

**Virginia Cave Board
Thursday, May 30, 2025
Town of Grottoes Council Chambers
Grottoes, Virginia**

TIME AND PLACE

The meeting of the Virginia Cave Board took place at 11:00 a.m. on Friday, May 30, 2025, at the Town of Grottoes Council Chambers in Grottoes, Virginia.

VIRGINIA CAVE BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Andrea Futrell, Chair
Russell Kohrs
Jacqueline Gooden-Seay
Allen L. Louderback

Andrea Reese
David Hubbard (late arrival)
Austin Shank

VIRGINIA CAVE BOARD MEMBERS NOT PRESENT

John H. H. Graves
Stephanie Lillard

Roger W. Kirchen (ex officio)

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION (DCR) STAFF PRESENT

Frank Stovall, Deputy Director for Operations
Andrew Smith, Chief Deputy Director
Paul G. Saunders, III, Senior Policy Analyst
Wil Orndorff, Kart Protection Coordinator
Anne Chazal, Chief Biologist
Cassiopeia Camara, Env. Ed. Specialist
Lori Schoenweisner, Env. Ed. Specialist
Emi Endo, Senior Public Relations and Marketing Specialist

OTHERS PRESENT

Jenna Fidler
Jacob Fidler
Abigail Renberg
Carol Tiderman

ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM

With six members of the Board present, a quorum was established.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Andrea Futrell called the meeting to order at 11:16 a.m.

INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Futrell called for introductions.

Members of the Board and DCR staff present introduced themselves.

CAVE BOARD BYLAWS

The Board discussed possible revisions to its bylaws. Revised bylaws will be presented to the Board for adoption at its next meeting.

BOARD ACTION

Chair Futrell moved to revise the bylaws to assign DCR staff the duties of the Recording Secretary. Mr. Shank seconded, and the motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM January 23, 2025

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Kohrs moved that the minutes from the January 23, 2025, meeting of the Virginia Cave Board be approved with revisions as presented by Ms. Futrell. Ms. Reese seconded, and the motion carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Ms. Chazal presented the following financial information but indicated that there would be revisions sent to the Board in the future in order to correct errors in the report:

DCR - Natural Heritage (Cave Board)
 Summary of Financial Activities
 Fiscal Year 2025 (through May 31, 2025)

FY25 Beginning Cash Balance	<u><u>1,141.41</u></u>
Revenues	Amount
FY25 Revenues	<u>-</u>
Total Revenues	<u><u>-</u></u>
Expenses	Amount
FY25 Expenses	<u>1,141.35</u>
Total Expenses	<u><u>1,141.35</u></u>
Total Cash Balance (as of May 31, 2025)	<u><u>0.06</u></u>

DCR - Natural Heritage (Cave Board License Plates)
 Summary of Financial Activities
 Fiscal Year 2025 (through May 31, 2025)

FY25 Beginning Cash Balance	<u><u>1,480</u></u>
Revenues	Amount
FY25 Revenues	<u>-</u>
Total Revenues	<u><u>-</u></u>
Expenses	Amount
FY25 Expenses	<u>-</u>
Total Expenses	<u><u>-</u></u>
Total Cash Balance (as of May 31, 2025)	<u><u>1,480</u></u>

DCR KARST PROGRAM UPDATE

Mr. Orndorff provided the Board with an update from the DCR Karst Program.

BOARD MEMBER ARRIVAL

Mr. Hubbard arrived at 11:30 a.m.

LAND CONSERVATION REPORT

Ms. Chazal presented the following update:

Selected Natural Area Protection Updates
 Submitted to the Virginia Cave Board
 Rob Evans, Natural Area Protection Manager

A partial summary of projects of presumed cave & karst interest since last Cave Board report: DCR hopes to consummate addition of approx. 975 acres to **Buffalo Mountain Natural Area Preserve (Floyd County)** later this summer. Not previously discussed due to lack of clear cave & karst interest, but this NAP supports one of the largest aggregations of natural heritage resources in the state system. This addition is made possible with a > \$3,600,000 from the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation and the assistance of The Conservation Fund (TCF). TCF is serving as in intermediary between the family and DCR.

DCR is also pleased with recent progress at **Chestnut Creek Wetlands (Floyd County)**. Staff have been working with this landowner for approximately 20 years. The landowner has reaffirmed his willingness to sell a key inholding that will remove the threat of road building, residential development, agricultural activity, and construction of a creek crossing at this wetland focused preserve.

A landowner with a small parcel adjacent to existing DCR ownership at **Deep Run Ponds Natural Area Preserve (Rockingham County)** has offered to donate the parcel. Staff are discussing the merits of the addition, which would provide increased upland buffer, as well as boundary maintenance issues. The donation would require DCR to cover the due diligence costs, from a currently unidentified source of funding.

Real estate due-diligence work is still underway in support of the planned land purchases near **Brocks Gap (Rockingham Co)**. As previously mentioned, eventual closing will result in establishment of a new NAP of approximately 179 acres bordering the North Fork Shenandoah River and the **geologically significant North Mountain fault**.

DCR continues to work toward several fee-simple acquisitions along the **Ellet Escarpment (Montgomery Co)**. Most recently, VDNH was awarded an additional grant from the VOF Core Fund to support land acquisitions and matching funds previously obtained from VLCF grants. DCR's Real Property Office (RPO) recently obtained signed purchase agreement from the original landowner/parcel that began this project (including the entrance to "**Dave's Cave**"). With this hurdle cleared, this and an adjoining parcel are largely set to close, forming the nucleus of a new NAP.

A nearby 43-acre parcel is likely to close with our partner TCF, on or around June 3. DCR will eventually purchase the tract from TCF using funds from VLCF, and possibly a recent award from the VOF-Core Fund. TCF and DCR are still actively negotiating with another landowner, with a cave entrance, that adjoins the above mentioned ~43 acre parcel. This landowner has some demands that we are working to accommodate; pending that outcome TCF may be able to secure conservation outcome on this parcel as well. Finally, VDNH has been in contact with another landowner who has expressed willingness to work with DCR to sell 3 adjoining parcels lying close to **Heartbeat Cave** that also would adjoin one of the pending acquisitions. If the DCR "SCAT" team fully supports this project, VDNH will need to seek additional acquisition funds totaling at least \$400,000 in the future.

DCR is working with the Town of Cleveland to expand the **Cleveland Barrens NAP (Russell County)** by further protecting **Tank Hollow Falls** and approx. 5 total acres currently owned by the Town adjoining the waterfall and the existing NAP. This project is being supported by the Cumberland Forest Community Fund administered and supported by The Nature Conservancy.

As usual, there are many other protection projects going on around the Commonwealth, on behalf of VDNH, and many others in various stages of development or consideration. If anyone would like more information on any projects, including those listed above, they may contact VDNH Protection staff directly.

VIRGINIA CAVE BOARD VACANCIES

Chair Futrell updated the Board on the process for appointments to the Board and shared the statutory requirements for Board members. There are currently two vacancies on the Cave Board.

DIXIE CAVERNS

The Board welcomed the owner of Dixie Caverns, Jenna Fidler, who addressed the Board regarding developments next to her property and concerns about flooding. The Board discussed possible remedies for protection of the cave.

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Kohrs moved that the Board direct he and Ms. Futrell to draft a letter on behalf of the Board to the local planning commission and county addressing the concerns at Dixie Caverns. Mr. Hubbard seconded, and the motion carried.

DCR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION, CAVE AND KARST GAME

Ms. Schoenweisner and Ms. Camara addressed the Board and presented the newly developed cave and karst game.

NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY CONVENTION

Being held in New York in June of 2025 and the Board Chair will be in attendance.

PROJECT UNDERGROUND

Mr. Orndorff provided a background on the program and will be sending the Board additional information regarding its offerings.

CAVES ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONVENTION

Convention will be in Harrisonburg, VA on September 26, 2025. Chair Futrell will be requesting that Mr. Graves forward more information regarding the convention.

EXPLORE VIRGINIA CAVES LICENSE PLATE

The Board discussed how to proceed with the Explore Virginia Caves License Plate program. The Board was presented with staff's recommendation.

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Kohrs moved that the Board reevaluate the program at its first meeting in 2026, if at least 100 total applications have not been received by December 31, 2025, the Board should consider discontinuing the program. Mr. Hubbard seconded, and the motion carried.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK

Chair Futrell addressed the handbook, which will go live in July, and its importance for the Cave Board.

I-81 EXPANSION AND VDOT REQUEST FOR INPUT

Chair Futrell addressed correspondence between her and the Virginia Department of Transportation regarding the I-81 expansion. Thus far, no issues have been identified.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned for lunch at 12:36 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called back to order at 1:02 p.m.

VIRGINIA CAVE AND KARST TRAIL

Mr. Kohrs briefly addressed the information he previously shared regarding his student's work on resources online for the cave and karst trail story maps using DCR's ArcGIS resources.

THE CAVERNS AT NATURAL BRIDGE

Mr. Orndorff briefly addressed the Caverns at Natural Bridge which are now owned by DCR. A management plan and cave concept are currently being developed.

MADISONS SALTPETRE CAVE TOUR

Mr. Hubbard gave the Board a presentation on cave resources and some background and information on Madison's Saltpetre Cave, which the Board was invited to tour after the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

DATE FOR NEXT MEETING

Staff will survey the board for the date of the next meeting.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:38 p.m.