

**Board of Conservation and Recreation
Friday, January 8, 2016
Department of Conservation and Recreation
600 E. Main Street, 24th Floor
Richmond, VA**

TIME AND PLACE

The meeting of the Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation was convened at 10:00 a.m. in the Department of Conservation and Recreation Board Room, Richmond, Virginia.

MEMBERS PRESENT

W. Bruce Wingo, Chair
Nancy Hull Davidson
Andrew C. Jennison
Michael P. Reynold
William E. Small

Vincent M. Burgess
Dexter C. Hurt
Harvey B. Morgan
Isaac J. Sarver
Alexander I. Vanegas

MEMBERS ABSENT

Linwood M. Cobb, III

Patricia A. Jackson, Vice Chair

STAFF PRESENT

Clyde E. Cristman, Director
Rochelle Altholz, Deputy Director of Administration
Tom Smith, Interim Deputy Director of Operations
Jason Bulluck, Acting Director, Division of Natural Heritage
Michael Fletcher, Board and Constituent Services Liaison
Lisa McGee, Director, Policy and Planning
Sharon Partee, Finance Director
Danette Poole, Director, Division of Planning and Recreation Resources
Debbie Puzzo, Administrative Coordinator
Craig Seaver, Director, Division of State Parks
Timothy Shrader, Eastern Field Operations Director
Eric Surratt, Internal Auditor

OTHERS PRESENT

Robert Crockett, Campgrounds of America

ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM

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

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman Wingo called the meeting to order and welcomed member and staff. Director Cristman introduced DCR staff and made the following announcements:

- Joe Elton, Deputy Director for Operations and former State Parks Director will retire on March 1, 2016.

- Tom Smith has been named Interim Deputy Director for Operations.
- Jason Bulluck has been named Acting Director for the Division of Natural Heritage.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 6, 2015

Mr. Sarver moved that the minutes of the November 6, 2015 meeting be approved with no changes. Mr. Jennison seconded and the minutes were approved as submitted by staff.

REPORT OF NOMINATING COMMITTEE REGARDING ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Mr. Reynold reported that the nominating committee recommended that Patricia Jackson serve as Vice Chair of the Board of Conservation and Recreation. There were no nominations from the floor and the recommendation was approved by acclamation.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT - *Clyde E. Cristman, DCR Director*

Auditor of Public Accounts Findings and Corrective Actions

- January 2014: General Assembly requests APA conduct a Special Review due to report of problems with oversight of federal grants and concerns of overall fiscal management.
- April 2014: DCR placed under new management.
- June 6, 2014: APA audit report issued with 93 findings; mostly due to lack of agency specific policies, failure to follow state policies/procedures, but no evidence of widespread fraud, waste or abuse.
- June 24, 2014: DCR submits 1st Corrective Action Plan to DOA and APA; first 5 corrective actions already completed.
- December 31, 2015: DCR submits most recent 90 day update; 89 corrective actions (96%) complete, all others in progress.
- January 2016: DCR Internal Audit will begin testing compliance with corrective action policies and procedures.
- March 31, 2016: DCR will have all corrective policies and procedures in place.
- Spring 2016: APA will conduct full audit.

Agency Overview

HB30/SB30, as introduced			
FY 2017	\$123.5 million GF	\$50.6 million NGF	\$174.1 million total
FY 2018	\$61.5 million GF	\$50.3 million NGF	\$111.8 million total
Authorized MEL	452 FTE	Currently filled – Vacant -	408 FTE 44 FTE
Current Wage Positions	704 Filled	Expected Wage Positions in-season	1,630 +/- (includes life guards, snack bars, YCC staff)
Active Federal Grants	\$20.9 million NGF	Major Grant Sources	NPS, FHWA(DOT), EPA via DEQ, FEMA, FWS, USDA, CNCS via VDSS

Water Quality Improvement Fund

- \$67.7 million proposed in FY2017

- \$51.8 million for implementation of agricultural best management practices
 - § \$19.6 for implementation of previously approved livestock exclusion practices
- \$6.2 million for SWCD technical assistance
- \$8.2 million for the Water Quality Improvement Fund Reserve
- \$800,000 for Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
- \$100,000 for nutrient plans for golf courses

Virginia Land Conservation Foundation

- \$16 million proposed each year for FY2017 and FY2018
 - \$4 million for the Open-Space Lands Preservation Trust Fund and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation
 - \$12 million for VLCF
 - § At least 50% of the funds are to be used for grants to acquire land or easements with public access
 - Meets the requirements set out in §2.2-1509.4

Dam Safety

- \$546,080 proposed in introduced budget to rebuild the dam safety and floodplain management programs
- Probable Maximum Precipitation study completed
 - Of the 24,000 new PMP 2.5 square mile grid points across the Commonwealth when compared to historic values, ~ 95% of the new PMPs were lower, many by as much as 20 to 30%
 - Cost Savings Estimate - ~\$72 M (very conservative): only high and significant hazard
 - 45 District High Hazard Dams identified for rehabilitation previously – Total estimated savings of ~\$19 M; ~25% savings; 5 dams potentially will not require upgrades.
 - Pre-run the PMPs for 900 high and significant hazard impoundments.

State Parks

- \$120,000 proposed in FY2017 and FY2018 for opening Natural Bridge state park
- \$292,000 proposed in FY2018 for limited opening of Seven Bends state recreation area
- \$703,800 proposed for developing WiFi interconnectivity in state parks
 - \$685,800 in FY2017
 - \$48,000 in FY2018
- \$250,000 proposed from State Park Conservation and Resources Fund authorized for feasibility study to expand communications options

Natural Heritage

- \$500,000 increase provided by 2015 General Assembly continued in base budget
 - Essential staff
 - § Natural Area Stewards (Lee County and Chesapeake Bay Region)
 - § Karst Protection Coordinator
 - § Partial funding for Geographic Information System Manager

- Maintenance to access roads, parking areas, trails and boardwalks
- New interpretive signs
- Necessary equipment (trucks, prescribed fire equipment)

Capital Investment Priorities

- \$140 million for state parks proposed in VPBA bond package
 - Cumulative capital needs exceeds \$1.5 billion
 - Proposed funding would focus on:
 - § Development of 2 “land-banked” parks
 - § Repair and maintenance of existing facilities
 - § Construction of day-use facilities
 - § Acquisition of additional land for existing state parks

Biscuit Run State Park

- Albemarle County south of Charlottesville
- Approximately 1,195 acres
- Frontage on Routes 20 and 631
- Acquired in 2009
- Potential economic impact of \$6.6 million

Widewater State Park

- In Stafford County on the peninsula created by the confluence of Aquia Creek and the Potomac River
- Approximately 1,100 acres
- Water frontage on both the river and the creek
- Acquired from Dominion Resources in 2006
- Currently funded for part of Phase 1 at \$7.5 M
- Potential economic impact of \$7.5 M

Projects include:

- Renovation of existing cabins and potential new cabins
- Renovation of existing campgrounds
- Trail projects to include:
 - Replacement of falling trail bridges needed at:
 - § Hungry Mother
 - § Natural Tunnel
 - § New River Trail
 - § Staunton River Battlefield
 - Provide for additional hiking, biking, and equestrian opportunities

Other projects included:

- Renovate Foster Falls hotel (New River)

- Renovate Walnut Valley farm (Chippokes)
- Maintenance complex
 - Caledon
 - False Cape
 - Southwest Virginia Museum
- Construct visitor center (High Bridge)
- Renovation of pool bathhouse and aquatic center (Pocahontas)
- Renovation of pool bathhouse (Westmoreland)
- Construct restrooms
 - First Landing
 - Grayson Highlands
- Renovate restrooms and replace campground bathhouse (Douthat)
- Construct retaining wall on Lovers Leap Trail (Natural Tunnel)
- Replace bulkheads (False Cape)
- Various utility and American with Disabilities Act upgrades

Board Comments:

- Mr. Small asked if other campgrounds had been contacted regarding proposed upgrades and developments. Director Cristman responded that DCR contacts local campgrounds and businesses within a certain radius of each park each time amendments to the park master plan are proposed.
- Mr. Crockett noted that Campgrounds of America was very interested in the bond package and saw this as a great opportunity to work together with Virginia State Parks.
- Mr. Sarver asked about the low water bridge access at the Seven Bends location. Ms. Poole replied that DCR had not been given clearance by VDOT to bring in the heavy equipment needed for demolition and construction purposes and discussions were ongoing.
- Mr. Small asked if the Board could receive transcripts for master plan meetings. Director Cristman responded that the Board is always welcome to attend meetings and Ms. Poole offered to send any meeting notes to the Board.

Legislation Update:

- House Bill 200 directs DCR to develop a plan establishing a fee structure for campsites and cabins in state parks.
- House Bill 299 proposes the inclusion of DCR conservation officers in the Virginia Law Officers' Retirement System.
- House Joint Resolution No. 70 directs the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission to study the feasibility of establishing a public-private partnership for the construction and operation of new state parks and the management of existing state parks.

Director Cristman noted that two resolutions should be introduced, one commending the 80th anniversary of Virginia State Parks to include language relating to the 50th anniversary of Planning and Recreation and a separate resolution commending the 40th anniversary of the Natural Heritage Program.

Natural Heritage Update - Jason Bulluck, Acting Director, Division of Natural Heritage

Mr. Bulluck discussed the challenges of aging data with regard to native species and conservation efforts. 703 records from 1989 – 1991 are set to become historic records in 2016. Nearly 20% of data will become historic data by 2019 at which point it will no longer be used in environmental review nor shared with partners for use in other conservation and land management decisions.

While Natural Heritage staff made a concerted effort they were only able, with available funding, to revisit about 100 of these soon-to-be historic occurrences in 2016.

Virginia Conservation Vision

Mr. Bulluck reported that the Virginia Conservation Vision was completed in 2008 to help guide conservation efforts at DCR and by other partners. This has been used in the development of local comprehensive plans and green infrastructure plans as well as in the determination of some VLCF grant awards. Staff is revising four of these statewide maps which can be found on multiple interactive conservation websites.

Models being revised include:

- The Agricultural Model which quantifies the relative suitability of lands for agricultural activity. This was completed in the summer of 2015. The model is based primarily on soil quality, but also incorporates information on current land cover as well as travel time to potential markets for agricultural goods.
- The Development Vulnerability Model quantifies the predicted relative risk of conversion from natural lands or open space to developed uses.
- The Watershed Integrity Model identifies priority watershed and stream catchments for conservation due to landcover and hydrologic factors as well as knowledge of biological health of aquatic communities in streams.

Prescribed Fire and Longleaf Restoration

DCR Natural Heritage staff conducted a 50-acre prescribed fire in native warm season grass and wet prairie habitats at the state-owned Cowbane Wet Prairie Natural Area Preserve and the adjacent South River Preserve owned by The Nature Conservancy on Friday, December 11, 2015. Prescribed fire is essential for maintaining the fire-dependent vegetation that comprises these native prairies.

Longleaf Pine Restoration

DCR's Longleaf Pine Restoration Specialist and Southeast Region Steward oversaw operations to plant 326,140 longleaf pine seedlings on 650 acres at South Quay Sandhills and Chub Sandhill state natural areas preserves during December 10-16, 2015. The project was, in part, made possible by DCR partnerships with The Nature Conservancy, Virginia Department of Forestry, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Harley Davidson provided a \$100K grant to the Nature Conservancy and participated in the planting.

The Governor's proposed budget includes funds for VLCF, of which \$2M is to be applied to open space lands, such as Natural Area Preserves. These VLCF funds can be applied to some of the \$80M in priority acquisition and public access needs that Natural Heritage has identified.

Planning and Recreation Resources Update - *Danette Poole, Director, Division of Planning and Recreation Resources*

Top 3 PRR Goals for 2016

1. Restore operational funding to minimum levels needed to support existing staff and programs. Additionally, provide support to implement new agency initiatives: Treasures, Statewide Trails Committee.
2. Secure funding for the 2016 Virginia Outdoors Survey, estimated at \$150,000 (\$75K to be reimbursed from the NPS). Survey to be completed in the fall.
3. Secure additional staff support needed to implement the bond, once we know final details on projects.

Virginia Treasures – Natural, Cultural, and Recreational Treasures

- Provide new public access to a natural, cultural, or scenic outdoor recreation resource
- Enhance outdoor recreation and foster stewardship of natural and cultural resources
- Goal: 1,000 Treasures
- Over 300 recorded to date
- Website is now live for receiving nominations of recreational treasures
- First batch of letters and certificates have gone to the Governor's office for signature

Public Access MOU

- First inter-agency coordination meeting to be held in February
 - Examine existing inventories
 - Identify pending VDOT bridge projects
 - Determine goals and resources needed

Statewide Trails Advisory Committee

- Next meeting March 22, 2016
- List of desired outcomes provided in report to legislature October 1

2018 Virginia Outdoors Plan

- Virginia Outdoors Plan Inventory and VOP Demand Study
 - UVA Center for Survey Research updating the Virginia Outdoors Inventory
 - DCR preparing funding proposal to the NPS for development of the 2018 VOP to include the 2016 Virginia Outdoors Survey
 - 50% match required from DCR – did not receive funding allocation; examining alternate funding sources

Environment Virginia Awards

- For projects that implement the recommendations of the VOP
 - Award Criteria – 3 Categories
 - § Trail Development
 - § Public Access to waterways and water trails
 - § Other recreational uses and scenic resource recognition

Design and Construction

- Ongoing Projects
 - Rehabilitation of 2 dams at Pocahontas S.P. (design stage)
 - 15 cabins in 15 parks (Lake Anna, Twin Lakes, Claytor Lake, Kiptopeke, Natural Tunnel)
 - § Construction: estimated completion summer 2016
 - Powhatan Campground
 - § 30 sites
 - § 2-mile road to new canoe launch
 - § Construction: Fall 2016
- Other Projects
 - Access road to High Bridge
 - § 1.5 mile road to provide ADA access
 - Staunton River Battlefield
 - § Mulberry Hill Renovations
- New work for 2015/2016
 - Occoneechee Sprayground
 - Widewater Phase 1A
 - Chippokes – Walnut Valley Farm
 - Yurts

Recreation Grants

- Land and Water Conservation Fund
 - Congress reauthorized for 3 years
 - Funding for state and local grants doubled
 - Anticipate approx. \$2 M for Va. grants next year

Virginia Scenic Rivers

- Proposed York River – Gloucester and York Counties
 - +/- 20 miles
 - Field work July 13, 2015
 - Support and guidance from the Waterman's Museum
 - Assets: history/cultural, fisheries, buffers, rare natural communities, variety of landscape and views, and remoteness
 - Localities moving forward to recommend designation in upcoming session of the GA

State Park Master Planning

- Completed – submitted to GA in November
 - Staunton River Battlefield update
 - York River update
 - Claytor Lake update
 - Occoneechee Sprayground Area Amendment
- Updates due in 2016
 - Belle Isle
 - False Cape
 - First Landing
 - Middle Peninsula

State Parks Update - *Craig Seaver, Director, Division of State Parks*

- 2016 represents the 80th Anniversary of Virginia State Parks. The theme for the year is “Moments and Memories.”
- Over 12,000 people participated in First Day Hikes on New Year’s Day - walking over 15,000 miles statewide. Virginia is one of the leaders in the nation for this effort.
- The Governor and DCR will again host the Capital Campout on the lawn of the Executive Mansion
- State Parks has begun a new parks customer loyalty program. Every dollar spent in Virginia State Parks earns 20 pts. Accumulated points can be used for overnight stays and other items.
- Youth Conservation Corps program applications were opened on January 1.

Mr. Seaver reviewed park attendance and the economic impact for 2015. He shared highlights from his annual “Inside the Gates” report which included details by park, district, and resource management for all parks.

Financial Update - *Sharon Partee, Finance Director*

- General Fund – FY 2016 appropriation per chapter 2 approved June 23, 2014 - \$43,748,501
 - The appropriation was adjusted to \$58,996,178 per Chapter 665, approved March 26, 2015. After “pass-thrus” to other funds, \$44,763,592 remains for expenditure in the current year. Through November 30, 2015, \$20,880,998 (46.6%) has been spent. Expenditures are not equally distributed throughout the year.
- Parks Revenue – As of the end of November 2015, State Parks is about 10.6% ahead of last year for the same time period.
- Parks Project Fund – There are no items to bring before the Board at this time.
- Water Quality Improvement Fund and Virginia Natural Resources Commitment Funds have distributed about \$12.5M through November 30.
 - \$10,398,777 Beginning cash balance on July 1, 2015
 - \$18,881,888 Deposited into the above fund per the Appropriation Act
 - \$3,764,440 Revenue from Recordation fees and misc.
 - \$12,451,632 Distributed through November 30, 2015
 - \$20,593,474 Cash Balance on hand November 30, 2015
- Water Quality Improvement Fund Reserve has a cash balance of \$0 as of November 30, 2015 – this was transferred to the VA Water Quality Improvement Fund per the appropriation act.

- Natural Area Preservation Fund has a cash balance of \$282,370 as of November 30, 2015.

Other Business

Mr. Vanegas moved and Mr. Burgess seconded that the Board adopt the following resolution in honor of Joe Elton who is retiring on March 1, 2016. The motion carried unanimously.

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION BOARD OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

Presented to

JOE ELTON

At a regular meeting of the Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation held on Friday, January 8, 2016 at 600 E. Main Street, Richmond, Virginia, the following resolution was unanimously adopted.

WHEREAS, during America's Great Depression, the Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service in partnership with the Commonwealth built the Virginia State Park System, which was launched on June 15, 1936; and

WHEREAS, in 1994 ***Mr. Elton*** became the 6th Director of the Virginia State Parks System; and

WHEREAS, under ***Mr. Elton's*** leadership the Virginia State Park System has grown dramatically from 30 state parks to include 36 operating parks and six new sites in planning and development; and

WHEREAS, during ***Mr. Elton's*** tenure Virginia State Parks were recognized nationally as the National Gold Medal Winner for "excellence in parks and recreation management;" and

WHEREAS, in 2007 ***Mr. Elton*** was honored with the Distinguished Service Award by the National Association of State Parks Directors "in recognition of many years of dedicated service and inspired leadership to the conservation, interpretation and enhancement of our nation's natural and cultural state park treasures"; and

WHEREAS, ***Mr. Elton*** lead the effort to develop advocacy groups for Virginia State Parks such as the Virginia Association for Parks and dozens of "Friends Groups"; and

WHEREAS, ***Mr. Elton*** conceived and developed the Virginia Youth Conservation Corps; and

WHEREAS, ***Mr. Elton*** served as the National Association of State Park Directors from 2009-2011; and

WHEREAS, ***Mr. Elton*** served as a founding member and President of America's State Parks Foundation; and

WHEREAS, ***Mr. Elton*** received the Distinguished Service Award from the Society of Recreation Professionals and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Association of Outdoor Recreation Liaison Officers in 2012; and

WHEREAS, **Mr. Elton** is a graduate of Ohio State University, the Commonwealth Management Institute and the Virginia Executive Institute at Virginia Commonwealth University's Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs; and

WHEREAS, **Mr. Elton** served as Virginia State Park Director from August 1994 until August 2015; and

WHEREAS, **Mr. Elton** served as Deputy Director of Operations for the Department of Conservation and Recreation from 2014 until March 2016.

BE IT RESOLVED that the Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation applaud **Mr. Elton** for his commitment to the recreational and natural resources of the Commonwealth.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that on this date, January 8, 2016, the Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation establishes a public record of their deep appreciation for **Mr. Elton's** years of service.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Conservation and Recreation will occur in the April-May timeframe.

Adjourn

There was no further business and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

William B. Wingo
Chairman

Clyde E. Cristman
Director