

**Board of Conservation and Recreation
Thursday, June 24, 10:00 a.m.
Machicomoco State Park, Hayes, Virginia**

TIME AND PLACE: The meeting of the Board of Conservation and Recreation took place at 10:00 a.m. at Machicomoco State Park in Hayes, Virginia

BOARD OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION MEMBERS PRESENT

Patricia A. Jackson, Chair
Danielle Heisler
Angela Henderson, Ph.D.
Harvey B. Morgan
Vivek Shinde Patil, PhD

Nancy Hull Davidson, Vice Chair
Dexter C. Hurt
Kat Maybury
Esther M. Nizer
Camilla Simon

BOARD OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION MEMBERS NOT PRESENT

Clayton Spruill

DCR STAFF PRESENT

Clyde E. Cristman, Director
Tom Smith, Deputy Director of Operations
Rochelle Altholz, Deputy Director of Administration and Finance
Lisa McGee, Policy Director
Melissa Baker, Director of State Parks
Jason Bulluck, Director, Division of Natural Heritage
Lynn Crump, Scenic Resources Coordinator
Kelly McClary, Director, Division of Planning and Recreation Resources
Terry Simms, Park Manager, Machicomoco State Park
Ann Zahn, Tidewater District Manager

ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM

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

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman Jackson called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Welcome to Machicomoco, our 40th State Park. She introduced Park Manager, Terry Simms.

Mr. Simms welcomed the Board and staff to Machicomoco. He encouraged members and staff to explore the park and the interpretive trail.

Chairman Jackson called for member introductions.

Mr. Morgan gave some background concerning the land at Machicomoco and the Catlett house. He attended school with the Catlett children. He noted that the naval weapons station is across the river in Yorktown and recalled a time when one of the Catlett children reported 81 windows blown out of the house due to an explosion.

Mr. Morgan commented that during his tenure in the House of Delegates he had worked with the family to turn the land to a state park. The family was not interested at that point. When the property sold, the Commonwealth was outbid in the process and the land was slated for development. However, working with the Conservation Fund, DCR was able to acquire the property through funds from the Dominion Surrey-Skiffes Creek settlement.

Mr. Morgan congratulated Director Cristman and DCR for sealing the deal to create Machicomoco.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 21, 2020

BOARD ACTION

Ms. Hull Davidson moved that the minutes of the December meeting of the Board of Conservation and Recreation be approved as submitted. Dr. Patil seconded and the motion carried.

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

Director Cristman gave the Director's report. He noted that a lot had transpired since the December meeting.

DCR has welcomed Melissa Baker as the Director of State Parks. Ms. Baker was previously the Director of North Dakota State Parks.

Director Cristman noted that the agency had worked through the COVID pandemic under the Governor's guidelines. The decision was made that outdoor recreation was an essential function. While cabins were closed, camping was reopened on Memorial Day in 2020. Cabins reopened in June. In person meetings were also restricted.

The agency anticipated a \$6 million shortfall. Due to drastic savings measures including furloughing some wage employees, the agency was able to keep that to \$4 million for overnight revenue. However, day use kept the total loss at \$2 million. At this time, the full staff has not returned to Main Street Centre. Many staff are still teleworking, however, that does not apply to front line staff.

Because of the restrictions, Machicomoco Park was opened virtually without the ability to invite the public.

When the General Assembly authorized acquisition of Machicomoco, the funding was provided by the Dominion Surrey-Skiffes Creek settlement.

Working through the conservation fund allowed DCR to move much more quickly into the construction phase. The first phase of the park is complete, but DCR is now back into the master planning process.

Director Cristman noted that the first portion of Clinch River State Park had opened the preceding week. The master planning process continues. The park consists of several sites along the river.

DCR is also working on two new parks Sweet Run in Loudoun County, as well as Mayo River State Park on the North Carolina border.

Chairman Jackson thanked Director Cristman for the update. She commended DCR for managing to keep the park system open during the COVID pandemic.

FINANCIAL REPORT – *Rochelle Altholz, Deputy Director of Administration and Finance, DCR*

Ms. Altholz gave the financial update on behalf of Finance Director Sharon Partee. She noted that funds not expended by the yearend revert to the Commonwealth. Ms. Partee was working with her staff for the year-end closeout.

Ms. Altholz reviewed a financial report provided in member packets. A copy of that report is included as Attachment #1.

DIVISION OF PLANNING AND RECREATION RESOURCES – *Kelly McClary, Director, Division of Planning and Recreation Resources, DCR*

Ms. McClary gave the update for the Division of Planning and Recreation Resources. She noted that the master planning process for Machicomoco has begun. In the next 30 to 60 days, staff will work with an advisory committee. This park will be merged with the property initially slated as Middle Peninsula State Park. There will be two public meetings as well as two advisory committee meetings.

An architect and engineering firm has been hired for Clinch River State Park Master Plan. Meetings with the team and the advisory committee will take place in the next month or so. Work will soon begin on Sweet Run and Mayo River master plans.

Ms. McClary noted that the master plan update would propose a name change for Chippokes Plantation State Park, removing the word “plantation” and renaming the park “Chippokes State Park.”

Ms. McClary noted that the Design and Construction division has been working on the following projects:

- 5 cabins at Pocahontas State Park which are already closed out.
- 8 cabins at Staunton River State Park. These are Civilian Conservation Corps projects that have been updated.
- Bridge replacement at Hungry Mother
- Renovations to the Pocahontas pool complex will add a spray ground by next Memorial Day.

Ms. McClary reported on the following grant programs:

- The Land and Water Conservation Fund had a grant round earlier in the year totaling \$4.6 million. These grants were awarded for acquisition. A second grant round for acquisition and development will be in the fall for approximately \$8 million.
- The Recreation Trails Fund grant round will close on June 30. The fund has \$1.4 million to split between motorized trails (30%), non-motorized trails (30%), and diversified trails (40%)
- The fund will also provide \$128,000 for 100 percent reimbursement for ADA trails. The hope is that these funds will upgrade existing trails.

The Great American Outdoors Act was signed in August of 2020. This Act provides permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Ms. McClary turned to Director Cristman to discuss the name change for Chippokes Plantation State Park.

Director Cristman advised that DCR and the College of William and Mary were the first state entities to proactively have a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion program. This is now mandated by the General Assembly. He noted that as a part of the process DCR is conducting both internal and external reviews.

Director Cristman commented that an African American staff member had told him that they did not wish to take their children to a “plantation.” DCR began to look at programs and names through different lenses.

In the process of completing the Master Plan for Chippokes Plantation State Park, Director Cristman advised staff to bring the plan back to the Board with a recommendation to remove the word “plantation” from the park name and to rename the park “Chippokes State Park.”

Ms. Maybury expressed concern over language in the current draft of the Master Plan that identified the property as the first European American farm. She noted that because there were also slave quarters located on the property that the issue of slavery should be addressed.

Ms. Crump commented that the entire plan would be revised with those considerations.

BOARD ACTION

REVISED: 7/12/2021 12:54 PM

Ms. Simon moved that the Board of Conservation and Recreation recommend that the name “Chippokes Plantation State Park” be revised to “Chippokes State Park” removing the word “Plantation” from the title. Ms. Hull Davidson seconded and the motion carried.

Dr. Patil asked what type of grants DCR normally sees for how people are using funding. He noted that the recent grant round was for acquisition only.

Ms. McClary responded that under the Land and Water Conservation Fund localities apply for funding for a future park, or park expansion. The grant fund requires that the park be open within three years.

State Park Master Plans – Lynn Crump – Scenic Resource Coordinator, DCR

First Landing State Park

Ms. Crump presented the recommended Master Plan update for First Landing State Park.

Officially renamed First Landing State Park on April 26, 1999, to commemorate the April 1607 landing, the park consists of some 2,888 acres of beaches, dunes, maritime forests, salt marshes, and fresh water wetlands located at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay in Virginia Beach, Virginia. The park is in the Hampton Roads Planning District, Region 23; this area is home to more than 1.8 million people.

Access to the park is provided off of U.S. Route 60 (Shore Drive) in Virginia Beach. Since First Landing State Park first opened it has been recognized as a destination area, enticing visitors from throughout the Commonwealth to come and enjoy its unique resources. The park was developed as a cooperative effort between the National Park Service and the state.

Ms. Crump advised that First Landing State Park was one of the first state parks to open over eighty-five years ago as Seashore State Park. The park was built by an African-American Civilian Conservation Corps unit.

Director Cristman noted that the General Assembly provided funding to study putting a mountain bike trail at the park. DCR was able to use the funding to document occurrences of endangered species. Because of the instability of the sand, DCR does not plan to move forward with the biking trail.

Ms. Jackson asked if there were plans for interpretation regarding the history of the park.

Ms. Crump replied that those issues will be addressed in the Visitor Experience Plan.

Dr. Patil inquired about the impact of sea level rise on the park.

Director Cristman advised that Governor Northam issued an Executive Order that there be no state construction within a flood plain without specific exemptions. He noted that the park has already experienced operational problems due to flooding, including closing the campgrounds in a prior year.

Ms. Crump noted that all future designs would pay strict attention to the floodplain and sea level rise.

Ms. Maybury expressed concern over language in the summary addressing Massive Resistance and the closing of all state parks due to desegregation, specifically with the referenced to how the park benefitted and the natural resources had the chance to recover.

Chairman Jackson suggested that it might be helpful to review the language in all the plans.

Director Cristman replied that the language could be addressed. He noted that a portion of the CCC group that built the park was African American. The parks were closed to due to a civil law suit regarding integration and equitable access to the park. It is important to tell that part of the story.

Ms. Crump noted that the visitor interpretation plan could be incorporated into the executive summary.

Ms. Simon commented that it was important to tell the full story.

Ms. Nizer advised that she viewed the language as positive as the closing of the parks allowed the earth to recover.

Director Cristman suggested that the Board hold action on this Master Plan and that staff be allowed to address these concerns and to bring the plan back to the next Board meeting.

Natural Bridge State Park

Ms. Crump presented the Executive Summary for Natural Bridge State Park.

Natural Bridge has been privately owned for more than 200 years and operated as a tourist destination for many years. In 2014, the property was subdivided; citizens of the community then organized to keep the site as a public destination. Virginia Conservation Legacy Fund (VCLF) using a loan from the Virginia Resources Authority purchased it in order to protect it. Once the loan is repaid, a portion of the land acquired will be donated as a state park; while the hotel area will be retained and managed by VCLF. Natural Bridge was officially declared a State Park on September 24, 2016, with DCR taking over management of approximately 1,500 acres.

Natural Bridge State Park is located in Rockbridge County, close to Botetourt County and the City of Lexington. The park property is bisected by US Route 11, a bypass route for Interstate 81 during high traffic or emergency incidents, and state Route 130. The population growth in the

area is stable. The closest state park, Douthat State Park, is over 45-minutes away and there is no other state parks within an hour's drive of NBSP. The 2018 Virginia Outdoors Survey, identified recreation participation rates for the most needed activities near NBSP in Region 6 – Central Shenandoah – as access to natural and historic areas, parks and trails.

Director Cristman noted that the park was acquired through The Conservation Fund. That fund has turned the park over to the Trust for Public Lands. DCR will work with the Trust for Public Lands to assume ownership of the park by 2024. Until that time, the opportunities to develop the park are limited.

Ms. Crump advised that the Virginia Department of Transportation reviewed alternative ways to remove Route 11, which goes over top of the bridge. There is concern for the bridge stability, especially as traffic from Interstate 81 is often routed over the bridge. Multiple reroutes were considered. The process for realigning the road could take up to six years and will require specific action and funding from the General Assembly.

BOARD ACTION

Dr. Patil moved that the Board of Conservation and Recreation recommend approval of the Master Plan for Natural Bridge State Park as presented by staff. Ms. Hull Davidson seconded and the motion carried.

Scenic River 50th Anniversary Summary – Lynn Crump

Ms. Crump gave an update regarding the Scenic River Program.

Ms. Crump advised that six new designations in 2020 and two designations in 2021 added 110 miles in 2020 and eighty-five miles in 2021.

2020

- Clinch River Extension
- Grays Creek
- Maury River
- Middle James River
- Pound River
- Staunton River Extension

2021

- South River
- Rappahannock River Extension

Regarding the 50th Anniversary the website had over 4,000 page views. The website features a calendar of events, an opportunity to sign up to join the celebration, stories, and a marketing tool kit for communities. More than thirty organizations, individuals, and businesses signed up to support the efforts.

The Scenic River exhibit was sponsored by Capital One and FORVA and was displayed at Main Street Station in Richmond for about three months. The display is now at Grayson Highlands State Park and will move to Covenant Woods in September. It is available to those interested.

Chairman Jackson commented Ms. Crump and the group for a successful event particularly with the challenges of the COVID pandemic.

DIVISION OF NATURAL HERITAGE – *Jason Bulluck, Director, Division of Natural Heritage, DCR*
Natural Area Preserve Additions

Mr. Bulluck gave the update for the Division of Natural Heritage. He noted that on the heels of a challenging but very productive 2020, where DCR closed on 12 land acquisitions/additions to the NAPs, including two new NAPs, 2021 is off to a great start with five closings before the end of May.

The following additions were made to the Natural Area Preserve System from December 1, 2020 through May 27, 2021.

Wallen Tract, The Cedars Natural Area Preserve, Lee County

Size: 9.7 acres

Dedicated: 21-May-2021

Funding Source: Treasury Loan to be reimbursed by USFWS Recovery Lands Acquisition Grant

Resources Protected:

- At least ten Natural heritage resources including rare invertebrate, fish, mussel either protected on the tract, or in the river adjacent this tract.
- *Conserve Virginia* Categories
 - Natural Habitat and Ecosystem Diversity
 - Protected Landscapes Resilience
 - Water Quality Improvement
 - Floodplains and Flooding Resilience

Mr. Bulluck noted that this purchase brings the size of The Cedars Natural Area Preserve in Lee County to just over 2,099. Though this addition is only 10 acres, it is an exceptional and significant ten acres from a biodiversity perspective.

The new acreage conserves two natural springs where Natural Heritage staff have documented the federally-listed Lee County Cave Isopod (*Lirceus usdagalun*), an unnamed, ***new to science***, Isopod (*Lirceus sp. Novum*), in addition to more common species. Including this newly protected site, there are only 6 known places in North America where three species of asellids (a type of crustacean) co-occur. According to Dr. Julian Lewis, Smithsonian Institution Research

Associate, the springs on this tract “are inhabited by the most unique assemblage of asellid isopod crustaceans of any site in the United States.” The springs outflow directly into the Powell River, where the water quality, temperature, and quantity help support one of the most significant remaining reaches of the river in terms of freshwater mussel fauna.

DCR worked with the landowners for over 2 years. The land had been partially cleared within both the riparian zone and uplands in preparation for residential development. Establishment of septic systems and additional land clearing could have proven disastrous to the aquatic species present. Under DCR-Natural Heritage stewardship the remaining riparian buffer vegetation will be protected and enhanced, benefitting aquatic species and water quality as well as bat species, such as the Gray Bat (*Myotis grisescens*), that are believed to forage along the Powell River corridor.

Carden Tract, Difficult Creek Natural Area Preserve, Halifax County

Size: 1.2 acres

Dedicated: 04-Feb-2021

Funding Source: Natural Area Preservation Fund

Resources Protected: (i) furthers the maintenance, preservation, restoration, and management of

- Natural heritage resources
 - Southern Piedmont Hardpan Forest
 - More than a dozen rare, globally significant rare plant species
- *ConserveVirginia* Categories
 - Natural Habitat and Ecosystem Diversity
 - Protected Landscapes Resilience
- Portion of C4 Forested Ecological Core

Gilginia Tree Farm Tract, Chestnut Ridge Natural Area Preserve, Giles & Bland Counties

Size: 820.8 acres

Dedicated: 30-Dec-2020

Funding Source: VOF Forest CORE Grant (MVP mitigation)

Resources Protected:

- Natural heritage resources
 - Central Appalachian Dry-Mesic Chestnut Oak - Northern Red Oak Forest
- *ConserveVirginia* Categories
 - Natural Habitat and Ecosystem Diversity
 - Agriculture and Forestry
 - Protected Landscapes Resilience
- Portion of C1 Core

Apple Patch LLC Tract, Poor Mountain Natural Area Preserve, Roanoke County

Size: 75 acres

Dedicated: 29-Dec-2020

Funding Source: VOF Forest CORE Grant (MVP mitigation)

Resources Protected:

- Natural heritage resources

- Piratebush (*Buckleya distichophylla*)
- Central Appalachian Pine - Oak / Heath Woodland
- Central Appalachian Xeric Shale Woodland (Chestnut Oak / Mixed Herbs Type)
- *ConserveVirginia* Categories
 - Natural Habitat & Ecosystem Diversity
 - Agriculture & Forestry
 - Protected Landscapes Resilience
- Portion of C4 Core

Sink Tract, Poor Mountain Natural Area Preserve, Roanoke County

Size: 133.5 acres

Dedicated: 01-Dec-2020

Funding Source: VOF Forest CORE Grant (MVP mitigation)

Resources Protected:

- Natural heritage resources
 - Piratebush (*Buckleya distichophylla*)
 - Central Appalachian Pine - Oak / Heath Woodland
 - Central Appalachian Xeric Shale Woodland (Chestnut Oak / Mixed Herbs Type)
 - At least three rare and imperiled invertebrate species.
- *ConserveVirginia* Categories
 - Floodplains and Flooding Resilience
 - Natural Habitat and Ecosystem Diversity
 - Protected Landscapes Resilience categories
- Portion of C3 Forested Ecological Core

FALKLAND FARMS

Mr. Bulluck, Ms. Baker, and Director Cristman provided update on the significance of the donation of the 7,300-acre Falkland Farms to DCR; the status of the transfer of property; and ecological restoration and recreation opportunities which Natural Heritage and State Parks are beginning to plan.

Director Cristman noted that the combined Falkland Farms property, Staunton River State Park, and Difficult Creek Natural Area Preserve would be the largest combined landholding for DCR.

Inventory

DCR's Natural Heritage Division continues to update our natural heritage resources data and mapped documented locations:

May 2021

Animal Mapped Locations (EOs*)	3,725
Plant Mapped Locations (EOs*)	4,280
Community Mapped Locations (EOs*)	1,887
Conservation Sites (total):	2,227
<i>Stream Conservation Units</i> – 541	
<i>Terrestrial Conservation Sites</i> - 1,438	
<i>Cave Sites</i> – 248	
Managed Areas	10,481
Mapped Tracts (total)	13,385
References	96,012

Information Management

Natural Heritage continues to work to update and add high priority data from partners to ConserveVirginia. Version 3.0 is being finalized now.

DCR staff have just finished a new Nature-based Recreational model – a statewide model indicating areas where nature-based recreation is most needed based on population and proximity to existing terrestrial and aquatic recreational opportunities. This is a key component in land conservation decisions, part of VLFC grant scoring, LWCF, as well as ConserveVirginia.

These efforts seek to inform that land conservation is strategically focused on most important lands and waters to protect from a variety of resource priority perspectives.

Project Review

Through June 23, DCR's three Project Review FTE had reviewed 1,361 projects. 343 had no intersect with Natural Heritage Resources, and the remaining ~1000 required and received, by deadline, a full review and details comments letter from NH staff. 65-75% of all projects are coming in through NHDE. Continued success, and now emulated by dozen other NHPs.

Stewardship

Mr. Bulluck noted that public access is less overwhelming than a year ago, but still at a net increase, due to the exposure during peak of pandemic. The preserves suffered a bit, staff acted swiftly, closures and re-opening of enhanced facilities, more resilient to public access. DCR took advantage of media interviews, social media and any communications via website and with partners to strengthen the message of what NAPs are conserved and managed for, and what types of public recreational use are compatible with their purpose and why.

DCR is currently working to expand and improve public access strategically to provide a unique visitor experience with no impacts to the NHRs and stewardship activities on a preserve. Developing proposal now to the Rec Trails Program to development access for hiking at Bald Knob NAP in Town of Rocky Mount.

The Division of Natural Heritage is very fortunate to have received the first budget increase included in the Governor's Draft, then approved/final, budget in 35 years. DCR is working now to fill five positions to right size the program on areas that make the conservation impact and

services to citizens better. Natural Heritage is looking at four retirements this CY, two of which have occurred, one filled, one posting closed yesterday.

Dr. Henderson asked what resources were needed to address the increased volume.

Mr. Bulluck noted that a staff presence and facility management, as well as additional parking resources were key. DCR has worked with the media to get the word out about what is and is not permitted in Natural Area Preserves.

Director Cristman commented that staffing is critical.

**DIVISION OF STATE PARKS – Melissa Baker, Director, Division of State Parks, DCR
State Parks 2020 Year in Review**

Dr. Baker commented that she is happy to be working with Virginia State Parks for over a year now. She noted that she arrived only five weeks before the pandemic hit. She commended State Parks staff for helping her through the transition during the COVID restrictions.

Ms. Baker noted that in March of 2020, DCR closed State Parks to camping and cabins. Over 200 wage staff were furloughed. In addition, an additional 100 positions were not filled.

Ms. Baker noted that when DCR was able to begin the hiring process there were few applicants. She noted that the Division made hundreds of operational changes to deal with both the pandemic and the staff shortage.

Ms. Baker reported that for the 2021 season, Virginia State Parks is on track to have the largest revenue in three years. Both camping and day use have expanded in the parks.

Ms. Baker noted that the increase in the minimum wage would impact State Parks.

State Parks is working to expand the interpretation efforts with the consideration of diversity, equity and inclusion issues. Parks have great civil rights stories. DCR is working to tell the stories that will make parks look more like the citizens of the Commonwealth.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

NEXT MEETING

Director Cristman advised that he would like the Board to meet in September or October at Natural Tunnel State Park. An area of the park is being renamed in honor of Bruce Wingo, longtime Board Chair and supporter of Virginia State Parks. Staff will poll the board with possible dates.

ADJOURN

There was no further business and the meeting adjourned.

Attachment #1

**Department of Conservation and Recreation
General Fund Appropriation and Expenditures
Fiscal Year 2021 as of May 31, 2021**

FY2021 Legislative Appropriation **\$ 133,055,585**

Appropriation Transfers and Adjustments

Water Quality Improvement Fund Transfers	(48,899,228)	
SWCD Dam Repair	(900,000)	
Dam Safety/Flood Prevention & Protection	(15,732,147)	
Land Conservation Fund Transfers	(10,000,000)	
Central Appropriation Adjustment	(653,787)	
		(76,185,162)

FY 2021 Total GF Appropriation Available for Operations **\$ 56,870,423**

Division	FY21 Division Targets	YTD Actual (As of May 31, 2021)	Target vs Actual - %
Soil & Water Conservation	\$ 13,884,113	\$ 11,513,881	82.9%
Dam Safety	1,279,552	1,191,136	93.1%
Natural Heritage	3,145,764	2,842,600	90.4%
Land Conservation	1,924,241	1,893,937	98.4%
State Parks (incl Breaks)	22,393,172	22,393,172	100.0%
PRR (Incl Design & Construction)	2,452,741	2,162,859	88.2%
Director's Office - Admin- Finance	11,790,840	8,236,645	69.9%
Grand Total	<u>\$ 56,870,423</u>	<u>\$ 50,234,230</u>	<u>88.3%</u>