

**Board of Conservation & Recreation
Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation**

**January 9, 2026
Pocahontas State Park
Swift Creek Dining Hall
09:00 AM**

Mr. Hunter H. Ihrman, Chair
Colonel Eric A. Hoggard, Vice Chair
The Honorable Duane Adams
Ms. Susan Allen
Chief Walt "Red Hawk" Brown
Ms. Gretchen Byrd

The Honorable James Cheng
The Honorable Douglas Domenech
Mr. John W. Inge, IV
The Honorable Kyle Kilgore
Mr. Ross Stewart
Ms. Jennifer Walle Boyd

AGENDA

- I. Welcome & Call to Order – Mr. Hunter Ihrman**
- II. Approval of Minutes – Mr. Hunter Ihrman (p. 1)**
- III. Annual FOIA Training – Ms. Breanne Lindsey**
- IV. Annual Renewal of the Virtual Meeting Policy – Ms. Breanne Lindsey (p. 14)**
- V. Director’s Report – Mr. Andrew W. Smith (p. 19)**
- VI. Financial Report – Ms. Laura Ellis (p.21)**
- VII. Review of the Governor’s Proposed FY27 and FY28 Budget – Mr. Andrew Smith (p. 22)**
- VIII. Review and Approval of the Proposed Machicomoco State Park Master Plan – Ms. Kelly McClary**
- IX. Adoption of the 2027 BCR Calendar – Mr. Frank Stovall (p. 24)**
- X. Public Comment – Mr. Hunter Ihrman**
- XI. Announcements & Adjournment – Mr. Hunter Ihrman**

II. Minutes of the October 2, 2025, Meeting

VIRGINIA BOARD OF CONSERVATION & RECREATION

TIME AND PLACE

The meeting of the Board of Conservation and Recreation took place at 9:03 a.m. on Thursday, October 2, 2025, at Twin Lakes State Park.

BOARD OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Hunter H. Ihrman, Chair
Colonel Eric A. Hoggard, Vice Chair

Chief Walt "Red Hawk" Brown
The Honorable Douglas Domenech
Mr. John W. Inge, IV
The Honorable Kyle Kilgore
Ms. Gretchen Byrd
Mr. Ross Stewart
Mrs. Susan Allen
The Honorable Duane Adams

BOARD OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION MEMBERS NOT PRESENT

Ms. Kat Maybury
The Honorable James Cheng

STAFF PRESENT

Matthew S. Wells, Director
Andrew Smith, Chief Deputy Director
Frank Stovall, Deputy Director for Operations
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
Katie Shepard, Chief of Education and Interpretation
Scott Vantrease, Chief of Law Enforcement
Brian Fuller, Real Property Manager
Charlie Connor, Deputy Chief of Law Enforcement
Breanne Lindsey, Board & Constituent Liaison
Paul Saunders, Senior Policy Analyst
Bryce Wilk, District Manager, Central District, Division of State Parks
Kevin Faubion, Park Manager – Twin Lakes
Joe Neville, Chief Ranger – Visitor Experience, Machicomoco State Park

ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM

With ten (10) members of the Board present, a quorum was established.

CALL TO ORDER

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

ELECTION OF A NEW CHAIR & VICE CHAIR – *Mr. Hunter Ihrman, Board Chair*

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Ihrman opened nominations for the position of Chair of the Board of Conservation and Recreation. Ms. Allen nominated Mr. Ihrman. Chief Brown seconded the nomination, and the motion was unanimously approved by: Adams, Allen, Byrd, Brown, Domenech, Hoggard, Ihrman, Inge, Kilgore, and Stewart.

Mr. Ihrman opened nominations for the position of Vice Chair of the Board of Conservation and Recreation. Mr. Stewart nominated Col. Hoggard. Ms. Allen seconded the nomination, and the motion was unanimously approved by: Adams, Allen, Byrd, Brown, Domenech, Hoggard, Ihrman, Inge, Kilgore, and Stewart.

APPROVAL OF THE APRIL 24, 2025, MINUTES

BOARD ACTION

Ms. Allen moved to approve the April 24, 2025, Board meeting minutes as presented. Ms. Byrd seconded the motion, which was approved by: Allen, Byrd, Brown, Domenech, Hoggard, Ihrman, Inge, Kilgore, and Stewart. Mr. Adams abstained from voting as he was not present during the last Board meeting.

REVIEW OF THE BOARD'S PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES – *Mr. Paul Saunders, Senior Policy Analyst*

Mr. Saunders informed the Board that the public participation guidelines underwent periodic review. The public participation guidelines were published in the Virginia Register on July 14, 2025, which began the public comment period. The public comment period closed on August 4, 2025. There was one comment submitted during public comment with the recommendation being to retain the guidelines as is.

BOARD ACTION

After considering the information provided, Chief Brown made the following 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.

Mr. Inge seconded the motion, and the motion was unanimously approved by: Adams, Allen, Byrd, Brown, Domenech, Hoggard, Ihrman, Inge, Kilgore, and Stewart.

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

Director Wells began by recognizing the Fairy Stone State Park rangers for their diligence in conducting the rescue of an injured hiker at their park. He continued by providing the following highlights:

- DCR recently completed acquisitions of several properties, including Lake Caledon, which is a major addition to Caledon State Park. Additionally, DCR closed on Mayo Island, which was the last privately-owned major island in downtown Richmond. The department provided \$9 million dollars for the acquisition through the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation and the Community Flood Preparedness Fund.
- Park leadership attended a national conference and were recognized for the innovative work with onboarding processes and creation of a data dashboard for park managers to utilize. The Virginia Association for Parks are recognized for their advocacy efforts to give VALORS to State Park Rangers and State Park Law Enforcement Rangers.
- Director Wells recently met with Governor Youngkin and others for a round table conversation to discuss recovery efforts for those affected by Hurricane Helene. DCR is participating in rehabilitation efforts by utilizing the Resilient Virginia Revolving Loan Fund.
- DCR signed a ten-year agreement with the US Forest Service to provide \$5 million dollars in funding to allow the Natural Heritage Division to conduct biological inventory across the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests. Additionally, there is discussion to have a Good Neighbor Agreement to support outdoor recreation in the forests as well, which may be determined at a later date.
- DCR partnered with KPMG to conduct a study of DCR's retail operations and additional information will be provided at a later meeting. In the meantime, Director Wells informed the Board that based on the study there is approximately \$3.3 to \$7 million dollars of additional profit DCR's retail operations could make if changes are implemented.
- The department requested \$180 million dollars in the biennial budget, which is being considered by the Governor. Some of the funds will be dedicated towards maintenance for cabins in Hungry Mother State Park and First Landing State Park. Additionally, maintenance repairs will be necessary for the swimming pool at Staunton River State Park. Director Wells informed the Board that there are additional items outlined within their agenda materials regarding what initiatives will be funded if the Governor approves the budget request as submitted.

Director Wells announced that his final day with the department will be October 31, 2025. Following his departure, Chief Deputy Director Smith will assume the role of Acting Director of DCR. Director Wells expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to work with the Board and the department over the past three and a half years. He also provided an overview of the department's progress during his tenure:

Enhance Outdoor Experiences for Virginians by Increasing Accessibility

- The department completed over thirty land acquisitions and acquired nearly 5,000 acres. Additionally, the 42nd and 43rd State Parks were opened during this time, which are Sweet Run State Park and Culpeper Battlefields State Park. An additional state park is currently in development and is expected to open in the near future. There are two natural area preserves that are currently in the planning or development stages. The Inn at Foster Falls has opened as the first inn or hotel located within a Virginia state park and marks the first public-private lodging partnership in the state park system.
- The department continues to enhance accessibility across Virginia State Parks. EnChroma-adapted viewfinders for colorblind visitors have been installed at all 43 parks, making Virginia the first state to

implement this technology statewide. A track chair program, featuring motorized, all-terrain wheelchairs, is now available at six parks to assist visitors with mobility challenges. Additionally, Natural Bridge State Park has implemented the Right Hear system, providing audio trail narration for visitors who are visually impaired.

Enhance Outdoor Experiences for Virginians by Elevating Enjoyment

- State Parks interpretive programs have engaged approximately 900,000 participants. Over \$170 million has been allocated for maintenance, construction, and development projects, including major renovations to cabins, campgrounds, lodges, and bathhouses. Visitor satisfaction has consistently remained above 90%. Additionally, the department's support of communities surrounding state parks contributes to an estimated \$400 million in annual economic impact.

Enhance Outdoor Experiences for Virginians by Providing Support

- The department added 40 new positions within the State Parks and Natural Heritage programs, with additional staffing increases also occurring in the Planning, Recreation and Resources, and Property Management programs.
- Nearly \$20 million in new general fund support was received for operations, and self-generated revenue increased by \$7 million, allowing for the hiring of staff and purchase of equipment to enhance visitor experiences. The department also received 650,000 hours of volunteer support.
- DCR Law Enforcement staff are now included in the VALORS program, and internal process improvements have led to the development of clearer career pathways for park rangers, supporting professional growth and retention.

At the conclusion of Director Wells' report, the Board engaged in discussions on several topics, including the Virginia Land Conservation Fund projects, visitation numbers for Machicomoco State Park, retail sales across state parks, and ongoing efforts to address the maintenance backlog within the state park system.

FINANCIAL REPORT – Mr. Frank Stovall, Deputy Director for Operations

Mr. Stovall reported on the financial conditions of DCR:

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:

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 (August 31, 2025)	Target vs Actual %
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	\$ 88,020,692.00	\$ 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, 2025)	YOY Change
Grand Total	\$ 29,939,754	\$ 8,653,940	29%	\$ 8,468,804	2%

FALKLAND STATE CONSERVATION AREA – Mr. Frank Stovall, Deputy Director for Operations

Overview of Falkland State Conservation Area

Mr. Stovall provided an overview of the Falkland State Conservation Area Short Term Action and Management Plan 2025-2028, developed by department staff. The Falkland State Conservation Area encompasses 7,400 acres and is located adjacent to Difficult Creek Natural Area Preserve and Staunton River State Park. It forms part of a larger 40,000-acre contiguous conservation landscape in Southside Virginia.

The management plan emphasizes preparing the area for public access, managing natural resources, and providing outdoor recreation opportunities. The Falkland State Conservation Area will be jointly managed by State Parks and Natural Heritage divisions on both administrative and financial levels. Department staff will develop resource management plans focusing on forest management, invasive species control, and prescribed fire application.

Additionally, the plan includes designing, constructing, and maintaining a multi-use trail system to facilitate public access while minimizing increases in maintenance and management costs. Communication efforts will include the development of signage, maps, and informational materials to keep the public and stakeholders informed about the conservation area's status and resources.

Administration & Operations

This site will provide expanded opportunities for outdoor recreation, which is atypical for Natural Area Preserves. The primary purpose of the Natural Area Preserve system is to protect biodiversity, critical habitats, and endangered species, which imposes significant restrictions on permissible recreational activities. However, this site possesses unique ecological value that allows for certain recreational uses without meeting the full criteria of a traditional state park.

As a result, this represents a new operational model, reflected in its designation as a State Conservation Area. Management responsibilities will be shared between the Division of Natural Heritage and the Division of State Parks. Funding for the site will come from three sources: revenue generated on-site through timber harvesting during landscape restoration, and operating funds from both the Division of Natural Heritage and the Division of State Parks. These funds will support daily maintenance and management, primarily conducted by Natural Heritage staff with support from Staunton River State Park personnel.

Key management decisions will be overseen by a Management Committee, a cross-divisional team led by the Deputy Director for Operations and supported by staff from both State Parks and Natural Heritage. Additionally, the department has received approval to fill two positions at the Falkland State Conservation Area: an Operations Steward and a Law Enforcement Officer.

Natural Resource Management and Outdoor Recreation Planning

The department will focus on four key areas of Natural Resource Management: deer management, forest management, prescribed fire, and invasive species control. Managed hunts, conducted in coordination with the Department of Wildlife Resources, will continue to be offered to control the deer population. Forest management activities will include timber thinning and harvesting in partnership with the Department of Forestry. Prescribed burns are planned for implementation in Fall 2026, following the development of a burn plan by DCR staff. Additionally, an invasive species control plan will be developed and executed at the site from Spring 2026 through 2028. The end goal is restoring the property back to a savanna, an open forest habitat, which is what the site was in the past.

The department will also focus efforts on outdoor recreation planning, beginning over the next few months with the development of a trail system. The goal is to have multi-use trails for equestrians, biking, and hiking. DCR anticipates that the public will have a desire to camp and access the water in the future, however, at this time there is not an immediate plan in place for these activities, but they may be explored at a later date. For now, the expectation will be to encourage visitors to utilize the facilities at Staunton River State Park.

Final Thoughts and Board Member Discussion

Mr. Stovall concluded by informing the Board that the Falkland State Conservation Area represents a landmark conservation and recreation initiative, combining the strengths of both State Parks and Natural Heritage programs. The joint management approach aims to maintain ecological integrity while providing public access. However, adequate funding and staffing are essential to the project's success. To support long-term planning and ensure sustainable funding beyond 2028, the current operating budget includes a \$350,000 allocation dedicated to post-2028 planning efforts.

At the conclusion of Mr. Stovall's overview of the Falkland State Conservation Area, the Board discussed several topics, including the types of trees present and the composition of the original landscape, the joint management approach as a new operational model, the designation of the site as Virginia's first state conservation area, management responsibilities, and the distinction between managed deer hunting and open hunting.

VIRGINIA'S SCENIC RIVERS – Ms. Kelly McClary, Director, Division of Planning and Recreation Resources

Scenic Rivers Background and Current Protocol

Ms. McClary provided the Board with an overview of the Scenic Rivers Program, which has been active in Virginia since 1970. The Falls of the James was designated as historic in 1972 and was fully incorporated into the Scenic Rivers Program in 1984. Currently, Virginia has approximately 1,100 miles of designated Scenic Rivers. A Scenic River is defined as a river, or a section thereof, designated by an act of the General Assembly due to its outstanding natural and scenic beauty, as well as its fish and wildlife resources, historic significance, recreational opportunities, geological features, cultural values, and other notable attributes. The Board is responsible for recommending Scenic River designations, which are then submitted to the General Assembly for review and approval.

The department does not proactively identify areas for designation as Scenic Rivers. Instead, such requests must be initiated by the locality through a formal letter from the locality's Board of Supervisors addressed to the Director of DCR. To qualify, the river section must be a minimum of five miles in length and accessible to the public.

Upon meeting these prerequisites, DCR staff commence the development of a comprehensive evaluation report. The assessment process involves thirteen specific criteria and includes an on-site evaluation conducted jointly by DCR personnel and local officials. Due to the thorough nature of the evaluation, the report typically requires up to one year to complete.

The following criteria are considered in the evaluation of a potential Scenic River:

Criteria		Description
1	Stream corridor vegetation	% of natural vegetation disturbed by human activity (grazing, cropland, timber harvesting, turf, etc.)
2	Streambed/stream flow modification	% of the river segment (length) impounded/channelized by dams
3	Human development	Urban: % of the river corridor containing urban development Rural: Average number of structures or building clusters per mile of river
4	Historic features	Presence of historic sites or cultural resources within 1,000 feet of river
5	Natural features	Occurrences of a natural resource/ feature of statewide or greater significance within 1,000 feet of river.
6	Parallel roads	Ratio of parallel (within 300 ft.) road length to river segment length Length of visible parallel roads within 300 feet

7	Road, railroad, and utility crossings	Ratio of number of bridge and culvert crossings to river length
8	Public recreational access	Presence and character of access points to river segment
9	Significant permanent protection	% of river corridor area protected (conserved) as public land or by conservation easement
10	Water quality	Frequency of turbidity during May-October
11	Fishery quality	Presence and population of game fish species
12	Landscape quality	Quality of the scenery of the surrounding landscape through which a river flows based on diversity of scenery and range of views (distance)
13*	Overall aesthetic appeal	Special features that enhance visual interest and scenic beauty affecting aesthetics and overall ranking

Upon completion of the evaluation and drafting of the report, DCR will notify the locality and collaborate with relevant agencies and partners to build support for the Scenic River designation. The report will then be posted on the DCR website, and DCR will provide the locality with the necessary legislative language.

Subsequently, the draft report will be presented to the Board for review. The Board will decide whether to recommend the area for Scenic River designation. If the Board approves the recommendation, the locality must work with legislators to introduce the appropriate legislation to the General Assembly.

DCR staff will provide support throughout the legislative process until the designation is formally approved by the General Assembly.

Path Forward for Scenic River Designations

Ms. McClary informed the Board that in 2022, DCR partnered with Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) to conduct a study focused on refining the evaluation criteria for Scenic Rivers. This collaboration involved VCU students, subject matter experts, and DCR staff working together to develop a standardized and consistent methodology for river assessments.

As part of this effort, a training video and hands-on instructional materials were created through group consensus in evaluating Scenic River criteria. Additionally, a Geographic Information System (GIS) tool was developed to support pre-field assessments and enable remote evaluations.

The primary objective was to enhance the scientific rigor of the evaluation process and reduce subjectivity. DCR subsequently conducted a comprehensive review of the study by examining its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges. The key findings from this review are summarized below:

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Challenges
Collaboration with experts	Limited field testing	Expansion of the protocol	Resistance to new methodology
Comprehensive training materials	Proficiency in software tools	Further refinement of tools	Technology challenges

Innovative approach	Complexity of protocol	Training program development	Funding, resources, access constraints
Pre-field assessment tool	Time constraints	Collaboration with other stakeholders	External regulatory changes

Enhancements to the process related to pre-planning include the development of a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to guide policies and procedures, an update to the Guide to Citizen Involvement, and enabling interested parties to utilize a public-facing GIS web application for preliminary or partial evaluations of rivers based on the established criteria.

Regarding the evaluation request phase, the goal is for interested parties to incorporate the results of their preliminary or partial GIS assessments to support their formal requests for river evaluation. Enhancements to the evaluation process itself focus on improving GIS capabilities and refining metrics and methodologies to more accurately assess a river's eligibility for Scenic River designation.

In terms of reporting and documentation, the GIS tool will be used to generate and present maps, supporting materials, and conclusions within the Scenic River Report.

Finally, the re-evaluation component aims to establish policies and procedures to facilitate streamlined re-assessments of existing designated river segments.

The eligibility criteria and evaluation methods have been updated to enable a scientific review of eleven out of the thirteen criteria, moving away from a predominantly subjective approach. The eleven criteria assessed scientifically include stream corridor vegetation; streambed and stream flow modifications; human development; historic features; natural features; parallel roads; road, railroad, and utility crossings; public recreational access; and significant permanent protection.

Two criteria—water quality and fishery quality—will be evaluated using a hybrid approach, combining both scientific analysis and subjective assessment. Finally, the remaining two criteria, landscape quality and overall aesthetic appeal, will continue to be evaluated subjectively.

Board Member Discussion

At the conclusion of Ms. McClary's overview of the Scenic Rivers Program, the Board engaged in discussion on several topics. These included the evaluation criteria and rating system for the Scenic Rivers Program, landowner perspectives regarding Scenic Rivers within their communities, and the benefits motivating localities to seek Scenic River designation.

The Board also discussed the process for removing a Scenic River designation—acknowledging that this has never occurred—along with the program's lack of enforcement authority to require actions within localities. Additionally, it was noted that information about the Scenic Rivers Program, including a list of designated rivers, is available on the DCR website. Lastly, the Board discussed DCR staff participation in Board of Supervisors meetings to support education and outreach efforts for both boards and landowners regarding the program.

RECESS

The Board recessed from 10:54 a.m. to 11:09 a.m.

TELLING HARD STORIES – *Ms. Katie Shepard, Chief of Education and Interpretation; Mr. Joshua Ellington, Chief of Resource Management; Mr. Joe Neville, Chief Ranger – Visitor Experience, Machicomoco State Park*

Ms. Shepard opened the discussion by emphasizing that Virginia is a state rich in diversity, reflected in the varied stories associated with its State Parks. To effectively convey these narratives, the State Parks offer interpretive programs designed to be both engaging and educational, highlighting the natural and cultural resources of the parks. She acknowledged that some stories can be challenging to tell, as visitors may interpret them differently based on their individual beliefs and backgrounds. Ms. Shepard explained that the purpose of this presentation was to outline the techniques employed by the interpretive staff in sharing these diverse stories.

Ms. Shepard emphasized that interpretation extends beyond education; it is fundamentally about inspiring action through knowledge. She referenced a quote by Freeman Tilden, a pioneer in the field of interpretation: “Through interpretation, understanding; through understanding, appreciation; through appreciation, protection.” The State Park interpretive staff focus not only on exploring the past but also on understanding the parks in their current state to ensure their preservation for future generations. Interpretive staff play a crucial role in helping visitors see themselves as active participants in this ongoing process.

Ms. Shepard outlined four key strategies employed to effectively convey challenging stories: staff training, research and creating connections, interpretive opportunities and techniques, and building relationships and trust. She provided an overview of the staff training process, highlighting the annual Spring Interpretive Workshop. Ms. Shepard shared examples related to the history of various State Parks, including the history of some State Parks dating back to the 1930s. The interpretive staff actively engage visitors by meeting them where they are, offering opportunities such as living history demonstrations, background information on the establishment of parks, and educational signage along hiking trails to enhance visitor understanding.

Mr. Ellington provided an overview of the cultural resources available for State Park staff to utilize when developing interpretive programs, which touched on how relationships are built with tribal communities. Mr. Ellington informed the Board that the Cultural Resource Manager position was developed in 2023, and the role was filled by Dr. Lauren McMillan. Dr. McMillan is a liaison for Virginia tribes as she is responsible for tribal engagement activities that take place. To best engage with Virginia tribes, it is important to involve Tribal Nations early in the development of a project where there are stories told in the parks that require their communication. Maintaining regular and thorough communication is key to ensuring the relationship between park staff and Tribal Nations is ongoing. It is essential to respect Tribal Nations as sovereign governments and to seek solutions that benefit all parties involved in the projects.

Mr. Ellington provided an overview of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) and described the ongoing efforts by State Parks to consult with federally recognized Tribal Nations. He noted that in 2024, legislation was enacted requiring the Secretary of the Commonwealth to designate an Ombudsman for Tribal Consultation. The current Ombudsman, Kara Canaday, frequently collaborates with the

Cultural Resource office to provide guidance and support on various projects, including those involving State Parks.

The Board discussed communication by DCR staff with federally recognized Tribal Nations compared to those who are solely state recognized Tribal Nations and the importance of working with all Tribal Nations.

Mr. Neville provided an overview of the ongoing efforts at Machicomoco State Park to engage with Tribal Nations and share their stories through a variety of interpretive programs. He emphasized the park's commitment to supporting and conveying the history, perspectives, and cultures of Virginia Tribal Nations. Mr. Neville noted that he and the Park Manager plan to visit museums and cultural centers across the region to deepen their understanding of Indigenous history and to better guide visitors seeking further educational opportunities beyond the park. He also informed the Board of recent events hosted at the park, including an Earth Day celebration and the Chickahominy Tribe Summer Culture Camp.

The Board engaged in a discussion regarding Machicomoco State Park's initiatives, the number of State Parks and Natural Area Preserves with historical ties to Indigenous peoples, and additional hard stories to tell, including those related to hunting and environmental concerns.

ENSURING SAFETY IN OUR PARKS & PRESERVES – *Mr. Scott Vantrease, Chief of Law Enforcement and Mr. Charlie Connor, Deputy Chief of Law Enforcement*

Mr. Stovall introduced Mr. Vantrease and Mr. Connor to provide an overview of ensuring safety in State Parks and Natural Heritage Area.

Mr. Vantrease provided an overview of his background in law enforcement, as well as that of Mr. Connor. He then detailed the primary responsibilities of Law Enforcement Rangers, emphasizing their duty to protect Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) properties and ensure the safety of visitors.

Currently, approximately 100 sworn law enforcement officers are assigned to DCR's State Parks and Natural Heritage Areas. These officers are tasked with safeguarding infrastructure valued at \$1.2 billion and managing the safety of millions of guests annually.

DCR Law Enforcement holds accreditation from the Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission, which mandates a renewal process every four years. This accreditation requires compliance with over 190 established standards.

Under § 10.1-115.E of the Code of Virginia, DCR Law Enforcement Rangers possess the same authority and powers as county sheriffs across the Commonwealth. In their operations, they frequently collaborate with local law enforcement agencies, providing mutual assistance as necessary.

The range of incidents requiring DCR Law Enforcement intervention is broad and includes burglaries, suicides, mental health crises, sexual assaults, weapons violations, large public disturbances, homelessness and public support issues, narcotics violations, fugitives, sex trafficking, gang-related activities, hate group incidents, and homicides.

The process to become a Law Enforcement Ranger begins with obtaining certification from the Department of Criminal Justice Services and successfully passing the state exam. The initial training program lasts approximately 23 to 24 weeks and is offered by 36 Member Agencies, collectively training over 3,000 students annually.

Following academy training, candidates complete a post-academy orientation designed to familiarize them with operational procedures specific to State Parks through classroom instruction. The subsequent phase requires completion of 240 hours of law enforcement activities, including ride-alongs with a certified training officer.

The final stage involves acquiring three to seven years of practical law enforcement experience. After certification, Rangers are required to complete 20 hours of continuing education annually to maintain their credentials.

The Law Enforcement Ranger career specialization is a key component in fostering continuous professional growth within the department. The primary objectives are to enhance recruitment and retention for these highly competitive roles, ensure the availability of well-trained public safety and law enforcement rangers, and strengthen proactive measures to protect DCR employees, visitors, and resources.

A modernized approach to career pathing has been implemented to increase accessibility to park leadership positions for all qualified staff. The established career advancement pathway within law enforcement is as follows:

- Park Ranger – Public Safety & Law Enforcement
- Chief Park Ranger – Public Safety & Law Enforcement
- District Ranger – Public Safety & Law Enforcement
- Chief District Ranger – Public Safety & Law Enforcement
- Deputy Chief
- Chief

This structured progression supports professional development and leadership opportunities within the agency.

The Board engaged in a discussion regarding several aspects of DCR Law Enforcement operations, including current staffing levels and the starting salary for Law Enforcement Rangers. The Board was also informed that there have been no officer-involved shootings involving DCR Law Enforcement Rangers. Additionally, it was acknowledged that the only line-of-duty death within the Ranger program occurred in 1975. The discussion also included an overview of the training scenarios and methods utilized by law enforcement training staff to prepare officers for field operations.

After the meeting adjourned, Mr. Connor provided a tour of law enforcement equipment.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Ihrman announced that the next meeting is scheduled for January 9, 2026, at Pocahontas State Park.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:37 p.m.

DRAFT

IV. Renewal of the Virtual Policy

VIRGINIA BOARD OF CONSERVATION & RECREATION



MEMORANDUM

To: Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation
From: DCR Policy Office
Date: January 9, 2026
Subject: Virtual Participation Policy

Applicable Code Sections:

- Va. Code [§ 2.2-3708.3 D.](#) “Before a public body uses all-virtual public meetings as described in subsection C or allows members to use remote participation as described in subsection B, the public body shall at least once annually adopt a policy, by recorded vote at a public meeting, that shall be applied strictly and uniformly, without exception, to the entire membership and without regard to the identity of the member requesting remote participation or the matters that will be considered or voted on at the meeting.”
- Va. Code [§ 2.2-3708.3 B.](#) “Individual members of a public body may use remote participation instead of attending a public meeting in person if, in advance of the public meeting, the public body has adopted a policy as described in subsection D...”
- Va. Code [§ 2.2-3708.3 C.](#) “With the exception of local governing bodies, local school boards, planning commissions, architectural review boards, zoning appeals boards, and boards with the authority to deny, revoke, or suspend a professional or occupational license, any public body may hold all-virtual public meetings, provided that the public body follows the other requirements in this chapter for meetings, the public body has adopted a policy as described in subsection D...”

Background:

- On June 30, 2023, the Board of Conservation and Recreation adopted a Virtual Participation Policy in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act governing remote participation in board meetings.
- Such a policy is required to be adopted annually. The Board last adopted the virtual participation policy in April 2025; however, it is suggested that the Board utilize the first meeting of the calendar year to renew this policy moving forward.

- **Recommendation:**

- Staff recommends that the Board adopt the attached virtual participation policy.

Suggested Motion:

- “I move that the Board adopt the Virtual Participation policy as presented by staff and apply it strictly and uniformly, without exception, to the entire membership and without regard to the identity of the member requesting remote participation or the matters that will be considered or voted on at any meeting.”

Attachment:

- Virtual Participation Policy for adoption

BOARD OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION
VIRTUAL PARTICIPATION POLICY
January 9, 2026

ESTABLISHMENT OF POLICY

In accordance with § 2.2-3708.3 of the *Code of Virginia* (Code), the Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation (Board) establishes the following policy regarding remote participation and all-virtual public meetings.

REMOTE PARTICIPATION

It is the policy of the Board that individual Board members may participate in meetings of the Board by electronic communication as permitted by § 2.2-3708.3 of the Code. This policy shall apply to the entire membership and without regard to the identity of the member requesting remote participation or matters that will be considered or voted on at the meeting.

Whenever an individual member wishes to participate from a remote location, the law requires a quorum of the Board to be physically assembled at the primary or central meeting location.ⁱ

When such individual participation is due to a personal matter, such participation is limited by law to two meetings per calendar year or 25 percent of the meetings held per calendar year rounded up to the next whole number, whichever is greaterⁱⁱ.

Requests for remote participation shall be conveyed to staff of the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), who shall relay such requests to the chair of the public body.

Individual participation from a remote location shall be approved unless such participation would violate this policy or the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (§ 2.2-3700 et seq. of the *Code of Virginia*). If a member's participation from a remote location is challenged, the Board shall vote on whether to allow such participation.

The requests for remote participation shall be recorded in the meeting minutes. If the Board votes to disapprove the member's participation because such participation would violate this policy, such disapproval shall be recorded in the minutes with specificity. The minutes shall include other information as required by §§ 2.2-3707 and 2.2-3708.3, depending on the type of remote participation or all-virtual public meeting.

As provided for in subsection B of §2.2-3708.3 of the Code, there are four circumstances where individual members of the Board may participate from a remote location. The member must notify the Board Chair of one of the following four reasons for remote participation.

1. The member has a temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition that prevents the member's physical attendance;

2. A medical condition of a member of the member's family requires the member to provide care that prevents the member's physical attendance, *or the member is a caregiver who must provide care for a person with a disability at the time the public meeting is being held thereby preventing the member's physical attendance;*
3. The member's principal residence is more than 60 miles from the meeting location identified in the required notice for such meeting; or
4. The member is unable to attend the meeting due to a personal matter and identifies with specificity the nature of the personal matter. However, the member may only use remote participation due to personal matters of up to two meetings per calendar year, or 25 percent of the meetings held per calendar year rounded up to the next whole number, whichever is greater.

If an individual member remotely participates in a meeting, a general description of the remote location must be included in the minutes. (a specific address is not required). The remote location does not have to be open to the public.

If a member remotely participates due to a (i) temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition that prevented the member's physical attendance or (ii) a family member's medical condition that required the member to provide care for such family member, thereby preventing the member's physical attendance, that fact must be included in the minutes. It is not required to identify the specific disability or medical condition.

If a member remotely participates because the member's principal residence is more than 60 miles from the meeting location, the minutes must include that fact.

If a member remotely participates due to a personal matter, the minutes must include the specific nature of the personal matter cited by the member.

If remote participation by a member is disapproved because it would violate the participation policy adopted by the Board, such disapproval must be recorded in the minutes.

ALL-VIRTUAL PUBLIC MEETINGS

It is the policy of the Board that the Board may hold all-virtual public meetings pursuant to subsection C of § 2.2-3708.3. Such all-virtual public meetings are limited by law to two meetings per calendar year or 50 percent of the meetings held per calendar year rounded up to the next whole number, whichever is greater. An all-virtual public meeting may not be held consecutively with another all-virtual public meeting.

The following provisions for all-virtual meetings under subsection C of § 2.2-3708.3 shall apply.

1. An indication of whether the meeting will be an in-person or all-virtual public meeting is included in the required meeting notice along with a statement notifying the public that the method by which a Board chooses to meet shall not be changed unless the Board provides a new meeting notice in accordance with the provisions of § 2.2-3707;
2. Public access to an all-virtual meeting is provided via electronic communication means;

3. The electronic communication means used allows the public to hear all members of the Board participating in the all-virtual public meeting and, when audio-visual technology is available, to see the members of the Board as well;
4. A phone number or other live contact information is provided to alert the Board if the audio or visual transmission of the meeting provided by the Board fails, the Board monitors such designated means of communication during the meeting, and the Board takes a recess until public access is restored if the transmission fails for the public;
5. A copy of the proposed agenda and all agenda packets and, unless exempt, all materials furnished to members of the Board for a meeting is made available to the public in electronic format at the same time that such materials are provided to members of the Board.
6. The public is afforded the opportunity to comment through electronic means, including by way of written comments, at those Board meetings when public comment is customarily received.
7. No more than two members of the Board are together in any one remote location unless that remote location is open to the public to physically access it;
8. If a closed session is held during an all-virtual public meeting, the transmission of the meeting to the public resumes before the Board votes to certify the closed meeting as required by subsection D of §2.2-3712;
9. The Board does not convene an all-virtual public meeting (i) more than two times per calendar year or 50 percent of the meetings held per calendar year rounded up to the next whole number, whichever is greater, or (ii) consecutively with another all-virtual public meeting; and
10. Minutes of all-virtual public meetings held by electronic communication means are taken as required by § 2.2-3707 and include the fact that the meeting was held by electronic communication means and the type of electronic communication means by which the meeting was held. If a member's participation from a remote location pursuant to these requirements is disapproved because such participation would violate the policy adopted pursuant to subsection D of § 2.2-3708.3, such disapproval shall be recorded in the minutes with specificity.

ADOPTION

The Board adopted this Policy at its January 9, 2026, meeting at Pocahontas State Park in Chesterfield, Virginia. The Policy shall be included as Addendum A in the Board approved Bylaws and shall be re-adopted annually.

The Policy shall remain in effect until rescinded by the Board or until nullified or altered by amendments to the *Code of Virginia*.

Board Chair

¹ For purposes of determining whether a quorum is physically assembled, an individual member of a public body who is a person with a disability as defined in § ~~51.5-40.1~~ or is a caregiver for a person with a disability and uses remote participation counts toward the quorum as if the individual was physically present.

² The Board interprets this limitation of 25% to mean that a member may participate in only one meeting remotely when the Board meets in person.

V. DCR Director's Report

VIRGINIA BOARD OF CONSERVATION & RECREATION

Your Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation continued to carry out its mission to Conserve, Protect and Enjoy in 2025, expanding its public lands and making improvements to make outdoor recreation more accessible. Here are some highlights from the past year.

- **New and expanded public lands:** The agency completed acquisitions that will establish two new natural area preserves: Eastern Divide in Montgomery County and Brocks Gap in Rockingham County. DCR also acquired lakefront property to expand Caledon State Park.

- **Opening the 44th state park:** Hayfields State Park officially opened on October 20, expanding the Virginia State Parks system to 44 parks. The 1,034-acre property in Highland County was once working farmland, and its preservation ensures that this natural landscape will remain open and accessible for generations to come. The opening was well-received across our social media channels, reaching a combined organic audience of nearly 193,000.



Figure 1: Hayfields State Park, Virginia's 44th State Park consists of 1,034 acres in Highland County.

- **Record funding of land conservation grants:** In its 26th year, the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation awarded \$15.5 million in grant awards. Highlights include: 969 acres of ancestral homelands acquired by the Rappahannock Tribe to conserve as a natural area and for educational purposes; two tracts with two separate VLCF grants acquired by Capital Region Land Conservancy (CRLC) to expand the James River Park System, including Mayo's Island, increasing public access to historic and recreational lands; and 471 acres of property in King George County acquired by DCR to expand Caledon State Park.
- **Special biological areas:** A Good Neighbor Agreement was entered into with the U.S. Forest Service. This funding, valued at about \$5 million over 10 years, will allow DCR's Division of Natural Heritage to assist USFS with biological inventories, including assisting with NEPA requirements, updating old records, and assessments of special biological areas.
- **Conservation planning in the coastal zone:** As part of a NOAA-funded project administered by the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program at the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), DCR's Natural Heritage 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. The final version will guide Natural Heritage Resource inventory efforts in the next phase of the project.

- **Increasing public access:**

- Part one of the Phase 2 acquisition at Culpeper Battlefields State Park was completed.
- Natural Bridge State Park acquired Natural Bridge Caverns.
- High Bridge Station, High Bridge Trail State Park's first visitor center, was dedicated and opened.
- Caledon State Park's addition of the Lake Caledon property was the first successful VLCF grant awarded to Virginia State Parks. The mostly forested property, immediately south of the park, increases recreational opportunities such as camping, hiking, fishing, canoeing and kayaking at the park.
- A lease was executed for a new canoe/kayak launch site for Clinch River State Park in Scott County.
- Trail building is ongoing across multiple preserves, enhancing public access facilities at Crow's Nest Natural Area Preserve in Stafford County and creating the first public access facilities at both Bald Knob Natural Area Preserve in Franklin County and The Cedars Natural Area Preserve in Lee County.
- Reconstruction of a boardwalk trail will soon be underway at North Landing River Natural Area Preserve in the City of Virginia Beach.

- **Preserving history and updating amenities:** Renovations of the CCC-era Douthat Lodge at Douthat State Park were completed, and restoration work began on more than 30 cabins at Westmoreland and First Landing state parks.



Figure 2: The newly renovated CCC-era lodge at Douthat State Park

- **State park master plans:** The 10-year master plan for Lake Anna State Park was completed and approved, and Machicomoco State Park's master plan will soon be reviewed by the Board of Conservation and Recreation. These plans involve a process of gathering input from stakeholders and the community to shape a comprehensive vision that balances conservation, recreation and education.

VI. Financial Report

VIRGINIA BOARD OF CONSERVATION & RECREATION

Financial Report – January 9, 2026

General Fund Appropriation & Expenditures

- Fiscal Year 2026 Total Legislative Appropriation: \$107,947,574
- Total transfers and adjustments: (\$15,765,324)
- Fiscal Year 2026 Total Legislative Appropriation Available for Agency Operations: \$92,182,250

Figure 1: Appropriation Transfers & Adjustments:

FY2026 Legislative Appropriation		\$ 107,947,574
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	
Central Appropriations	3,685,535	
CTO funds for assessment	476,023	
		(15,765,324)
FY 2026 Total GF Appropriation Available for Operations		\$ 92,182,250

Figure 2: General Fund Division Budgets and Expenditures Through November 30, 2026.

Division	Division Targets	YTD Actual (November 30, 2025)	Target vs Actual - %
Natural Heritage	\$6,500,945.00	\$ 2,712,552	41.7%
State Parks	\$38,659,525.00	\$ 27,231,903	70.4%
PRR (Incl Design & Construction)	\$4,237,268.00	\$ 1,317,118.74	31.1%
Director's Office - Admin- Finance	\$14,187,360.00	\$ 7,665,678	54.0%
Grand Total	\$ 63,585,098	\$ 38,927,252	61.2%

*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 November 30, 2025.

	FY26 Estimate	YTD Actual (Through November 30, 2025)	YTD Actual /Estimate	Prior Year YTD Actual (Through November 30, 2024)	YOY Change
Grand Total	\$ 33,666,754	\$ 16,857,969	50%	\$ 17,077,506	-1%

VII. Governor Youngkin's Proposed FY27 Budget

VIRGINIA BOARD OF CONSERVATION & RECREATION

I. Governor Youngkin's Proposed FY27 Budget Adjustments for DCR¹

Operating Budget Summary

Biennium	Fiscal Year	Source	GF	NGF	Total
2020-2022	2021	Chapter 1, 2022 Acts of Assembly	\$133,055,585	\$57,858,814	\$190,914,399
2020-2022	2022	Chapter 1, 2022 Acts of Assembly	\$152,961,045	\$58,058,814	\$211,019,859
2022-2024	2023	Chapter1, 2024 Acts of Assembly	\$431,138,368	\$172,452,771	\$603,591,139
2022-2024	2024	Chapter1, 2024 Acts of Assembly	\$556,564,758	\$146,799,665	\$703,364,423
2024-2026	2025	Chapter 725, 2025 Acts of Assembly	\$456,615,201	\$211,635,974	\$668,251,175
2024-2026	2026	Chapter 725, 2025 Acts of Assembly	\$107,947,574	\$149,423,979	\$257,371,553
2026-2028	2027	Governor's Proposed Budget	\$256,795,331	\$300,090,049	\$556,885,380
		Base Budget	\$107,947,574	\$149,423,979	\$257,371,553
		Addenda (Changes to the Base)	\$148,847,757	\$150,666,070	\$299,513,827
2026-2028	2028	Governor's Proposed Budget	\$110,924,189	\$158,034,338	\$268,958,527
		Base Budget	\$107,947,574	\$149,423,979	\$257,371,553
		Addenda (Changes to the Base)	\$2,976,615	\$8,610,359	\$11,586,974

Positions Summary

Biennium	Fiscal Year	Source	GF	NGF	Total
2020-2022	2021	Chapter 1, 2022 Acts of Assembly	435.50	46.50	482.00
2020-2022	2022	Chapter 1, 2022 Acts of Assembly	443.50	46.50	490.00
2022-2024	2023	Chapter1, 2024 Acts of Assembly	474.50	49.50	524.00
2022-2024	2024	Chapter1, 2024 Acts of Assembly	480.50	50.50	531.00
2024-2026	2025	Chapter 725, 2025 Acts of Assembly	512.50	53.50	566.00
2024-2026	2026	Chapter 725, 2025 Acts of Assembly	514.50	57.50	572.00
2026-2028	2027	Proposed Positions	514.50	70.50	585.00
		Base Budget	514.50	57.50	572.00
		Addenda (Changes to the Base)	0.00	13.00	13.00

Operating Budget Amendments

- Adjust appropriation for centrally funded changes to Line of Duty Act premiums and enrollment: Adjusts appropriation for Line of Duty Act premiums and enrollment changes budgeted in Central Appropriations, Item 469 N. of Chapter 725, 2025 Acts of Assembly.

	FY 2027	FY 2028
General Fund	\$18,035	\$18,035

- Adjust appropriation for centrally funded minimum wage increases: Adjusts appropriation to reflect the assumed increase in the Virginia minimum wage effective January 1, 2026, and budgeted in Central Appropriations, Item 469 Q. of Chapter 725, 2025 Acts of Assembly. The amounts provided support the annualized general fund cost of increasing the Virginia minimum wage from \$12.00 per hour to \$12.89 per hour or the equivalent annual salary of \$26,811. The actual minimum wage for January 1, 2026,

¹ All text and data in this section was taken from the 2026 Executive Budget Document as posted on the webpage of the Department of Planning and Budget and accessed on December 23, 2025.
<https://dpb.virginia.gov/budget/buddoc26/partb/officeofnaturalandhistoricresources.pdf>

will be communicated by the Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Industry by October 1, 2025.

	FY 2027	FY 2028
General Fund	\$92,886	\$92,886
Nongeneral Fund	\$13,018	\$13,018

- Adjust appropriation for centrally funded salary increases for state employees: Adjusts appropriation for the salary increases for state employees budgeted in Central Appropriations, Item 469 R. of Chapter 725, 2025 Acts of Assembly.

	FY 2027	FY 2028
General Fund	\$2,185,115	\$2,185,115
Nongeneral Fund	\$305,110	\$305,110

- Support algal bloom remediation at Lake Anna: Provides funding in the first year for harmful algal bloom remediation efforts.

	FY 2027	FY 2028
General Fund	\$750,000	\$0

- Provide nongeneral fund appropriation and positions for participation in a cooperative agreement with the United States Forest Service: Establishes federal and special nongeneral fund appropriation and positions to support participation in a ten-year cooperative agreement with the United States Forest Service. This agreement will designate funding for critical trail maintenance, arborist work, and infrastructure repair across state parks and adjacent federal lands.

	FY 2027	FY 2028
Nongeneral Fund	\$1,474,052	\$1,551,784
Positions	13.00	13.00

- Transfer cash between funds within the agency: Authorizes the agency to transfer \$2.4 million from the State Park Acquisition and Development Fund to the Natural Area Preservation Fund. These funds were received through the sale of property originally intended to become a preserve.

Capital Project Requests

- Acquire Oak Hill and establish as a state park: Authorizes the Director, Department of Planning and Budget, to establish a capital and operating appropriation for the Department of Conservation and Recreation to acquire Oak Hill upon meeting specified conditions.
- Provide additional federal appropriation for natural area preserve acquisitions: Allocates additional federal appropriation for the project in anticipation of awards.

	FY 2027	FY 2028
Nongeneral Fund	\$10,200,000	\$0

IX. Upcoming Meeting Dates

VIRGINIA BOARD OF CONSERVATION & RECREATION

I. **Approved 2026 Board of Conservation and Recreation Meeting Dates**

January 9, 2026	Pocahontas State Park, Chesterfield, Virginia
April 28 – 30, 2026	Shenandoah National Park, Luray, Virginia
October 7-9, 2026	Breaks Interstate Park, Breaks, Virginia

II. **Proposed 2027 Board of Conservation and Recreation Meeting Dates**

January 8, 2027	Pocahontas State Park, Chesterfield, Virginia
April 14-16, 2027	Hungry Mother State Park, Marion, Virginia
October 6-8, 2027	Westmoreland State Park, Westmoreland, Virginia*

*Location is dependent on completion of the cabin restoration project at Westmoreland.

The information provided on the following pages is for the Board’s awareness only and will not be presented to the board. Please feel free to reach out to DCR Staff with any questions or comments. Contact information can be found at the bottom of each section.

Report to the Board: Master Plan Update

VIRGINIA BOARD OF CONSERVATION & RECREATION

Master Plan Status Report

The DCR Division of Planning and Recreation Resources continues to collaborate with internal and external partners, including the Division of State Parks, to advance master planning initiatives. Efforts are ongoing for High Bridge Trail, Powhatan, Shenandoah River, Mayo River, and Sweet Run State Parks. In 2026, planning will begin for several additional parks, starting with Staunton River and Wilderness Road State Parks. Master plan projects are scheduled based on staffing, resource availability, and the progress of current efforts.

High Bridge Trail State Park	● Public Comment Meeting Held in October 2025 ● Drafting Master Plan ● Anticipate Spring 2026 Presentation to the Board
Shenandoah River State Park	● Public Comment Meeting Held in September 2025 ● Drafting Master Plan ● Anticipate Spring 2026 Presentation to the Board
Powhatan State Park	● Public Information Meeting Held in October 2025 ● Public Outreach/Engagement are ongoing ● Visitor Experience Workshop completed ● Needs Assessment Workshop ongoing
Mayo River State Park	● Public Information Meeting Held in December 2024 ● Public Outreach/Engagement are ongoing, ● Visitor Experience Workshop held in March 2025 ● Needs Assessment anticipated for Winter 2026 ● Public Comment meeting anticipated for Spring 2026
Sweet Run State Park	● Project Kick Off and First Advisory Committee Meeting Held in November 2024 ● Existing Condition Analysis is ongoing ● Public outreach/engagement is ongoing ● Public Comment meeting anticipated for Spring 2026
Staunton River & Wilderness Road State Parks	● Project Kick-Offs scheduled for January 2026

Contact Information

Additional questions regarding the Master Planning efforts may be directed to:

Kelly McClary, Director
Division of Planning and Recreation Resources
Phone: 804-225-2738
Email: kelly.mcclary@dcr.virginia.gov

Report to the Board: Capital Projects Summary

VIRGINIA BOARD OF CONSERVATION & RECREATION

Twin Lakes Cabin 6 Renovations

Objective: This project scope includes the renovation of one existing cabin at Twin Lakes State Park. The cabin was damaged in a storm when a tree fell on the roof of the facility. The renovation work was deemed an emergency, and it included structural replacement of the roof and roof shingles and exterior and interior replacements of siding, the porch, and mechanical and electrical systems. The project was funded with Maintenance Reserve funds.

<i>Budget:</i>	Resources	Expenditures	Encumbered	Remaining
	\$150,000	\$28,164	\$111,429	\$10,407

Status: Complete

Completion Date: Complete Fall 2025

Figure 1: Cabin 6 at Twin Lakes State Park



Report to the Board: Capital Projects Update

VIRGINIA BOARD OF CONSERVATION & RECREATION

Leesylvania State Park Pier Renovations

Objective: This project scope included the major renovations and partial demolition of the fishing pier at Leesylvania State Park. The work includes the demolition of the roof and a portion of the pier that was destroyed in a storm event. The renovation was deemed an emergency and design and construction began promptly. The project was funded with Maintenance Reserve funds.

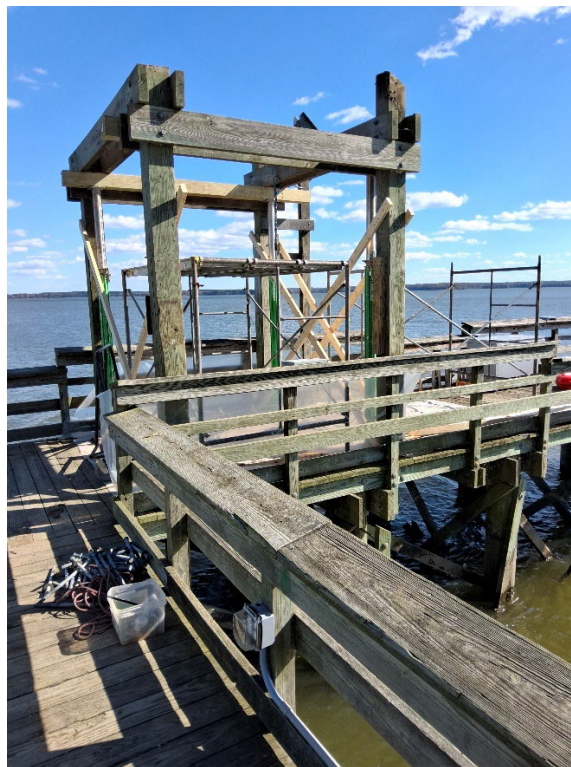
Budget:	Resources	Expenditures	Encumbered	Remaining
	\$ 505,000	\$ 47,579	\$ 436,776	\$ 20,645

Status: This project is being constructed.

Completion Date: Winter 2026

Figure 2:

The pier at Leesylvania State Park



Twin Lakes Dam rehabilitations

Objective: This project scope included the rehabilitation of an existing spillway of the Goodwin Dam at Twin Lakes State Park. The work included a condition assessment of a spillway that exceeded flood conditions during a storm event. Once the evaluation was completed, the project was deemed to be an emergency, and the rehabilitation of the spillway was required. The work included hardening the spillway and raising its height to ensure future flooding would not deteriorate the earthen dam. The project was funded with federal emergency funds (0290).

Budget:

Resources	Expenditures	Encumbered	Remaining
\$140,950	\$ 130,950	\$ 140,950	\$ 10,000

Status: The project is 95% complete.

Est. Completion Date: 95% Complete

Figure 3:

Rehabilitated spillway at Twin Lakes State Park.



First Landing and Westmoreland State Park Cabin Renovations

Objective: This project scope included the renovation of 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: First Landing State Park :Cabin construction



Machicomoco State Park: New Ranger Residence

Objective:

This project scope includes new construction of a ranger residence at Machicomoco State Park. The project includes the new construction of a 1,500sf residence to include a new septic system , utilizes, access road, and parking area for an onsite Park Ranger – Law Enforcement. This project was funded with 2021 Virginia Public Bonds approved by the General Assembly.

Budget:

Resources	Expenditures	Encumbered	Remaining
\$ 700,000	\$ 99,978	\$569,005	\$ 31,017

Status:

This project is being constructed

Est. Completion Date: Summer 2026

**Figure 4: Machicomoco
State Park New residence**



Other Capital Projects

The list below includes other capital projects currently managed by the Division of Planning and Recreation Resources:

Project	Status (2025)
BC Utility / ADA Upgrades	Complete
CL Utility / ADA Upgrades	Complete
FS Utility / ADA Upgrades	Complete
NRT Repair/Replace Trestles	Complete
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	Complete
Belle Isle Manor Improvements	Design
WE Renovate Existing Cabins	Construction

Report to the Board: Capital Projects Update

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	Complete
Various Roofs Southwestern VA	Construction
LE Infrastructure Improvements	Construction
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	Construction
Sweet Run Residence Repairs	Construction
Widewater Shoreline Renovations	Design
Kiptopeke Pier Repairs	Construction
New River Trail Sewerage Treatment	Complete
Shot Tower Repairs	Design
Various Residential/ Cabin Repairs	Construction
Leesylvania Pier Repairs	Construction
Twin Lakes Cabin 6 Emergency Repairs	Complete
York River Visitor Center Repairs	Construction

Contact Information

Additional questions regarding capital projects may be directed to:

Frank Stovall, Deputy Director for Operations

Phone: 804-836-9810

Email: frank.stovall@dcv.virginia.gov

Kelly McClary, Director, Division of Planning and Recreation Resources

Phone: 804-225-2738

Email: kelly.mcclary@dcv.virginia.gov

Report to the Board: State Parks Update

VIRGINIA BOARD OF CONSERVATION & RECREATION

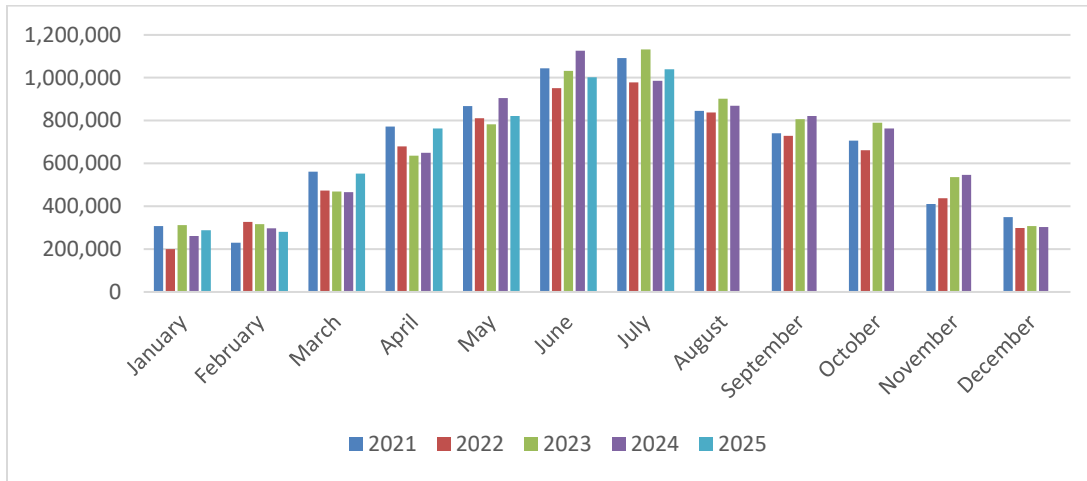
Virginia State Parks – Key Projects and Initiatives

- **Portfolio Overview**
 - Virginia State Parks is implementing a focused portfolio of **priority projects in FY2025** that advance visitor experience, workforce capacity, accessibility, conservation, and operational effectiveness across the state park system.
- **Asset Management System Implementation**
 - The division is actively implementing a **comprehensive asset management system** to improve lifecycle planning, maintenance prioritization, and capital investment decisions. Phase I established the system framework and asset inventory standards; Phase II is underway, focusing on data population, condition assessments, and integration with maintenance and capital planning workflows.
- **Visitor Experience & Interpretation**
 - Major projects are modernizing **visitor centers and interpretive exhibits**, beginning at First Landing State Park, to improve accessibility, storytelling, and educational relevance while addressing aging facilities and outdated media.
- **Workforce Development**
 - The **Ranger Conservation Corps** is being launched to expand field capacity, strengthen recruitment and retention pipelines, and provide structured training and career pathways in park operations and resource stewardship.
- **Accessibility & Inclusion**
 - A statewide **All-Terrain Wheelchair (ATW) pilot** has been implemented to improve outdoor access for visitors with mobility limitations. Program outcomes are now being evaluated to inform potential expansion.
- **Technology & Organizational Effectiveness**
 - Completion of the **State Parks SharePoint upgrade** has improved internal communication, document management, and cross-program coordination across a geographically dispersed workforce.
- **Land Conservation & Resource Protection**
 - Strategic land acquisition efforts, including the **Kane Gap property near Natural Tunnel State Park**, advance long-term conservation objectives, protect critical landscapes, and expand public access.
- **Strategic Alignment**
 - All projects directly support **Mission 2036 priorities**, strengthening core operations, enhancing visitor experiences, building workforce capacity, and ensuring long-term sustainability of park assets and resources.

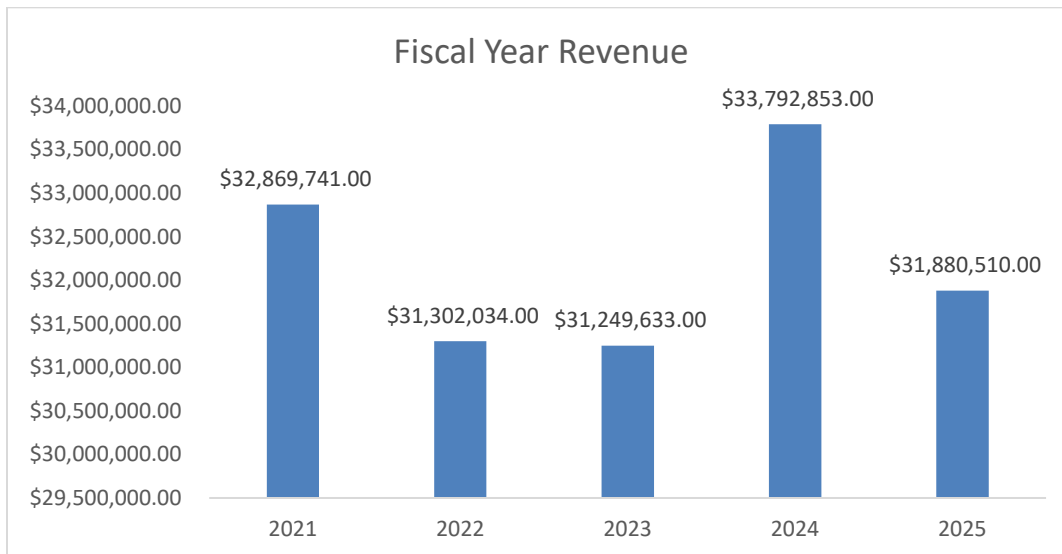
Metrics

Updated visitation and revenue and education statistics. Please adjust them so that the charts are the same size. Convert the education numbers chart to a simple word table.

Calendar Year 2025 Visitation:



Revenue by Fiscal Year:



2025 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	124,153	288,698*	89,156	212,203*

*Preliminary year-end data

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Report to the Board: Natural Heritage Update

VIRGINIA BOARD OF CONSERVATION & RECREATION

Biological Inventory Section

- A total of **743** staff-days were spent from Jan - Sept 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). **152** new occurrences of these resources were documented and mapped across the Commonwealth. **406** 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, Dominion Energy and others.
- The United States Forest Service (USFS) and DCR entered into a Good Neighbor Agreement. This is a 10-year agreement that will provide \$5 million in funding to DCR. DCR's Division of Natural Heritage (DNH) will help the USFS complete field work and records necessary for completion of NEPA requirements and improve its knowledge for cave and karst systems on the Forest, and DNH will receive funding and financial support to collect core natural heritage resource data on the Forest's 1.8 million acres.
- DNH is working with the Department of General Services (DGS) to secure a new space for the agency's zoology lab. The current lab is located in the Monroe Building, which has been designated for demolition. The new lab will be located closer to DNH offices in Main Street Centre, offer easier access, and additional storage. It will be completed in April/May 2026.

Information Management Section

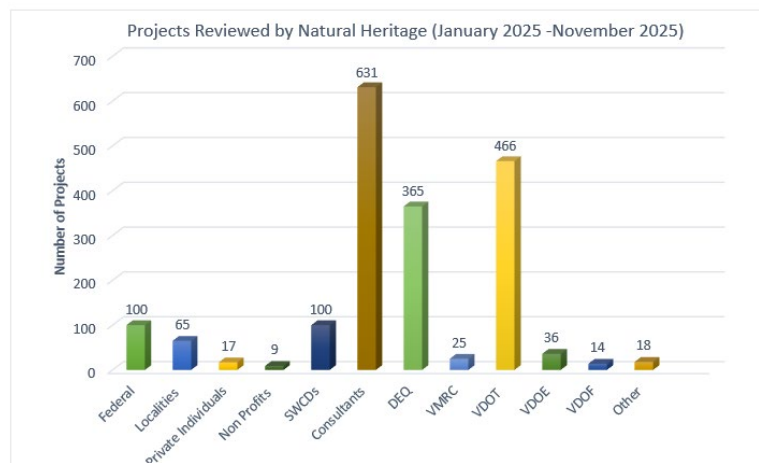
- **Mussel Richness Mapping Project:** A complimentary layer to the Potential Freshwater Mussel Richness (PFMR) layer was completed in 2025. The resulting Flow Buffers Prioritized for Conservation and Restoration layer uses PFMR data to delineate flow buffers for targeted conservation and restoration efforts. Prioritization is based on mussel richness and rarity, nutrient loading, and land cover characteristics. By incorporating topographic flow paths, the buffer layer ensures that interventions are placed where they will have the greatest impact on water quality and mussel habitat enhancement. Both layers are now available on the Virginia Natural Heritage Data Explorer.
- **Virginia Wildlife Corridor Action Plan:** Efforts continue on the Virginia Wildlife Corridor Action Plan (VWCAP). In 2025, the Chief of Biodiversity Information and Conservation Tools dedicated significant time to subprojects funded under the federal Wildlife Corridor Pilot Program (WCPP). These subprojects focused on assessing connectivity and road risks for small animals, aquatic organisms, and large mammals. The Chief served as a member of the Technical Advisory Committee and Technical Review Panel for the small animals project, as well as on multiple workgroups supporting these efforts. Additionally, the Chief served on the Leadership Team for the core VWCAP team, helping guide the development and implementation of the statewide plan.
- **Data Backlog Clearing Effort:** A Coastal Biodiversity Data Management Specialist (CBDMS) was hired under a federal grant through the Coastal Zone Management Program to address long-standing backlogs of natural heritage data. Thanks to the efforts of the Biotics Squad, which includes the CBDMS, at least 20% of the unprocessed backlog has been cleared.
- **HB 206 Regulatory Advisory Panel (RAP) Participation:** The Chief of Biodiversity Information and Conservation Tools served as a Subject Matter Expert (SME) throughout the HB 206 RAP process,

which focused on determining mitigation for development impacts to Forest Cores from utility-scale solar projects. The Chief developed two mitigation proposals, one of which advanced to the final round of four proposals considered by the panel. During the RAP meetings, the Chief delivered a highly technical presentation on the Virginia Natural Landscape Assessment (VaNLA), a landscape-scale spatial analysis used to identify, prioritize, and link natural habitats for biodiversity conservation and ecosystem function, and the source of the Ecological Cores under consideration by the RAP.

- **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 and Chief of Biodiversity Information and Conservation Tools developed a new GIS layer to support conservation planning in Virginia's coastal zone. The layer identifies un-conserved lands adjacent to permanently protected areas that contribute to the resilience of those conserved lands, both physically and biologically.
- **HB 309 Forestland and Urban Tree Canopy Conservation Plan Participation:** The Chief of Biodiversity Information and Conservation Tools participated as a stakeholder and technical contributor in the development of the framework for Virginia's Forestland and Urban Tree Canopy Conservation Plan, mandated under HB 309. The legislation requires the Department of Forestry to coordinate with a Technical Advisory Committee to produce the plan by November 1, 2026, with updates every five years thereafter.

Environmental Review Section

- From **January 1, 2025, to November 30, 2025**, DCR's Natural Heritage Environmental Review section sent out **2,761** responses to clients and partners; **13** projects were late (**0.005 % of all projects reviewed**). 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. **1,963** projects were submitted using the NHDE website (**71%** of overall projects received) and **915** were **"no comment/no conflict"** projects submitted through the Natural Heritage Data Explorer.



- A Coastal Native Seed Bank was established in partnership with the Virginia Native Plant Society and the Clifton Institute to farmers growing native species in the coastal zone along with the hiring of a new native

seed coordinator. The new native seed coordinator, Rachel Martin, was hired by the Clifton Institute in Oct 2025.

Natural Areas Protection Section

- DCR established the state's 68th Natural Area Preserve, called Eastern Divide (Montgomery Co.) through fee-simple purchase of two parcels totaling ~30 acres on November 3rd.
- DCR established the state's 69th Natural Area Preserve, to be called Brocks Gap (Rockingham County) in December.
- 975 acres were added to Buffalo Mountain Natural Area Preserve in Floyd County.
- Efforts are underway to accept donation of ~2,300 acres as an addition to Chestnut Ridge NAP (Bland Co.) from The Nature Conservancy.
- Staff have identified urgent funding needs for key parcels of interest at several NAPs, including Grassy Hill NAP (Franklin Co.), Piney Grove Flatwoods NAP (Sussex Co.), Lyndhurst Ponds (Augusta Co.), and Mutton Hunk Fen (Accomack Co.).
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Natural Areas Stewardship Section

- DNH's Natural Areas Science Manager, Ryan Klopff, hosted a virtual panel put on by the Natural Areas Association in October, focused on deer management in natural areas. Partners from DWR presented the program described above along with other researchers and land managers.
- Construction of a new trail and parking area has been completed at Bald Knob NAP. This preserve previously did not have public access facilities. The grand opening of the public access facilities at this NAP is scheduled for 2026.
- Similarly, a new trail and parking area are under construction at Crow's Nest NAP aiming to enhance the visitor experience and to make a larger portion of the preserve available for passive recreation (hiking, nature study).
- Coastal Region Steward and staff hosted an interagency pesticide field training session at Magothy Bay NAP focused on collaboration, cross-training, and gaining apprenticeship hours for newer trainees.
- Southeast Region staff have completed on-site preparations and developed the first prescribed burn plan for Dendron Swamp NAP in Isle of Wight County.
- 2025 new hires (Invasive Species Technician and Stewardship GIS Specialist) have developed a new geospatial data collection tool for tracking invasive species management activities. Accurate mapping of area of extent, density of cover, reproductive status etc. are very important details for tracking progress in invasive species management. This new tool improves and aligns our record keeping across the state as well as greatly improves tracking of multiple management records.

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