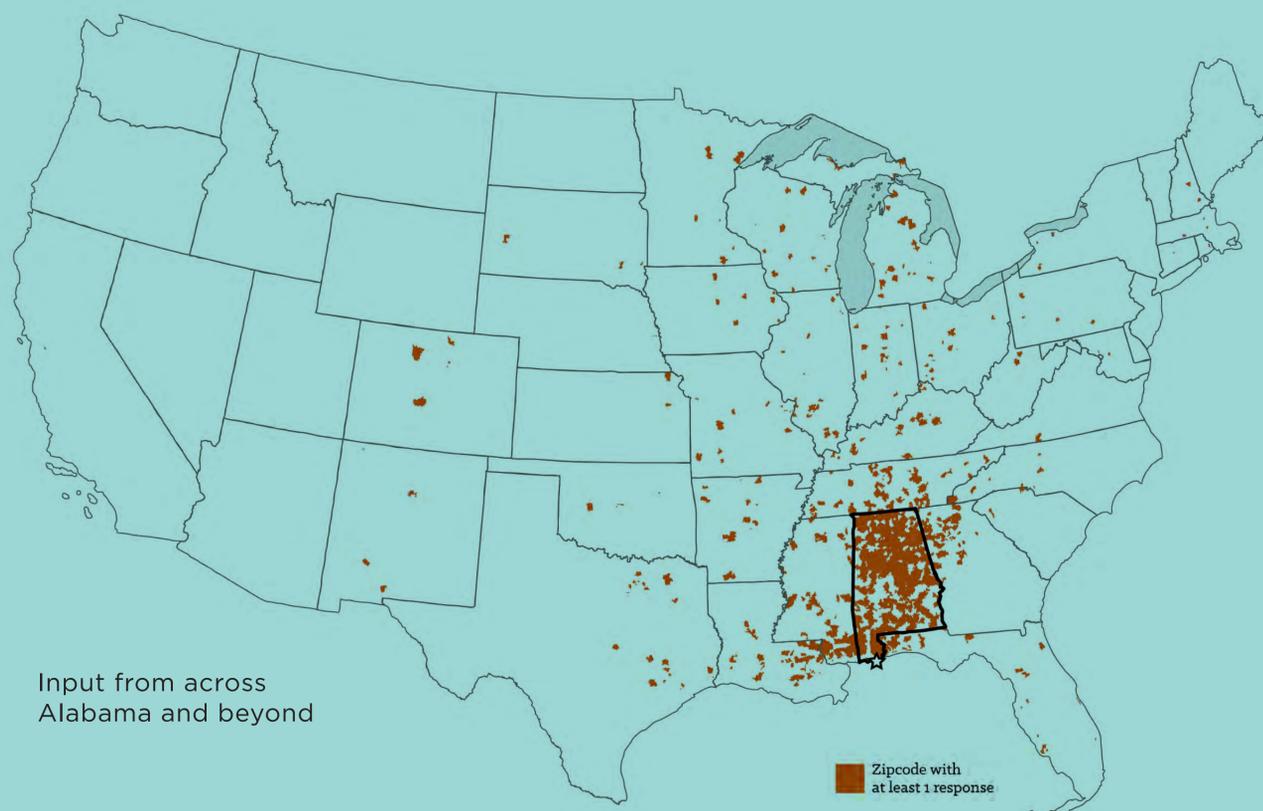
- Gulf State Park Enhancement Project (5 NRDA elements)
- Other ideas for economic and environmental sustainability
- Existing park elements

FUNDED BY:

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Community Feedback



Input from across Alabama and beyond

FEEDBACK FROM:

2,600+
ONLINE SURVEY RESPONSES

12
STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

3
COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSES

2
MINI-OPEN HOUSES IN THE PARK

YOUR TOP PRIORITIES:

1. Restoring the park's environment
2. Improving walking & bicycling in the park
3. Improving the campground
4. Adding more overnight accommodations
5. Offering more environmental education programs & similar activities

KEY IDEA:

BALANCE NEW DEVELOPMENT WITH THE PARK'S NATURAL CHARACTER.



1. AN ALABAMA TREASURE:

Preserve and enhance Gulf State Park's greatest assets: a rich diversity of ecosystems spanning 6,100 acres

- wildlife habitat, native plant communities, and natural processes
- balance programs and uses with natural setting
- concentrated development



2. YOUR FRONT PORCH ON THE GULF:

A place for all kinds of visitors to connect with nature

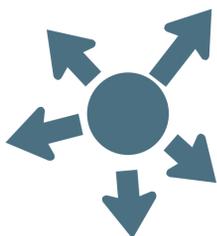
- affordability
- accessibility (physical and electronic)
- diverse range of activities and accommodations, suitable for Gulf State Park's natural and cultural context



3. ALABAMA'S OUTDOOR CLASSROOM:

Let the park be a classroom and a model for environmentally friendly development for the Gulf Coast region

- environmental education programs and experiential learning
- regenerative design, construction, and operations
- stewardship



4. ROOTED IN THE GULF COAST:

Strengthen ties between the park, local communities, and Alabama as a whole

- ecological connections
- cultural and historic connections
- walking and bicycling connections

Gulf State Park Vision:

Gulf State Park will be an international benchmark for economic and environmental sustainability demonstrating best practices for outdoor recreation, education, and hospitable accommodations.

PHASE 1

The five elements supported through Early Restoration funding from the National Resource Damage Assessment Process (NRDA)

- Enhancing the visitor experience (Phase 1 Trail Enhancements)
- Learning Campus
- Interpretive Center
- Dune Restoration
- Rebuilding the Lodge

PHASE 2

Additional opportunities to strengthen the economic potential of the park:

- State Park Road 2 Conversion
- Phase 2 Trail Enhancements
- Campground Improvements
- Golf Course Conversion / Park Adventure Launch
- Park Tram

PHASE 3

Long-term opportunities to add even more value to the park:

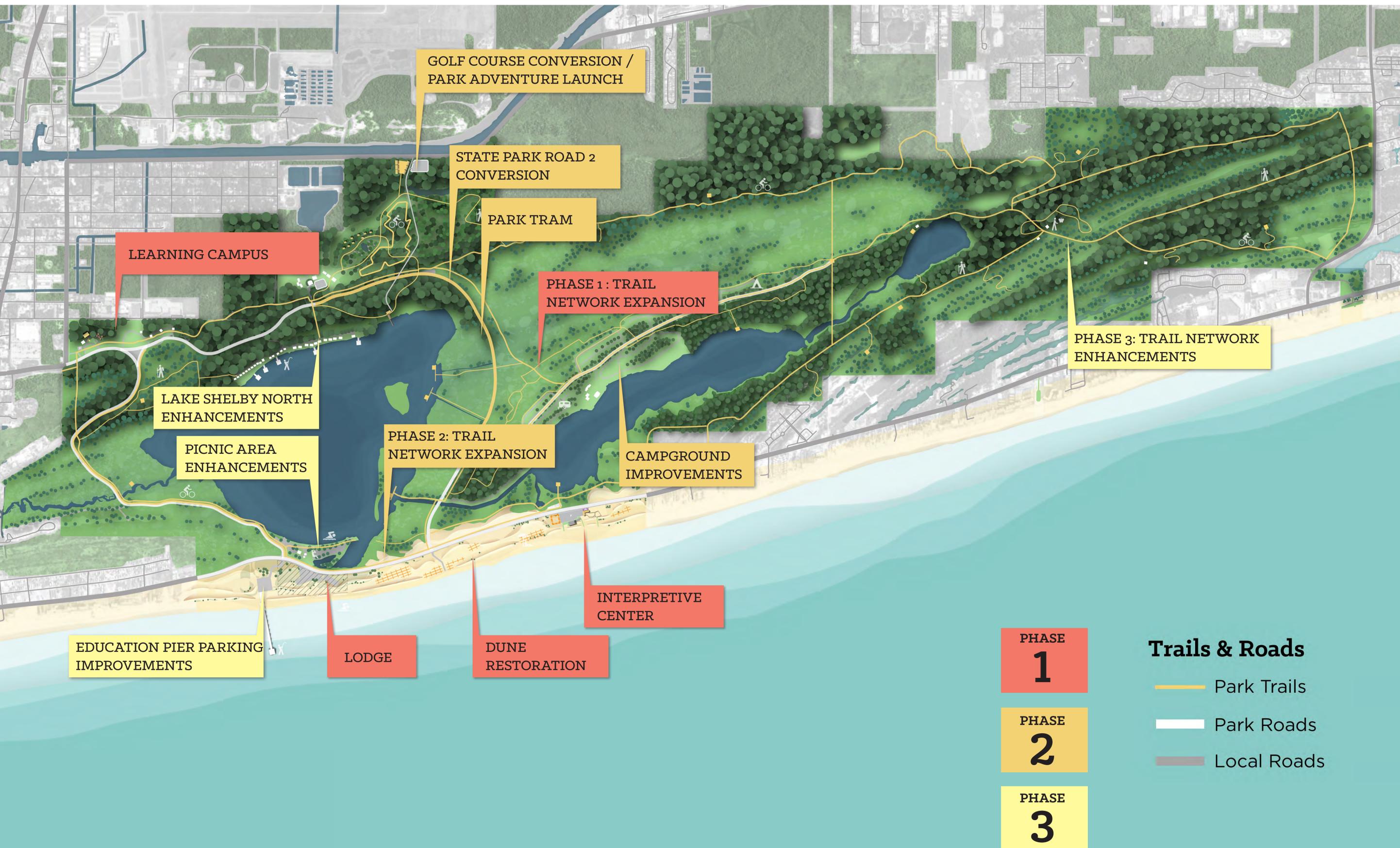
- Picnic Area Enhancements
- Phase 3 Trail Enhancements
- Education Pier Parking Improvements
- Lake Shelby North Enhancements

Strengthening Park Operations

Underlying all of the phases, the Master Plan includes operational recommendations (like enhancing technology systems) to support the physical enhancements. The intent is to ensure maximum long-term revenue potential.

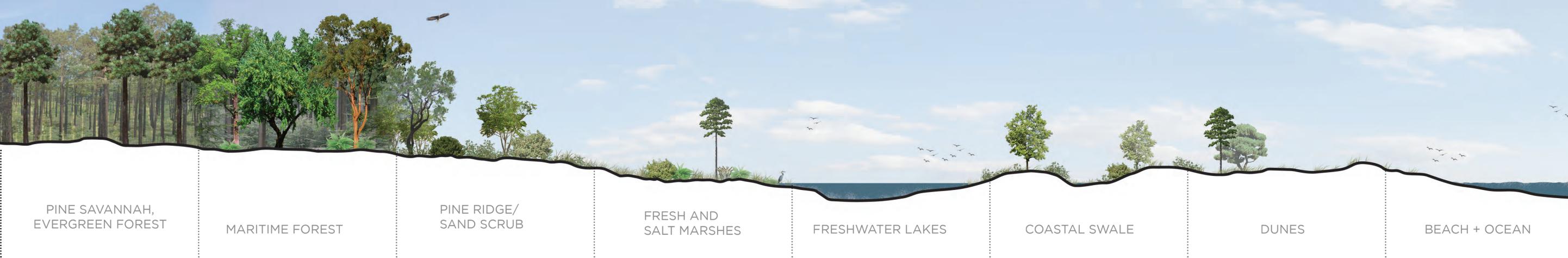
OVERVIEW

Master Plan Elements



OVERVIEW

Restoring the Park's Environment



In terms of ecosystem diversity, there is almost nothing like Gulf State Park anywhere else on the Gulf.

Preserving and enhancing the park's unique ecosystems underlies all of the phases and projects. Incorporated strategies include:

- Dune Restoration
- Protection and expansion of habitat
- Respecting and restoring natural water movement
- Prescribed burning for selected ecosystems
- Stewardship opportunities
- Regenerative building practices

BALANCING MORE ACTIVITIES WITH MORE CONSERVATION

Restoring the Park's Environment was the #1 Priority among locals and people under age 40. It ranked #3 overall.



The Right Kind of Development in the Right Place

To preserve core habitat areas, it's important to concentrate any new development within already disturbed areas. In addition, the park has an opportunity to model regenerative building practices for other gulf communities.



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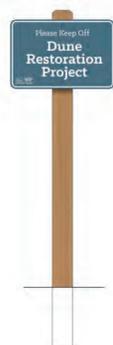
GSP Enhancement Project

Goal: Restore natural systems so the dunes can regrow themselves over time.

Strategies:

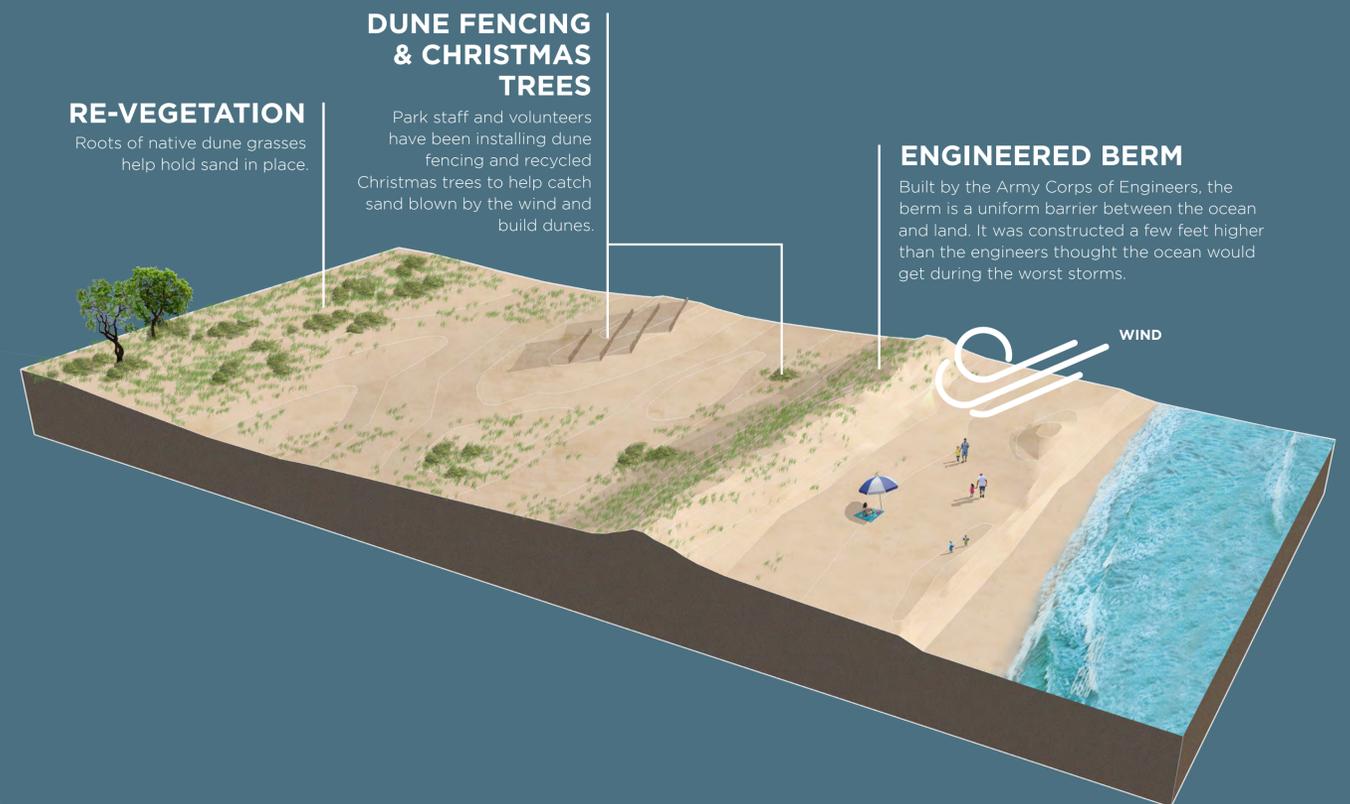
- Strategic cuts in berm allow sand to reach inland parts of the dune system
- Plantings of native plant species
- Removal of invasive plant species
- Continue to restore dunes with Christmas trees and sand fencing
- Ensure park visitors cross dunes only at designated walkovers

Signage will help park visitors understand what is happening with the dunes and how healthy dunes help both humans and the park.

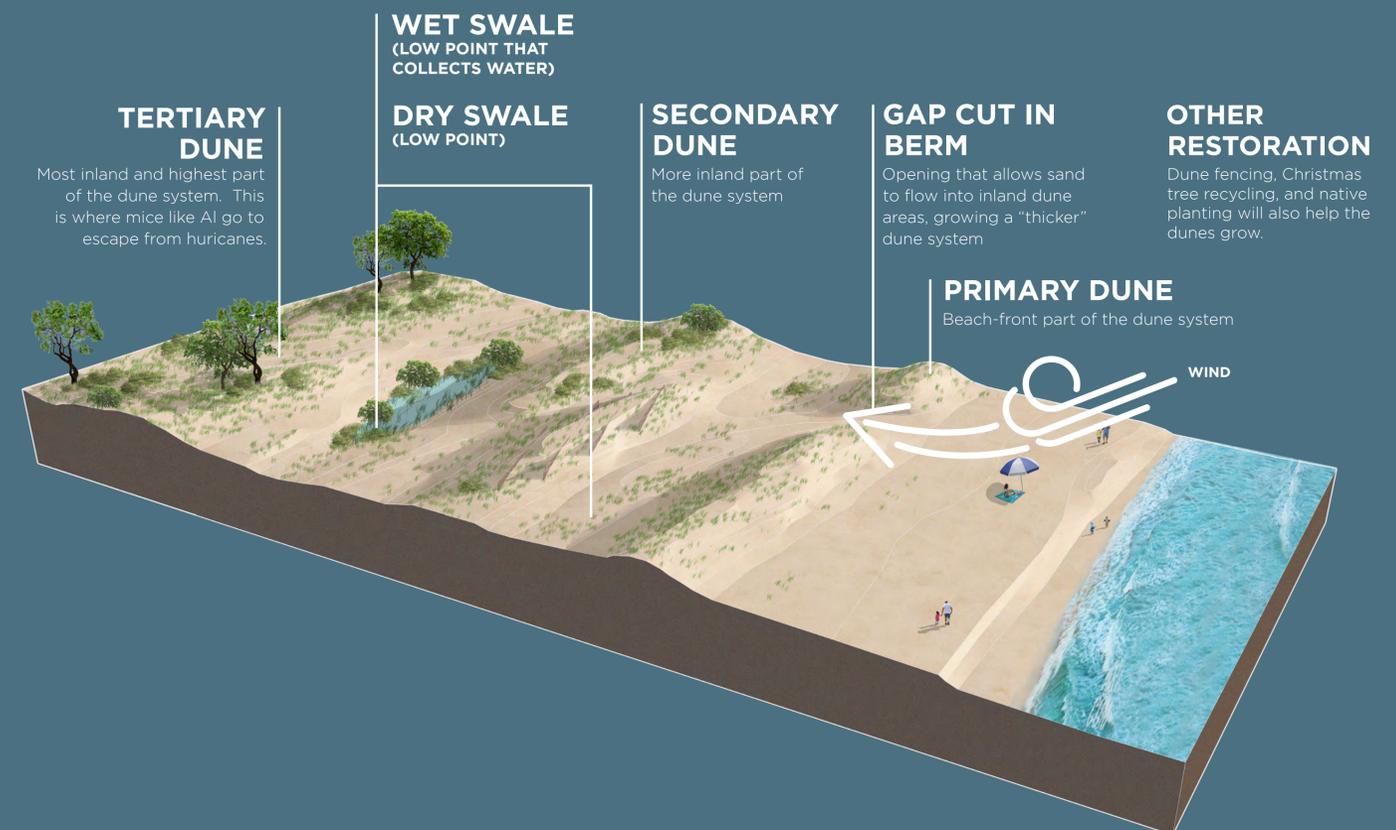


Dune Restoration

TODAY: A NARROW BERM IS THE DUNE



FUTURE GOAL: A HEALTHY, DEEP DUNE SYSTEM



PHASE 1

GSP Enhancement Project

Rebuilding the Lodge

This overnight stay and meeting facility will welcome everyone and will serve as a model of resilient, environmentally friendly coastal development.

Lodge Design Principles

- A Comfortable Stay
- Energy Efficiency
- Southern Vernacular
- Resilient Materials and Construction
- Healthy, Functional Dunes
- Smart Water Management
- An Educational Building and Site
- Launch-point for the Park



A Smaller Footprint in the Dunes:

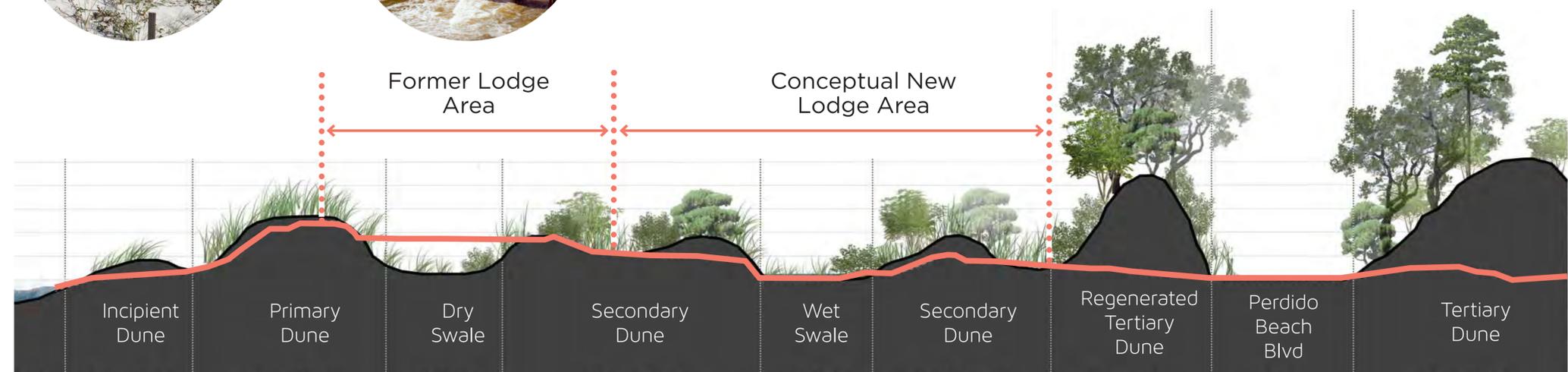
The new lodge and meeting facility will be rebuilt at the site of the previous lodge, which was destroyed during Hurricane Ivan.

The previous lodge had a footprint that impacted over 30 acres of Gulf State Park's dunes.

In contrast, the currently permitted lodge site is 21 acres and a substantial portion of this smaller site will consist of preserved and restored dunes rather than development.

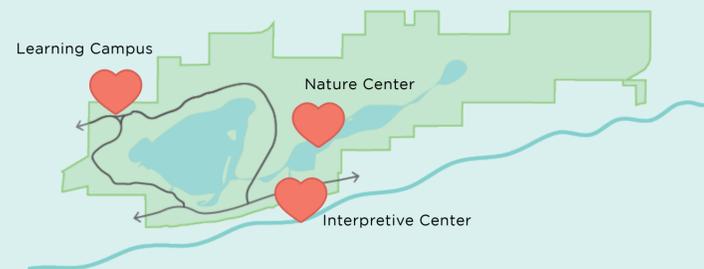


Setting the new lodge further back from the primary dune will give the dune system room to grow. This provides better habitat for the Alabama Beach Mouse and better storm protection for the new lodge.



PHASE 1

GSP Enhancement Project



The Whole Park as a Classroom

Gulf State Park's **Nature Center** is a well-loved park destination. The **Interpretive Center** and the **Learning Campus** will complement the Nature Center as the primary learning destinations in the Park. The Lodge and Park HQ may also have complimentary functions.

This network of educational opportunities will one day also include:

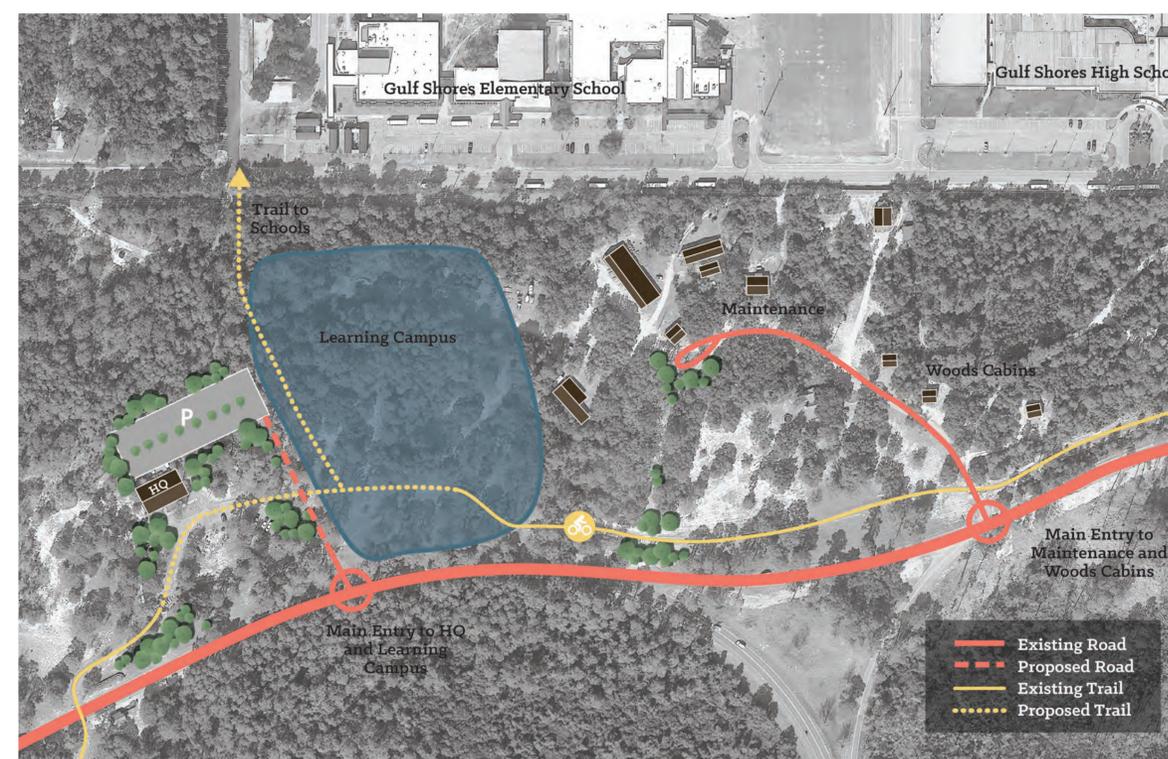
- **Exploration Stations:** Launch points for guided activities, education, and self-guided exploration.
- **Learning Moments:** Smaller-scale learning opportunities designed throughout the park, weaving educational moments into all park visits.

Interpretive Center & Learning Campus



Interpretive Center

- Includes indoor and outdoor exhibits, highlighting information about our unique environment
- Located on the Pavilion Parking Lot to preserve and protect surrounding dunes



Learning Campus

- Provides classrooms and laboratories for K-12 students and beyond, expanding the park's capacity for in-depth research and education programs
- Location near park HQ allows learning to extend beyond the park, with connections to the Gulf Shores community and local schools
- Additional flexible lodging option for student groups as well as park visitors
- New dining opportunity to serve park visitors and the wider community

PHASE 1

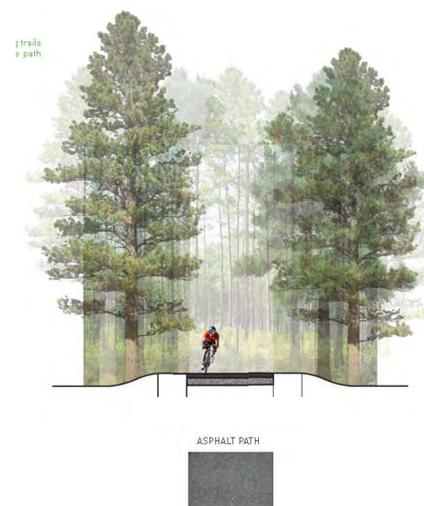
GSP Enhancement Project

Trail Network Enhancements Phase I

Phase 1 of the Trail Network Enhancements includes 9.5 miles of new trails & 3.5 miles of trail enhancements, including wayfinding signage, trailheads and amenities. Explore and discover even more of the park!



Not all trails are the same! Trail network enhancements provide greater diversity for walkers and bicyclists. They also adapt to the different environments they pass through.



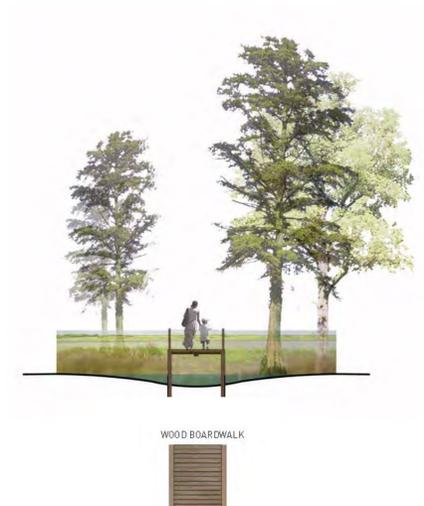
Major Paths

Similar in feel to the existing Hugh S Branyon Backcountry Trail, these trails have room for avid cyclists and larger cycling groups.



Nature Trails

These narrower and softer trails are made for walking and hiking. They traverse the park's upland environments.



Wetland Crossings

Wooden boardwalks provide access to the park's wetter areas. These elevated paths include interpretive signage and places to pause and enjoy the view.

2

PHASE 2

Additional opportunities to strengthen the economic potential of the park:

- State Park Road 2 Conversion
- Phase 2 Trail Enhancements
- Campground Improvements
- Golf Course Conversion / Park Adventure Launch
- Park Tram

PHASE 2

State Park Road 2 Conversion



Closing a stretch of State Park Road 2 to through-traffic creates a new connection for pedestrians, bicyclists, and the park tram.

The conversion of State Park Road 2 could be as simple as adding signage and barriers at the ends, and possibly restriping the road. Over time, the road could be adapted to improve water flow, reconnecting the wetland systems that run through the center of Gulf State Park.



State Park 2 Sunday Morning Test-Runs

The Master Plan recommends closing State Park Road 2 to traffic on Sunday mornings, starting early next Spring. This allows the opportunity to test the closure and for bicyclists, runners, and walkers to enjoy about a 1.5 mile segment of car-free road.



EXAMPLE:

Cades Cove Loop Road
Great Smoky Mountains National Park, TN

Cars and bicyclists usually share the 11 mile, one-way loop road, but on Saturday and Wednesday mornings from May to September, the road is only open to non-motorized visitors.

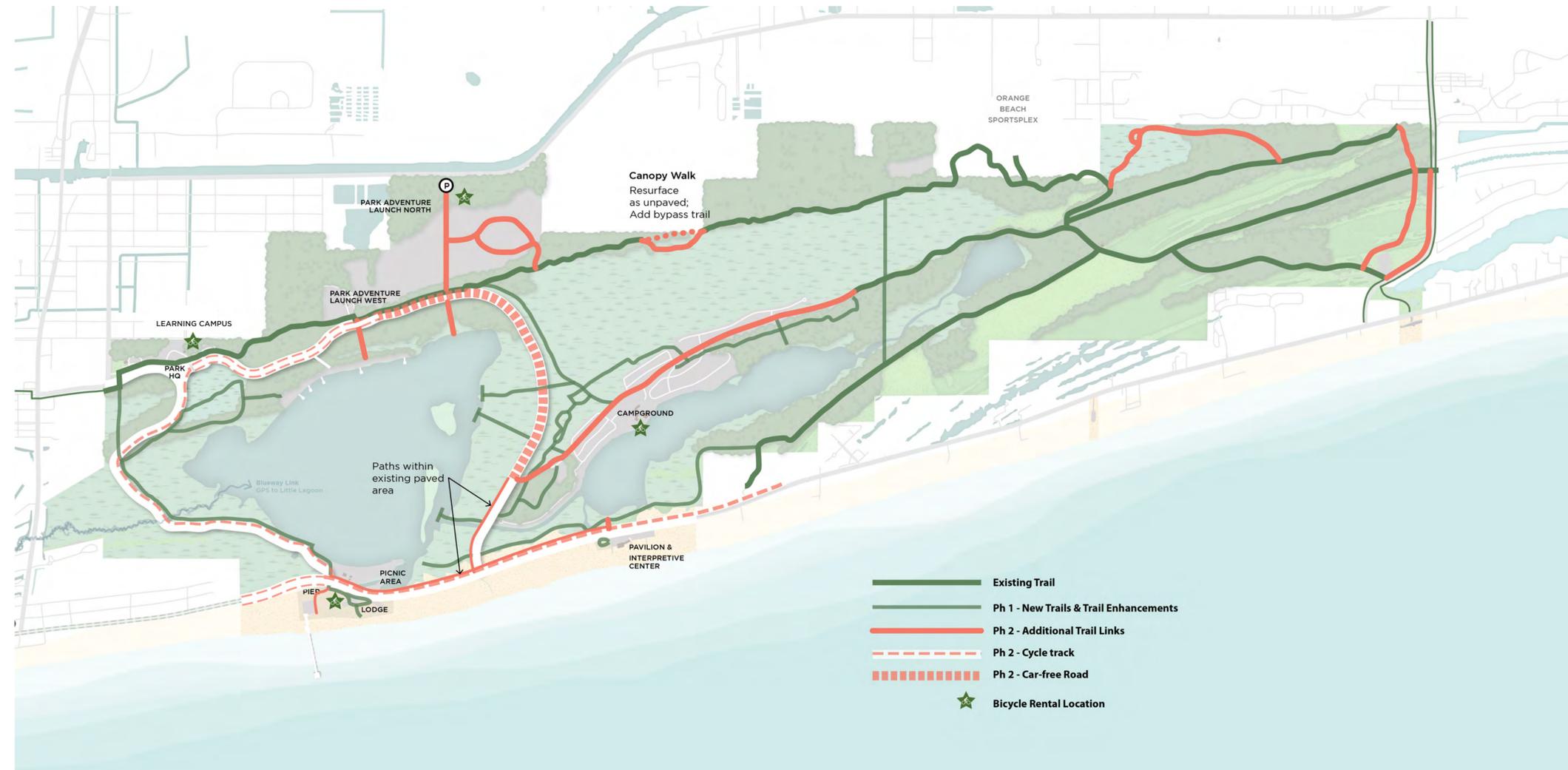
PHASE 2

Trail Network Enhancements Phase II

Phase 2 of the trail network enhancements focuses on closing loops and adding to the educational learning elements throughout.

Examples of Phase 2 enhancements:

- Lake Shelby south connection
- Campground Road path
- Cabin trail connection
- Eastern trail connections
- Pitcher Plant Bog Boardwalk
- Canopy Bypass along Gulf Oak Ridge
- Additional trails added with Golf Course conversion



Perdido Beach Blvd. Cycletrack

Within the existing paved right-of-way, the four driving lanes could be shifted south and separated from a bike path. The walking path could then be added on the road's edge.

Conceptual Diagram:



Safer Crossings - Perdido Beach Blvd.

Survey: Crossing Perdido Beach Blvd. is the #1 barrier to bicycling/walking.

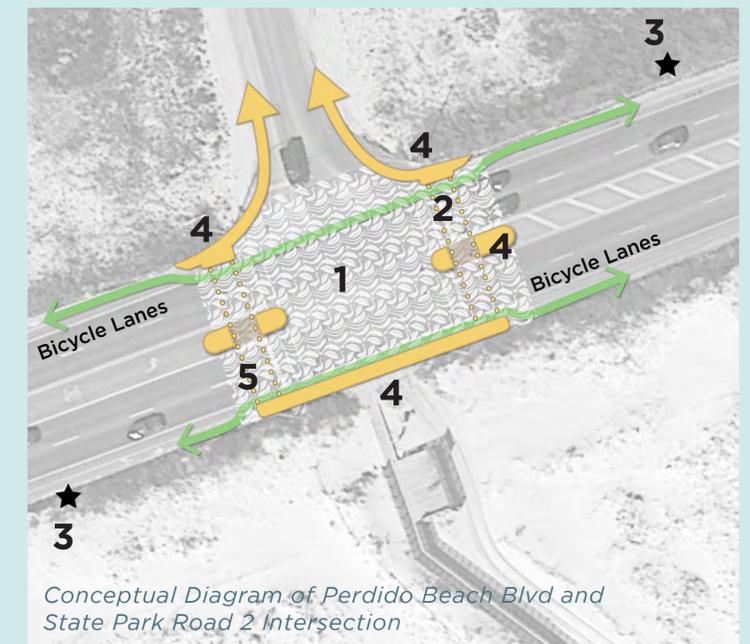
Make the crosswalk more visible & safe

Possible solutions include:

- Public Art (1) inspired by the park's logo
- In-pavement lighting (2), illuminated signage (3), and/or overhead beacons
- Refuge islands (4)
- Wider crosswalks (5)

Increase enforcement

Adopt more strenuous enforcement of traffic laws; pull over cars that run red lights.



Conceptual Diagram of Perdido Beach Blvd and State Park Road 2 Intersection

PHASE 2

Campground Improvements

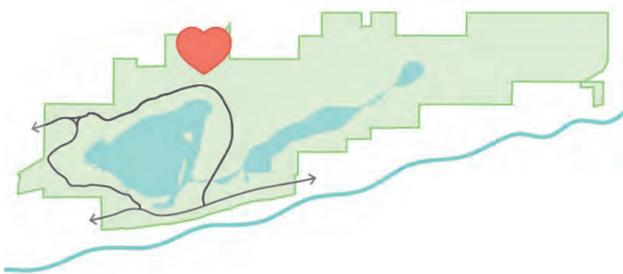


The campground is a beloved park destination and already functions well for visitors. Opportunities to make it even better include:

- Improved entry experience and circulation
- Adding trees for shade and privacy
- Wi-fi improvements
- Improving connections to adjacent trails
- Making the campground safer for pedestrians and bicyclists (see Trails Phase 2 and Park Tram for more improvements)
- Path along Campground Road
- New group campsites along Middle Lake with shared central green spaces

PHASE 2

Golf Course Conversion - Park Adventure Launch



The new Park Adventure Launch has a broad range of outdoor activities for all ages and restored conservation land.

- Potential for new conservation land (at least half of course)
- Hiking trails
- New gateway that lets visitors park and then explore park by other means (there is no new road into park; the entrance leads directly to a parking lot only)
- Outdoor Center and Lake Outpost with retail partner
- Ziplining (relocated) & ropes course
- Frisbee golf, picnic shelters, and nature-based playgrounds
- Pavilion for gatherings

Why change the Golf Course?

Declining use, environmental impacts, and a challenging future outlook for the sport prompt the need for change.

Golf in Decline Nationally

- Golf industry nationally has lost 5 million players in the last decade; a projected 20% of existing golfers are likely to quit in the next few years.
- Golf popularity is declining the fastest among people under 35.

Source: National Golf Foundation

Decline in Golf at Gulf State Park

- The golf course is currently operating in the black; however, if current decline in revenue continues the course will be operating at a loss soon.
- Revenue from green fees decreased 26% from 2012-2014.
- Significant capital investment (roughly estimated at \$5-\$10M) would be needed to bring the course up to today's competitive standard.

Golf courses have a heavy environmental footprint

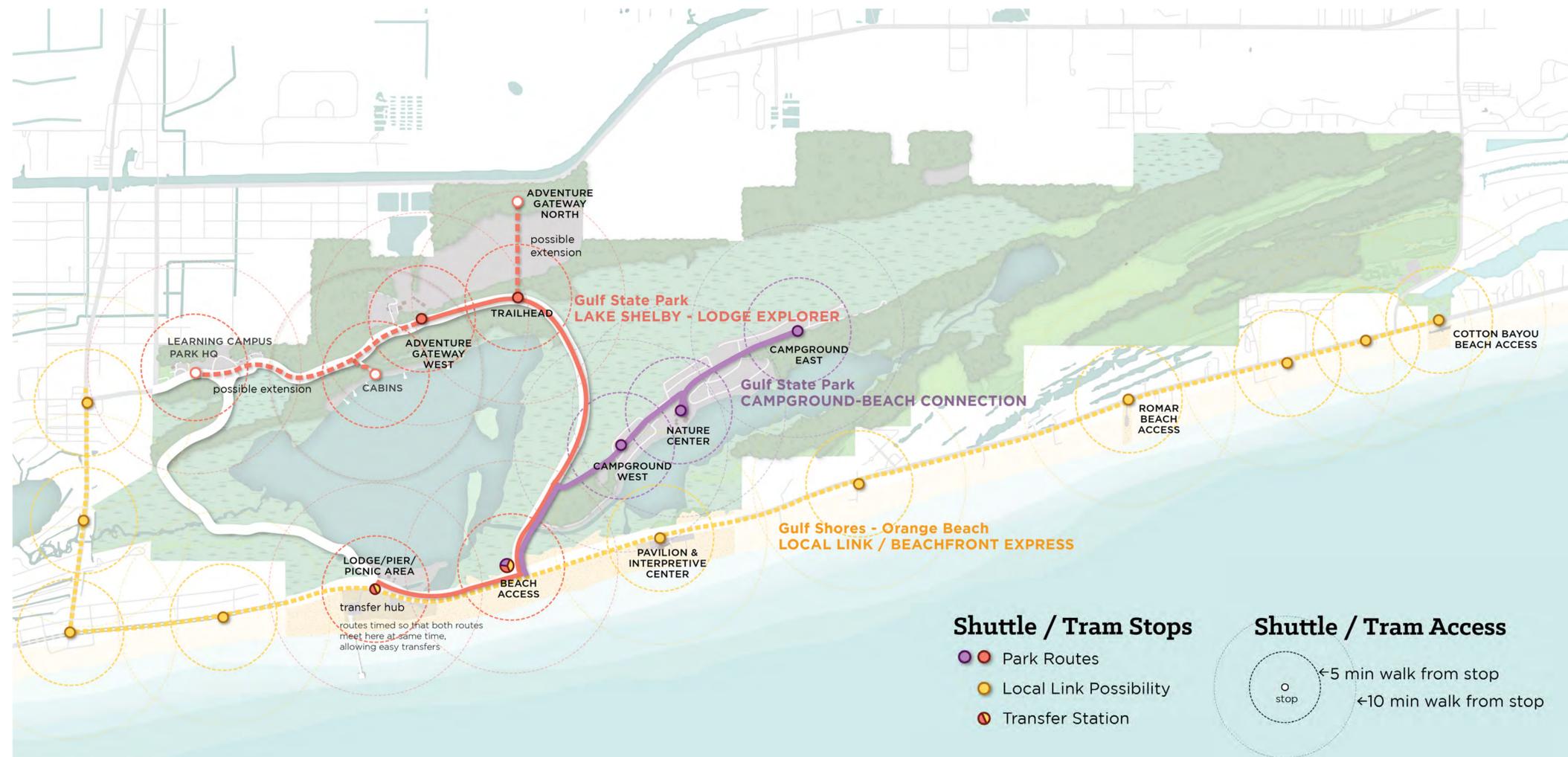
- The average American Golf Course consumes 50M gallons of water per year; usage comparable to that of a village of 1,400 people.
- Golf courses are sources of pollutants from fertilizers and chemicals.

PHASE 2

Park Tram

Imagine watching the scenery go past from an open-air tram!

A Park Tram will make it possible to get around the park without a car, even if you're not a walker or bicyclist. The Park Tram will connect park destinations, including the Campground, Beach, and Lodge.



Example: Topsail Hill Preserve Tram

An open-air Beach Tram at Topsail Hill (Florida) links several stops to the beach. The tram runs hourly, and each stop includes a shelter with benches.

“Topsail State Park is our favorite. Shuttle service to the beach and we can ride bikes if we choose. Beaches are not crowded and nice facilities.

- MyGulfStatePark Survey Respondent

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PHASE 3

Long-term opportunities to add even more value to the park:

- Picnic Area Enhancements
- Phase 3 Trail Enhancements
- Education Pier Parking Improvements
- Lake Shelby North Enhancements

PHASE 3

Lake Shelby Enhancements



Picnic Area

Restoring a great community gathering place

- Improved circulation
- Completed trails loop (Trails Phase 2)
- More picnic tables and a moderately-sized lake-front pavilion
- Nature-based play area
- Dog park enhancements
- Ziplines relocated
- Expanded kayak and canoe rentals

Lake Shelby North

Enhanced overnight accommodations

- More trees between buildings for privacy
- Lakefront fire pits
- Improving existing play area
- Trail network connection
- Long term opportunity to add treehouses

PHASE 3

Trail Network Enhancements Phase III

Phase 3 of the Trail Network Enhancements focuses on enhancing the trails experience by improving the character of existing trails.

Examples of Phase 3 Enhancements:

- Opportunities to convert Rattlesnake Ridge and/or Cotton Bayou to unpaved surfaces
- Widen Catman Road trail to provide more room for walkers and bicyclists
- Resurface Powerline North to unpaved and enhance hydrological connectivity under trail



PROMOTING WALKING, BICYCLING, AND TRAM USE HELPS THE PARK

Reducing parking and promoting alternative forms of transportation has positive spin-off benefits:

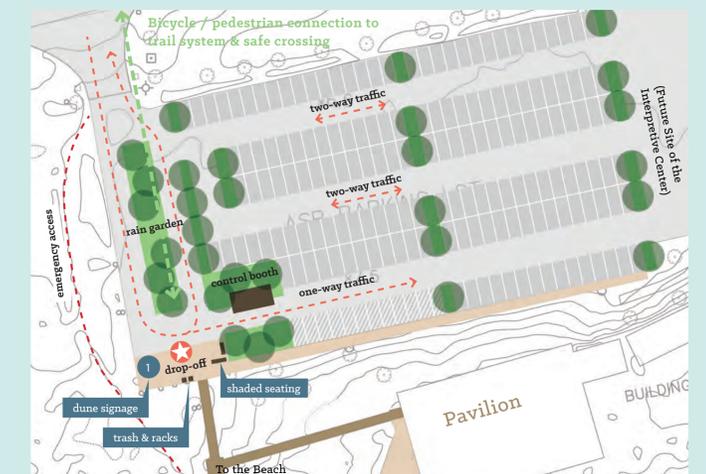
1. Less space for parking = more room for wildlife and improved absorption of rainfall
2. Less driving = fewer emissions and cleaner air
3. Fewer cars = safer walking and bicycling

Phase 3: Conceptual Beachfront Parking Lot Enhancements

- **Welcome visitors:** an inviting entry area with room to wait
- **Drop-off zone:** easy circulation to drop of gear and people
- **Green parking:** adding trees and planted areas for shade and stormwater capture
- **Simplified signage:** a clear hierarchy of information



The Education Pier Concept



The Pavillion & Interpretive Center Concept

TODAY: A Cherished Asset



TOMORROW: An Even Better Park



BRANDING

A Unique Graphic Identity for the Park

The story behind the logo

The logo is a fun and bold representation of the various ecosystems and wildlife that make Gulf State Park unique.



How will the logo be used?

The graphic identity of the park will come alive in wayfinding and interpretive signage, construction fencing, and painted crosswalks.



Dune Interpretive Signage



Dune Restoration Signage

Construction Fencing



Painted Crosswalks

