

Board of Conservation and Recreation
Friday, July 22, 2016
The Heritage Center, Pocahontas State Park, Chesterfield, Virginia

TIME AND PLACE

The meeting of the Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation convened at 10:04 a.m. in the Heritage Center at Pocahontas State Park, Chesterfield, Virginia.

MEMBERS PRESENT

W. Bruce Wingo, Chair

Patricia A. Jackson, Vice Chair

Vincent M. Burgess

Nancy Hull Davidson

Danielle Heisler

Dexter C. Hurt

Andrew C. Jennison

Harvey B. Morgan

Vivek Patil

Michael P. Reynold

Isaac J. Sarver

MEMBERS ABSENT

Linwood M. Cobb, III

STAFF PRESENT

Clyde E. Cristman, Director

Rochelle Altholz, Deputy Director of Administration

Jason Bulluck, Director, Division of Natural Heritage

Lynn Crump, Environmental Programs Planner

Michael Fletcher, Board and Constituent Services Liaison

Lisa McGee, Director, Policy and Planning

Sharon Partee, Finance Director

Craig Seaver, Director, Division of State Parks

Timothy Shrader, Eastern Field Operations Director

Christine Watlington, Senior Policy and Planning Analyst

Chuck Wyatt, Special Projects Assistant

QUORUM - With eleven (11) members of the Board present, a quorum was established.

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman Wingo called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. Director Cristman introduced the new Board members, and congratulated Chairman Wingo on his reappointment for a second term.

- Ms. Danielle Heisler from Richmond, Virginia is the Director of Digital Product Management for Capital One where she works on artificial intelligence and conversational interfaces. Ms. Heisler expressed a strong interest in the work of DCR and a passion for state parks and conservation.
- Dr. Vivek Patil from Arlington, is a Senior Manager with Perkin Elmer where he works in biotechnology focusing on human health. Because of his concerns regarding conservation and environmental health, Dr. Patil took elective course work. He hopes to use his time on the Board to bring awareness to how open spaces and outdoor recreation have a direct impact on human health.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JANUARY 6, 2016

Ms. Davidson moved for the approval of the minutes of the January 6, 2016 with no changes. Ms. Jackson seconded and the minutes were approved as submitted by staff.

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

Director Cristman gave an overview of the work of DCR and the Board. The Board of Conservation and Recreation (BCR) is one of four Boards managed by DCR. The BCR advises the Director and the Department concerning State Parks, Natural Heritage, Planning and Recreation, and Scenic Resources. The other DCR Boards are the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board, the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation, and the Virginia Cave Board.

Director Cristman welcomed members to Pocahontas State Park, the largest State Park with 8115 acres, and the closest State Park to downtown Richmond. Pocahontas opened as a national park in 1938. From 1942-1945 the area was reserved for soldiers returning from World War II to decompress in a natural setting. The National Park Service (NPS) donated the area to Virginia State Parks in 1946.

As a follow up from the January meeting, Director Cristman reported that yurt construction has begun at Pocahontas State Park, Fairy Stone State Park, and Shenandoah River State Park. The yurt project was piloted at Kiptopeke State Park. Yurts in State Parks are exempt from the normal construction process, allowing DCR to obtain building permits from the local building office saving both time and money. DCR, in partnership with Virginia Correctional Enterprises and Blue Ridge Yurts in Floyd County, plans on completing 50 yurts within the next year and a half.

Budget Language

- An amendment to the budget language restricts DCR's ability to acquire additional land without the specific approval of the General Assembly.
- Two land acquisitions were completed prior to this provision going into effect on July 1.
 - A 600 acre donation in Loudoun County has closed. Plans are being developed for a new State Park in Loudoun County.
 - 243 acres were added to New River State Trail State Park. A reclaimed mining site will be used for additional parking.

Announcements

On Saturday, September 24, 2016, National Public Lands Day, DCR will host a ribbon cutting to open Natural Bridge State Park as Virginia's 37th State Park.

NATURAL HERITAGE UPDATE – *Jason Bulluck, Director, Division of Natural Heritage*

Mr. Bulluck reviewed the current activities of the Division of Natural Heritage. More information about these programs is available on the Natural Heritage portion of the DCR website (<http://www.dcr.virginia.gov>). He noted that DCR's Natural Heritage Program is celebrating 30 years. The program has been recognized as the "Best in the Western Hemisphere" in 1996, 2002, and again in 2016.

Mr. Bulluck provided a Power Point presentation regarding how DCR Natural Heritage conserves Virginia's biodiversity through inventory, protection and stewardship.

Inventory and Data Management

- The Conservation Lands Database uses a myriad of conservation planning analyses and tools.
 - About 4 million acres are conserved representing 17% of the state.
 - The Database is fundamental for strategic conservation and assesses acreage, ownership, management activities, and management intent.
 - The Database works to protect rare species and ecosystem function for resiliency to threats like unplanned development and climate change.
- Virginia ConservationVision maps were completed in 2008 and are currently under revision. The maps guide land conservation efforts for DCR and conservation partners.
- The Vulnerability Model quantifies the predicted relative risk of conversion from natural lands or open space to developed uses.
- The Virginia Wetlands Catalog helps to steer wetland restoration and conservation activities to the proximity of wetland impacts.
- The Division of Natural Heritage provides environmental review for 2500-3000 projects annually.

Protection and Stewardship

- Natural Heritage manages 63 Natural Area Preserves covering a total of 55,984 acres. 21 of these have public access facilities.
- Stewardship activities work to address invasive species, restore hydrology, manage habitat for rare species, and restore rare systems like the Longleaf Pine
 - On December 10-16, 2015, 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 area preserves.
 - This was the largest native longleaf pine planting effort to date in the Commonwealth and was a culmination of two years of effort.
 - DCR partnered with The Nature Conservancy, the Virginia Department of Forestry, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- The Species Distribution Modeling predicts where species habitats exist with a percentage likelihood based on known locations.
 - Consistent, easy to share model outputs can benefit the private sector as well.
 - Funding sources include:
 - § Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission - \$260K + \$68K match
 - § South Atlantic LLC - \$150K
 - § Region 5 USF&WS - \$150K

Current funding needed to complete predictive suitable habitat models for all state and federally listed species in Virginia was discussed and the Board provided some feedback on potential sources of support and funding.

PLANNING AND RECREATION RESOURCES UPDATE - Lynn Crump, Environmental Programs Planner

Ms. Crump provided a Power Point presentation regarding the activities of the Division of Planning and Recreation Resources. The following information was presented:

Virginia Treasures

- Goal 1,000 Treasures
 - Natural Cultural and Recreational Treasures 367
 - Land Conservation Treasures 408
 - Current Total 775

- Numbers nearly doubled from January – May; approximately 300 contributions were received from the Department of Historic Resources and the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.
- The Governor’s office is actively promoting. A partnership with Virginia Tourism Corporation was launched in June.
- DCR is receiving steady applications through the website.
- The agency is developing a map that will indicate names and locations of treasures on the DCR website.

2018 Virginia Outdoors Plan

- The Virginia Outdoors Plan is published by DCR every five years and addresses outdoor recreation needs and land conservation. The most recent version in 2013 was the first plan published only in electronic format.
- The 2013 VOP was recognized as one of the top plans in the country.
- The plan is set up according to planning districts.
- Plans are underway for the 2018 VOP.
 - Spring 2016 – VOP Technical Advisory Committee
 - Summer/Fall – Regional meetings
 - Fall 2016 – Complete inventory and begin Survey
 - Fall 2017 – Post draft VOP
 - Fall/Winter 2017-2018 – VOP webinar
 - 30 day VOP comment period
 - Winter/Spring 2017-2018 – Final VOP to NPS for approval

Environment Excellence Awards

The Environmental Excellence Awards were presented at the Environmental Virginia Symposium at Virginia Military Institute in Lexington in April.

- The Gold Medal winner for outdoor recreation was the Luray Hawksbill Greenway Trail for the exemplary implementation of the Virginia Outdoors Plan by connecting the community to the natural environment along the 2-mile walking and biking trail that borders the Hawksbill Creek.
- The Silver Medal Winner was the Roanoke River Blueway.
- The Bronze Medal Winner was the Waynesboro Water Trail.
- Tucker Park at Maidens Crossing in Goochland County received an Honorable Mention for Virginia Outdoors Plan Implementation.

DCR staff is working with the Virginia Recreation and Park Society to offer educational webinars featuring outdoor recreation topics. DCR will assist in identifying and presenting four webinar series. Ms. Crump presented a draft resolution commending the Division of Planning and Recreation Resources and the Virginia Recreation and Parks Society for the planning and implementation of the Virginia Outdoors Plan. The text of the resolution is included as Attachment A.

BOARD ACTION

Ms. Jackson moved that the Board adopt the resolution as presented. Mr. Burgess seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Statewide Trails Advisory Committee

- The Statewide Trails Committee met on March 22, 2016 and will meet again on August 18 and December 1, 2016.
- Topics addressed at the March meeting:
 - Strategies to foster communication and networking among trail stakeholders.
 - Market trial values and benefits.
 - Strategies to increase tourism and commercial activities associated with the statewide trail system.

Design and Construction

- Powhatan Campground - Expected completion August 2016
- Widewater Phase IA - Construction to begin in 2017
- New Cabins. Ongoing construction at the following parks:
 - Lake Anna
 - Kiptopeke
 - Natural Tunnel
 - Claytor Lake
 - Twin Lakes
- A 1.5 mile road to provide ADA access has been completed at High Bridge Trail State Park

Recreation Grants

- Land and Water Conservation Fund
 - Grant round of approximately \$2.6 million (combined 2015 & 2016 apportionments) anticipated in fall
 - Currently updating scoring criteria/grant manual, which must be approved by the NPS
- Recreation Trails Program
 - Approximately \$1 million available
 - Grant round closed July 21

State Park Master Planning

- Updates due in 2016
 - Belle Isle
 - Fairy Stone
 - Grayson Highlands
 - Mason Neck
 - Pocahontas
 - Westmoreland
- New Parks
 - Natural Bridge – planning currently underway
 - Loudoun – newly acquired
 - Clinch River – on the horizon
 - Mayo River – pending additional acquisitions

Virginia Scenic Rivers

Ms. Crump presented a video produced by DCR about the Scenic Rivers Program. The video is available for viewing at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNKeXPiGvTo>

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

Mr. Seaver presented a Power Point presentation that addressed the economic impact of state parks in 2015.

The presentation included the following points:

Virginia State Parks – Economic Impact Report 2015

- Key Results
 - Total Economic Significance \$214-222.8 million
 - Total Economic Impact \$139.4-171.2 million
 - Total Income Created \$86.7 million
 - Total Jobs Created 2,571
- Proof that parks are a good investment
 - Every dollar of general funds (taxes) spent on state parks generates \$8.26 in “fresh” money for Virginia
 - Every dollar of funding for parks returns \$0.85 in state and local taxes
 - The park system creates 2571 jobs with about 1100 of them being in the private sector
- What does this study really tell us?
 - First, that state parks are important economic engines and they bring great value to local communities.
 - These economic benefits are gained at very small cost to the state budget. The current investment of \$18 million in state general funds creates up to \$222.8 million in economic activity and \$171.2 million in economic impact – new money to the state and localities.
 - State Parks create 2517 jobs and a lot of these are private sector jobs.
 - This economic activity generates state and local taxes that largely replay the initial investment of tax dollars - \$0.85 returned for every \$1.00 of general funds.
- But it’s not all about the money
 - The true value of Virginia’s State Parks is in the impacts they create for Virginians and their guests.

Investigating Public-Private Partnerships for State Parks

Mr. Seaver reported that the General Assembly authorized a study regarding public-private partnerships for State Parks. He provided a power point presentation regarding the plans for the study as follows:

HB 30 (Chapter 780) 365 G: The Board of Conservation and Recreation shall consider whether public-private partnerships would (i) result in greater operational efficiencies in the planning, development, construction, and operation of new state parks and (ii) generate cost savings, allow for additional state park amenities, and increase operational revenues for state parks. Technical assistance shall be provided to the Board by the Department of Conservation and Recreation. The Board shall submit a report to the Governor and the Chairmen of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees no later than November 15, 2016.

- What is behind this request?
 - A number of state parks and federal agencies have recently increased privatization of park services:
 - § Kentucky and Tennessee: Pursuing private contractors to operate state park resort areas (hotels, golf courses, etc.)
 - § California: Forced to seek private contracts to operate state parks that would otherwise close due to state budget crisis. Includes contracts with local citizens’ organizations to keep parks open.
 - § U.S. Forest Service: Many campgrounds under private management.
 - There has been a general interest in the possibilities of lowering government costs of operations through privatization: Prisons, highway maintenance, etc.
- Privatization can include:
 - “Build and Operate” facilities and services
 - Operation of an entire park

- Operation of one or more facilities or services within a park (campground, boat rentals, tours, etc.)
- Operation or provision of park infrastructure services (overnight reservations system, cabin housekeeping, grounds management, etc.)
- Use of the park by private businesses and non-profits (canoe/kayak outfitters, fishing guides, day camps, etc.)
- What is VSP already doing?
 - PPEA Project: Canopy Course at Shenandoah River State park
 - Power and paddle boat rentals at 3 parks
 - Campstore and Watersports rentals at First Landing
 - Reserve America overnight reservation system
 - Business Manager point-of-sale system
 - Multiple river outfitters operating under commercial user permits
 - Multiple day care centers, summer day camps, etc. operating under non-profit user permits
- Roadmap for the study: Where to next?
 - Establish DCR Board input and involvement
 - Refine what we know about the possibilities and conditions for privatization...further investigation
 - Select conclusions and recommendations...DCR Board input
 - Complete draft report...DCR Board review
 - Final report...adoption by DCR Board (Due to money committees by November 15, 2016)

Board Discussion

Board members requested that the following be considered in the study:

- Has there been a huge push from the private sector for this?
- There's a concern about privatization. The study should look at the culture of the users.
- Would frequent park visits be discouraged because of costs?
- The study should tie back to the mission and values of State Parks.
- Affordability is a critical component.
- Do the master plans consider public-private partnerships?
- The VOP is fair guidance for what the public expects from state parks.

FINANCIAL UPDATE – Sharon Partee, Finance Director

Ms. Partee gave a general financial update for the agency and presented a project for the State Parks Project Fund for Board approval.

- 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. Since the last Board meeting, the agency received an additional appropriation adjustment (in April) of \$55,684 for worker's comp (\$53,609) and line of duty (\$2,075). With this additional amount and after "pass-thrus" to other funds, the total remaining for FY16 expenditures went from \$44,763,592 to \$44,819,276. As of June 30, 2016, \$44,766,696 (99.9%) had been spent. There is a remaining FY16 general fund balance of \$52,580 – of this amount \$35,451 (\$19,800 – vehicle for SWC and \$15,651 – for a trainer and printing for SWC Districts) will be requested to carry-forward into FY17 and \$17,129 was offered as an agency-wide reduction.
- General Fund – FY 2017 appropriation per Chapter 70 approved May 20, 2016 - \$119,653,799.
The majority of the large increase in appropriation is from the state surplus from FY15 to be deposited into the Virginia Water Quality Improvement Fund in the amount of \$61,780,800. Other increases we received

were about \$3.5M in Dam Safety for dam repairs and \$4M additional in funding for VLCF (Virginia Land Conservation Foundation). After all mandatory transfers, we will have about \$46M in GF for our agencies' operations.

State Parks Project Fund

Ms. Partee presented the following proposed project for the Farm and Forestry Museum at Chippokes Plantation State Park:

Utilizing \$24,614.35 in funds from the former Chippokes Farm Foundation, the park will renovate 1,400 square feet of space in the museum maintenance area for the purposes of maintaining and storing the museum's antique collections in a climate-controlled environment. The money will be used to fund labor and purchase services and materials for the following:

- Acid treat/etch concrete floors and apply a new epoxy coat.
- Replace 3 metal roll up doors with insulated replacements.
- Insulate ceiling.
- Install new lock hardware on entry doors to ensure security of the facility.
- Purchase and install appropriate collections storage. This will include shelving, cabinets, flat files, and storage boxes.
- Transport collections to the new storage space and store them there.

Board Action

Ms. Jackson moved approval of the proposed project for Chippokes Plantation State Park as submitted. Mr. Sarver seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

BOARD LOGISTICS – *Michael Fletcher, Board and Constituent Services Liaison*

Mr. Fletcher gave a brief review of FOIA issues for the Board and noted that a full FOIA/COIA training would be provided at a future meeting. He also reviewed travel expense procedures for members.

OTHER BUSINESS - Mr. Sarver suggested that resolutions be prepared in recognition of outgoing Board members. Staff will prepare these for adoption at the next meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT - There was no public comment.

NEXT MEETING - The next meeting of the Board of Conservation and Recreation is scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on Friday, September 23 at Natural Bridge, Virginia.

ADJOURN - There was no further business and the meeting adjourned at 2:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

W. Bruce Wingo
Chair

Clyde E. Cristman
DCR Director

Attachment A

Commending the Planning and Recreation Resources Division (hereinafter referred to as the Planning Division) of the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Virginia Recreation and Park Society (VRPS) for planning and implementation of the Virginia Outdoors Plan (VOP).

WHEREAS, the VRPS, an affiliate with the National Recreation and Park Association, is a private, non-profit professional organization; and

WHEREAS, the VRPS is recognized as the Commonwealth's lead non-profit organization providing statewide guidance to parks and recreation professionals; and

WHEREAS, since 1965 VRPS affiliates have worked locally and with DCR to implement the VOP; and

WHEREAS, VRPS affiliates provide guidance and leadership for local, regional and statewide implementation of the VOP through local work and service in an advisory capacity on the VOP Technical Advisory Committee; and

WHEREAS, VRPS affiliates serve on the VOP Technical Advisory Committee. These local parks and recreation professionals advise DCR staff, attend regional, outdoor recreation planning meetings and convene with outdoor recreation subcommittees to address regional and statewide outdoor recreation planning; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED that the Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation and the Virginia Recreation and Park Society strongly commend VRPS professionals for service on the VOP Technical Advisory Committee; and be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, that the Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation and the VRPS recognize the work of the VOP Technical Advisory Committee, especially VRPS members Carol Steele, Gloucester County Director of Parks and Recreation, John Carnifax, James City County Director of Parks and Recreation and Paul Gilbert, Executive Director, NOVA Parks, for their participation on the VOP Technical Advisory Committee.

Through their professional successes and their work with VRPS and the VOP Technical Advisory Committee, Carol, John and Paul have made outstanding contributions to the field of outdoor recreation and to the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan project team. These include:

- Serving as a liaison between DCR and VRPS,
- Bringing local parks and recreation perspective to the VOP Technical Advisory Committee,
- Promoting outdoor recreation through VRPS leadership roles,
- Providing insight to trends in local parks and recreation,
- Sharing local outdoor recreation department implementation successes and ideas,
- Bringing extensive knowledge of resources for local, regional and statewide outdoor recreation implementation, and
- Fostering community and regional partnerships that enhance outdoor recreation opportunities for the public.