

Board of Conservation and Recreation
Thursday, April 24, 2025
Claytor Lake State Park

TIME AND PLACE

The meeting of the Board of Conservation and Recreation took place at 9:00 a.m. on Thursday, April 24, 2025, at Claytor Lake State Park.

BOARD OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION MEMBERS PRESENT

Ms. Esther M. Nizer, Chair
Mr. Hunter H. Ihrman, Vice Chair
Chief Walt "Red Hawk" Brown (Remote Participation)
The Honorable James Cheng
Colonel Eric A. Hoggard (Remote Participation)
The Honorable Douglas Domenech
Mr. John W. Inge, IV
The Honorable Kyle Kilgore (Remote Participation)
Ms. Gretchen Byrd
Mr. Ross Stewart

BOARD OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION MEMBERS NOT PRESENT

Mrs. Susan Allen
Ms. Kat Maybury

STAFF PRESENT

The Honorable Stefanie Taillon, Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources
Matthew S. Wells, Director
Laura Ellis, Deputy Director for Administration and Finance
Frank Stovall, Deputy Director for Operations
Dr. Melissa Baker, Division Director, Virginia State Parks
Jason Bulluck, Division Director, Natural Heritage
Whitten Cluff, Executive Assistant for Operations
Lisa McGee, Director for Policy and Planning
Kelly McClary, Division Director, Planning and Recreation Resources
David Neudeck, Public Communications and Marketing Director
Tim Shrader, Eastern Field Operation Manager
Dave Collett, Western Field Operation Manager
Josh Ellington, Chief of Resource Management
Andrew Philpot, District Manager
Samantha Wangsgard, Chief Planner
Lesley Starke, Stewardship Chief
Broady Havens, Park Manager – Claytor Lake
Sam Sweeny, Park Manager - NRT

ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM

With eight (8) members of the Board present, a quorum was established.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Nizer called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and called for introductions.

REVIEW AND RENEWAL OF THE VIRTUAL PARTICIPATION POLICY – *Lisa McGee, Director for Policy and Planning*

In accordance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, which requires annual adoption of a Board Virtual Participation Policy, Ms. McGee presented an amended policy that included legislative amendments enacted during the 2024 General Assembly Session. Key provisions included:

- Up to 50% of meetings may be held entirely virtually.
- Virtual participation for health or caregiving reasons counts toward physical quorum.

BOARD ACTION

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the policy as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

REGULATORY ACTION – REPEAL OBSOLETE REGULATIONS – *Lisa McGee, Director for Policy and Planning*

Ms. McGee requested that the Board authorize the Agency to initiate a regulatory action to repeal the Regulations Governing Application for and Use of Grant Funds to Localities (4VAC45-10). These regulations were initially promulgated in 1986 under the former Board on Conservation and Development of Public Beaches. This Board was later abolished in 2003 and its powers were transferred to the Board of Conservation and Recreation. As a repeal of these regulations was anticipated, they were not officially renumbered and transferred to BCR under 4VAC3. Upon a review of these regulations and of Chapter 7 – Shoreline Erosion and Public Beach Preservation of Title 10.1 of the Code of Virginia, it was determined that these regulations are no longer applicable, given the lack of current funding for the program and the unclear authority for their original promulgation. Future guidance on any grant funds for public beaches should be managed through updated Board guidelines rather than formal regulations.

BOARD ACTION

A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Department to initiate a regulatory action to repeal the regulations and to manage any future grant opportunities through updated Board guidance. The motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JANUARY 3, 2025

Amendment noted to correct name spelling.

BOARD ACTION

A motion was made and seconded to approve the January 3, 2025 meeting minutes as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

REVIEW & APPROVAL OF THE LAKE ANNA MASTER PLAN – *Ms. Kelly McClary and Ms. Samantha Wangsgard*

Ms. McClary requested that the Board take action on the Lake Anna State Park Master Plan. Master Plans are reviewed every 10 years and updated as required by legislation. The full master plan was provided to the Board and Ms. Wangsgard presented a review of the plan.

Key Components included:

- \$50M phased development plan over 30 years.

- Emphasis on enhancing beach access, campgrounds, visitor centers, and historic interpretation (e.g., Gold Mine Trail).
- Significant staffing increases required as development progresses (9 to 19 FTEs).
- Emphasis on sustainability, public access, and community engagement.

Board Discussion

A request was made to include language emphasizing responsible and efficient use of taxpayer funds in the master plan.

BOARD ACTION

A motion was made and seconded to approve the Lake Anna Master Plan with the addition of language noting fiscal responsibility. The motion passed unanimously.

NAMING OF A NEW NATURAL AREA PRESERVE - *Mr. Jason Bulluck, Director, Division of Natural Heritage*

Mr. Bulluck provided a presentation on what will be Virginia's 67th natural area preserve and requested the Board's approval of the recommended name of Southside Savanna for the preserve.

Key Highlights:

- 3,899 dedicated natural areas acres in Halifax County, historically known as Falkland Farms.
- Portion of the largest ever donation of land for permanent conservation to the Commonwealth, a total of 7,368 acres, with an approximate market value of \$12M
- Natural Area Resources:
 - Southern Piedmont Hardpan Forest
 - Southern Piedmont Basic Oak-Hickory Forest
 - At least five globally or state critically imperiled plant species
 - Anticipated to represent the largest area of highest floristic diversity and rarity in the southeastern US
 - Restoration will result in the largest remaining piedmont savanna in the eastern US
- Naming of the reserve is to capture the location and what is being preserved or protected.

BOARD ACTION

A motion was made and seconded to approve the recommendation of Southside Savanna as the name for the Commonwealth's 67th Natural Area Preserve. The motion passed unanimously.

BREAK

The Board adjourned for a break at 9:48 a.m.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called back to order at 10:00 a.m.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT – *Matthew S. Wells, DCR Director*

Prior to providing the Director's report, Director Wells introduced Secretary Taillon. Secretary Taillon delivered opening remarks reflecting on her recent appointment and priorities:

Key Highlights:

- **Newly Sworn In:** Secretary Taillon was officially sworn in on April 7, 2025. Her first official event was the ribbon cutting at the new High Bridge Trail State Park Visitor Center, which she praised as a strong start to her term.
- **Hurricane Helene Recovery:**
 - Highlighted the extensive damage at Claytor Lake State Park and surrounding areas.
 - Praised the collaborative effort between DCR staff, local teams, and federal partners to reopen the park and restore operations within approximately 3.5 months.
 - Emphasized the governor’s strong commitment to timely and effective disaster recovery.
- **Looking Ahead:**
 - Key areas of focus include dam safety and advancing state park development initiatives, including opening new parks and improving existing facilities.
 - Secretary Taillon expressed enthusiasm about working with the board throughout the year.
- **Board Appreciation:**
 - Acknowledged the board’s voluntary service and the significant time commitment involved.
 - Commended members for their continued dedication despite other personal and professional obligations.

Director Wells provided the Board with the following report:

In January, a detailed accomplishment report was provided to the Board for their review and consideration. Since January, DCR Divisions associated with the Board of Conservation and Recreation report the following significant achievements:

[Virginia State Parks](#)

- **Volunteer Statistics:** In 2024, volunteers donated a grand total of 221,132 hours of service to Virginia State Parks. At the 2024 rate of \$33.49 per volunteer hour, volunteers provided over 7.4 million dollars (\$7,405,710,68) worth of work to Virginia State Parks. Our volunteers served the equivalent number of hours of 110 full-time employees. Volunteers truly are an extension of our parks.
- **Pocahontas CCC Cabin Beds:** Soldiers from Fort Greg Adams assisted the park with the start of a winter-long project to assemble 60+ bunk beds for every group cabin. Several more military groups are scheduled to continue to help with the project.
- **Workplace Safety Training:** New and returning site safety officers from all Virginia State Parks completed training on DCR’s Cartograph Database, OSHA updates, trailer loading and strapping practices, and team task assignments.
- **Green Travel Awards Conference:** This annual conference brings together leaders from across the Commonwealth to share successes and ideas for continuing excellence in sustainability efforts in the travel industry. Virginia State Parks is a key partner in the organization. Two projects from State Parks were award winners this year. Bear Creek Lake State Park - Friends of Bear Creek Lake State Park’s NexTrex Recycling Challenge received a Virginia Green Travel Star Award for Innovative Green Project. With the help of their Friends Group, Bear Creek collected plastic bags from park guests and the community and sent them off to Trex with the reward of a new bench that was made from the recycled bags. Pictures from the Awards Presentation appear below.

[Virginia Natural Heritage Program](#)

- **Prescribed Fire Crew Boss Academy:** Stewardship staff participated in and helped to instruct trainees in a week-long Prescribed Fire Crew Boss Academy. Trainees, 34 total, from four regions of Virginia, eight other states and from 14 different agencies earned certifications in fireline followership, crew/fire leadership, firing operations, single resource, and crew boss status. This event, and others like it, are critically valuable investments, that supply fire-trained professionals across the country for both prescribed fire operations (which helps to prevent catastrophic wildfires), as well as wildfire response efforts.

- **New Species Discovered:** The globally vulnerable and state critically imperiled Chapman's purpletop (*Tridens chapmanii*), a rare grass species, was discovered/confirmed, in a remote area of Pocahontas State Park. This is now the third known occurrence of this species in Virginia. Other discoveries made via federal Section 6 grants provided through VDACS, resulted in reporting in January that confirmed two new populations of state-critically imperiled Frosted elfin (*Callophrys irus*), the first ones discovered in the Virginia mountains in decades; two new locations of the critically imperiled Piedmont clubtail (*Hylogomphus parvidens*) dragonfly; and reconfirmation of 9 of the 11 known populations of the federally and state listed Rusty-patched bumblebee (*Bombus affinis*). All such discoveries and confirmations can help to prevent new species from being listed with regulatory status at state and federal levels.
- **Endangered Atlantic Pigtoe Mussel Surveys Completed:** Final Reports submitted for surveys of the federally endangered Atlantic Pigtoe mussel, a project funded by the US Fish & Wildlife Service and the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources. This was the second and final year of the project, to inform listing and recovery decisions by the USF&WS and DWR. Only six mussels of the species were found over the two-year survey, and across five survey sites along the Meherrin and Nottaway Rivers.
- **Prescribed Fire at the Cedars:** Two high priority first-entry burns were successfully conducted at The Cedars NAP, with assistance from Department of Forestry, Virginia State Parks, and the Virginia Chapter of the Nature Conservancy. The burn focused on a 16-acre field that was consumed with invasive Chinese lespedeza that also served as a source of invasion into surrounding areas of the Preserve. This burn was preceded, and will be followed by, preparatory activities such as fire fuels management and herbicide treatments, which helped to ensure that this entry burn had greatest positive impact.

Planning and Recreation Resources

- **Cabin Restoration at Westmoreland and First Landing:** Bidding is underway for the design and construction work for the cabin renovations at First Landing and Westmoreland State Parks. The project scope includes renovations to 20 cabins at First Landing and 25 cabins at Westmoreland State Parks. The majority of renovations will be completed at the historic CCC cabins at these parks.
- **Sweet Run Master Planning:** The first Sweet Run State Park Master Plan Public Information meeting was held this month. Over 60 members of the public attended the In-person meeting and over 50 people attended the virtual meeting. The master plan process will continue to seek public input throughout the year. Sweet Run is one of DCR's newest state parks in Loudon County, VA.
- **Mayo River Master Planning:** The Mayo River Master Planning team has completed their public information meeting, the advisory meeting, the Visitor Experience meeting, and the needs assessment meeting. The team is currently conducting a market study.
- **Virginia Outdoors Plan:** PRR staff have continued to roll out the Virginia Outdoors Plan through public meetings and presentations at conferences. Most recently, the VOP was presented at the Environment Virginia Symposium, which is a collaborative conference of environmental organizations and state agencies. Next week, the VOP will be presented at the Virginia United Land Trust conference (VaULT).
- **High Bridge Trail Visitor Center:** On April 8, 2025, High Bridge Trail State Park held its grand opening for their new Visitor Center.
- **Roof Renovation Projects:** Multiple Roof renovation projects have begun across the state. The Design and Construction section of PRR has received bids to replace over 50 roofs across Virginia in a multi-pronged approach to many deferred maintenance issues. This project will continue throughout 2025 replacing the most compromised roofs.

Land Conservation and Real Property Office

- **Grayson Highlands State Park Expansion:** On March 26, DCR closed on the acquisition of 5.054 acres at Grayson Highlands State Park. Known as the "Campbell Tract", the property was an inholding along the eastern boundary of the park, along Big Wilson Creek. The acquisition protects the property from being privately developed within the park.
- **Deep Run Ponds Natural Area Preserve Expansion:** DCR closed on the acquisition of the "Kaylor Tract" at Deep Run Ponds Natural Area Preserve. This 100-acre addition in Rockingham County was purchased with a VLCF grant. While the property was already held in an open-space easement by VOF and the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation (SVBF), it now permanently protects the northernmost and one of the largest karst ponds in this preserve complex.
- **Preservation of Brander Street:** DCR closed on the donation of a 4.465-acre open-space easement from the City of Richmond on a property known as "Brander Street." The easement is co-held with the Capital Region Land Conservancy (CRLC) and will be managed as a part of the James River Park System. The property, located along the river east of I-95, was acquired from Norfolk Southern Railroad Corporation and contains a portion of the Richmond Slave Trail. The project was funded by a VLCF grant.
- **VLCF Projects:**
 - Stafford County successfully closed out an FY24 VLCF grant for \$248,450 to place a conservation easement on a 73-acre farm, with match funding from the county's Purchase of Development Rights program. The property has historic significance, protects an ecological core, and is adjacent to two conserved parcels under easement with VOF. The property is located along a Virginia scenic byway, providing visual access to the traveling public.
 - A FY24 grant to VOF for \$537,500 to conserve a 186-acre farm in Nottoway County was successfully closed out. The conservation easement protects the property's agricultural fields and forests, wetlands, and more than 3,000 feet of frontage on the state scenic Nottoway River.
 - A VOF easement protecting 138-acres of farmland in Loudoun County's Beaverdam Creek Historic Roadways District, and the acquisition of 91 acres in Grayson County by New River Soil and Water Conservation District to create New River Hill Park. The new park will provide a natural area for public outdoor recreation and water access. It borders the New River, an American Heritage River and protects the scenic viewshed for those traversing the New River Blueway.

FINANCIAL REPORT – Ms. Laura Ellis, Deputy Director for Administration and Finance

Ms. Ellis reported on the financial conditions of DCR:

Financial Report – April 24, 2025

General Fund Appropriation & Expenditures

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| • Fiscal Year 2025 Total Legislative Appropriation: | \$377,268,801 |
| • Total transfers and adjustments: | (\$265,965,768) |
| • Fiscal Year 2025 Total Legislative Appropriation Available for Agency Operations: | \$111,303,033 |

Figure 1: Appropriation Transfers & Adjustments:

FY2025 Legislative Appropriation		\$ 377,268,801
Appropriation Transfers and Adjustments		
Water Quality Improvement Fund Transfers	(138,076,028)	
Water Quality Improvement Fund Reserve Transfer	(2,583,531)	
Dam Safety/Flood Prevention & Protection	(5,732,147)	
Land Conservation Fund Transfers	(16,000,000)	
Dam Safety transfer to Virginia Community Flood Preparedness Fund	(100,000,000)	
SWCD Dam Repair	(1,500,000)	
Central Appropriation Adjustments	1,726,999	
Mandatory Carryforward	3,712,942	
Discretionary Carryforward	17,485,996	
		(240,965,769)

Figure 2: General Fund Division Budgets and Expenditures March 31, 2025.

Division	Division Targets	YTD Actual (March 31, 2025)	Target vs Actual %
Natural Heritage	\$ 7,817,195	\$ 3,962,832	50.7%
State Parks	\$ 37,264,338	\$ 31,988,413	85.8%
PRR (Incl Design & Construction)**	\$ 23,477,236	\$ 3,387,584	14.4%
Director's Office - Admin- Finance	\$ 13,561,008	\$ 6,691,313	49.3%
Grand Total	\$ 82,119,777	\$ 46,030,141	56.1%

*Notes: State Parks reflects only General Fund appropriations and expenditures, approximately 50% of the total parks budget. PRR appropriations includes significant capital project pass throughs for specific locality projects, including locality owned boat ramps (\$6M), swimming facilities (\$9M), and other similar items.

Figure 3: State Park Operating Revenues July 1, 2024, through March 31, 2025

	FY25 Estimate	YTD Actual (Through March 31, 2025)	YTD Actual /Estimate	Prior Year YTD Actual (Through March 31, 2024)	YOY Change
Grand Total	\$ 32,818,211	\$ 21,673,125	66%	\$ 22,316,276	-3%

PLANNING AND RECREATION RESOURCES CAPITAL PROJECT SUMMARY – Ms. Kelly McClary, Director, Division of Planning and Recreation Resources

Crow’s Nest Natural Area Preserve

Objective: This project scope includes the demolition of an existing structure and the development of a new parking area at Crow’s Nest Natural Area Preserve. The work includes a new access for the site. The project was funded with federal American Rescue Plan Act funds.

Budget:	Resources	Expenditures	Encumbered	Remaining
	\$845,000	\$26,298	\$135,421	\$683,280

Status: Design work is underway including permits from the Division of Engineering and Buildings.

Completion Date: December 2025.

Douthat Lodge Renovations

Objective: This project scope included the interior renovations of the historic lodge at Douthat State Park. The work includes the interior renovation of the 5 bedroom lodge. The kitchen and living area renovations and upgrades are also being completed. The project was funded with American Rescue Plan funds (ARPA).

Budget:

Resources	Expenditures	Encumbered	Remaining
\$ 1,048,316	\$ 604,714	\$ 401,920	\$ 41,682

Status: The project is under construction. The building envelope is water-tight to ensure the structural integrity of the building. The kitchen work is on-going and pictured below.

Completion Date: Fall 2025: Complete

Westmoreland State Park Shoreline Stabilization

Objective: This project scope included break water additions to the shore at Westmoreland State Park. In collaboration and partnership with VDOT, DCR worked to identify locations along the shore that were not stabilized and were allowing sediment into the Potomac River. This is the third project that the two agencies worked together utilizing VDOT funding for a successful result. The work included rip-rap placement and sand deposits and native grasses to create an established shore. The project was funded with Virginia Public Building Authority bonds and supplemented with 2021 federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.

Budget:

Resources	Expenditures	Encumbered	Remaining
\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0

Status: The project is 100% complete. This project is in Westmoreland County and ensures the public can enjoy the continued use of the shore.

Est. Completion Date: Complete

High Bridge Trail State Park-New Visitor Center

Objective: This project scope included the new construction of an approximately 2,600sf visitor center within ¼ mile from the historic High Bridge. The scope included a new well, waste water system and underground power; all necessary to construct the facility. The building offers park office space, visitor restrooms and a large exhibit and lobby space to welcome visitors. It also includes a large outdoor deck overlooking the trail. The

building location is the only ADA access point to, and the nearest facility to, the High Bridge. This project was funded with Virginia Public Building Authority bonds and supplemented with 2021 federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.

Budget:

Resources	Expenditures	Encumbered	Remaining
\$ 3,194,444	\$ 2,264,218	\$ 106,529	\$ 823,651

Status:

The project is substantially complete. The next steps include furnishing the office spaces and exhibit space.

Est. Completion Date:

April 2025-Dedication event - Exhibits -On-going

Design and Construction Projects-2025		
Project	Budget	Status (2025)
High Bridge Trail Center	\$ 2,544,440	Construction
BC Utility / ADA Upgrades	\$ 2,440,000	Construction
CL Utility / ADA Upgrades	\$ 1,660,000	Construction
FS Utility / ADA Upgrades	\$ 1,550,000	Construction
NRT Repair/Replace Trestles	\$ 8,500,000	Construction
New Residence, Grayson	\$ 600,000	Construction
New Residence, Caledon	\$ 600,000	Construction
New Residence, Shenandoah River	\$ 600,000	Construction
New Residence, Lake Anna	\$ 600,000	Construction
New Residences, Seven Bends	\$ 1,200,000	Construction
New Residences, Natural Bridge	\$ 1,200,000	Construction
New Residence, Machicomoco	\$ 600,000	Construction
New Residence, York River	\$ 600,000	Construction
Campground Infrastructure, Grayson	\$ 3,181,653	Construction
Belle Isle Manor Improvements	\$ 4,700,000	Design
WE Renovate Existing Cabins	\$ 8,440,000	Construction
FL Renovate Existing Cabins	\$ 7,718,000	Construction
Various Critical Bathhouse Renovations	\$ 2,009,000	Design
WE Road and Bank Stabilization	\$ 14,043,000	Construction

Douthat Renovate Lodge	\$ 1,048,316	Construction
NH Mountain Region Improvements	\$ 1,177,500	Construction
NH Southwest Region Improvements	\$ 2,800,000	Construction
NH North Landing River Site Access	\$ 2,096,280	Construction
Crow's Nest Raven Road Parking Area	\$ 845,000	Construction
Various Roofs Central VA	\$ 1,000,000	Construction
Various Roofs Northern VA	\$ 2,259,500	Construction
Various Roofs Eastern VA	\$ 740,500	Construction
Various Roofs Southwestern VA	\$ 1,000,000	Construction
LE Infrastructure Improvements	\$ 3,015,000	Design
Natural Tunnel Pool Renovations	\$ 4,000,000	Design
Various HVAC Replacements	\$ 976,808	Construction
Various Paving Repairs	\$ 1,726,957	Construction
Kiptopeke Dredging	\$ 622,995	Construction
Various Cabin Restroom Repairs	\$ 750,000	Construction
Various Chimney Repairs	\$ 1,000,000	Construction
Various Repair Sewage Systems	\$ 200,000	Design
Sweet Run Residence Repairs	\$ 300,000	Construction
Westmoreland Residence Well Repairs	\$ 300,000	Construction
Kiptopeke Pier Repairs	\$ 300,000	Construction
Caledon Visitor Center Repairs	\$ 300,000	Construction
Shot Tower Repairs	\$ 100,000	Design
Various Residential/ Cabin Repairs	\$ 500,000	Construction
Leesylvania Pier Repairs	\$ 375,000	Design
Twin Lakes Cabin 6 Emergency Repairs	\$ 150,000	Construction
York River Visitor Center Repairs	\$ 600,000	Design

MAINTENANCE AND ASSET MANAGEMENT IN STATE PARKS – *Dr. Melissa Baker, State Parks Director*

Dr. Baker provided an overview of Virginia State Parks' assets, maintenance backlog, challenges, and the launch of a new statewide asset management system.

Scope of Park Assets

- Over 79,000 acres, 1,400+ buildings, 313 cabins, 50 yurts, 700+ miles of roads/trails, utility systems, and 3 museums.
- Estimated replacement value: \$1.24 billion
- State parks function like small cities with complex infrastructure.

Deferred Maintenance

- Total identified deferred maintenance: \$388 million
 - \$119M funded
 - \$269M unfunded
- Major needs: ADA upgrades, sewer repairs, HVAC systems, historic structure compliance

Funding Structure

- Capital projects: Over \$3M
- Maintenance reserve: \$25,000–\$3M
- Operating budget: ~\$65M total (used for routine maintenance)

Factors Contributing to Deferred Maintenance

1. Organizational:
 - Retirements lead to loss of institutional knowledge.
 - Park managers promoted rapidly; generalists wear many hats.
 - High reliance on part-time/seasonal staff (only ~329 FTEs of ~1,500 total).
2. Data & Process Challenges:
 - Inconsistent tracking across parks.
 - Limited centralized data; prioritization was subjective.
 - Lack of written procedures and training.
3. Funding Gaps:
 - NSF benchmark: 2–4% annual reinvestment (~\$25–50M needed).
 - DCR's funding level falls short, contributing to the backlog.

Strategic Improvements

- New Resource Management Section established to focus on physical assets.
- Hiring of Physical Resource Manager and GIS Specialist.
- Improved staff training and procurement support.
- Development of prioritization framework based on:
 - Safety
 - Visitor services
 - Escalating cost risk

Launch of Asset Management System: Cartegraph (OpenGov)

- Phased implementation began in 2024:
 - Phase 1: Pilot parks like Bear Creek Lake using the system for preventative maintenance scheduling.
 - Phase 2: Statewide rollout begins Fall 2025.
- Tracks:
 - Buildings, components (e.g., roofs, HVAC), equipment, and even vehicles.
 - Lifecycle status, condition assessments, maintenance history, GIS locations.

- Mobile app integration enables real-time data entry and work order generation in the field.
- All parks will be onboarded with baseline data and at least one trained staff member by end of 2025.

Forward-Looking Goals

- Standardize workflows across parks via working groups (e.g., cabin management).
- Enable transparency and shared access across park units.
- Use system data to drive smarter budgeting and long-term planning.
- Long-term goal: Build a lasting foundation for the next generation of park managers.

Notable Points

- DCR is one of the first state park systems in the U.S. to implement Cartegraph (Texas also recently adopted it).
- The project was funded internally without requesting new appropriations, using existing revenue.
- Strong emphasis on change management and long-term value.

FOCUSING ON THE FUTURE– *Mr. Frank Stovall; Deputy Director of Operations*

Frank Stovall provided a presentation on Focusing on the Future and framed his remarks around the importance of making strategic, values-driven decisions as the agency plans for the next decade, particularly with an eye toward 2036, a landmark year for conservation in Virginia.

2036 Milestones – A Historic Opportunity

- **100th anniversary** of Virginia State Parks.
- **100th anniversary** of Shenandoah National Park.
- **70th anniversary** of the Virginia Open Space Land Act.
- **50th anniversary** of the Natural Heritage Program.

These anniversaries highlight Virginia’s national leadership in conservation and outdoor recreation policy.

Why It Matters

- State Parks and Natural Area Preserves now protect over 130,000 acres.
- Hosted nearly 8 million visitors last year.
- Outdoor recreation in Virginia contributes \$13 billion to the economy annually.
- DCR programs alone had an impact of nearly \$400 million in 2023.
- 80% of Virginians surveyed use the outdoors for recreation; 70% support increased funding.

The Power of Purpose and Mission

- Stovall emphasized staying focused on each division’s core purpose:
 - State parks: public access and recreation
 - Natural heritage: biodiversity conservation
 - Real estate and planning: land protection and development
- Staff must understand **why** their role matters and how it contributes to broader conservation goals.

“Trail Marker” Framework for Decision-Making

Stovall introduced a metaphor of trail markers as decision-making tools to guide the agency in:

1. Staying mission-focused
2. Strengthening internal culture
3. Protecting special places
4. Emphasizing education and public engagement
5. Achieving professional and operational excellence
6. Expanding equitable access and removing barriers

7. Providing high-quality visitor experiences
8. Ensuring adequate staffing and working conditions
9. Supporting and listening to frontline personnel
10. Building and maintaining strong local partnerships

“Trail markers don’t make the decisions, but they help us make the right ones.”

Education and Connection

- Stovall stressed the role of education in long-term conservation: “People don’t protect what they don’t understand.”
- Education is not separate from conservation—it is a core strategy to connect people to place.
- Programs like accessible trails, ranger-led activities, and adaptive recreation (e.g., Track Chairs) make parks inclusive and relevant.

Infrastructure & Staffing Investment

- Emphasized importance of the asset management system, new capital project capacity, and building intergenerational infrastructure.
- DCR’s project load is growing rapidly; new hires for capital project management will help ease pressure on staff and accelerate delivery.

Supporting Staff & Volunteers

- Highlighted the vital role of frontline personnel, such as park rangers and interpreters.
- Noted the emotional and operational value of simply having visible staff presence in parks.
- Expressed gratitude for volunteers, like Master Naturalists, who amplify DCR’s mission.

Partnerships and Economic Impact

- Local partnerships are central to community development and trail town strategies.
- DCR receives support letters from communities eager to be part of the outdoor recreation economy.

Closing Thoughts

- The work being done today sets the stage for Virginia’s conservation legacy into the next century.
- Staff are not afraid of bold goals: “We started six state parks at once in 1936—we don’t shy away from challenges.”
- Encouraged board members to see how asset management, planning, staffing, and education all connect to a single purpose: making good decisions for the long-term stewardship of Virginia’s natural and cultural resources.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m.