

Board of Conservation & Recreation



**October 2, 2025
Twin Lakes State Park**

Agenda Items

- **Business Meeting Agenda (p.1)**
- **April 24, 2025, Minutes (p.3)**
- **Memo: Public Participation Guidelines (p. 20)**
- **Director's Report (p. 21)**
- **Financial Report (p. 24)**
- **Virginia's Scenic Rivers – Evaluation Criteria Explained (p. 25)**

Additional Items

- **Public Comment Received in Response to Periodic Review of 4 VAC3-11**
- **FY 2027 & FY 2028 Capital Requests Summary**
- **Falkland State Conservation Area Short Term Action and Management Plan**
- **2024 Annual Report: Public Safety and Law Enforcement**

Non-Agenda Items

- **Design and Construction – Capital Projects Update* (p. 28)**
- **Parks Operational Update* (p. 34)**
- **Natural Heritage Update* (p. 35)**

***These items are not related to presentations or agenda actions by the Board. They are intended to be routine updates for the Board. If there are any questions on these enclosures, please contact a member of DCR**

Mr. Hunter H. Ihrman, Vice Chair
The Honorable Duane Adams
Mrs. Susan Allen
Chief Walt "Red Hawk" Brown
Ms. Gretchen Byrd
The Honorable James Cheng

The Honorable Douglas Domenech
Colonel Eric A. Hoggard
Mr. John W. Inge, IV
The Honorable Kyle Kilgore
Ms. Kat Maybury
Mr. Ross Stewart

AGENDA

- I. Welcome & Call to Order – Mr. Hunter Ihrman**
- II. Election of a New Chair & Vice Chair – Mr. Hunter Ihrman**
- III. Approval of the April 24, 2025, Minutes – Chair**
- IV. Review of the Board’s Public Participation Guidelines – Mr. Paul Saunders**
- V. Director’s Report – Director Matthew Wells**
- VI. Financial Report – Mr. Frank Stovall**
- VII. Falkland State Conservation Area – Mr. Frank Stovall**
- VIII. Virginia’s Scenic Rivers – Ms. Kelly McClary**
- IX. Telling Hard Stories – Ms. Katie Shepard**
- X. Ensuring Safety in Our Parks & Preserves – Mr. Scott Vantrease**
- XI. Public Comment – Chair**
- XII. Announcements & Adjournment - Chair**

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III. Approval of the Minutes – Thursday, April 24, 2025

VIRGINIA BOARD OF CONSERVATION & RECREATION

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. Kat Maybury
Ms. Gretchen Byrd
Mr. Ross Stewart

BOARD OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION MEMBERS NOT PRESENT

Mrs. Susan Allen
Ms. Kay 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.

<i>Budget:</i>	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).

<i>Budget:</i>	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.

<i>Budget:</i>	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.

<i>Budget:</i>	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.

IV. Review of the Public Participation Guidelines

VIRGINIA BOARD OF CONSERVATION & RECREATION



MEMORANDUM

To: Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation
From: Paul G. Saunders, III, Senior Policy Analyst
Date: October 2, 2025
Subject: Public Participation Guidelines – Recommendation for Retention Without Modification

Applicable Code Sections:

- Va. Code [§ 2.2-4007.02](#): Requires agencies to adopt Public Participation Guidelines (PPGs) to promote public involvement in the development of regulations.
- Va. Code § 2.2-4017 and [Executive Order 19 \(2022\)](#): Requires a periodic review of regulations, including PPGs, to ensure they remain applicable and necessary.

Background:

The Board of Conservation and Recreation adopted its current Public Participation Guidelines ([4 VAC3-11](#)) in accordance with the Virginia Administrative Process Act to ensure transparency and public involvement in regulatory actions. These guidelines establish procedures for notifying the public, soliciting input, and conducting hearings related to regulatory development.

As part of the periodic review process, notice of the periodic review of the PPGs was published in the *Virginia Register* on July 14, 2025, initiating a public comment period that closed on August 4, 2025. Only one public comment was received during this period recommending retention of the guidelines in their current form without modification.

Staff have reviewed the existing PPGs and determined that they continue to meet all statutory requirements and effectively support public engagement. No substantive or procedural deficiencies have been identified, and no changes in law or policy require revision at this time.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Board retain the current Public Participation Guidelines without modification.

Suggested Motion:

“I move that the Board of Conservation and Recreation retain the Public Participation Guidelines without modification and direct the Department to submit the decision to retain the regulation without change in accordance with the Administrative Process Act and all applicable policies and procedures.”

Attachment:

- Public comment received in response to the periodic review of 4 VAC3-11.

Director's Report

VIRGINIA BOARD OF CONSERVATION & RECREATION

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

Virginia State Parks

- **Search and Rescue Incident at Fairy Stone:** Resident Rangers at Fairy Stone State Park were called out for an injured hiker on Stuart's Knob. Chief Ranger Ian Smith and Park Manager Adam Layman were able to locate the individual, who had gone off the trail and ended up down a steep rock face. Assistant Park Manager Ethan Seaver led EMS and the Patrick County Special Operations Team to the individual's location via the Whiskey Run Trail. Due to the terrain, rope rigging was set up, and the individual was secured into a Stokes basket and pulled up the slope back to the trail, from where responders carried him out to the awaiting ambulance. Special thanks to the Special Operations Team, Fairy Stone, and Patrick Springs Volunteer Fire Departments, and the Patrick County Sheriff's Office for a successful rescue.
- **Southwest Virginia Museum Hosts "Westmoreland Coal and the Scotia Explosions":** Regarded as one of the most catastrophic mine disasters in U.S. history, the explosions at the Scotia Mine in Letcher County, KY, rocked this region. These unfortunate incidents, occurring just over the mountain from the Southwest Virginia Museum Historical State Park in Big Stone Gap, VA, led to significant changes in health and safety regulations within the mining industry and left enduring effects on Southwest Virginia and beyond. This special program was held at Mountain Empire Community College's Goodloe Center and was facilitated by Brian McKnight, an author, historian, and history professor at the University of Virginia at Wise. It primarily featured a discussion with several members of the mine rescue teams from Westmoreland Coal Company who were involved in the response to the Scotia explosions in 1976. Attendees had the opportunity to hear their personal accounts of this crucial event, which is recognized as a defining moment in the coal mining industry. Staff from the Southwest Virginia Museum Historical State Park were present to kick off the event and provide a welcome and introduction, but also to greet visitors, address inquiries, and showcase a special pop-up exhibit. Additionally, partners from the Wise County Historical Society attended the event, displaying various items from their own collection.
- **National Night Out – Building Community Relationships:** Throughout the Commonwealth, State Parks Law Enforcement Rangers participated in National Night Out – a tradition to strengthen ties between community members and law enforcement. The Rangers engaged with eventgoers through providing safety tips, wildlife facts, and games with various prizes.
- **New River Trail State Park Manager Receives Service Award:** Park Manager Sweeney won the 2025 Doug Blatney Public Service Award from the New River Conservancy Sunday, July 27, 2025. The award is a given for outstanding service to the New River and its communities. New River Trail State Park and New River Conservancy have shared river cleanups along the trail and after Hurricane Helene, we shared multiple cleanups around Foster Falls. This long-standing partnership as expanded as the Conservancy has spread its North Carolina operations through Virginia and into West Virginia over the last few years. This award is a testament to the staff of New River Trail State Park and its Friends of New River Trail Citizen Support Organization.

Virginia Natural Heritage Program

- **Natural Heritage botanists rediscovered *Centunculus minimus*:** a flowering plant reaching 1 to rarely 10 centimeters in height. This species is ranked G5 (globally secure), and Virginia S1 (critically imperiled in the Commonwealth). It is ranked by NatureServe network programs as either rare or historic in 16 states or provinces. In Virginia, *C. minimus* was first reported in 1886 from Fairfax County; second in Prince William County in 2022; and this third occurrence, by DCR-Natural Heritage, in Augusta County. **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.
- **New state record plant discovered:** On September 3, 2025, field botanist Jenny Stanley discovered a new state record for *Solidago ptarmicoides* (White Prairie-goldenrod; G5/S1) and a new occurrence of *Cirsium virginianum* (Virginia Thistle; G4/S2) in Dinwiddie County, Virginia. *Solidago ptarmicoides* is a midwestern disjunct which rarely occurs in eastern states and is entirely absent from the mid-Atlantic region. *Cirsium virginianum* occurs primarily in the Southeast and is uncommon throughout its range. Both species tend to occur on circumneutral hardpan soils in open, fire adapted habitats.

Planning and Recreation Resources

- **Douthat Lodge Renovations:** The Douthat Lodge Renovations are substantially complete. The \$1.2 Million capital project was funded with Federal American Rescue and Recovery Act funds. The project scope consisted of the historic renovations of the 1930's overnight lodge to include interior renovation to five bedrooms, a great room and bathrooms and kitchen. Modern utilities and amenities were adapted to match the historic condition to ensure historic integrity of the structure.
- **Twin Lakes SP - Emergency Storm Repairs to Cabin 6:** This emergency project is for the repair of Cabin #6 at Twin Lakes State Park damaged by fallen trees during a March storm event. Cabin 6 is a block residential cabin which suffered damage to exterior walls, roof, and interior finishes and has been closed to the public. Brockenbrough is the A/E consultant and Brock Construction out of Farmville, VA, is the General Contractor. The Contractor has mobilized with site cleanup and roof stabilization work now underway. Construction is scheduled to be completed by Fall 2025.
- **Belle Isle State Park – Belle Isle Manor Renovation:** This project is renovation of the park's namesake building, the circa 1760's Belle Isle Manor, its kitchen, and schoolhouse outbuildings, as well as the grounds and gardens. Improvements will incorporate accessibility including new public restrooms, a warming kitchen, parking area, new electrical service and water infrastructure, new sanitary septic system, full mechanical, electrical, and plumbing upgrades, structural repairs, roof, window and exterior wall restoration, and interior renovations to all historic finishes.

Land Conservation and Real Property Office

- **Lake Caledon South Tract Acquisition:** On Friday, June 20, DCR closed on a 276.3604-acre addition to Caledon State Park from The Trust for Public Land (TPL). The transaction was a subsequent closing from the Jarrell Family (a local developer) to TPL, TPL granted an open-space easement to the Navy (in exchange for \$900,000 in REPI funding), and TPL transferred the property to DCR.
- **Mayo's Island Open-Space Easement:** The Real Property Office closed on a 14.5-acre easement on Mayo's Island in downtown Richmond on Monday, and it was celebrated by Governor Youngkin and Mayor Avula on Tuesday. The easement is co-held with CRLC, and the land is owned by the City of Richmond as a part of the James River Park system. The project was funded by a \$1.5 million VLCF grant and a \$7.5 million CFPF grant.
- **VLCF Projects:**
 - Two VLCF grant projects successfully closed: The Rappahannock Tribe acquired and conserved 969 acres of ancestral tribal lands at Fones Cliffs along the Rappahannock River with the assistance of a \$1,716,166 grant. The property is now under easement with USFWS and Va. Dept. of Historic Resources. Capital Region Land Conservancy (CRLC) acquired and conserved 4.5 acres in the City of Richmond, which includes a portion of the historic Trail of the Enslaved, along the southern banks of the James River. This project received \$64,953 in grant funds and is now owned by the city and under easement with CRLC and DCR.
 - The VLCF Board met on June 3 to open the FY26 grant round. With the addition of returned grant funds to the annual appropriation, the total amount available is the most funding VLCF has ever announced: \$15M – The board is anticipating meeting in November to award the grants from this grant round.

Capital Budget Requests

- Enclosed is a review of the FY2027 & FY2028 Capital Budget Requests submitted by DCR.

V. Financial Report

VIRGINIA BOARD OF CONSERVATION & RECREATION

Financial Report – October 2, 2025

General Fund Appropriation & Expenditures

- Fiscal Year 2026 Total Legislative Appropriation: \$107,947,574
- Total transfers and adjustments: (\$19,926,882)
- Fiscal Year 2025 Total Legislative Appropriation Available for Agency Operations: \$88,020,692

Figure 1: Appropriation Transfers & Adjustments:

Appropriation Transfers and Adjustments	
Governor's Veto	(500,000)
WQIF Reserve	(2,583,531)
Dam Safety/Flood Prevention & Protection	(732,147)
Land Conservation Fund Transfers	(16,000,000)
SWCD Dam Repair	(1,500,000)
Mandatory Carryforward	1,388,796
	(19,926,882)

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

Division	Division Targets	YTD Actual	Target vs Actual
		(August 31, 2025)	%
Natural Heritage	\$ 6,258,843.00	\$ 1,363,897	21.8%
State Parks	\$ 36,922,219.00	\$ 17,470,732	47.3%
PRR (Incl Design & Construction)	\$ 3,794,354.00	\$ 817,940	21.6%
Director's Office - Admin- Finance	\$ 12,789,072.00	\$ 3,374,216	26.4%
Grand Total	\$ 88,020,692	\$ 36,366,024	41.3%

*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, 2025, through August 31, 2025

	FY26 Estimate	YTD Actual (Through August 31, 2025)	YTD Actual /Estimate	Prior Year YTD Actual (Through August 31, 2024)	YOY Change
Grand Total	\$ 29,939,754	\$ 8,653,940	29%	\$ 8,468,804	2%

Virginia Scenic Rivers – Evaluation Criteria

VIRGINIA BOARD OF CONSERVATION & RECREATION

Virginia Scenic River Evaluation Criteria Explained

DCR DIVISION OF PLANNING AND RECREATION RESOURCES

Rivers or river segments are evaluated for scenic designation on the following factors from which a cumulative score is derived.

1. Stream corridor vegetation:

Stream segments that feature wide, forested riparian buffers and natural vegetation adjacent to the riverbanks are scored higher than those exhibiting obvious signs of human disturbances (e.g., natural vegetation cleared for logging, agriculture, lawn, etc.).

2. Streambed or stream flow modifications:

Because the intent of the program is to keep designated rivers in a native or natural state, significant channelization or impoundments negatively affect the scenic qualities of a river segment.

3. Human development:

The development of buildings and structures along a river corridor can affect the quality of the scenery, particularly if such signs of human development are clearly visible to the recreational user during full foliage. Human development along the river is scored in two parts. The first focuses on the percentage of residential, commercial, and industrial development observed from the river in predominately urban areas, whereas the second is used to identify the average number of agricultural and residential structures or building “clusters” per mile of river in predominately rural settings. Higher scores are assigned to river corridors having few or no buildings, structures, or other signs of human development visible from the river.

4. Historic features:

Rivers were the primary transportation corridors in early America. For that reason, early residences and structures were typically oriented toward, and situated near, these early thoroughfares before the advent of reliable roadways. Historic structures and sites included or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places or Virginia Landmarks Register located within 1,000 feet of a potential river segment improve historic and visual interest compared to rivers lacking such features.

5. Landscape:

The term “scenic” most directly refers to the quality of the scenery of the surrounding landscape through which a river flows. Two specific scenic attributes of the landscape — the diversity of the scenery and range (or distance) of views — are considered when scoring the scenic quality of a river’s viewshed, with higher scores assigned to those that feature views of diverse natural landscape features that are visible at considerable distances from the river.

6. Quality of fishery:

The quantity and diversity of game fish present in a potential scenic river are important due to their intrinsic value to the river ecosystem and recreational value to anglers. The quality of a river's fishery is based on the relative abundance of recreational fish varieties and the diversity and uniqueness of recreational species commonly caught on the river.

7. Additional natural features:

This criterion uses data from the Natural Heritage Data Explorer (NHDE) to identify the presence of natural flora, fauna, and habitats considered to be of statewide or greater significance along a potential river corridor. Additional or bonus points may be granted when data indicates the presence of rare or significant plants or wildlife located within 1,000 feet of the river.

8. Water Quality:

Periodically visible pollution or chronically muddy or turbid water during the year impairs the scenic attributes of a river and results in a lower score than one that experiences sedimentation or turbidity rarely or only after periods of heavy rain.

9. Parallel roads:

The scenic river evaluation criteria include a potential river corridor's relative remoteness and roadlessness. Roads traditionally followed rivers as transportation routes, using the valleys and gorges formed by rivers to traverse natural obstacles. The presence of these features adjacent to a river and the extent to which road traffic is visible and audible to recreational users determines its score, with higher scores awarded to segments that exhibit few or no parallel roadways having visible or audible vehicle traffic.

10. Crossings:

The number and type of crossings by manmade infrastructure, whether by roads, railroads, overhead transmission lines, or similar facilities, may affect a river's scenic beauty and lead to a lower score than a river having no such crossings. Underground pipelines and other facilities that cross underneath the riverbed and are not visible from the river do not affect the scoring.

11. Special features affecting aesthetics:

This criterion considers the presence of additional natural and cultural river and river corridor features, identified through direct observation or experience, that enhance visual interest and scenic beauty. These features include, but are not limited to, islands, rapids, cascades, mature forests, culturally significant structures, and sense of isolation or remoteness. Higher scores are assigned for the evaluation criterion directly below (overall aesthetic appeal) to river segments exhibiting several or many of these attributes.

12. Overall aesthetic appeal:

This rating considers all special features affecting aesthetics before applying an overall ranking, from low to exceptional, based on the combined aesthetic appeal of the river segment. A river assigned an exceptional ranking would have many of these features, diversity with respect to the special visual features observed, and extreme or dramatic contrasts in terms of scenery.

13. Public recreational access:

Since scenic river designation enhances a river's appeal for recreational use, public recreational access is a significant consideration. The presence of one or more official public boat ramps, canoe and kayak launches, public use trails, or similar access for activities such as boating, tubing, fishing, and swimming results in a higher score being assigned to a river segment than one having only informal public access such as a public road crossing, private access, or no access.

14. Significant permanent protection:

Additional recognition is awarded for a river segment where at least 25 percent of the land adjacent to the river is permanently protected by a conservation or open space easement, public park, or other form of preservation.

Planning and Recreation Resources Capital Project Summary

VIRGINIA BOARD OF CONSERVATION & RECREATION

Natural Tunnel Pool Complex

Objective: This project scope includes the renovation of the existing pool and pump room building and the addition of a new splash pad at Natural Tunnel State Park. The work includes a new ADA access for the pool and updated mechanical and electrical work on site. The project was funded with general funds.

Budget:

Resources	Expenditures	Encumbered	Remaining
\$4,000,000	\$152,955	\$256,100	\$3,590,945

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

Completion Date: Groundbreaking November 2025, Completion: Summer 2026

Figure 1: Rendering of Pool Deck Splashpad



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 historic renovation has been completed. The project was funded with American Rescue Plan funds (ARPA).

Budget:

Resources	Expenditures	Encumbered	Remaining
\$ 1,200,000	\$ 963,369	\$ 110,055	\$ 126,576

Status: Complete

Completion Date: Figure 2: Fall 2025: Complete

2:
The Lodge Greatroom at Douthat State Park



New River Trail Bridge Renovations

Objective: This project scope included the renovation of 17 bridges at New River Trail State Park. The park crosses 4 counties and contains approximately 54 miles of trail. The work included a condition assessment of all 31 bridges and the renovation of the highest priority based on condition. Many of the bridges cross highway and rivers. 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
\$8,500,000	\$ 7,643,755	\$ 731,100	\$ 125,145

Status: The project is 85% complete. This project encountered Hurricane Helene delays.

Est. Completion Date: 85% Complete

Figure 3:

Renovated Bridge at the Foster Falls location of New River Trail State Park.



First Landing and Westmoreland State Park Cabin Renovations

Objective: This project scope included the renovation of an over 30 cabins at Westmoreland and First Landing State Parks. The scope includes the renovations of both exterior and interior areas of historic CCC cabins built in the 1930's and block cabins built in the 1950's. The work includes mechanical and electrical upgrades as well as ADA access improvements and modern amenities. This project was funded with Virginia Public Bond Authority (VPBA) bond funds.

Budget:

Resources	Expenditures	Encumbered	Remaining
\$ 16,158,000	\$ 1,763,398	\$13,646,048	\$ 748,554

Status: The project is being constructed.

Est. Completion Date: Summer 2027

Figure 4: Block cabin rendering



Mountain Region Natural Area Preserves- New Parking Areas

Objective: This project scope included new construction at two of the Mountain Region Natural Preserves. New parking areas at Bald Knob Natural Area Preserve and The Cedars Natural Area Preserves were included. The work included ADA access improvements and a new trail systems. This project was funded with 2021 federal American Rescue Plan Act funds.

Budget:

Resources	Expenditures	Encumbered	Remaining
\$ 1,177,500	\$ 973,728	\$199,868	\$ 3,904

Status: Complete

Est. Completion Date: Summer 2025

Figure 4: Bald Knob Parking Area

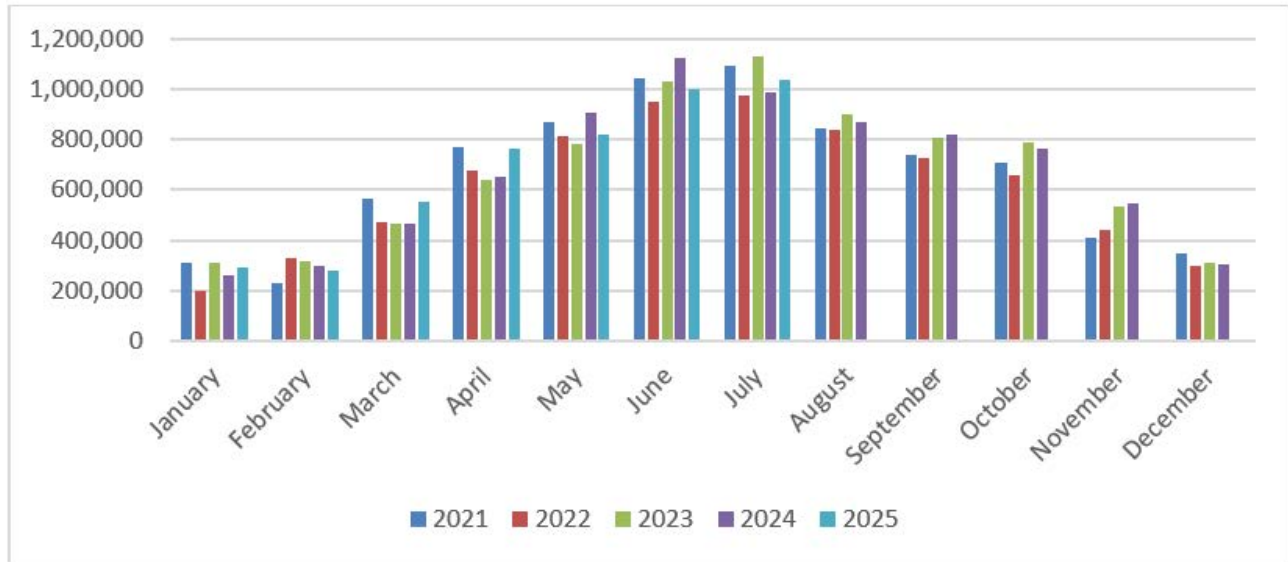


Active Design and Construction Projects	
Project	Status (2025)
BC Utility / ADA Upgrades	Construction
CL Utility / ADA Upgrades	Construction
FS Utility / ADA Upgrades	Construction
NRT Repair/Replace Trestles	Construction
New Residence, Grayson	Construction
New Residence, Caledon	Construction
New Residence, Shenandoah River	Construction
New Residence, Lake Anna	Construction
New Residences, Seven Bends	Construction
New Residences, Natural Bridge	Construction
New Residence, Machicomoco	Construction
New Residence, York River	Construction
Campground Infrastructure, Grayson	Construction
Belle Isle Manor Improvements	Design
WE Renovate Existing Cabins	Construction
FL Renovate Existing Cabins	Construction
Various Critical Bathhouse Renovations	Design
WE Road and Bank Stabilization	Construction
NH Southwest Region Improvements	Construction
NH North Landing River Site Access	Construction
Crow's Nest Raven Road Parking Area	Construction
Various Roofs Central VA	Construction
Various Roofs Northern VA	Construction
Various Roofs Eastern VA	Construction
Various Roofs Southwestern VA	Construction
LE Infrastructure Improvements	Design
Natural Tunnel Pool Renovations	Design
Various HVAC Replacements	Construction
Various Paving Repairs	Construction
Kiptopeke Boat Ramp	Design
Claytor Lake Marina Renovations	Design
Various Repair Sewage Systems	Design
Sweet Run Residence Repairs	Construction
Widewater Shoreline Renovations	Design
Kiptopeke Pier Repairs	Construction
New River Trail Sewerage Treatment	Construction
Shot Tower Repairs	Design
Various Residential/ Cabin Repairs	Construction
Leesylvania Pier Repairs	Design
Twin Lakes Cabin 6 Emergency Repairs	Construction
York River Visitor Center Repairs	Design

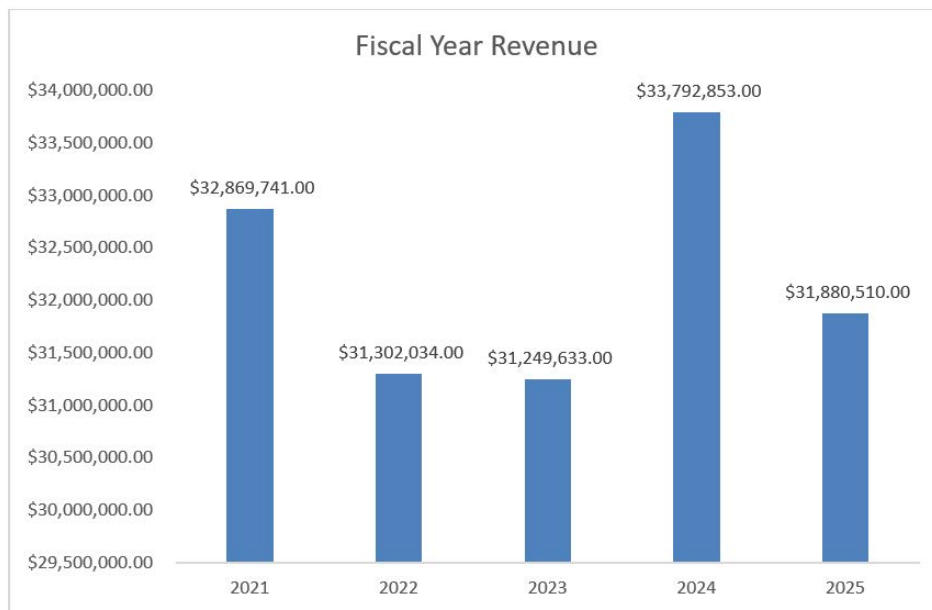
State Parks Operational Statistics

VIRGINIA BOARD OF CONSERVATION & RECREATION

Calendar Year 2025 Visitation:



Revenue:



Interpretation:

2025 Mid-Year Interpretive Program Attendance Overview

Types of Interpretation	
Active Interpretation	Passive Interpretation
Also called personal interpretation. Visitors interact with a staff member or volunteer. Exchange includes information with a mission-driven, interpretive message. Example: traditional ranger-guided programming.	Also called non-personal interpretation. Interpretive media where a staff member doesn't have to be present. Information is mission driven and interpretive. Example: exhibits, signage, publications.
In-Park Programming	Off-Site Programming
Active Interpretation activities that take place on park property. Audiences can include park visitors, overnight guests, field trip groups, and others.	Active Interpretation activities that take place off park property. These outreach events can be with schools, at events or festivals, libraries, and other locations.

	Active Interpretation				Passive Interpretation		
	Through June 30			Through Dec. 31	Through June 30	Through Dec. 31	
	In-Park Events	Off-Site Events	Total Events	Total Attendance	Annual Attendance	Attendance	Attendance
2023	4,780	252	5,032	146,068	341,487	92,145	232,511
2024	5,047	327	6,374	141,167	288,912	123,983	502,859
2025	4,632	396	5,028	123,367		89,156	

Natural Heritage Operational Highlights

VIRGINIA BOARD OF CONSERVATION & RECREATION

Administration Section

- DNH's vacant Administrative Coordinator position was filled in May by Tarra Booker, formerly the DNH Executive Secretary.
- A new DNH Executive Secretary was onboarded in June.
- A new Administrative Assistant to be onboarded in October.
- The agency is working to identify the KSAs needed in the Director role by surveying state programs. Full recruitment should begin in November with a target position fill date of February 2026. During the transition, Lesley Starke, the Chief of Stewardship, will serve as the Acting Deputy Director for Operations, providing leadership and direction to the protection, stewardship, and administrative sections. Anne Chazal, Chief Biologist, will serve as the Acting Deputy Director for Science and Inventory, providing management and leadership for the Inventory, Information Management, and Permit Review sections.

Biological Inventory Section

- A total of 406 staff-days were spent in the first half of 2025 conducting field surveys for Natural Heritage Resources (i.e. the habitats for rare plant and animal species; cave and karst resources; and significant natural communities). 59 new occurrences of these resources were documented and mapped across the Commonwealth. 180 known occurrences were updated.
- Rare species habitat and significant natural communities mapping and reports from field surveys are being funded in 2025 by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, Virginia Department of Transportation, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, DCR-State Parks and Dominion Energy to name a few.
- The Division lost federal funding from the U.S. Forest Service for biological inventories on George Washington and Jefferson National Forest lands in 2025 (about \$100K). This funding was part of a 5-year agreement, under which annual contracts had been awarded. USFS and DCR are working on a new 10-year agreement, from a different funding source, which has been submitted to the USFS for adoption.
- DNH has applied for approximately \$120,000 in federal grant monies to support surveys for federally listed species in the state. This work, if funded, would occur in 2026.

Information Management Section

- A complimentary layer to the Potential Freshwater Mussel Richness (PFMR) layer was completed this year. The Flow Buffers Prioritized for Conservation and Restoration layer utilized the PFMR to delineate flow buffers for targeted conservation and restoration efforts. The buffers are strategically prioritized based on mussel richness and rarity, nutrient loading, and land cover characteristics. By considering topographic flow paths, the buffer layer ensures that interventions are placed where they will have the most impact on water quality and mussel habitat enhancement. Both layers are now available on the Virginia Natural Heritage Data Explorer.
- Staff are working on an update to the Virginia Wildlife Corridor Action Plan, including collaborations on efforts funded under the Wildlife Corridor Pilot Program to assess connectivity and road risks for small animals, aquatic organisms, and large mammals.

- A Coastal Biodiversity Data Management Specialist was hired under a federal grant through the Coastal Zone Management Program to address backlogs of natural heritage data that have accumulated for years due to staffing shortages. To date, at least 12% of the entire unprocessed backlog have been cleared by the CDBMS and other staff.
- DCR – HB 206 Regulatory Advisory Panel Participation: On September 11, DCR’s Chief of Biodiversity Information and Conservation Tools, Joe Weber, participated as a Subject Matter Expert (SME) in the HB 206 Regulatory Advisory Panel (RAP) meeting, following several months of preparatory meetings with other SMEs. The RAP is focused on determining mitigation for development impacts to Forest Cores from utility-scale solar projects. He delivered an in-depth presentation on the Virginia Natural Landscape Assessment (VaNLA)—a landscape-scale spatial analysis for identifying, prioritizing, and linking natural habitats for biodiversity conservation and ecosystem function, and the source of the Ecological Cores used in the mitigation framework. He also drafted and presented a proposed definition for Persistently Converted Forest, and introduced a mitigation proposal focused on using the length of interior streams as a verifiable indicator of ecological integrity to guide mitigation for development impacts to Outstanding and Very High-Integrity Ecological Cores. Two other proposals were presented at the meeting—one by another SME and one by an energy company. The next RAP meetings, scheduled for October 9 and November 6, will focus on discussing the proposals and advancing those with the greatest support from the panel.
- DCR – Resilience Mapping Finalized to Guide Coastal Zone Conservation: As part of a NOAA-funded project administered by the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program at DEQ, DCR’s Spatial Ecologist, Shiva Torabian, and Chief of Biodiversity Information and Conservation Tools, Joe Weber, developed a new GIS layer to support conservation planning in Virginia’s coastal zone. The layer identifies unconserved lands adjacent to permanently protected areas that contribute to the resilience of conserved lands, both physically and biologically. It incorporates 40 indicators of physical and biotic resilience, including documented occurrences of rare species, rare species richness, flood risk, marsh migration potential, and landscape connectivity. These indicators were used in a Random Forest model to predict each parcel’s capacity to support long-term ecological function and withstand future stressors such as sea level rise. The final version of the map was completed with input and review from stakeholders during a September 3 meeting, and will guide Natural Heritage Resource inventory efforts in the next phase of the project.

Environmental Review Section

- During Jan – Aug 2025 –DCR’s Natural Heritage Environmental Review section sent out 1,982 responses to clients and partners; 11 projects were late. The Natural Heritage Data Explorer interactive mapping website was designed and has been maintained and updated for over 15 years, to streamline and help expedite DCR’s review of projects submitted using NHDE. Reviews for 1,408 projects were submitted using the NHDE website (71% of overall projects received between Jan – Aug 2025) and 643 projects of the total number of projects reviewed were “no comment/no conflict” projects with comments provided within minutes of project submittal.



- A Coastal Zone Management grant was awarded to DCR-Natural Heritage in June for Phase II of the Native Seed Pilot Project. The grant funding will support technical assistance provided by the Clifton Institute to farmers growing native species in the coastal zone along with the hiring of a new native seed coordinator.
- The Natural Heritage Coastal Zone locality liaison transitioned to the Natural Area Protection and Outreach Specialist position on August 1st. The vacant locality liaison position was posted on September 4th and closing on September 17th. Interviews are planned for October 1st.

Natural Areas Protection Section

- 47.96-acres were added to the Grassy Hill NAP (Franklin Co.) through fee-simple purchase on July 9th.
- 13.75-acres were added to the Cowbane Wet Prairie NAP (Augusta Co.) through fee-simple donation on July 18th.
- In concert with DCR's Real Property Office, 16 projects are advancing toward completion that will expand the resiliency of natural heritage resources at 12 existing Natural Area Preserves as well as multiple projects that will result in creation of two new Preserves.
- DCR signed a letter of intent with The Nature Conservancy to acquire up to 1,900 acres, in two phases, as an addition to South Quay Sandhills NAP in Sussex County.
- DNH staff submitted four grant requests to the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation (VLFCF) for FY26 funding to support future NAP purchases at South Quay Sandhills NAP (City of Suffolk), Difficult Creek NAP (Halifax Co.), Piney Grove Flatwoods NAP (Sussex Co.), and the new Eastern Divide NAP (Montgomery Co).
- Tyler Meader was hired to fill the staff vacancy (one of its two existing staff positions) on August 1st.
- Staff continue to work toward a multi-part collaboration with Tribal Nations supported by a federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law grant, by drafting agreements with the Indigenous Conservation Council of the Chesapeake Bay and the Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuarine Partnership's Tribal Coastal Resilience Team which are currently under review and creating a Tribal Liaison position to be housed within DCR.

Natural Areas Stewardship Section

- The DNH 2025 prescribed fire season from February through May totaled 1,083 acres burned on 6 natural area preserves, across 9 burn days. Additional partnership burns (>1,000 ac) were conducted successfully with assistance from DNH staff.
- A new Stewardship GIS Specialist, Michael Holden, was onboarded in June.
- A new Southern Piedmont Regional Supervisor/Steward, Laura Hudson, was onboarded in July.
- A new Mountain Region Operations Steward-Law Enforcement Ranger, Jared Vandergriff, was onboarded in August.
- Recruitment is underway for a new Southern Piedmont Region Operations Steward-Law Enforcement Ranger, aiming for onboarding prior to November.
- Natural Heritage is wrapping up invasive plant treatment projects in three stewardship regions funded by USFS via DOF. Stewards treated fourteen different invasive plant species across 350 acres on natural area preserves. Species targeted for this project included: Japanese stiltgrass, beefsteak plant, tree-of-heaven, Japanese knotweed, kudzu, Japanese barberry, Chinese privet, garlic mustard, mile-a-minute, English ivy, princess tree, wavyleaf grass, periwinkle, Chinese wisteria, sericea, and ravenna grass.
- Trail building is ongoing across multiple preserves, enhancing public access facilities at Crow's Nest (Stafford Co.), and creating the first public access facilities at both Bald Knob (Franklin Co.) and The Cedars (Lee Co.). Reconstruction of a boardwalk trail is pending final contract execution at North Landing River (Virginia Beach City).
- The DNH Invasive Species Coordinator is serving on a sub-committee, led by VDACS, to develop retail signage for invasive plants in accordance with the Invasive Plant Retail Signage Law passed in 2024.