

**Board of Conservation and Recreation
Friday, October 19, 2018
Virginia Department of Forestry
Charlottesville, Virginia**

TIME AND PLACE

The meeting of the Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation convened at 10:02 a.m. on Friday, October 19, 2018 at the Virginia Department of Forestry in Charlottesville, Virginia.

BOARD OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION MEMBERS PRESENT

W. Bruce Wingo, Chair	Kat Maybury
Patricia A. Jackson, Vice Chair	Harvey B. Morgan
Vincent M. Burgess	Esther Nizer
Danielle Heisler	Vivek Shinde Patil
Dexter C. Hurt	

BOARD OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION MEMBERS NOT PRESENT

Nancy Hull Davidson	Andrew C. Jennison
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DCR STAFF PRESENT

Clyde E. Cristman, Director
Thomas Smith, Deputy Director of Operations
Isaac J. Sarver, Deputy Director for Board and Constituent Services
Michael Fletcher, Board and Constituent Services Liaison
Chris Ludwig, Chief Biologist
Lisa McGee, Director of Policy
Rick Myers, Natural Areas Stewardship Manager
Sharon Partee, Director of Finance
Danette Poole, Director, Division of Planning and Recreation Resources
Craig Seaver, Director, Division of State Parks

ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM

With nine (9) members of the Board present, a quorum was established.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Wingo called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. and asked for the calling of the roll.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MAY 10, 2018

Mr. Burgess moved for the approval of the minutes from the May 10, 2018 meeting of the Board of Conservation and Recreation. Ms. Jackson seconded and the minutes were approved as submitted.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT – *Clyde E. Cristman, DCR Director*

Director Cristman welcomed members to the Department of Forestry. He noted that the planned retreat at Natural Tunnel State Park was canceled due to the threat of Hurricane Florence. He suggested that the Board might look at dates in the springtime to reschedule that meeting.

- Governor Northam visited Pocahontas State Park on Public Lands Day.
- Both Twin Lakes State Park and High Bridge Trail State Park suffered damage from the aftermath of Hurricane Michael.
- The Governor's Cabinet Meeting at Kiptopeke State Park was canceled due to Hurricane Michael.

The Loudoun County Board of Supervisors approved the purchase of 280 acres of land next to the land already owned by DCR. Upon General Assembly approval, this will be donated to the Commonwealth and added to the acreage for Sweet Run State Park. The Board approved the name Sweet Run at the last meeting.

BCR REPORT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY – *Isaac Sarver, Deputy for Boards and Constituent Services*

Mr. Sarver gave an overview of the DRAFT Natural Area Preserve and State Park Acquisition and Improvement Report.

Item 363, Chapter 2 of the Virginia Acts of Assembly states:

The Board of Conservation and Recreation is directed to develop a prioritization process and report which evaluates the relative priority of improvements for all properties that have not yet been fully developed as State Parks or Natural Area Preserves to ensure that the development of land-banked properties and properties not fully developed as State Parks is undertaken with consideration of: i.) priority on development in areas with limited access to state and regional outdoor recreation facilities; ii.) the relative operational costs and staffing needs for any new areas compared to operating and staffing needs at existing state parks and natural areas; iii.) focus on in-holdings and parcels contiguous to existing state parks and natural area preserves; and iv.) any other such criteria as deemed appropriate.

Methodology

Mandatory Criteria

- Located in areas with limited access to state and regional outdoor recreation facilities.
- Relative operational costs and staffing needs for any new areas compared to existing park and NAP needs.
- Acquisitions of in-holdings and critical parcels that are adjacent to existing properties.

Identified Criteria

- The value of land acquisitions in protecting significant natural, cultural recreational and historical resources.
- Local and regional demand, determined by Virginia Outdoors Plan Survey.

- Potential revenue generation from land acquisition and capital improvements.

Land-Banked and Under-Developed State Parks

- Clinch River State Park
- Mayo River State Park
- Middle Peninsula State Park
- Natural Bridge State Park
- Seven Bends State Park/Recreation Area
- Sweet Run State Park
- Widewater State Park

Director Cristman noted that Governor Northam would be cutting the ribbon to open Widewater State Park on Thursday, November 8.

Cost Components

Development and Infrastructure

- Examples include: contact stations, yurts, tents, bathhouses, parking, visitors centers, trails, maintenance facilities, etc.
- These expenses are one-time, capital expenditures to develop and construct infrastructure needed to support public access.

Start-Up Equipment

- Examples include: mowers, trucks, tools, cabin furnishings.
- These expenses are one-time costs to provide the necessary tools to maintain a park for the public.

Annual Operations Funding

- Examples include: staff salaries, office equipment, utilities.
- These expenses are on-going costs to operate a park.

Natural Area Preserve Land Acquisition and Public Access

- Consistent with the General Assembly's stated priority of increasing public access, DNH identified a targeted list of 18 of Virginia's 63 Natural Area Preserves where either land acquisition or public access enhancements would be beneficial.
- The 2017 Virginia Outdoors Survey ranked visiting natural areas as the #1 most sought after activity and #1 need statewide.

Natural Area Preserve Public Access Improvements

DCR has identified \$1.7 million in capital needs to improve public access at 14 existing natural area preserves, five of which would establish new public access facilities in the Southwest, Shenandoah Valley, Southeast and Eastern Shore regions. The types of access improvements include:

- New, improved or enlarged parking areas
- New, improved and expanded hiking trails

- Information kiosks
- Interpretive signage
- Longleaf Pine interpretive trails (Chub Sandhill and South Quay Sandhills)
- An ADA handicap accessible-compliant fishing platform (Pinnacle)
- Swinging bridge renovation (Pinnacle and Goshen Pass)
- New observation deck on a restored fire tower (Channels)

Recommendations

Based upon review of existing land-banked parks and natural area preserves, and tasked with identifying appropriate criteria and developing a strategic prioritized list of development and acquisition priorities for state parks and natural area preserves, the following recommendations emerged:

- Recommendation 1: Consider further development of public access facilities, infrastructure improvements, and increased operational funding needed to provide public access at Middle Peninsula State Park, Seven Bends State Park, Sweet Run State Park, and Widewater State Park.
- Recommendation 2: Consider public access facilities, infrastructure improvements, and increased operational funding to enhance public access to the state's natural area preserve system at the following sites: The Cedars, Pinnacle, The Channels, Redrock Mountain, Buffalo Mountain, Poor Mountain, Deep Run Ponds, Goshen Pass, Hickory Hollow, Crow's Nest, Chub Sandhill, North Landing River, South Quay Sandhills, and Pickett's Harbor.
- Recommendation 3: Consider further development of Clinch River State Park, Mayo River State Park, and Natural Bridge State Park in the near future.
- Recommendation 4: Consider the acquisition of additional acreage at the following natural area preserves: The Cedars, Unthanks Cave, Pinnacle, Bald Knob, Buffalo Mountain, Difficult Creek, Poor Mountain, Deep Run Ponds, Crow's Nest, Hickory Hollow, South Quay Sandhills, Pickett's Harbor, and Magothy Bay.
- Recommendation 5: Consider the acquisition of additional acreage at the following state parks: Caledon, Fairy Stone, High Bridge Trail, Hungry Mother, James River, Lake Anna, Mason Neck, Staunton River, Westmoreland, Wilderness Road, and York River.

Director Cristman noted that the geographic locations were important. State Parks are usually in more developed areas and closer to main roads. Often acquiring property next to a state park preserves the land from future development. On the other hand, Natural Area Preserves are typically harder to access.

Mr. Sarver advised that staff was requesting the Board to approve the report in draft form with the understanding that further technical edits would be made, and that the report is still under review by the office of the Secretary of Natural Resources and the Governor.

BOARD ACTION

Ms. Jackson moved that the Board of Conservation and Recreation approve the draft report as presented by staff with the understanding that further technical edits would be made. Mr. Morgan seconded and the motion carried.

STATE PARKS LICENSE PLATES

Chairman Wingo called attention to information in member packets regarding State Park License Plates. These plates were authorized by the General Assembly. Orders for 450 plates must be received prior to the actual issuance of the plates.

STATE PARKS UPDATE – *Craig Seaver, Director Division of State Parks*

Mr. Seaver noted that many exciting things were happening in Virginia State Parks.

- Governor Northam recently visited Natural Tunnel, Pocahontas, First Landing, and Kiptopeke State Parks.
- The first electric vehicle charging station was dedicated at First Landing State Park.
- Park staff are looking at the Virginia Clean Cities program in the Farmville and High Bridge State Park area.
- Park volunteers have contributed over 270,000 hours to date.
- The Virginia Association for Parks recently met at Hungry Mother State Park.
- Parks continue to experience capacity issues. Leesylvania, Shenandoah River, and Lake Anna often have to close on weekends because they reach park capacity. Division staff are looking at best management practices to address this.
- Decisions were made to close parks and evacuate campers during the approach of Hurricanes Florence and Michael. These closings had a substantial impact on park revenue.
- Some of the park dams were stressed, but none failed during the rain events. Numerous trees were down and flooding in several parks.
- There was trail damage at High Bridge Trail State Park. Part of the trail remains closed.
- State Parks staff are currently working on a variety of budget reduction strategies for the current year due to unmet funding of critical staffing and operational needs.

Mr. Seaver spoke about RX America, a program that encourages doctors to prescribe outdoor activities for health benefits utilizing federal, state, and local parks. www.parksrxamerica.org

Mr. Seaver presented the board with two new publications. One entitled “Virginia State Parks, by the numbers” and a rack card Vision 2026 publication describing needs of state parks. The “Virginia State Parks by the numbers” is an educational tool to familiarize legislators and constituents with the many and varied activities, programs, and management responsibilities of state parks.

Mr. Seaver presented “*Vision 2026, Preserving 90 Years of Virginia State Park Legacy.*” Vision 2026 is a mission critical plan for the future and sustainability of state parks. The plan encompasses an overall vision for fully funding the operations, staffing, deferred maintenance, and capital improvements needed for state parks. Also included in this presentation was a publication listing descriptions of the state parks 2020 legislative request (FY20) to begin address these overall needs beginning during the upcoming 2019 General Assembly session.

The 2020 budget decision package request includes;

- The establishment of 63 full time positions in parks to address critical needs-\$3.5 million
- Addressing severe and unfunded operation needs of state parks-\$2.8 million
- Establish sustainable funding for equipment and vehicle replacement=\$720,000 annually

- Inclusion of DCR Conservation Officers into VaLORS-\$427,000
- Funding for the operations and staffing of the following land banked and/or new parks; Clinch River, Middle Peninsula/Timberneck, Sweet Run, and Natural Bridge.
- Operating funds for the newly acquired Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail Center as a satellite of Natural Tunnel State Park-\$209,000
- Funding for full support of the State Parks Youth Conservation Corps program in all 37 parks-\$623,000 and one FTE.
- Two other line items are funding for the upkeep for highway signage to protect the \$700K investment of new state park signs through Virginia Logos and funding for Mayo River State Recreation Area-\$325,000.

A hard copy of specific descriptions and details of these requests was handed out by Mr. Seaver to board members.

NATURAL HERITAGE UPDATE - *Chris Ludwig, Chief Biologist and Rick Myers, Natural Areas Stewardship Manager*

Mr. Ludwig and Mr. Myers reviewed the Virginia Natural Heritage 2020 Budget Request.

2020 Budget Need and Request

- Standing overall need (25 positions) – ca. \$2.5 million
- Most critical needs for 2020 (7 positions) and non-personnel - \$1,029,186
- Two Decision Packages moved forward for Governor’s consideration for 2020 budget
- Presented here in logical order of work, not priority

Positions Requested

1. Resource Inventory Biologist
2. Environmental Review Specialist
3. Virginia Pollinator Biologist
4. Karst Resource Specialists (2)
5. Southeast Region Operations Steward
6. Shenandoah Valley Operations Steward

Insufficient staff and operating resources means:

- Closed preserves (e.g. North Landing River NAP in Virginia Beach)
- Plant theft (Buffalo Mountain; The Cedars)
- Illegal hunting (Crow’s Nest)
- Trash dumping (North Landing River)
- Artifact theft (Savage Neck Dunes)
- Off-road vehicle damage (4-WDs in rare wetlands, on closed shorelines)
- Landowner/neighbor issues unaddressed
- Spray paint graffiti at Crow’s Nest, Buffalo Mountain, The Channels; Bull Run Mountains

- Poor condition of public access infrastructure
- Deferred monitoring of rare species populations and natural community condition
- Deferred maintenance (signs, boundaries, roads, trails, boardwalks)
- Deferred invasive species management
- Inability to utilize the available volunteer workforce
- Less outreach and education about the NAP System and NH Program

2020 Need in Summary

Natural Heritage Critical Staff Needs

Personnel – 5 positions - \$473,446
Non-personnel –
 Start up - \$165,700
 Ongoing - \$118,300

Karst Program Personnel

Personnel – 2 positions - \$205,240
Non-personnel - \$67,500

Raven Road Access to Crow's Nest Opening

The Raven Road Access to Crow's Nest opened on April 1, 2017:

- 8 miles of hikes on 2.872-acre preserve
- Weekend following, 300 visitors/day
- Average since – 50 visitors/day
- Simple, sufficient, successful

Trail Construction and Maintenance

An example of trail construction and maintenance is an ADA-compliant accessible trail near Cleveland Barrens Natural Area Preserve, which leads to viewpoint of Tank Hollow Falls, near the Town of Cleveland in the Clinch River Valley of Virginia.

2018 Prescribed Fire

Prescribed fire is needed for the following:

- Fire adapted species and natural communities
- Wildlife management, viewshed maintenance, fuels management, invasive species control, and maintaining or enhancing habitat conditions for many species
- 2017 – Prescribed fire was conducted on 799 acres in 12 Natural Area Preserves
- To date in 2018 – Prescribed fire has been conducted on 1,703 acres in 6 Natural Area Preserves

Longleaf Pine Restoration

The Division of Natural Heritage continues work for the restoration of Longleaf Pine in Virginia.

- Keystone species, dominant in the fire-dependent longleaf pine ecosystem.
- Exclusive seed source at South Quay Sandhills NAP
- Since 2008, over 675,000 seedlings have been reared and planted on over 1,300 acres across six southeastern Virginia Preserves
- The largest area is 600 acres at Chub Sandhills NAP

Possible Legislative Need – Karst Program

DCR is proposing legislation to amend the Virginia Stormwater and Erosion and Sediment Control Laws.

- Currently there is no consideration for cave and karst features.
- The legislative change will fill regulatory and data gaps to begin to decrease the unregulated contamination and degradation of Karst waters and habitat due to stormwater runoff.
- The change will also allow more informed development planning and preventive measures based on the knowledge of the connections between cave and karst, and drinking water and habitat.
- The change will help to reduce sedimentation of aquifers, which reduces capacity of aquifer to store and transmit water.

PLANNING AND RECREATION RESOURCES UPDATE – *Danette Poole, Director, Division of Planning and Recreation Resources*

Ms. Poole gave the update for the Division of Planning and Recreation Resources.

2018 Virginia Outdoors Plan

Celebrating the Benefits of Outdoor Recreation

Produced in accordance with §10.1-200 of the *Code of Virginia*.

Survey Summary

- Natural areas, parks, trails, and access to waterways remain along the top recreational needs in Virginia.
- Increased participation in freshwater fishing and paddle sports.
- Support for funding for outdoor recreation.
- Importance of scenic resources in travel planning.

VOP Schedule

- Public review of draft – June
- Edits and review by SNR office – July
- NPS review of draft – August/September

- Graphic layout for web September/November
- Final document to NPS with letter from Governor Northam – December
- Final approved document – December 2018
- Executive Summary – November/January 2019

Design and Construction

Completed Projects

Chippokes Walnut Valley Farm

- Construction 90% complete
- Scope: Renovations of three historically significant farm buildings to include a main house, slave quarter, and kitchen
- Cost: \$3.5 million

Pool Bathhouse Renovations

- Pocahontas - \$1.1. million
- Westmoreland - \$700,000

New Projects in Design

- Widewater Phase IB – Boat Ram
- Renovation of Cabins
- Replacement of HM Amphitheater Bridge
- Foster Falls Hotel
- New River Trail Bridge Renovations
- High Bridge Trail Center

Recreational Grants

Recreational Trails Program – FHWA

- 26 active grants totaling over \$4.8 million
- RTP grant cycle closed July 19, 2018
 - 23 applications received
 - 11 projects totaling over \$3 million in costs advancing to FHWA for funding
- RTP Advisory Committee Meeting held September 6
 - Recommended grant cycle dedicated to motorized trails for 2019

Land and Water Conservation Fund – NPS

- Established in 1985 – Program expired in 2015 and has been on a continuing resolution;
 - DCR: 9 active grants totaling over \$3.4 million
- Issue: NPS failure to honor grant agreements; DCR awaiting resolution before proceeding with future grant cycles.
- Program expired in September – Congress expected to re-authorize this year.

2019 Land Conservation and Greenways Conference

- April 8-10, 2019 in Richmond.

State Trails Advisory Committee Strategic Planning Retreat

- November 1-2, 2018
- Cedar Crest Conference Center, Twin Lakes State Park
- Featuring the Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute
- Sponsored by Dominion Energy/VAFP

Master Planning – 2018

In progress

- Biscuit Run –Planning support to Albemarle County
- Seven Bends – Public meeting held in August
- False Cape
- Natural Bridge
- Leesylvania
- First Landing

Scenic Rivers

Other possible designations

- Awaiting community/legislative support
 - York, Rapidan, Upper Clinch, New
- Requests
 - Pound, Appomattox
- Interest:
 - Extending the James, Meherrin, South, South Holstein, Staunton, Maury

Virginia Scenic Rivers Program 50th Anniversary in 2020

To date:

- Developed logo and strategic plan
- Established a steering committee
- 2020 RMS Conference in Richmond at VCU
- Mentioned in the 2018 VOP

Scenic Resources Subcommittee – Patti Jackson, Vice Chair

Ms. Jackson reported on the meeting of the Scenic Resources Subcommittee.

Ms. Jackson noted that she had been a member of the Virginia Scenic River Board that formed in 2003. In 2012, the Scenic River Board was abolished in 2012 and the responsibilities for the Virginia Scenic River program were dedicated to the Board of Conservation and Recreation.

In addition to rivers, scenic resources include viewsheds and other resources.

The subcommittee had their first meeting on October 10. Ms. Jackson and Mr. Burgess attended. Ms. Davidson and Mr. Patil are also members of the subcommittee.

Ms. Jackson offered the following recommendations from the subcommittee.

The Subcommittee agreed that the mission of the committee should be to protect the scenic resources of the Commonwealth, to include rivers, byways, viewsheds, and scenic areas.

The Subcommittee agreed to request that the Board do the following:

- Formalize the subcommittee and bring the subcommittee membership to five members, and establish regular meeting times.
- Direct the subcommittee to work with the steering committee for the 50th Anniversary of the Scenic Rivers Program.
- Ask for a resolution in support of the 50th Anniversary from the General Assembly.
- Support moving forward with the statewide inventory of scenic assets including seeking funding sources for that inventory.

Ms. Jackson also noted that the subcommittee recommended seeking a resolution of support from the General Assembly in recognition of the 50th Anniversary of the Scenic Resources Program.

BOARD ACTION

Ms. Jackson offered the subcommittee report and recommendations as a motion for Board approval. Mr. Burgess seconded and the motion carried.

FINANCIAL UPDATE – *Sharon Partee, Director of Finance*

Ms. Partee presented an overview of the DCR General Fund Appropriation and Expenditures for Fiscal Year 2018.

**Department of Conservation and Recreation
General Fund Appropriation and Expenditures
Fiscal Year 2018**

FY2018 Legislative Appropriation

49,922,661

Appropriation Transfers and Adjustments

Central Appropriation Adjustment	27,838	
Land Conservation Fund	(4,500,000)	
SWCD Dam Repair	(500,000)	
Dam Safety/Flood Prevention & Protection	(464,294)	
Actual 3% Salary/Benefit Increase (plus non-personnel)	1,270,787	
Re-appropriation for State Parks Bike Trail	400,000	
		(3,765,669)

FY 2018 Total GF Appropriation Available for Operations

46,156,992

Division	FY18 Division Targets	YTD Actual (As of June 30 2018)	Target vs Actual - %	Year End Balance
Soil & Water Conservation	9,284,072	9,277,206	99.9%	
Dam Safety	1,494,341	1,494,340	100.0%	
Natural Heritage	3,319,265	3,319,265	100.0%	
Land Conservation	1,950,312	1,950,312	100.0%	
State Parks	18,988,671	18,871,671	99.4%	
PRR (Incl Design & Construction & Breaks)	1,829,988	1,829,988	100.0%	
Director's Office - Admin- Finance	9,290,343	9,290,343	100.0%	
Grand Total	46,156,992	46,033,125	99.7%	123,868

FY2018 GF Carry Forward Requests

State Parks	\$117,000	Swift Creek Mountain Bike Trail
Soil & Water	6,868	SWCD Training

OTHER BUSINESS

Director Cristman recognized Chris Ludwig who will be retiring in March 2019.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

NEXT MEETING

Chairman Wingo suggested that the next meeting be in Richmond following the opening of the General Assembly Session. Staff will poll regarding the best date.

ADJOURN

There was no further business and the meeting adjourned at 1:52 p.m.