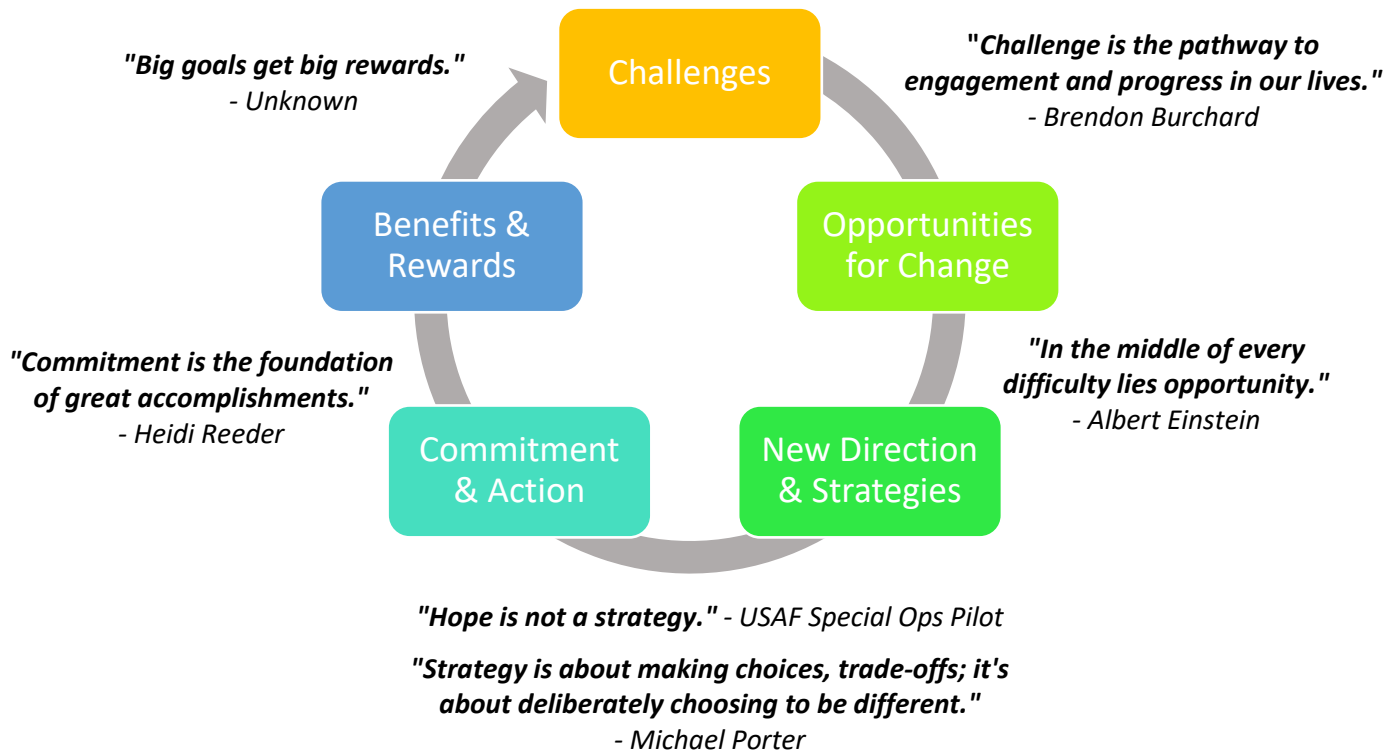




# “Forward to the Future”

MOVING BEYOND SUBSTANTIAL CHALLENGES TO CREATE SUSTAINABLE CHANGE



## CHALLENGES

- There are many challenges which threaten the health and prosperity of the lands, lakes, and communities which surround Land Between the Lakes.
- Likewise, there are unprecedented challenges which impact Land Between the Lakes' ability to provide quality recreation, environmental education, and habitat.
- Both sets of challenges put human health, economic prosperity, and the protection of natural and cultural resources at risk and must be met with a strong sense of urgency. The potential costs for not meeting these challenges are great.



## OPPORTUNITIES

- Fortunately, while the challenges we face are great, so is the enthusiasm to overcome these challenges. We live in a time where there is strong leadership recognition, alignment and energy around the value of natural lands to the American public.



- Public land managers, non-profit organizations, private industry, and citizen stewards are coming together to identify joint interests and seek "win-win" solutions.
- There is opportunity to overcome the challenges we face if there is a willingness, desire, and the capacity to do so.



## **STRATEGIES**

- The growing challenges require a clear collective vision and a bold strategy to meet the environmental, social, and economic needs of present and future generations.
- We need to do things differently, to adapt to the changing world. We must develop a strategy that seeks new and creative solutions extending beyond "business as usual."
- Any path forward cannot depend solely on our knowledge, understanding and capabilities. Both out of necessity, and because it makes good business and public service sense, we need to engage our fellow land management agencies, our partners, our stakeholders, our communities, and establish plans around common objectives and areas of interest.



## **COMMITMENT**

- Big goals take big commitment. We cannot do this work alone. Declining budgets and shrinking staffs make this an even harder task.
- Through working together, understanding each other better and building relationships and trust, we can then deliver the broadest array of services and opportunities to the public.



## **BENEFITS**

- There are many benefits to connecting people to the outdoors. Studies show that people are happier, more productive, and enjoy improved mental health when they can disconnect from everyday pressures and enjoy outdoor activities in natural settings. Public lands also draw millions of visitors to rural communities and help rural economies. National forests and other public lands are the primary places people can learn about the natural world and begin to understand the delicate, natural, interdependent systems that we must care for, nurture and steward for future generations.

## **BOTTOM LINE:**

***We can overcome big challenges by identifying the best opportunities to come together to meet common goals. Through working together and committing to bold strategies we can make a bigger impact to the community by expanding the environmental, social, and economic benefits to present and future generations.***

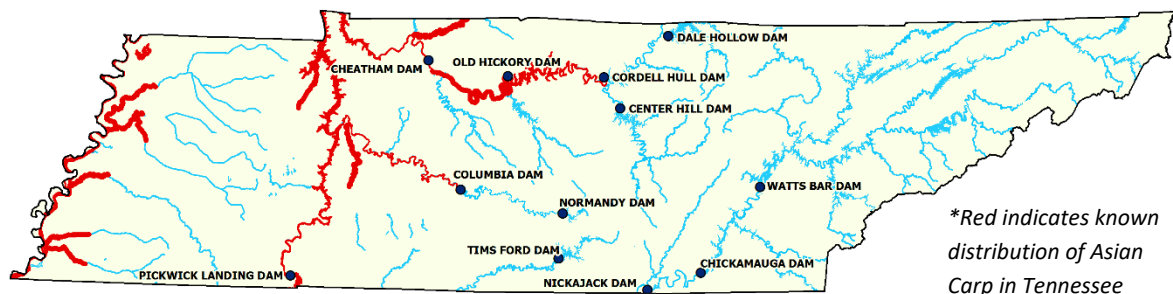
# The Basis for the Strategic Goal

## MAKING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE GOAL & THE CHALLENGES WE FACE

**STRATEGIC GOAL #2** – Restore and sustain healthy habitats to be a destination for hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing of abundant and diverse species

### CHALLENGES

- **INVASIVE SPECIES** – Invasive species are likely to spread over time and new invasive species will inevitably emerge as well. Feral hogs are becoming a real concern at Land Between the Lakes. Asian carp have invaded the Mississippi, Tennessee, and Cumberland River systems in western Kentucky & Tennessee and are continuing to expand their range. All four Asian carp species cause problems to native aquatic fauna either because they eat them or because they compete for habitat and resources. (Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, n.d.)

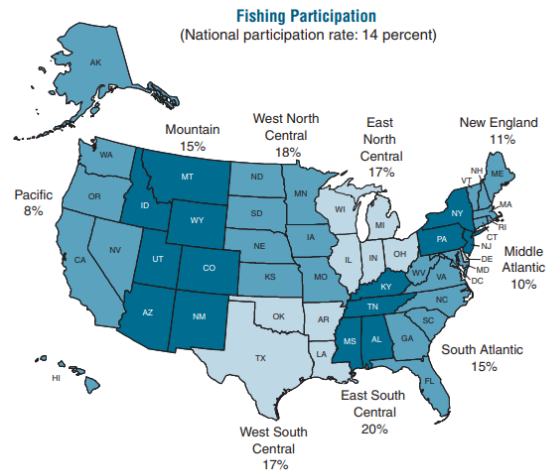


- **LOSS OF NATURAL LANDS** –Overall, forest area is decreasing in the South. From 1997 to 2060, the South is forecasted to lose between 11 million acres (7 percent) and 23 million acres (13 percent) of forests, nearly all to urban uses. (Greis, 2013) In Kentucky, it is estimated that approximately 130 acres of forests, natural habitats and agricultural lands are lost per day to developed use. (America, n.d.)
- **HABITAT CONDITIONS & REDUCED WILDLIFE POPULATIONS** – Land Between the Lakes forest continues to mature and open lands have decreased to only 5%. The lack of understory vegetation has contributed to declining deer densities. From 2001 to 2016, Land Between the Lakes deer harvest is showing declining trends as per the “2017 Deer Report.” A “habitat maintenance” backlog for maintenance of early successional habitat exists on the Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area, and this habitat type is essential, not only for the region’s deer herd, but for many species of songbirds and game birds as well. According to the Southeastern Grasslands Initiative (2017): “The loss of Southern grasslands has contributed to plummeting populations of many iconic species of animals (Bobwhite Quail, Monarch Butterflies, Greater Prairie Chicken) and plants.
- **FUNDING** – Between 2015 and 2018, Land Between the Lakes’ facilities budget has decreased by more than half and between 2015 and 2019 its recreation operations budget has gone down by



30%. Greater fiscal pressures on recreational facilities and program development will come with rising energy and operating costs. The condition of recreation and heritage assets has steadily diminished, resulting in a ballooning backlog of maintenance needs in the amount of \$7.8M. Investing in innovative and sustainable recreation planning, programs, and infrastructure requires funding beyond traditional government sources.

- HUNTING, FISHING & WILDLIFE VIEWING TRENDS** - In 2016, 255 million people 16 years and older lived in the United States and 1 of 7 of these U.S. residents went fishing. While the national participation rate was 14 percent, the regional rate in the East South-Central Region was higher at 20%. (Service, 2016) By 2060, total participation in birding, fishing, and hunting will increase in the South, with birding projected to experience an increase in the rate of participation. Activities oriented toward viewing and photographing nature (scenery, flowers/trees, and wildlife) have been among the fastest growing in popularity in the South. (Greis, 2013) However, while popularity is increasing, habitat conditions are on the decline.



## STAKEHOLDER INTERESTS & CONCERNS

### Public Comments Received July-August 2018

- “Hunting...has to be managed in a way that provides...wildlife the maximum benefit to flourish.”*
- “Create more and better small game habitat, in particular edge habitats.”*
- “Would like to see more Forest management, the woods are closing in and are too thick. It’s not growing much at ground level for animals to survive!”*
- “Lately we have noticed a problem with wild hogs destroying woodland habitat at LBL.”*
- “Many people come from miles around to deer hunt LBL, however that has declined in recent years due to the declining deer herd in LBL. We could see a decline in current fishermen as well as the Asian Carp continue to consume large quantities of plankton and displace the baitfish vital to survival of other species like bass; less bass means less fishermen.”*
- “For sure the fishing and hunting interests will continue to be the most important attractors to the LBL near term and must be strongly supported.”*

### Common Themes from the December 2018 Community Visioning Session

