

**Board of Conservation and Recreation
Subcommittee on Scenic Resources**

**Wednesday, October 9, 2018
Richmond, Virginia**

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Patti Jackson
Vince Burgess

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS NOT PRESENT

Danielle Heisler
Vivek Patil

DCR STAFF PRESENT

Lynn Crump, Environmental Programs Planner
Michael R. Fletcher, Board and Constituent Services Liaison
Isaac Sarver, Chief Deputy for Board and Constituent Services.

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Jackson called the meeting to order.

PURPOSE OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE

Ms. Jackson reviewed the purpose of the subcommittee. She noted that since the Virginia Scenic River Board was dissolved the Board of Conservation and Recreation did not have as many opportunities to review scenic resources. She observed that concerns over such things as power lines crossing rivers and other development that should be considered.

Ms. Crump noted that the purpose of the meeting was to determine if the subcommittee is appropriate, necessary, and useful for a thorough discussion of Scenic Issues. She noted that at the May Board of Conservation and Recreation meeting that, based on concern over scenic resources and the upcoming 50th Anniversary of the Scenic Rivers Program that Chairman Wingo agreed to appoint a subcommittee to review these issues and to report to the Board.

Ms. Jackson suggested that the subcommittee could meet periodically and advance issues of concern to the full Board.

Mr. Burgess stressed the importance of moving forward because of the approaching 50th Anniversary of the Scenic Rivers Program.

Ms. Crump noted that there was already a steering committee comprised of members from the three Scenic River Advisory Committees. The committee has already discussed the anniversary with the Friends of Rivers of Virginia. There are other groups who are also interested.

REVIEW OF VIRGINIA OUTDOORS SURVEY WITH REGARD TO SCENIC RIVERS

Ms. Crump reviewed the results of the Virginia Outdoors Survey. She noted that 89% of respondents say that scenery is important in making travel plans. Governor Northam recently spoke of the importance of tourism in the state and noted that a large percentage of Virginia jobs are based on that tourism.

UPDATES

Virginia Solar and Wind Energy Engagement Process

The General Assembly approved a requirement to review this process. Dominion paid to have a consultant hold stakeholder meetings. Scenic Virginia and the American Society of Landscape Architects were included in that discussion. The effort will provide an opportunity for scenic resources to play a more prominent role in the discussion of alternative energy and the impact on scenic views.

The DCR Division of Natural Heritage is developing a land conservation prioritization process. Byways and rivers have just been added to that process. It has been suggested that 'scenic areas' and/or viewsheds be added to that inventory and decision making process.

Ms. Crump said that there is a need for a stateside assessment that would inventory scenic assets as well as assess those based on scenic value. She noted that this could be quite expensive. Ms. Jackson suggested that there may be grant funding available for such an important process.

Virginia Byways

The MOU with the Department of Transportation (VDOT) has not been updated. However, there have not been many request for information. Most recently, there have been requests in Rockingham and Albemarle Counties for review. VDOT has been directed by the Commonwealth Transportation Board to review their process for recognizing and re-evaluating the Virginia Scenic Byway designation process. The *Code of Virginia* specifies that Byways should be periodically reviewed to see if they still meet the requirements.

Scenic Virginia

Scenic Virginia is working with a grant to Virginia Tech for the development of a consolidated listing of Scenic Assessment literature and the development of an assessment piece for Scenic Resources/Assets.

The Chesapeake Conservancy is doing a watershed-wide scenic assessment based on social media point gathering. Visitors are able to post photos online of places they have visited. The Chesapeake Watershed covers nearly half of the state. Scenic Virginia is hoping this will something that could be replicated for the rest of the state.

The power line crossing the James River at Jamestown is being constructed, but the matter is also in court.

50th Anniversary Effort

As noted above, a smaller steering committee is working on the celebration and there is a strategic plan in place to guide their efforts.

The River Management Conference will be held at VCU in May 2020 and will have a focus on Virginia's anniversary.

Ms. Crump noted that a Governor's Fellow is coming to the DCR Division of Planning and Recreation Resources and will be working with the Scenic Rivers Program.

Ms. Crump reviewed a packet of information sent out for the 40th anniversary, including a resolution passed by the General Assembly. The committee discussed forwarding this to the General Assembly through the DCR Policy Office.

Background of the Scenic River Advisory Board

Ms. Crump reviewed the background of the Virginia Scenic River Advisory Board, which was created in 2003 when the 1970 code was revised to consolidate the individual river advisory boards. In 2012, the Board was dissolved and the responsibilities were given to the Board of Conservation and Recreation.

The Scenic River Board was active with guidance to the program, public outreach and river evaluations.

Ms. Jackson noted that the important aspect was why the BCR was designated to have that responsibility if the Board was not going to follow through and maintain that status. She asked how the Department or Board could make sure that scenic value is not lost.

Ms. Crump suggested reaching out to groups already associated with rivers and advising them of the opportunity to work with the Scenic Rivers Program and to establish local Scenic River Committees.

Ms. Crump reviewed a request from the Catoctin Creek Scenic River Advisory Committee regarding construction activity by VDOT. The subcommittee advised that Catoctin Creek should contact the local engineer to discuss.

SUBCOMMITTEE GOALS AND ACTIONS

The Subcommittee discussed the goals and necessary actions. It was recommended that the Chairman be requested to add a fifth member. The Board can refer items to the subcommittee for review and report back to the Board. It was also recommended that the subcommittee develop a regular meeting schedule.

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 recommend that the Board do the following:

- Formalize the subcommittee and bring the subcommittee membership to a total of 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 from the BCR for 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 agreed to present these recommendations to the Board at the October 19, 2018 meeting.

There was no further discussion and the meeting was adjourned.