

**Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation  
Thursday, November 7, 2002, 10:00 a.m.  
House Room C, General Assembly Building  
Richmond, Virginia**

**Board of Conservation and Recreation Members Present**

W. Bruce Wingo, Chairman  
J. Benjy Burnett  
J. Christian Walker Ferry  
Sheryl D. Swinson

Alan D. Albert  
Raymond Cahen  
Jack McGee

**Board of Conservation and Recreation Members Not Present**

Robert W. Gordon, Jr.

**Staff Present**

Joseph H. Maroon  
Scott Bedwell  
John R. Davy  
Joe Elton  
John Heerwald  
G. Warren Wahl, II

Leon E. App  
William Conkle  
David C. Dowling  
Michael R. Fletcher  
Robert S. Munson  
R. Gary Waugh

**Others Present**

Approximately 150 members of the public were also in attendance.

**Welcome**

Mr. Wingo called the meeting to order at 10:25 a.m. He declared a quorum present and noted that one member was delayed by traffic but would arrive presently.

**Approval of Minutes from September 6, 2002**

Mr. Burnett noted a change on Page 12, paragraph five. Mr. John Field should be identified as a retired U.S. Army Corps of Engineers reservoir engineer for John H. Kerr Dam.

MOTION: Mr. Cahen moved that the minutes of the June 26, 2002 meeting be approved as amended.

SECOND: Mr. Burnett

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

### **Master Planning Process**

Mr. John Davy noted that two Master Plans would be presented to the Board for consideration at the meeting for Smith Mountain Lake State Park and for Staunton River State Park. In addition, he noted that additional information would be presented concerning the proposed Occoneechee State Park Master Plan.

### **Smith Mountain Lake State Park**

Mr. Bob Munson presented the proposed Master Plan for Smith Mountain Lake State Park.

#### *Executive Summary*

The 20,600-acre Smith Mountain Lake was created in 1960 when Appalachian Power Company (now AEP) built a dam on the Roanoke River in Smith Mountain Gap. Construction of the dam was completed in 1966 and a year later Appalachian Power donated the first parcel of land to the Commonwealth for the establishment of the state park. The state bought the rest of the land over the next six years and the first stage of development, road construction, began in 1975. The park opened to the public in 1983. It includes sixteen miles of frontage on the lake.

Smith Mountain Lake State Park lies in southwestern Virginia on the Roanoke River branch of Smith Mountain Lake. Located along the eastern edge of the Blue Ridge physiographic region, the park contains 1248 acres, most of which lie in Bedford County. The remaining 37 acres make up a peninsula across the lake in Franklin County. Smith Mountain Lake State Park is accessed via Route 626. It is about 40 miles southeast of Roanoke, 40 miles southwest of Lynchburg, and 140 miles southwest of Richmond.

Facilities existing at Smith Mountain Lake State Park include a 50 site campground, 20 cabins, visitor center, office, maintenance area, beach, bathhouse, boat ramp, picnic area with shelter, playground, boat rental facility, trails residences, roads, water system and waste water system. Visitation in 2001 was 412, 635 persons.

The master plan update was conducted by planners from the Department of Conservation and Recreation in accordance with §10.1-200.1 of the *Code of Virginia*. The *Code* states that a map indicating, at a minimum, boundaries, inholdings, adjacent property holdings and other features such as slopes, water resources, soil conditions and types, natural resources, and cultural and historic resources be prepared. A park purpose statement and goals and objectives are also to be developed. A technical advisory committee was appointed comprised of local citizens, businesses, members of the park Friends group,

AEP representatives, and representatives of local government. Public input was solicited at the beginning and at the end of the process to ensure plan recommendations were understood and accepted by the community.

*Smith Mountain Lake State Park Purpose Statement*

The purpose of Smith Mountain Lake State Park is to provide premier outdoor recreational and educational opportunities associated with Virginia's largest lake, while interpreting the natural, historical, and cultural resources of the west piedmont region of Virginia.

Mr. McGee asked about the schedule for Phase I.

Mr. Munson noted that most of the Phase I items would be completed within 2-4 years.

Mr. Maroon noted that Phase I is based on money from the Parks and Natural Areas Bond which was recently approved. The process of developing the schedule for the use of those funds is underway.

MOTION: Mr. Cahen moved that the Master Plan for Smith Mountain Lake State Park be approved as presented.

SECOND: Mr. Albert

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Wingo noted that the Board would also consider the Master Plan for Staunton River, but that since there were many individuals in the audience concerned with the Occoneechee Master Plan, it would be a good idea to move the presentation of the Occoneechee plan up on the agenda.

Mr. Wingo noted that the process would begin with presentations by DCR staff and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Mr. Davy gave a brief overview of the Master Plan process. The process is established in the *Code of Virginia*. DCR is required to complete new master plans for all state parks by December 2003. The process is detailed to ensure public involvement.

DCR completes two studies. Tier one is what is known about the park and includes a public meeting seeking input as to desired elements for the park. This information is compiled and reviewed by an advisory group and then presented at a second public meeting.

Master plans are developed based on a twenty year plan.

Once the plan is completed, the draft is sent to all state legislators for a thirty-day comment period before the DCR Director makes his final decision. The 2002 Parks and Natural Areas Bond requires that any facilities to be developed are included in the master plan.

### **Occoneechee State Park**

At the last BCR meeting, staff presented the new draft master plan for Occoneechee State Park. As noted at that meeting, this park is the only one leased in its entirety from the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers and none of the parkland is owned by the Commonwealth. The current lease expires in 2018. Therefore, the Corps of Engineers has final approval for any proposed development or uses of the land. We also note that one other park, Staunton River State Park, leases 500 of its approximately 1,700 acres from the Corps. This park is located on the upper part of Kerr Reservoir about nine miles west of Occoneechee. The new draft master plan for Staunton River State Park will be presented to the Board later today.

At the September meeting, the staff reviewed the master planning process and the proposed developments for the park. Major new improvements proposed by the Department for the park included cabins, additional campsites, an environmental education/native American support center, swimming facility, trail expansion, equestrian camping area, Native American Village, and interpretation of significant cultural/historic sites. Also noted on the plan is the 23 acres in the middle of the park's development area which has been classified as open space for trails and water access. Alternatively, language is included in the draft master plan which recognizes the Town of Clarksville's request to use this area for three holes of a proposed public golf course. The majority of the golf course would be developed on the Town's Industrial Development Authority land which lies adjacent to and inland from the park.

While the draft master plan was generally well received by the public at the September meeting, there was considerable debate over the inclusion of the request for the three golf holes. Since the September meeting, DCR has received 650 public comments in favor and 3,675 opposed.

As a result of the concerns raised at the last meeting, the Board asked staff to gather additional information for your consideration before taking action on the draft master plan. The information was developed to address three issue areas:

1. What are the potential impacts of the proposal?
2. What is the status of the archeological study?
3. Does the Town or IDA have to follow the standard public procurement process in selecting a builder/operator for the course?

In response to these questions, the following information is provided.

Related to question one, potential impacts of the proposal, there are many unknowns. One reason for this is that historically we have never had a golf course in a state park. While they have been considered in the past and discussed as part of two recent master planning

processes, there has never been a golf course developed on state park lands. The overriding reasons for this have been:

1. That historically, Virginia State parks have featured traditional passive outdoor recreation activities in a natural setting.
2. The concern over the potential environmental and cultural impacts of a golf course on the land and adjacent water bodies.
3. There has generally been broad based public opposition to golf courses in state parks. This was also indicated by the 2000 Virginia Outdoors survey of some 3,400 randomly selected households. When asked how important it was for Virginia State Parks to provide golf courses, 58% said not important. In fact, of the 15 measured activities and facilities considered for state parks, only one had less public support than golf.
4. There have been continued issues raised on the economic viability of a golf course in a state park. In 1998 a letter from the Virginia Tourism Corporation to Barry Duval, Secretary of Commerce and Trade during the Gilmore Administration, stated: "States such as West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and Oklahoma have state supported golf courses. In all cases, these states have never recovered their initial construction costs and they operate their courses with state subsidies."
5. The concern over what sort of precedent would be set by allowing a golf course in a state park.

With respect to possible impacts on Occoneechee specifically, staff reviewed what was known about the proposal and then requested additional information from the Town of Clarksville and the IDA. These questions were related to possible impacts on the park as a result of the golf community development on the adjacent land and with respect to just the three holes proposed on the parkland.

In general, what was learned is that the project is still very much evolving. Only basic concepts as to what will be developed on the IDA land have been provided to the Department to date. A significant change has occurred since the last Board meeting. We understand that the Town has scaled back the golf course proposal from 27 holes to a total of 18 holes including the three on the park.

According to the Town and the IDA the exact location and number of private residential units as well as public lodging on the IDA portion of the golf course project will be determined by the selected developer. At this time, they have indicated that it will be a retirement style community developed around the golf greens on their section of the property. It is our understanding that there has not been an economic feasibility study done for this project and an analysis has not been done to determine the advantage the three lake front holes would make to the overall project. This analysis is important since the project can be developed entirely on the Clarksville IDA property.

Should the project move forward, greater specificity will be required before the lease negotiations can begin in order to insure that potential impacts to the park are identified and mitigated.

With respect to questions raised concerning the age and condition of the forest on the 23 acre parcel, staff asked the Department of Forestry to make an examination of the tract. They determined that the forest is a mixed hardwood stand with trees ranging in age from 50 to 100 years. The Town has indicated that approximately 18 of the 23 acres would need to be cleared and converted to the fairways and greens necessary to provide the signature waterfront holes.

The Town provided written responses to a number of specific questions asked by staff on behalf of the Board. The following is a brief summary of the Town's major points:

**What is the layout of the proposed holes within the Occoneechee State Park?**

The proposed public golf course in the Occoneechee State Park consists of three teeing complexes, three fairways and three golf greens. The Sam Snead Golf Group at no cost provided the golf course design to the Town and the true design of the course is yet to be determined. There are no contractual arrangements between the Town of Clarksville/Clarksville IDA and the Sam Snead Group or any other developer.

At the appropriate time the Town has also noted that the Clarksville IDA must work towards attracting a golf course developer who will at that time determine the feasibility of investing five to eight million dollars into developing a golf course on the IDA property.

The design layout of the three golf holes will also include vegetated buffers around the features to ensure limited views for visitors while traveling the State Park service road. According to the Town's response, views from the twenty-three acres towards Buggs Island Lake will be limited while at the same time provide enough clearing among the trees to create an attractive view while traveling the three golf greens. (See attached site plan).

**What sort of riparian buffer is proposed?**

A naturally vegetated, 50-foot buffer is proposed by the town for all boundaries adjoining the Occoneechee State Park and the lake.

John Davy noted that the Board may be interested in knowing that the Department generally uses a 100 foot riparian buffer for non water dependent development on state park lands and may use larger visual buffers around other types of park developments. Should this project move forward, this is a matter that will need further examination.

**What developments are suggested for the IDA property which could have an impact on the park?**

According to the Town, plans for the remaining property include an 18-hole public golf course, clubhouse, restaurant and a well developed, age-restricted-retirement residential development. Long-term plans include possible lodging to serve the public golf course and lake as well as other surrounding area tourism attractions.

**How would golfers cross into the park and how would park guests move from one section of the park to another through the public golf course?**

The Town indicates that Guests visiting the State Park will continue to travel throughout the State Park without any restrictions or problems via the existing east-west, gravel service road. They also note that at no time will State Park guests travel on the public golf course or IDA property.

The Board should note that the proposed course is in the center of the parks planned developed area. Therefore, if the project moves forward, this will be a major lease consideration. Not only will it be important to assure that golfers stay within the course and not have unrestricted access to the rest of the park, but also that park guests do not interfere with users of the golf course or feel they have unrestricted access to the fairways.

**What sort of infrastructure is proposed to support the public golf course?**

The proposed public golf course will be served from the existing Town of Clarksville water and sewer infrastructure located in the 265-acre Virginia Lakeside Regional Commerce Park.

**How will traffic to and from the public golf course be routed?**

The Town responded that traffic will access and depart via the existing internal road which serves the 265-acre Virginia Lakeside Regional Commerce Park. The existing internal road is the only access planned to serve both the Commerce Park and public golf course.

**What sort of management and security will be provided?**

According to the Town's response, the Clarksville Police Department and Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Department will provide day and night patrols throughout the Virginia Lakeside Regional Commerce Park. Once the public golf course development is completed, the Town notes that the owner and their management team will address the proper security measures for the property through both private and public entities.

The Board was informed by Mr. Davy that management and security is another major issue that will need to be addressed in the lease for the 23 acres proposed for the golf holes within Occoneechee. DCR currently has three staff with law

enforcement responsibility to cover the entire park. DCR staff is concerned about the impact such a high activity area will have on our limited resources.

**What sort of measures would be put in place to restore the parkland should the public golf course be closed?**

The town has indicated this issue will be addressed at the time when the Town of Clarksville secures a quality golf course developer.

Mr. Davy noted that while there may be a number of options available to the Department should the course be closed, to return the property to its current forested condition would take in excess of 50 years.

**How will access from the IDA property into the park be controlled?**

Signs will be posted along the fifty-foot buffer and property lines notifying individuals of trespassing and the penalties associated with trespassing onto public property.

Regarding the archaeological issues, at the last Board meeting the Town provided us with a copy of their consultants phase 1 study which was conducted on the area to be impacted by the three golf holes. The Department provided copies of the report to both the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and the Corps for their review. It is our understanding that their initial review indicates that the study appears to meet federal and state requirements. The study does not indicate any significant impacts or archeological findings that would be impacted by the proposed golf holes. Should this project move forward, the formal review process may or may not require additional information in this area.

The third issue we were asked to look into was whether or not the Town/IDA had to follow the standard public procurement process in selecting a builder operator for the golf course project. With respect to this issue, the conclusion of a review by our senior assistant attorney general stated that "The determination of the applicability of the exemption from the Public Procurement Act is so fact specific that it must be made by counsel for the Clarksville IDA."

Also, as stated at the September meeting, should this project move forward by being identified in the new master plan, language is included in the draft of the plan which lays out a number of additional conditions will have to be met before a lease can be signed.

One further point is that Occoneechee State Park with the 4.2 million dollars of new construction just approved by the voters is going to become an even greater economic contributor to the region in its own right. Just last fall, with the support of the Town of Clarksville, the state spent some \$900,000 dollars in the development of expanded parking and a tournament capacity boat launch facility. This has resulted in an increase in paid park attendance of over 10% since this facility opened. While the 92 bond basically provided infrastructure for the park, the 2002 bond is going to provide some major public use facilities



including cabins and a major horse camping area. These will have a significant impact on park visitation.

Mr. Davy concluded his staff presentation by saying that the requested analysis has addresses a number of issues. They include the following:

- The potentially precedent-setting nature of this decision which would diverge from the traditional uses of state parks since the 1930s. This decision could have bearing as to whether we will have similar requests to open up other state parks.
- Expressions of public opinion received by the Department to date are running approximately 6 to 1 against the proposal. This tracks public opinion surveys conducted by university researchers for our recent VA Outdoors Plan.
- According to the proposed Master Plan, development of three holes on the 23 acres in question is in the middle of the proposed developed area of the Park.
- Consequently, there are significant management, access, and security issues associated with the proposal. As noted, DCR has only 3 staff with law enforcement responsibilities for the entire park. Access to and from the golf holes area will also be very difficult to control.
- The proposal would use waterfront land for a non-water dependant use.
- The proposal is a significant departure from our normal Park concession arrangement. In a normal Park concession, an individual has a contract to run a service in a facility that we continue to own. DCR can cancel the contract at a moment's notice and have done so. The other key difference is that these concessions are being run to provide services to park customers. In contrast, the golf holes would not be administered by the park or park concessionaires and the land will be removed from park uses entirely.
- Potential environmental and cultural issues would include runoff into the lake from pesticide, herbicide and fertilizer usage, irrigation requirements (especially in drought conditions) and impacts on views and usage of traditional park users. Others have raised additional issues associated with forest fragmentation, wildlife impacts and Native American history. From what we understand, the proposal does not appear to have significant archeological findings at this time.
- And, finally, the application of public procurement laws in this case will need further research.

*Jim Butler*

*Army Corps of Engineers, Wilmington District*

Mr. Butler addressed the following issues:

- 1) The environmental impact. The Corps will need to see a thorough environmental assessment and will need to know what steps will be taken to minimize the adverse impacts.
- 2) Archaeological issues.

- 3) Also, if the golf course is determined to not be economically feasible, how will the parkland be returned to its natural status.
- 4) The Corps will need a comprehensive financial analysis to ensure that the project is on sound financial footing.
- 5) The Corps will need to see design details to include treatment for runoff.
- 6) The Corps will need to see that the integrity of the shoreline is maintained.

He noted that the land is owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and leased to the state. The Corps will need to assess the cumulative impacts of these three holes of golf.

Mr. Wingo called for public comment. He noted that each side had been asked to limit remarks to thirty minutes.

*Proponents*

*Melinda Moran*

*Town Manager, Clarksville*

Ms. Moran noted that Clarksville's objective is not to promote golf in Virginia's state parks, but to capitalize on the location. She noted that the area needed to attract new business. The lakefront access affects the marketability of the golf course. Clarksville is the only town on the 50,000 lake. The town gave up a lot of area when the lake was developed. She noted that the town was asking for assistance in the development and recovery process.

*Wayne Carter*

*Assistant County Administrator and Planning Director, Mecklenburg County*

Mr. Carter read a resolution passed unanimously at the October 15, 2002 meeting of the Mecklenburg County Board of Supervisors in support of the golf project.

*Charles Simmons*

*Chairman, Clarksville IDA*

A summary of Mr. Simmons' comments included the following points:

I served on the committee that drafted the master plan for Occoneechee state park. The staff did a good job of assembling a good team. This is a plan that would serve a variety of interests for the generations to come. The balance of the course and support facilities will be on land own by the Town of Clarksville. This is another step in making Southside Virginia a tourist attraction. This new golf facility will hopefully be a part of the Sam Sneed trail, similar to the Robert Trent Jones tour in Alabama, which has been quite successful. Recent job losses in Mecklenburg have galvanized our citizens. We are

working hard to make sure we not only survive, but thrive. We can create an amenity that we will never have otherwise.

I'd like to address some of the concerns. Why will twenty-five cabins be of less impact than three acres of golf? We are curious as to why the environmental lobby assumes that DEQ cannot possibly control the runoff. Why do they continue to define this as a natural area when it is a state recreation area? State parks are used for boating, fishing and camping, all of which are recreational activities.

There has been a spread of dis-information. We are accused of conflict of interest, dirty deals and more being leveled at public officials. The lease will be between the Town of Clarksville with DCR with approval by the Governor, the Attorney General and the General Assembly.

We are seeking ways to think outside the box in order to improve our community. Just because it has never happened is not a reason to deny us this opportunity.

We understand the value of the Park.

*Kathleen Walker*  
*Former Mayor of Clarksville*

A summary of Ms. Walker's comments included the following points:

Greetings from the Town of Clarksville, the only town on the beautiful Buggs Island Lake. Clarksville has suffered much adversity. At one time it was the oldest continuing tobacco marketing community in the world. We are no longer an agricultural industry.

Burlington Industry closed. Russell Stover closed. The old wagon factor went bankrupt. They had been in business for four generations. The way I see it if we promote what we have then tourism could be our answer. It would give our economy a boost.

We would like to build a golf course. We need the land from Occoneechee park. The land has been sitting idle for 52 years. We are asking to use only a small portion of it. We're asking you to lease it to us.

I'm 90 years old. I don't plan to play golf, but I hope to be there to cut the ribbon.

*Brad McDonald*  
*Cultural Resources, Inc.*

A summary of Mr. McDonald's comments included the following points:

I am the principle investigator for Cultural Resources Inc. We did the archaeological study. We determined that those acres were not eligible for further study. The state Department of Historic Resources concurred with that investigation.

Based upon our findings, we found those resources were not in a good state of integrity. Most were probably already submerged when the dam was created. We feel there were no other cultural issues there.

*Tim Davie*

*Vice President, Environmental Services, Timmons, Civil Engineering Richmond*

A summary of Mr. Davie's comments included the following points:

There are some new technologies for golf course design. The builder should address storm water management, irrigation, fertilizers. We are very familiar with state erosion and sediment process. We feel very confident to that we understand the environmental concerns.

*Greg Gordon*

*Clarksville*

A summary of Mr. Gordon's comments included the following points:

I am a local business owner and landowner. I am on the local Quail Unlimited Board. We are very excited about the master plan with the golf holes incorporated. We feel it will be a driving issue for the park. There are some environmental concerns, but we believe the golf course will be a nature friendly environment. Nature regenerates its forests by burning and reseeding.

*Andrew Hagy*

*Clarksville Economic Development*

Mr. Hagy asked the people from the region who have traveled here in support of this to stand.

Mr. Wingo thanked speakers and called for comments from the opposition.

*Opponents*

*Tyla Matteson*

*Virginia Chapter, Sierra Club*

Ms. Matteson read the following statement:

I am the Conservation Chair of the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club, a grass-roots environmental organization, numbering about 14,000 in the state. I wish to express our strong opposition to the plans to build any portion of a golf course at Occoneechee State Park in Clarksville, Virginia, and ask that the proposal be removed from the Park's Master Plan.

If built, 23 acres of lakefront land would be taken from our state park, mature hardwood and pine trees would be lost, as well as the native plants and animals sheltered in this natural habitat. The development would increase contaminated run-off into the John Kerr Reservoir, since the herbicides and pesticides used on the proposed golf course cannot possibly be contained by a 50-foot buffer.

Presently there are no golf courses in our Virginia state parks. If this course is allowed, it could set a precedent for similar commercial development in our state parks. The applicant, Sam Snead Golf, Inc. attempted to locate a golf course in Douthat State Park, Bath and Allegheny Counties, but the proposal failed, when studies revealed that the underlying business plan was inadequate.

The economic benefit from this project has been overrated. The loss to the environment and to the citizens who wish to keep their park intact is much greater than the benefit of a few new jobs. Recent statistics in golfing trends show a decline in golf rounds, nationwide, and a glut of golf courses.

Sharing our views are many groups and hundreds of citizens, including the president of the Virginia Native Plant Society, students from Virginia Commonwealth University, and American Indians who have traveled a long distance. Two prominent newspapers have recently published editorials opposing the golf course: the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* and *Charlottesville's Daily Progress*.

The resounding 60% victory for the parks bond on election day, Tuesday, signals a clear desire by the citizens of the Commonwealth to protect our natural places. I was one of the 965,631 who voted for the parks bond. It would then be an affront to our citizens to diminish these precious resources by clearing park land for a golf course. Thank you very kindly.

*Christina Wulf*  
*Virginia Forest Watch*

A summary of Ms. Wulf's comments included the following points:

I am grateful for the chance to speak with you this morning. I think the fact that over 3,000 people are opposed to putting the golf course in the park and 650 support is significant. This is an economic issue, but you also have a decision regarding a park owned by citizens of the Commonwealth. You are making a decision based by on one community. The land also borders the 1900 acre Occoneechee wildlife management area.

Another issue is whether there would be problems with hunders accessing the area. This area that the State Park preserves is a critical piece of our Native American history in Virginia. I am hungry for information about that history. An important reality for us to understand where we are in our state. State Parks provide recreational amenities we cannot find on private land. As mentioned this golf course will be built on a major travel way for people moving through the park. Finally, I urge the Clarksville area to consider emphasizing the native American history of the Park.

*Jim Wilkerson*

A summary of Mr. Wilkerson's comments included the following points:

For the past 18 months I have opposed plans to construct three golf holes in Occoneechee State Park. I own Lakestar Golf Practice Range just east of Clarksville. No one knows if it will hurt my business.

Occoneechee State Park is public land not private land. If the golf course cannot survive without the public land it holds no promise I'm sure most Virginians will not support giving away our public lands. States such as West Virginia, Tennessee, Mississippi and Oklahoma have never recovered their initial construction costs for golf courses. Obviously the Snead concept does not make good business sense if they are looking for private lands.

The State Tourism Commission said that due to budget issues, they would stop marketing golf. The golf course would employ 12-15 people, mostly from outside of Clarksville. The remaining would be seasonal and part-time work with no benefits. This is not primarily about jobs or attracting additional jobs. This is mostly about setting a precedent about parks in other state parks.

This is about much more than Occoneechee State Park. The primary benefactors would be the Sneads and the real estate developers. Occoneechee State Park belongs to all the citizens of the Commonwealth.

The Snead folks, along with others attempted to locate a golf course in Douthat state park which failed. They have also looked at Pocahontas, Sky Meadows and who knows what others. Certainly we should not allow the taking of our state park land and public natural resources for the benefit of a few.

Allowing golf in Occoneechee State Park would be a radical departure from what lead to receiving the National Gold Medal award for state parks, all without bulldozing 20 football fields of Occoneechee State Park forest.

*Woodrow Wilkerson  
Clarksville*

A summary of Mr. Wilkerson's comments included the following points:

Good morning. I don't want to see any of Occoneechee State Park go to private enterprise. Better than 80 percent of the public is against taking public land for the golf course.

In the late 70s and 80s, Richard Petty attempted this on the south side of Kerr Lake. He wanted to put an golf course and an amusement park over there. That was turned down. If private enterprise is allowed to go in there with his golf course you will have many more requests from other organizations, some that are here today.

Real estate people have been trying this for years. I know since the early 1970s the real estate people have been trying to get the land. The Bond referendum has passed to update parks and buy more land. But you are being asked to give away 23 acres.

If you approve you will be putting the town of Clarksville in the real estate business.

There is a lot of political support for this, but it is not what the people want.

*Walt "Red Hawk" Brown  
CHIEF, Cheroenhaka (Nottoway) Indian Tribe  
Southampton County Virginia*

A summary of Mr. Brown's comments included the following points:

I am speaking on behalf of Mother Earth and I think Teddy Roosevelt would say the same. You must first know your history in order to know where you should go. Our ancestors are now buried there. We have to be careful when there is encroachment in the guise of development. You need to look at records, which are recorded in the executive journals.

I also remind you this is also federal land. Remember your history.

*Barry Carter,  
Southside Virginia Native American Descendent Association*

A summary of Mr. Carter's comments included the following points:

Many of you have been surprised by the interest in this issue. I was not surprised because some of the same tactics have been used for 350 years. For 350 years we have

been dehumanized. The “one drop rule” has been used against people of Indian ancestry for making claims on their land.

We are all one people. We must learn to live in harmony with one another and mother nature.

The history of the area is told in *The Story of the Occoneechees* by John Tisdale. There were actually hundreds of burials pushed into the bank . The area was one of the most extensive burial camps in the United States. This was just 50 years ago.

We’ve had our children brainwashed. Our birth certificates changed. Our ancestors lynched. They did not understand the gravity of what they were doing.

Occonechee State Park is the homeland of our ancestors. It is sacred because we feel the presence of our ancestors.

Eighty to Ninety percent of the people of Mecklenburg County oppose the golf course. We have submitted 3,500 signatures. I have an additional 200 to give you today.

I did want to add one additional thing. There are pictures of archaeological findings that were overlooked by the company that did the survey. The four sites that were discovered were all on the lakefront. It is highly unlikely that they would all be along the waterfront.

*Eileen Rowan,*  
*National Audubon Society in Virginia*

A summary of Ms. Rowan’s comments included the following points:

I represent the National Audubon Society in Virginia. We have 16,000 members in Virginia. In 2001 46% of Virginians participated in wildlife recreation.

The claim of Audubon approved golf courses is not approved by us. They are not supported or endorsed by national Audubon.

Your job is not to make friends, it is to advise on sound policies. Approval of this golf plan would weaken wildlife protection mission. The plan would completely cut into two smaller fragments the forest. The golf course would block wildlife movement throughout the corridor. The cabins and camping areas will be cut off form the forest.

50-100 foot buffers are visual, not ecological. About 50 Audubon-ers have sent letters.

*Dante Desiderio*  
*Virginia Council on Indians*

A summary of Mr. Desiderio’s comments included the following points:



I am the Governor appointed At-Large Representative to the Virginia Council on Indians. We represent nearly 20 Indian tribes in the Commonwealth. I am also President of the Sappony Indians.

The Occoneechee history is our history. This is the first time we have been asked to participate in this process. This is rather odd since this is a deeply rooted Indian issue, that involves land that is sacred and land that is valuable beyond its suggested use.

When the Commonwealth and Town of Clarksville were built, they disturbed and destroyed our ancestors without a second thought. This is part of the only remaining land that recognizes our land as a people. Parties that have an interest in developing have gone out of their way to ignore our history. The only Indian tribe in the area that is historically linked was not consulted. That is a violation of protocol.

I urge you to do the right thing.

*Patti Jackson.*  
*James River Association, VA Conservation Network*

A summary of Ms. Jackson's comments included the following points:

We just helped you pass the bond. The 2002 Virginia Outdoors Plan, says that 93% of the citizens of the Commonwealth want to protect open space. 77% want open space off limits to development. You don't have a choice in this plan.

Since 1936 state parks have survived, but we are 50<sup>th</sup> in the country in what we spend. We must spend those funds wisely.

This will also set a federal precedent and open up the lake for development. The plan calls for 23.4 million dollars in investment, 4.2 million from this current bond package.

We ask you to honor the public interest rather than the special interest and don't allow this. I would like to ask those in attendance who are opposed to the golf course to stand.

Chairman Wingo thanked the opponents and then acknowledged State Senator Frank Ruff who spoke in favor of the project.

*Senator Frank Ruff*

A summary of Senator Ruff's comments included the following points:

January 1994, the day after I was sworn in, before any committee assignments were made. I met a lobbyist. Most lobbyists didn't have an interest in me.

Her name was Christine, commonly known as Christine the goat lady. She believes goat milk should be unregulated. I listened to her very carefully. She gave me a petition. It had a lot of names on it. I started looking through those names. I didn't know anybody cared about goat milk.

I contacted some of the signers. They didn't know anything about the petition. Some said, "yeah I signed a petition at the fair. I challenge you to take that list of petitions. Pick any number you want. Ask them how much they know about this project and how much they care about it.

Let's go back to something that we can agree on after all the rhetoric. None of us want to harm Occoneechee State Park. A lot of the discussion today seems to be a little bit off target.

Contracts are not part of the master plan. Mr. Maroon and the rest of the folks in that department must review the contracts. Your responsibility is to approve the master plan. You can approve and if the terms of the contract can't be agreed on nothing will happen.

Remember the responsibility of the Clarkesville IDA. They own over 600 acres adjacent to this park. They have a plan to develop along the front along route 59. They can do anything they want. They can put in an industrial project if they want. They chose to look for something that would be compatible with a state park.

I would contend that a few golfers in the morning and afternoon work a lot better along a state park than a heavy industry that has smells and noise that are not comfortable.

There is no question that the history of the Occoneechee is there in this area, but no more so in that area than in Benjy Burnett's back yard or my front yard.

There is no question they were in this area.

The issue of wildlife and its movement was raised. When the Alaskan Pipeline was built they said it would destroy the Caribou herds. Right now they are thriving.

The Sappony nation has taken no official position on this issue at all.

For 35 years, the State of Virginia has had control of this property. The front 600 acres has been used. There is no question it could be used to a greater extent. The back 2/3 of the park has not been used except by a few. We should work in a public private partnership for an opportunity for everybody to win.

Anything becomes a precedent only if you decided it will be.

Thank you for your time.

Mr. Wingo noted that the Board had heard from both sides and that it was now time for the Board Members to have a chance to ask questions from any of the speakers.

*Mr. Burnett*

I have no questions. But I would like to comment in respect to Mr. Davy's wrap up. The individuals who do this master plan are highly competent individuals. I would just like to note that the Town has not changed the course from 27 to 18 holes. We are not the entity that will decide how many holes go on the golf course. The developer will make that decision.

I would also like to say that I also voted for the bond issue as well. Most of us here voted for the bond. It is safe to say that people who know Occoneechee State Park and who live in the community also support the golf course.

Mr. Maroon noted that the change in the number of golf holes had been represented to the Department in the Town's written material.

*Mr. McGee*

Southwest and Southside Virginia have long been a depressed area of the state compared to the north and eastern region. I feel the state has an obligation to assist communities in economic development, a very important function. The development of an economic infrastructure is not incompatible with environmental preservation.

You've also heard from the consultant that with today's technology the lake would be protected from runoff and chemicals on the golf course. I feel the state has a wonderful opportunity here to help this area with their economic development. I also think it is not necessary to know all the details at this point. We are talking about conceptual plans.

There is a lot we don't know. But it is necessary at some point to take a first step. I think we need to take the first step today to get this process going. If there are fatal flaws in the design, that will be obvious with the reviews that are coming. I think these three golf holes will create a great improvement for the area. I would recommend that we approve.

Mr. Wingo noted that the Board had three options:

- 1) APPROVE as presented.
- 2) APPROVE without the golf course
- 3) DELAY the decision.

**MOTION:** Mr. Cahen moved that the Board of Conservation and Recreation approve the Master Plan for Occoneechee State Park as submitted with the inclusion of the provision for three holes of golf to be located on park property.

SECOND: Mr. McGee

DISCUSSION:

*Mr. Cahen*

I've been watching this closely for a good while. Everything that I was concerned about is covered within the safeguards. My objections have been overcome. We need to get it off base so that they can see how this plays out. I am certain of the safeguards.

*Mr. Wingo*

I have friends on both sides of this issue. I feel like there are still many unanswered questions and we are putting the cart before the horse. There are so many unanswered things that have to be answered. Once this board acts it won't come back to us. Either we act one way or the other today or we postpone our decision.

One proponent asked why three holes of golf are different than cabins. Cabins can be seen through the trees and cabins are for the patrons of the park.

*Ms. Swinson*

I have a thousand questions. I live in Southside Virginia, I'm a golfer and hiker. I have questions. I don't feel comfortable voting today without knowing answers to some of these questions.

With the Bond referendum, this sets a precedent that you are going to trade off lands when you are trying to find lands.

*Mr. Burnett*

I strongly support this. I am not going to abstain on this, regardless of the consequences. I was appointed to be a member of this board. I believe this is in the best interest of the park for this to go forward. I believe there are safeguards. Occonechee State Park is very important to the Town of Clarksville. No one supporting this wants to see anything bad happen to the park.

*Mr. Albert*

I said at the last meeting that I, like you, have friends on both sides. I grew up in a town like Clarksville in the mountains. I know that those who have pushed for this proposal and have

worked for hours for two years are doing what they honestly believe is best for their community and that has been unbelievably hard hit by the demise of industry and the difficulties of the tobacco industry.

I know people who are in support of this. I know that Senator Ruff believes this is the right thing and that this project has significant potential. I think the decision might be different if the situation were different. If, for example, this was a land swap or if this were a marginal proposal. It might be different if we were putting a golf course in an area that was bounded by a natural area by rough terrain or water so that the security and management issues were not so difficult. Might be different if this was truly a water management project.

I have spent many hours thinking about this. I honestly do not believe in the long run that the Corps will be able to approve this project. This is not a water dependent project. A tremendous golf course can be built without taking this piece of land out of the park.

It might be different as well if there were any credible evidence that the water holes make or break this project. Regardless whether we take this to the water's edge or not, it would be a less difficult decision if this was going to be a significant economic catalyst. I question whether this will have a significant impact on tourism.

Frankly, I think this decision would be different if we were not dead last among states in resources we have devoted to state parks. It would be easier to overlook a 23 acre piece out of our parks. I think the vote on Tuesday suggested that the public thinks differently. There was overwhelming support for increasing park land. Even \$119 million will essentially only provide us another 6000-7000 acres. At the end of spending, the G.O.B. money may have added 10,000 acres to our park base. 23 sounds like a small number but it does send precisely the wrong message about what we are about to...give up (land) when we are trying desperately to obtain resources.

Finally, it might be different if this did not set a precedent. There is no way around it in my mind that this sets a very important and a very bad precedent. This will not be the end of efforts to place golf courses in state parks. This has been described as a public/private partnership. I understand the town and the town

leaders. I think our charge is to the state as a whole to be guardians of a very small set of lands.

I will not be able to vote for this.

*Mr. Ferry*

I'd like to say a couple of things. I've heard from thousands of Virginias. Thank you for letting your concerns be known. Unfortunately, I think the debate has been mis-framed.

We are not talking about the Commonwealth building and operating a golf course in Occoneechee State Park. We are talking bout leasing 23 of nearly 2700 acres to a private developer for a golf course open to the public.

Economic development in an environmentally sound way is important. I think by supporting this proposal we would be doing so.

You mentioned that you don't see much benefit to the state park. If this golf course does attract people to the area it will attract them to the state park as well. This is one step in a very long process. A great deal of work by the community. I think we need to carry that process forward.

I support the proposal.

*Mr. Wingo*

I have one final comment of my own. If this measure should pass, my personal recommendation would be that this 23 acres of land revert back to the Corps and the state not be leasing the land.

The budget has been cut. The bond issue is very important. It will put more pressure on limited resources. We should not have to be responsible for any policing, and environmental problems. Virginia should remove itself from that and let it be leased from the Corps.

VOTE:

Mr. Wingo called for a roll call vote.

AYE: Burnett, Cahen, Ferry, McGee

NO: Albert, Swinson, Wingo

The motion carried with a 4-3 vote to recommend the Master Plan with the inclusion of the three holes.

Mr. Wingo said the Board would like to move on with the agenda.

*Staunton River State Park*

Mr. Bedwell presented the proposed Staunton River State Park Master Plan.

Fork Plantation was located at the confluence of the Dan and Staunton Rivers where the park is now located. H.E. Coleman owned the plantation and in 1839 ownership was transferred to Richard Logan. After the Civil War, the plantation fell into ruins. Tenant farmers farmed the land that was once the great Fork Plantation. In 1933, the State Commission of Conservation and Development of Virginia bought 1,196 ½ acres from J.W. Johnson, his wife Mary C. Johnson, J.E. Johnson and his wife Elizabeth Johnson. In 1935 a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp was established at “The Fork” to convert the plantation into a state park. This was the start of Staunton River State Park.

Staunton River State Park was opened in 1936 as one of the first six state parks in Virginia. The skilled hands of the CCC build the original buildings and facilities in the park. Since then, the park has evolved from a CCC demonstration project into a thriving natural resource/recreation facility. As a result, the park has come under increasing pressure to both provide users with more facilities and activities, while at the same time increase its value as a natural resource area. Though the construction of John H. Kerr Dam and Reservoir flooded the park and reduced an original 1,766 acres to approximately 1,597 acres, the park still succeeds in providing diverse cultural, historical and recreational experiences to users, and is a favorite vacation and day-use spot for members of the community and tourists alike.

Facilities at Staunton River include 8 cabins, 48 campsites, swimming pool with wading pool, concessions, picnic areas with shelters, restrooms, visitor center, amphitheater, bank fishing areas, boat storage building, boat launching ramps, multi-use trail system, parking areas including horse trailer parking, and playgrounds. Maintenance and management facilities include park office, staff residences, maintenance area as well as road system, water system, and septic fields.

Planners from the Department of Conservation and Recreation conducted the master plan update in accordance with § 10.1-200 of the Code of Virginia. The Code states that a map indicating, at a minimum, boundaries, in-holdings, adjacent property holdings and other features such as slopes, water resources, soil conditions and types, natural resources, and cultural and historic resources be prepared. A park purpose statement and goals and objectives are also to be developed. A technical advisory committee was appointed comprised of local citizens, businesses, Army Corps of Engineers representatives, and representatives of local government. Public input was solicited at the beginning and at the end of the process to ensure plan recommendations were understood and accepted by the community.

MOTION: Mr. Cahen moved that the Board of Conservation and Recreation approve the Staunton River State Park as presented.

SECOND: Mr. Burnett

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

#### *New Grant Rounds*

Mr. Davy gave an overview of new grant rounds. DCR administers two major local recreation grant programs. DCR has just announced the Virginia recreational trails grant program. Approximately \$800,000 is available in that grant round which closes on January 31, 2003.

Last year the Department had just over \$3 million in Land and Water Conservation Funds. These funds are distributed in 50/50 grants. Once Congress returns, the amounts will be determined for the next year.

#### *Director's Update*

Mr. Maroon reported that as with all agencies DCR has been asked to make additional budget reductions. DCR took almost a 15 percent cut in FY03 and FY04 added to 7% and an 8% already taken cut bringing the cumulative reductions total to 22% in FY03 and 23% by FY04.

DCR took 47 percent of all cuts in the Natural Resources area.

By not filling existing vacancies, DCR only had to lay off one individual. The department did give up 16 full time staff positions and will not be able to hire roughly 50 wage staff in our parks this summer.

The only area spared a cut was Dam Safety, which deals with life and property.

In better news, the voters overwhelmingly supported the General Obligation Bond. The margin of victory was 69%.

Mr. Maroon distributed a list of proposed projects for the Bond. The Department submitted a plan of action in September and is now waiting to hear about the distribution of the funds and the project schedule.

Mr. McGee asked how Department will continue the level of work without filling positions.



Mr. Maroon said that is the difficult part of it. DCR will be able to hire some staff in the design and construction phase, but the Bond does not cover operating and staffing costs.

*Public Comment*

There was no additional public comment.

*Future Meetings*

Mr. Wingo said that staff will circulate proposals for meeting dates depending on member's ability to attend.

*Other Business*

Mr. Wingo formally welcomed Ms. Swinson to the Board as she was recently appointed.

*Adjourn*

As there was no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

W. Bruce Wingo  
Chairman

Joseph H. Maroon  
Recording Secretary