

**Board of Conservation and Recreation
Monday, April 22, 2013
Powhatan State Park**

Board of Conservation and Recreation Members Present

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Mark E. Smith, Chair | W. Bruce Wingo, Vice Chair |
| Steven L. Apicella | James W. Beamer |
| Daniel F. Rinzel | William E. Small |
| Sheryl D. Swinson | Alexander I. Vanegas |
| Robert L. Wilkerson | Andrea Young |

Board of Conservation and Recreation Members Not Present

Alan D. Albert

DCR Staff Present

David A. Johnson, Director
Jeb Wilkinson, Chief Deputy Director
Joe Elton
Michael Fletcher
Scott Johnson
Craig Seaver
Danette Poole
Tom Smith
Michelle Vucci
Chuck Wyatt
Ann Zahn

Others Present

Lauren B. Schmitt, Virginia Campgrounds Association

Call to Order and Introductions

Chairman Smith called the meeting to order and declared a quorum present. He said that he would like to commend DCR staff and the legislators behind making Powhatan State Park a reality.

Approval of Minutes from October 18, 2012

Mr. Wilkerson and Mr. Rinzel noted corrections to the minutes.

MOTION: Mr. Wingo moved that the minutes of the October 18, 2012 meeting of the Board of Conservation and Recreation be approved as amended.

SECOND: Mr. Apicella

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: Minutes were approved as amended.

Director's Report

Mr. Johnson gave the director's report.

Mr. Johnson said that parks had good visitation in 2012, on par with previous years. He said that there had been an increase in visitation particularly with High Bridge Trail State Park and New River Trail State Park. He said that, if Breaks Interstate Park and Shot Tower State Park are included, Powhatan will be the 36th Virginia State Park.

Mr. Johnson said that before the General Assembly session there had been interest in the possibility of adding an extensive mountain biking trail at Pocahontas State Park. He said that the International Mountain Bike Association was interested particularly with the 2015 World Cycling Championship coming to Richmond. The hope is to have something developed at Pocahontas in time for that.

Mr. Johnson said that \$50,000 in seed money had been included in the Governor's budget with the anticipation of needing approximately a million dollars for the project. He said that there had been strong interest.

Mr. Johnson said that with regard to the General Assembly session, DCR put forward no specific legislative proposals. He noted that additional money was appropriated for the opening of Powhatan State Park. He said that the hope is to open the park in June.

Mr. Johnson said that another of the governor's recommendations was an additional two million dollars for high priority maintenance in parks.

Mr. Johnson noted that the regulatory portion of the Stormwater Management division would be moving to the Department of Environmental Quality effective July 1. He said that the agricultural portion would remain at DCR. He said that he did not anticipate any direct impact to this Board.

Mr. Johnson noted that members of DCR's Natural Heritage staff had worked to put together a book called the *Flora of Virginia*. This is a 1,500 page book that contains all of the plants of Virginia. This is the first publication of this kind in 250 years.

Ms. Young asked about the process of involving the community in the mountain bike trails.

Mr. Beamer said that the Pocahontas trail is a legacy project that will be very much like the Jamestown project. The trail system will be designed and will be combined with the James River Park System. He said that there is a lot of community support.

Ms. Young asked if there would be any problems with residents.

Mr. Johnson said that the trails would all be contained within the boundaries of the park.

Mr. Small asked about other uses on the trail.

Mr. Elton said that the Code of Virginia specifies that DCR maintain a system of non-motorized trails for public use. He said that DCR is not permitted to have motorized trails. There are trails that are open to any type of bicycle, but this series of trails will require the use of a mountain bike and will not be compatible with other vehicles or equestrian use. He said that equestrian trails are segregated within the park system. He said that the multi-use trails do not have the same elements as mountain bike trails.

Mr. Smith asked that staff notify the Board regarding the date of the Powhatan State Park dedication.

Mr. Smith asked about staffing issues at DCR.

Mr. Johnson said that some positions were moving forward. He said that one of the consequences of the Affordable Care Act was that DCR was forced to go into an amended planning session with regard to wage employees who are limited to 1,500 hours annually. Email Board on date of Powhatan Dedication.

Planning and Recreation Resources Update

Ms. Poole gave the following presentation.

Legislative Update

SB 909 State Park Master Planning

Requires DCR, in considering public comments on master plans, to make a reasonable effort to solicit comments and to provide timely notice of the comment period to trade associations and private businesses within a 10-mile radius of the park that offer similar services, including private campgrounds, marinas, and recreational facilities. This increases the required minimum degree of public comment opportunities during the state park master planning process.

Mr. Small said that the notice of meetings shouldn't be limited to 10-mile radius.

Ms. Poole stated that in addition to the Regulatory Town Hall, public notice is also currently provided via news releases to local papers, and that this legislation will provide for additional notification to businesses.

Mr. Elton noted that interested members of the public may sign up on the Virginia Regulatory Town Hall to be notified of all meetings.

SB 933 Movable Soccer Goal Safety Act

- Requires every organization that owns and controls a movable soccer goal to establish a soccer goal safety and education policy
- Prohibits the sale of movable soccer goals that are not tip-resistant beginning July 1, 2014
- Requires DCR to convene a work group to examine safety issues related to moveable soccer goals
- Findings/recommendations to be reported to the Governor and GA by November 1, 2013

Master Planning

Ms. Poole said that PRR staff was working with the following schedule for the completion of master plans:

- June:
 - Biscuit Run
- October:
 - Holiday Lake
 - Wilderness Road
 - Widewater
- 2014:
 - 2 new plans (May River and Breaks)
 - 12 updates

Design and Construction Projects Completed

- Powhatan State Park
 - Total Cost: \$7.5 Million
 - 12 Buildings
 - 2.5 Miles of Roads and Utilities

Westmoreland Water System

- Renovated Water System in February 2013
- Pressure/Consistency

Turned Park over to
New

Ongoing Projects

High Bridge Trail State Park Phase I Development

- House
 - Residence
 - Construction
- High Bridge
 - ADA Access
 - 2013

Renovation of Prospect
Future Ranger
Summer 2013
New Access Road to
1.5 Mile road to provide
Began design March

New River Trails Foster Falls Hotel

- complete
- complete
- complete
- -

Hotel Stabilization 85%
Maintenance Area 85%
Office Renovations 95%
Site Work
Bid Summer 2013

New Work For 2013

Powhatan State Park

- Crow's Nest Pier Construction
- Soil & Water Conservation District Dams
-

Campground Design
Water Access
Complete Designs

Virginia Scenic Rivers

- | | | |
|---|---|--------------------|
| • | | River Designations |
| | ○ | Banister |
| | ○ | Meherrin-extension |
| | ○ | Dan |
| • | | Current Studies |
| | ○ | Cranesnest |
| | ○ | Banister-extension |
| | ○ | Tye |
| • | | Possible Studies |
| | ○ | Staunton |

2013 Scenic River Evaluations

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| Cranesnest – Dickenson County (16 +/- miles) | |
| • | Fieldwork April |
| Banister [extension] – Pittsylvania County (30 +/- miles) | |
| • | Fieldwork late April |
| Tye – Nelson County (13 +/- miles) | |
| • | Field work May 14 |
| • | Rain date May 21 |

Field Evaluation Criteria

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| • | Corridor Vegetation |
| • | Stream flow and/or bed |
| • | modifications |
| • | Human Development of |
| • | Visual Corridor |
| • | Historic Features |
| • | Landscape |
| • | Quality of Fishery |
| • | Rare, Threatened, or |
| • | Endangered Species |
| • | Water Quality |
| • | Parallel Roads |
| • | Crossings |
| • | Special Aesthetic |
| • | Features |
| • | Recreation |
| • | Land Conservation |

2013 Virginia Outdoors Plan

Virginia's 10th Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

Progress since October

- in November SNR briefing conducted
- 85% complete; editing underway Drafting of chapters
- components – nearly complete Digital mapping
- extension by NPS to July 2013 Requested and granted

Grants

LWCF

Approximately \$1 million available

1. Paradise Creek Nature Park City of Portsmouth –
2. Memorial Park Trailhead and Canoe Launch Emporia – Veterans
3. Regional Park Authority – Gilbert's Corner Phase II Northern Virginia
4. Woodville Park Enhancement Phase II Gloucester County –
5. Authority – Chessie's Trail Fairfax County Park
6. Parks Upgrade Scott County – Local

American Battlefield Protection Program

Civil War Trust Partnership

- of \$22,536,416 protecting 88,806 acres Since 2000 – 55 Grants
- Grants of \$5,348,332 to preserve approximately 1,426 acres Currently 16 Active

Trails

- Network Statewide Trails
- Quarterly e-newsletters
- Workshops

- held in Roanoke in March
 - scheduled for September
- 2nd ADA Trail workshop
Water Trails workshop

Technical Support

- grant programs
 -
 -
 - planning/development
 - waterways
 -
 - Environmental Review process for DCR
 - working group/study
- Guidance on federal
Park and facility design
Playground safety
Trail
Public access to
Scenic resources
Coordination of the
Soccer Goal Post

At this time the Board recessed for lunch.

State Parks Update

Mr. Elton gave the update for State Parks.

Mr. Elton said that in follow up to the discussion regarding the ride center at Pocahontas that Mr. Beamer had taken the lead and was assisting with fundraising. Meetings will be held soon with the Secretary of Natural Resources and the Governor's office.

Mr. Elton said that DCR had received some approval to fill positions. He said currently the Division of State Parks had about 54 open positions. He noted that there were vacancies for park managers at Staunton River, Chippokes, Powhatan and Bear Creek Lake.

Mr. Seaver gave an update regarding storm damage at Westmoreland State Park. He said that two cabins had minor damage. The most severe damage was to a staff residence. He said that there were no injuries but several trees down on campsites. DCR is pursuing options for repair of the staff residence.

Mr. Wyatt gave the following update regarding the canopy tours in state parks:

Status Report on Tree Canopy Course PPEA at Shenandoah River State Park April 22, 2013

- Comprehensive Agreement was completed in August but final signatures were not executed until December 19, 2012
- EIR Study Completed. Several comments received that will be dealt with in the design, construction, and operations but nothing that would prohibit the project
- Phase I Archaeological Study Completed. No problems encountered
- Design and Approval for Construction:
 - Project was split into two parts to expedite the approval of the designs: Part 1 is for the building, parking lots, etc. and Part 2 is for the canopy course itself. It is hoped that Part 2 can be approved ahead of the rest of the project in order to get work done before the trees have filled in.
 - Status of Part 2 (Canopy Course)
 - § Preliminary drawings have been submitted to BCOM and comments have been returned to VCT
 - § BCOM had issues with the typical methodology for this type of construction. It relies on using prototypical designs that must be fitted to the situation
 - § A conference call was held between BCOM, VCT, DCR, etc. to better understand the issues. It was generally agreed that prototypical designs could be used but all designs must be certified by an engineer licensed in Virginia.
 - § VCT is resubmitting drawings to BCOM and hopes to get quick approval to begin building the course
 - Status of Part 1 (Building, Parking, etc.)
 - § Preliminary drawings were sent to BCOM
 - § Comments from BCOM and DCR on the preliminary drawings were returned to VCT
 - § DCR/Division of Stormwater has also submitted comments to VCT's A&E firm and is following up with communications to clarify issues
 - § VCT is resubmitting drawings. This part of the project may require additional reviews and re-submittals.
- VCT is still planning on building this spring and opening, at least on a partial basis, in spring or early summer.
 - Two employees have moved to Front Royal to prepare for construction and operations.
 - The park staff and our sign shop are working together on signage
- Next Steps:
 - Will go to AARB (Art and Architectural Review Board) for the May 3 meeting.
 - VCT will soon resubmit designs to BCOM for Part 2 (Canopy Course). Hopefully, the conference call with BCOM has cleared the way so that the designs will be in compliance with BCOM's standards.
 - Either a building permit will be issued based on the next review or additional comments and redesign will occur
 - Concurrently, the plans for Part 1 (Buildings, Parking, Trails, etc.) are being redrawn and will be resubmitted to BCOM to include all comments. It is possible that at least one more comment and redesign round will occur.

- VCT is still aiming at a spring or late summer opening, perhaps on a limited basis.

Regarding the Virginia Tech Study, Mr. Wyatt said that following the discussion at the October meeting, DCR had contacted the Virginia Tech Pamplin Business School. Due to an existing relationship, DCR was able to ask Virginia Tech to look at the question of public vs. private campground competition. Because there had already been substantial research, Virginia Tech agreed to review the existing literature. He said that ultimately the study showed that the two were not in direct competition as campgrounds were not a price based commodity.

Ms. Poole said that the information closely mirrored results of the Virginia Outdoors Study.

Mr. Elton said that with regard to the issue of annexation that the Town of Clarksville was working on an annexation plan and had hoped to annex a part of Mecklenburg County that includes the part that has Occoneechee State Park.

Mr. Wilkerson said that he had reviewed the Town comprehensive plan and was not aware of any discussion of annexation of Occoneechee State Park.

Mr. Elton said that the concern was regarding an agreement between the Town and the County that did not address discussions with DCR and with the Army Corps of Engineers which actually owns the land for the park.

Mr. Elton gave the following update regarding Powhatan State Park.

Historical Overview

- As work began in 2001 in preparation for the development of general obligation bond capital construction and acquisition projects for various state agencies, the General Assembly consulted the Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Virginia Outdoor Plan to identify where new state parks were needed to address the needs of our growing Commonwealth. That effort led to serious consideration for acquiring and developing a state park on the James River in Central Virginia.
- Staff of the General Assembly familiar with the operations of the Departments of Corrections and Juvenile Justice looked at properties on the James River in central Virginia that were not critical to the operation of those agencies.
- That review resulted in a recommendation that some 1,600 acres at the western end of the Beaumont Juvenile Justice facility should be given serious consideration.
- DCR staff toured the property with legislative and DJJ staff and a determination was made that the property would be appropriate for a new state park.
- It was the belief of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance staff that transferring this property would save the Commonwealth more than \$8 million that would have otherwise been spent to acquire land on the James River for a state park.

- A memorandum of understanding was developed between the two agencies in 2002 that outlined how the two agencies would function and collaborate on the project and in the future.
- 1,564 acres with 2.5 miles of frontage on the James River was transferred from the Department of Juvenile Justice to the Department of Conservation and Recreation through the 2003 Acts of Assembly, Chapter 1042, Item 381, M, dated May 1, 2003. Subsequent to the initial land transfer, .52 acres was later transferred to allow for the construction of a safe entrance to the park from Route 617.
- In 2005 a master plan advisory committee comprised of Powhatan county residents, adjacent land owners, government officials, user groups and local businesses began drafting a plan that was ultimately reviewed by the General Assembly, recommended by the Board of Conservation and Recreation and adopted by the DCR Director on February 22, 2007.
- The purpose of the park is to “provide premiere water and land based outdoor recreational and educational opportunities while protecting and interpreting the unique natural, historical and cultural resources of the storied James River and the eastern Piedmont region of Virginia.”
- The park’s master plan was reviewed and readopted on July 27, 2012 as required by the Code of Virginia.
- In 2008 the General Assembly included funding for phase 1 construction of the park in the state’s capital budget (\$7.5 million).
- In 2013 the General Assembly included funding for completing phase 1 construction (campground and additional road improvements) and improvement to the intersection of Route 522 and Route 617.
- The 2013 budget provided funding to open Powhatan State Park with four fulltime positions in the current fiscal year. Requests are pending approval to fill these positions and efforts are underway to acquire equipment and furnishings necessary to open the park. It was our goal to open before July 1, but it could be postponed until later in the summer since approvals have not been provided to this point.

Natural Heritage Update

Mr. Tom Smith gave the Natural Heritage update.

Virginia Natural Heritage Program

To conserve Virginia’s biodiversity through inventory, protection, and stewardship

The Natural Heritage Network 2013

All 50 U.S. states + TVA and Navajo Nation, Canada and 19 Latin American Countries and Caribbean programs

Proposed – Cave Hill Natural Area Preserve

Location: Augusta County
Owner: Cave Hill LLC
Natural Heritage Resources:
 Madison Cave Isopod
 Madison Cave Amphipod
 Other Rare Cave Species
 Two Significant Caves
Other Significance:
 Madison Cave mapped by Thomas Jefferson
 George Washington signature
 Former Tourist Cave
 Mined for Saltpeter in 1800s
 Adjoins Grand Caverns Park

Mr. Smith said that this would not be a land acquisition but a natural area preserve deed of dedication and open space easement. He said that the environmental assessment of the project was being funded by DuPont with the remainder of the cost a donation from the family.

Mr. Apicella asked about incorporating the name Madison into the site name.

Mr. Smith said that there were a number of other caves on the site. He also said that the caving community prefers in many cases not to draw specific attention to caves.

Ms. Swinson asked the status of white nose syndrome in bats.

Mr. Smith said that the disease continues to devastate the bat population. There is no known cure.

MOTION: Ms. Swinson moved that the Board of Conservation and Recreation recommend that the newest Natural Area Preserve in the system be named Cave Hill Natural Area Preserve.

SECOND: Mr. Vanegas

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously

Crow's Nest Update

- miles hiking trails completed

2 parking areas and 12

- opened fall 2013; will serve as water trail head
 - facility to be completed September 2014; \$360,000
 - Steward position (interviews 4/19 – 22).
 - access road upgrade. Cost range \$500,000 to \$2 million and months/years from start date
- Brooke Road area
Water trail launch
Hiring LE – Operations
Big Question – main

Longleaf Pine Update

Since our last meeting DCR has:

- 16,000 native longleaf pine seedlings for a total of 185,000 planted on 355 acres of NAP lands from 2007-2013. Planted an additional
- longleaf pine prescribed management burns. Completed 230 acres of
- addition to South Quay Sandhills – source of Virginia native seed. Acquired the 2,855 acre
- Sandhill, DCR has taken on a new 1,500-acre longleaf pine restoration project. With South Quay
- fill vacant Longleaf Pine Restoration Specialist/South Quay Steward position (after filling the Northern Mountains and Valley Steward vacancy). Next high priority is to

Election of Officers

Chairman Smith opened the floor for nominations for officer to become effective at the next meeting of the Board.

Mr. Wilkerson nominated Mr. Wingo to serve as Chairman. Ms. Young seconded and the motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Wilkerson nominated Ms. Young to serve as Vice Chairman. Mr. Wingo seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment

Ms. Schmitt from the Virginia Campground Association said that she looked forward to working in partnership with DCR and State Parks.

Other Business

Chairman Smith said that staff would work with calendars and poll members regarding the next meeting shortly after July 1.

Adjourn

There was no further business and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark E. Smith
Chairman

David A. Johnson
Director