

**Board of Conservation and Recreation
Friday, January 9, 2026
Pocahontas State Park**

TIME AND PLACE

The meeting of the Board of Conservation and Recreation took place at 9:07 a.m. on Friday, January 9, 2026, at Pocahontas State Park.

BOARD OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Hunter H. Ihrman, Chair
Chief Walt "Red Hawk" Brown
The Honorable Douglas Domenech
Ms. Gretchen Byrd
Mr. Ross Stewart
Mrs. Susan Allen
Ms. Jennifer Walle Boyd

BOARD OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION MEMBERS NOT PRESENT

Colonel Eric A. Hoggard, Vice Chair
The Honorable James Cheng
Mr. John W. Inge, IV
The Honorable Duane Adams
The Honorable Kyle Kilgore

STAFF PRESENT

Andrew Smith, Acting Director
Frank Stovall, Deputy Director for Operations
Laura Ellis, Deputy Director for Administration and Finance
Dr. Melissa Baker, Director, Virginia State Parks
Tim Shrader, Easter Field Operation Manager
Whitten Cluff, Executive Assistant for Operations
Lisa McGee, Director of Policy, Planning, and Legislative Affairs
Kelly McClary, Division Director, Planning and Recreation Resources
David Bryan, State Parks Planner
Josh Ellington, Chief of Resource Management
Lesley Starke, Stewardship Chief
Sharon Partee, Director of Finance
David Neudeck, Public Communications and Marketing Director
Breanne Lindsey, Board & Constituent Liaison

ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM

With seven (7) members of the Board present, a quorum was established.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Ihrman called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m. and called for introductions.

APPROVAL OF THE OCTOBER 2, 2025, MINUTES

BOARD ACTION

Mrs. Allen moved to approve the October 2, 2025, Board meeting minutes as presented. Chief Brown seconded the motion, which was approved by: Allen, Brown, Byrd, Domenech, Ihrman, Stewart, and Walle Boyd.

ANNUAL FOIA TRAINING – Ms. Breanne Lindsey, Board & Constituent Liaison

Ms. Lindsey presented an overview of the Freedom of Information Act as it pertains to Board members.

ANNUAL RENEWAL OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING POLICY – Ms. Breanne Lindsey, Board & Constituent Liaison

In accordance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, which requires annual adoption of a Board Virtual Participation Policy, Ms. Lindsey provided an overview of the current policy.

BOARD ACTION

Mrs. Allen moved to approve the Virtual Meeting Policy as presented. Mr. Stewart seconded the motion, which was approved by: Allen, Brown, Byrd, Domenech, Ihrman, Stewart, and Walle Boyd.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT – Mr. Andrew W. Smith, DCR Acting Director

Acting Director Smith provided an overview of DCR's accomplishments in 2025. DCR continued to carry out its mission to conserve, protect, and enjoy by expanding its public lands and making improvements to make outdoor recreation more accessible. He continued by providing the following highlights:

- The agency expanded public lands by creating two new natural area preserves, Eastern Divide and Brocks Gap, and acquired lakefront property to expand Caledon State Park.
- Hayfields State Park officially opened as Virginia's 44th state park on October 20, 2025, preserving 1,034 acres in Highland County and generating strong public engagement, with nearly 193,000 people reached on social media.
- In its 26th year, the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation awarded \$15.5 million in grants, supporting major conservation projects that preserved natural areas for educational purposes, expanded the James River Park System, and grew Caledon State Park.
- DCR entered a Good Neighbor Agreement with the U.S. Forest Service, providing about \$5 million over 10 years to support biological inventories, NEPA requirement assistance, record updates, and assessments of special biological areas.
- DCR's Natural Heritage developed a new GIS layer through a NOAA-funded project to support coastal conservation planning by identifying adjacent lands that enhance the resilience of protected areas.
- Public access increased through key land acquisitions, the opening of new visitor and recreation facilities, expanded camping and water access opportunities, continued trail development at multiple preserves, and reconstruction of a boardwalk trail will be underway at North Landing River Natural Area Preserve.
- Historic preservation and amenities were enhanced with renovations to the CCC-era Douthat Lodge and the start of restoration on over 30 cabins at Westmoreland and First Landing state parks.
- State park planning advanced with the completion and approval of Lake Anna's 10-year master plan and the review of Machicomoco's plan, both designed to guide balanced conservation, recreation, and education through stakeholder and community input.

Following Acting Director Smith's update, the Board discussed whether Hayfield State Park has undergone an assessment of Indigenous influence in the area. Staff indicated that the master planning process has not yet begun, but that such an assessment should be included as part of the plan. The Board also discussed variations in staffing levels across state parks and the range of hiking and recreational activities available at those parks.

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

Ms. Ellis reported on the financial conditions of DCR:

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	<u>\$ 107,947,574</u>
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)
FY2026 Total GF Appropriation Available for Operations	<u>\$ 92,182,250</u>

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%
Grand Total	<u>\$ 63,585,098.00</u>	<u>\$ 38,927,252</u>	<u>61.2%</u>

*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	<u>\$ 33,666,754</u>	<u>\$ 16,857,969</u>	<u>50%</u>	<u>\$ 17,077,506</u>	<u>-1%</u>

GOVERNOR’S BUDGET – Mr. Andrew W. Smith, DCR Acting Director

Acting Director Smith provided the following briefing on the Governor’s Budget:

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	Chapter 1, 2024 Acts of Assembly	\$431,138,368	\$172,452,771	\$603,591,139
2022-2024	2024	Chapter 1, 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
		<i>Base Budget</i>	\$107,947,574	\$149,423,979	\$257,371,553
		<i>Addenda (Changes to the Base)</i>	\$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
		<i>Base Budget</i>	\$107,947,574	\$149,423,979	\$257,371,553
		<i>Addenda (Changes to the Base)</i>	\$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	Chapter 1, 2024 Acts of Assembly	474.50	49.50	524.00
2022-2024	2024	Chapter 1, 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	Governor’s Proposed Budget	514.50	70.50	585.00
		<i>Base Budget</i>	514.50	57.50	572.00
		<i>Addenda (Changes to the Base)</i>	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	FY2028
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, 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

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.

- 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

Following Acting Director Smith’s overview of the Governor’s Budget, the Board discussed Oak Hill State Park and the potential impacts of the 2026 General Assembly legislative session on the park. The Board discussed the structural conditions at Oak Hill State Park and noted that the structures are in better condition than expected considering their age.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE PROPOSED MACHICOMOCO STATE PARK MASTER PLAN – Ms. Kelly McClary, Director, Division of Planning and Recreation Resources

Prior to presenting an overview of the Machicomoco State Park Master Plan, Ms. McClary announced that David Bryan has been selected as the new State Park Planner for the Planning and Recreation Resources (PRR) Section. She also thanked Chief Brown for his assistance with the Master Plan and for his service on the Advisory Committee.

The Board’s role is to review the plan and, if deemed acceptable, recommend its adoption. If the Board recommends adoption, the plan is forwarded to the General Assembly for review. Upon approval by the General Assembly, the plan is

then submitted to the DCR Director for approval. Ms. McClary then provided an overview of the Machicomoco State Park Master Plan:

- Machicomoco State Park is located along the York River in Gloucester County, Virginia, and consists of two administrative units, the Main Unit and the West Unit, totaling more than 1,000 acres. Ownership of the West Unit was transferred to DCR in 2006, followed by the Main Unit in 2020, with park operations commencing in 2021.
- The park's interpretive area highlights Virginia Indian history through educational programming and interpretive displays. Cultural resources reflecting Native American history at both units of the park date to the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries.
- Essential visitor experiences designed to convey the park's story and resources include the interpretive area, Timberneck House, the cartop boat launch road, the waters surrounding Machicomoco, the campground experience, access to unimpaired natural areas, views of the York River and associated marshes, and immersive passive recreation opportunities within the West Unit.
- A public information survey was conducted to gather public input regarding desired park features. Survey responses indicated that outdoor recreation and public events were top priorities. In addition, respondents emphasized Tribal history and noted the strong connection between Indigenous groups and the park's land and waterways.

Ms. McClary provided the goals of the park:

- Goal 1.0 – Protect, conserve, and enhance the cultural, historic, and natural resources of the park.
- Goal 2.0 – Create a welcoming and safe environment for all visitors to learn about and gain a better understanding of the natural, cultural, and historic resources of the park.
- Goal 3.0 – Provide a range of day-use and overnight opportunities, facilities, and amenities for visitors to the park.
- Goal 4.0 – Provide programming for natural, cultural, and historic education and interpretation.
- Goal 5.0 – Continue to collaborate across sectors to provide mutually beneficial efforts to enhance Machicomoco State Park and the surrounding region.
- Goal 6.0 – Continue to administer and manage the park professionally and transparently, which fosters the public's trust.

Ms. McClary concluded the plan overview by reviewing the three phases of each unit and the staffing needs of the park:

- The proposed development for the Main Unit is organized into three phases and includes construction of a maintenance facility, longleaf pine management, a visitor center, meadow development, cabins, an outdoor classroom, and related improvements.
- The proposed development for the West Unit is also organized into three phases and includes waterfront safety improvements, development of a picnic area, an ADA-accessible trail, shoreline stabilization, a ranger residence, a fishing pier, and related improvements.
- Staffing needs for the park were presented by phase and included current staffing levels, immediate staffing needs, and additional positions anticipated for phases two and three for both park units. Current staff positions include a Park Manager, Chief Ranger – Law Enforcement, Chief Ranger – Visitor Experience, Office Manager, Park Ranger – Maintenance, and Park Ranger – Law Enforcement. Immediate staffing needs include a Park Ranger – Maintenance and a Park Ranger – Resource Management. Additional staffing anticipated during phases two and three includes an Assistant Park Manager, Office Assistant, Supervisory Park Ranger, Volunteer Coordinator, Education Specialist, Park Ranger – Maintenance, Park Ranger – Law Enforcement, Park Ranger – Resource Management, and Park Ranger – Custodial.

Following Ms. McClary's overview of the Master Plan, the Board discussed various components of the plan. Chief Brown encouraged the Board to approve the Master Plan, noting that Machicomoco State Park is the only state park in Virginia that recognizes all three Virginia Indian language groups and emphasizing the importance of preserving this history. The Board also discussed agricultural activities at the park, including the farming of soybeans and corn; the partnership with

the Fairfield Foundation to repair the Timberneck House; the anticipated 30-year timeframe for completion of the Master Plan's phased development; and proposed amendments to the Executive Summary of the Master Plan suggested by Board members.

BOARD ACTION

Chief Brown moved to approve the Master Plan with recommended amendments by the Board to be considered by staff prior to submission to the General Assembly. Mrs. Allen seconded the motion, which was approved by: Allen, Brown, Byrd, Domenech, Ihrman, Stewart, and Walle Boyd.

ADOPTION OF THE 2027 BCR CALENDAR – *Mr. Frank Stovall, Deputy Director for Operations*

Mr. Stovall provided a reminder of the remaining meeting dates in 2026:

- April 29 – May 1, 2026: Shenandoah National Park
- October 7-9, 2026: Breaks Interstate Park

Mr. Stovall provided recommended dates and locations for the Board of Conservation and Recreation meetings through 2027 for approval as follows:

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

BOARD ACTION

Mrs. Allen moved to approve the 2027 meeting dates as presented. Ms. Byrd seconded the motion, which was approved by: Allen, Brown, Byrd, Domenech, Ihrman, Stewart, and Walle Boyd.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Ihrman announced that the next meeting is scheduled for April 29 through May 1, 2026, at Shenandoah National Park.

Mrs. Allen recognized the work of DCR staff and Chief Brown for their efforts as it relates to the Machicomoco Master Plan.

Mr. Ihrman recognized Dr. Baker, Director of the Division of State Parks, who has resigned to accept a position in another state. The Board expressed gratitude for Dr. Baker's six years of service with the agency, noting her leadership during the COVID-19 response and her dedicated efforts to increase access to state parks for persons with disabilities, ensuring that parks are accessible to all.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:42 a.m.