

Virginia Cave Board
Wednesday, September 30, 2026
Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
Grand Caverns
5 Grand Caverns Dr, Grottoes, VA 24441
11:30 a.m.

Andrea Futrell, Chair
Ángel García
Jacqueline Gooden-Seay
John H. H. Graves
Robert Denton, Jr.
Graham Montrose

Carol Tiderman
Stephanie Lillard
Andrea M. Reese
Austin Shank
Harriet Flynn

AGENDA

- I. Call to Order – Welcome and Introductions – Ms. Andrea Futrell
- II. Approval of Minutes from April 24, 2026 – Ms. Andrea Futrell
- III. FOIA Training – DCR Staff
- IV. Agency Reports
 - a. Treasurer’s Financial Report – DCR Staff
 - b. DCR Karst Program Update – DCR Staff
 - c. Land Conservation Report – DCR Staff
- V. New Business
 - a. Virginia Cave Board Resolution for Philip C. Lucas
- VI. Old Business
 - a. Virginia Cave Owners Newsletter
 - b. Virginia Cave Week
 - c. CaveSim in Virginia
 - d. NSS 2026 Convention
 - e. Virginia Stormwater Management Handbook
- VII. Public Comment
- VIII. Date for Next Meeting – December 1, 2026
- IX. Adjourn

**Virginia Cave Board
Friday, April 24, 2026
Luray Caverns
Luray, Virginia**

TIME AND PLACE

The meeting of the Virginia Cave Board took place at 11:05 a.m. on Friday, April 24, 2026, at Luray Caverns in Luray, Virginia.

VIRGINIA CAVE BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Andrea Futrell, Chair
Jacqueline Gooden-Seay
Allen L. Louderback
Carol Tiderman

John H. H. Graves
Andrea Reese
David Hubbard
Austin Shank

VIRGINIA CAVE BOARD MEMBERS NOT PRESENT

Stephanie Lillard
Angel Garcia

Roger W. Kirchen (ex officio)

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION (DCR) STAFF PRESENT

Sarah Spota, DCR Deputy Director
Breanne Lindsey, Board & Constituent Liaison
Paul G. Saunders, III, Senior Policy Analyst
Wil Orndorff, Kart Protection Coordinator
Anne Chazal, Chief Biologist
Emi Endo, Senior Public Relations and Marketing Specialist

OTHERS PRESENT

Chad Harrold

ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM

With eight members of the Board present, a quorum was established.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Andrea Futrell called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m.

INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Futrell called for introductions.

Members of the Board and DCR staff present introduced themselves.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 4, 2026

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Shank moved to approve the December 4, 2025, Board meeting minutes as presented. Mr. Graves seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by: Futrell, Gooden-Seay, Graves, Hubbard, Louderback, Reese, Shank, and Tiderman.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Ms. Chazal presented the following financial information:

**DCR - Natural Heritage (Cave Board)
Summary of Financial Activities
Fiscal Year 2026 (through April 15, 2026)**

FY26 Beginning Cash Balance	<u><u>1,141.41</u></u>
Revenues	Amount
FY26 Revenues	-
Total Revenues	<u><u>-</u></u>
Expenses	Amount
FY26 Expenses	-
Total Expenses	<u><u>-</u></u>
Total Cash Balance (as of April 15, 2026)	<u><u>1,141.41</u></u>

Baily Printing - VCON 2026 - payment pending \$1,175 expected to post in May

**DCR - Natural Heritage (Cave Board License Plates)
Summary of Financial Activities
Fiscal Year 2026 (through April 15, 2026)**

FY26 Beginning Cash Balance	<u><u>1,480</u></u>
Revenues	Amount
FY26 Revenues	-
Total Revenues	<u><u>-</u></u>
Expenses	Amount
FY26 Expenses	-
Total Expenses	<u><u>-</u></u>
Total Cash Balance (as of April 15, 2026)	<u><u>1,480</u></u>

Prepared by Jonathan Jackson, Natural Heritage Business Manager

DCR KARST PROGRAM UPDATE

Mr. Orndorff provided the Board with the following update from the DCR Karst Program:

DCR Natural Heritage Karst Team
Update to VA Cave Board
Wil Orndorff, 4/24/26

Karst resource inventories were completed at Natural Bridge State Park. Several previously undocumented small caves were identified and surveyed, and dozens of karst features were located and described using desktop analysis followed by field based verification. The longest new cave was ~ 200' in length and was home to a couple of dozen hibernating *Perimyotis subflavus* (tricolored bats).

DCR karst staff continues to work cooperatively with VDOT, VDWR, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service to minimize impact on Virginia's largest Gray bat maternity colony from extensive repairs to the 3/8 mile wide Piedmont Avenue Bridge in Bristol, Virginia, which conveys Beaver Creek south beneath downtown Bristol before emerging in Tennessee. Since the last Cave Board meeting, DCR karst team has installed bat call data recorders for the 2026 season and also downloaded and serviced temperature-relative humidity recorders distributed through the bridge. Data from ~ 4 years of T-Rh logging has been provided to VDOT for consideration in design and timing of bridge repairs.

Karst Team staff continue to participate in the DEQ Technical Review Committee for the new (2024) Stormwater Management Handbook. the seventh meeting of the Technical Review Committee (TRC) for the Virginia Stormwater Management Handbook, Version 1.3 will be held on Thursday May 28, 2026, and will be attended by Karst Protection Coordinator Wil Orndorff. DEQ continues to work through a backlog of comments on Appendix E (karst provisions) dating back to review of the draft document in the first quarter of 2024. The handbook as it stands now can be viewed here: <https://online.encodeplus.com/regs/deq-va/doc-viewer.aspx?secid=1486#secid-1454>. Many karst-specific comments still need to be addressed.

Karst staff is working with the Virginia Department of Energy Division of Geology and Mineral Resources (DGMR) to include geospatial cave data on digital mapping projects without disclosure of cave names or entrance locations. DGMR is nearing completion of a karst map of the interstate 81 corridor that should aid in planning as the interstate is widened or otherwise improved, and as development proximal to the interstate continues.

Karst staff assisted the National Cave Rescue Commission in instruction and operations of the weeklong Level 1 Cave Rescue Seminar taught in March at the Blacksburg Volunteer Rescue Squad. Southwest Virginia DNH Natural Area stewards Laura Young and John Hartley also helped with the class, which nineteen participants completed.

Work is proceeding as planned on the ten-year "Good Neighbors Agreement" between the U.S. Forest Service and the Virginia DCR Division of Natural Heritage, a substantial portion of which is karst resource inventory and monitoring led by lead karst field scientist Katarina Kosič Ficco. Extensive procurement tasks are mostly completed, and two wage staff – geologist Hunter Campbell and biologist Sophia Remhof have been hired. Campbell started in February, while Remhof will join the team in early June. Two quarterly reports have been submitted on this project, documenting work on priority areas of the Forest

where proposed and/or planned management actions may impact natural heritage resources. Dozens of karst features including sinking streams, sinkholes, caves, and springs have been identified. Of the areas assessed to date, the Hunters Valley area of Scott County (Clinch Ranger District) exhibits high potential for previously undocumented and significant karst development. Exploration and biological inventory of newly discovered caves is underway.

There are no significant incidents to report in regards to the Mountain Valley Pipeline, which is in service and nearing final stabilization (as determined by VDEQ). MVP's consultants (TRC companies) have continued to coordinate with DCR when minor possible subsidence issues along the pipeline right-of-way are investigated.

Bat hibernacula counts were the primary karst staff activity during January and February. Approximately 30 caves were visited, concentrating on known locations of the endangered Indiana Bat (*Myotis sodalis*). Occurrences of the species recently reported in two caves on the US Forest Service were confirmed. Overall results of the counts were mixed. Some sites continue to suggest a slow decline, while have stable or increasing numbers. Staff assisted the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources in hibernacula inventory of Hellhole Cave, the world's largest known hibernacula for the Virginia big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii virginianus*).

Karst team staff submitted a proposal to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation National Species Recovery Grant Program for a three-year project to perform quarterly monitoring of populations of the federally endangered Lee County cave isopod (*Lirceus usdagalun*). Thanks to decades of effort, initiated by the Virginia Cave Board, this species is now well protected and is a candidate for downlisting or delisting. The results of the proposed monitoring project will inform any decisions made by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

DCR karst team staff will be assisting the Cave Board with Cave Week events from June 1 through June 6, including the Ogdens Cave Open House and the Grand Caverns Cave and Karst Expo. These events will also celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Virginia Natural Heritage Program, the 90th Anniversary of Virginia State Parks, and the 100th anniversary of the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

LAND CONSERVATION REPORT

Ms. Chazal presented the following update:

Selected Natural Area Protection Updates (April 2026)

Submitted to the Virginia Cave Board

Rob Evans, Natural Area Protection Manager

Department of Conservation & Recreation, Division of Natural Heritage (DCR-DNH)

DCR has closed two projects since last report, has active real-estate projects at 12/67 existing Natural Area Preserves (NAP), and continues work on projects that will result in the establishment of 2 new NAP.

Closed:

- **Buffalo Mountain NAP (Floyd Co):** DCR completed transfer of an additional 975-acres from The Conservation Fund in middle November.
- **Brocks Gap (Rockingham Co):** Acquisition of this new NAP was completed in middle December. DCR acquired two separate interests: 180.5-acres in fee-simple and 34.3-acres under Open Space Easement.
- **Cleveland Barrens NAP (Russell County):** DCR completed this deed of dedication on March 26, with the Town of Cleveland, adding approximately 5 acres to this NAP bordering Tank Hollow Falls.
- **Lyndhurst Ponds NAP (Montgomery Co.):** On Feb 24, DCR signed a deed of release and termination of easement agreement across an-owned parcel that was previously encumbered by an Atlantic Coast Pipeline easement.

New NAP project (underway):

- Spineless Cave – prospective new NAP: **Virginia Institute for Invertebrates (VII) applied for and received a grant from the Virginia Outdoor Foundation to acquire approximately 222.21 acres in Giles County.** The property is known to support a new species of millipede (*Nannaria* sp. nov.), a new genus of spider in the family Linyphiida, and a rare cave-dwelling spider (*Nesticus mimus*). *DCR has agreed to dedicate this site as a new NAP if the acquisition process is successful.*

Active Projects (existing NAP): (THESE NOTES ARE BASICALLY THE SAME AS PREVIOUS UPDATE)

- **Eastern Divide (Montgomery Co):** two significant acreage tracts have been funded, have an acquisition partners TCF), and the transfer process is underway; both have been discussed previously. Prospective Phase IV is still TBD.
- **Chestnut Creek Wetlands (Floyd County).** DCR's acquisition progress has ground to a halt, key landowner paperwork appears to be lost due to a fire and death in the family.
- **Mill Creek Springs NAP (Montgomery Co):** Landowner negotiations toward this prospective inclusion of a conservation easement (discussed in last package) are still underway.
- **Crows Nest NAP (Stafford Co):** DCR is working on multiple projects in conjunction with Stafford County and the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust. that will result in additions to this Preserve.
- **Folly Mills Fen NAP (Augusta Co):** Progress stalled as reported previously.
- **The Cedars NAP (Lee Co):** several parcels owned by TNC have been planned for donation to DCR; these have taken a back seat to a host of higher priority projects.
- **Chestnut Ridge NAP (Bland Co.):** DCR is working with TNC to accept donation of ~ 2,300 acres.

Projects In need of funding:

Grassy Hill NAP (Franklin Co.): ~ 5.2 acres adjoining the NAP in partnership with private conservation buyer.

Piney Grove Flatwoods NAP (Sussex Co.): ~ 23 acres adjoining the NAP in partnership with TNC.

Lyndhurst Ponds Tract (Augusta Co.): several adjoining parcels are available for purchase.

Mutton Hunk Tract (Accomack Co.): existing DCR-held conservation easement listed on active real-estate market

Back Creek Tract (Frederick Co.): The Potomac-Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) parcel donation, but due-diligence funds needed.

CAVE BOARD VACANCY

Chair Futrell provided the Board with an update on the appointment process and encouraged members to identify and reach out to individuals who may be qualified candidates for Board service and encourage them to apply. Ms. Spota advised that she is available to answer questions from prospective applicants regarding the responsibilities and obligations associated with Board membership or the process of being appointed.

VIRGINIA CAVE BOARD MEMBER ABSENCES

Ms. Spota provided an overview of the annual reporting requirements agency staff are required to submit to the Governor's Office regarding boards under each agency's purview. She explained that the information provided includes details such as current board membership, term expiration dates, members' meeting attendance records, etc. Ms. Spota noted that this information assists the Administration in making appointment decisions and, in some cases, evaluating whether board members are fulfilling their responsibilities. She emphasized the importance of regular attendance and active participation in Board meetings. Ms. Spota further explained that, pursuant to the Board's Bylaws, the Chair may notify appropriate DCR staff of member absences, and staff are responsible for elevating that information to the Administration for its consideration.

NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY (NSS) CONVENTION

Chair Futrell informed the Board that the NSS Convention is scheduled to take place in July 2026 in Indiana. Chair Futrell, Ms. Tiderman, and Mr. Hubbard plan to attend and host an informational display regarding the Board. Chair Futrell also provided an overview of prior NSS Convention experiences, noting that Board representatives received inquiries regarding the Virginia Cave Board and its activities.

VIRGINIA CAVE LICENSE PLATE UPDATE

Mr. Saunders provided a memo to the Board and provided the following background information and recommendation:

Background:

The Virginia Cave Board partnered with the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to establish a specialty "Explore Virginia Caves" license plate to promote cave conservation and public awareness. DMV policy requires a minimum of 450 prepaid applications must be received before a specialty plate can be produced. The plate was also intended to become a revenue-sharing plate to support the activities of the Cave Board once 1,000 plate applications were received. To date, only 55 applications have been received. All application fees collected were placed in escrow, where they must remain unless the 450-application threshold is met and the plate is produced.

At its May 2025 meeting, the Board agreed to reevaluate the program at its first meeting in 2026 and to consider discontinuing the program if at least 100 total applications were not received by December 31, 2025. No additional applications were received between May 2025 and December 31, 2025. The total

number of applications remains 55, well below both the DMV-required minimum of 450 applications and the Board's interim benchmark of 100 applications. The application fees continue to be held in escrow.

Recommendation:

Given the inability to meet DMV production requirements and the continuing administrative obligations associated with escrowed funds, staff recommends that the Board direct staff to formally discontinue the Explore Virginia Caves license plate program with the DMV. Staff further recommends that the Board authorize staff to coordinate with DMV on the release and return of all fees held in escrow to the individuals who previously applied for the specialty plate.

BOARD ACTION:

After discussion, Ms. Tiderman made the following motion: After reviewing the updated status of the Explore Virginia Caves license plate program, I move that the Board direct staff to discontinue participation in the specialty plate program with the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles and to coordinate with DMV on the return of all escrowed application fees to the individuals who submitted applications.

Mr. Shank seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved by: Futrell, Gooden-Seay, Graves, Hubbard, Louderback, Reese, Shank, and Tiderman.

PASSING OF PHIL LUCAS, EXPERIENCED CAVER AND SUPPORTER OF THE BOARD

Chair Futrell informed the Board of the passing of Phil Lucas, an experienced caver and longtime supporter of the Board. The Board discussed Mr. Lucas's significant contributions to the caving community, including his legislative advocacy and scientific work in support of the Board and cave conservation efforts. The Board agreed that a memorial resolution would be drafted for consideration at the next meeting. Chair Futrell also volunteered to research and pursue the process for potentially obtaining a resolution from the General Assembly in 2027 recognizing Mr. Lucas's contributions and impact on the caving community.

VIRGINIA CAVE WEEK

Ms. Tiderman, serving as the lead of planning Virginia Cave Week, provided an update indicating she's contacted volunteers from previous years to assist with this year's program. During Virginia Cave Week there will opportunities for the general public to explore Luray Caverns, Grand Caverns, Ogden's Cave, Dixie Caverns, etc. Chair Futrell encouraged the Board to ask for more volunteers for this event.

VIRGINIA CAVE OWNERS NEWSLETTER, 2026 AND 2027

Chair Futrell provided an update regarding the 2026 and 2027 editions of the Virginia Cave Owners Newsletter. She informed the Board that Mike Futrell, a caver and supporter of the Board, assisted with the Virginia Speleological Survey by updating landowner mailing addresses for individuals who wish to receive the newsletter. Chair Futrell also expressed appreciation to those who contributed articles for the 2026 edition.

The Board discussed anticipated mailing costs associated with the 2027 newsletter and considered potential grant opportunities or other funding sources that may be available through DCR to support publication and distribution efforts.

CAVESIM

Mr. Orndorff provided an overview of the CaveSim program to Board members and staff. He explained that CaveSim is a mobile trailer exhibit designed to simulate the experience of traveling through a cave and noted that the program was developed by an individual in another state who uses it as an educational outreach tool to promote cave awareness and education. Mr. Orndorff also discussed the educational benefits the program provides, particularly for children learning about caves and cave conservation.

Mr. Orndorff informed the Board that advocacy with the General Assembly during the 2027 session will likely be necessary to support efforts to establish a CaveSim program in Virginia. Ms. Gooden-Seay expressed interest in assisting with the project, noting that any Virginia-based CaveSim program would need to be tailored to reflect Virginia's caves and karst resources, which may require a work group of subject matter experts. The Board also discussed that CaveSim is scheduled to be featured at Luray Caverns in October 2026.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK – TECHNICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

Mr. Orndorff informed the Board that there were no significant updates beyond the information previously provided and noted that revisions to the handbook are still ongoing. Chair Futrell encouraged Board members to attend committee meetings in their capacity as private citizens to provide feedback and input during the revision process.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

DATE FOR NEXT MEETING

As is customary, DCR staff will poll the Board for the date of the next meeting which will likely be held in September of 2026. Mr. Shank volunteered Grand Caverns as the site of the next Board meeting.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:40 p.m.

FOIA Refresher

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

Transparency and Public Access

Code of Virginia §§ 2.2-3700 through 2.2-3714

What is FOIA?

- A state law governing access to records and meetings of public bodies.
- To ensure Virginia's citizens have ready access to records in the custody of public officials.
- To ensure free entry to meetings of public bodies wherein the business of the people is being conducted.





Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

Transparency and Public Access

Public Meetings



What is a meeting?

- **Three or more** members get together - or two if two is a quorum (i.e. subcommittee)
- Formally or informally, in person or electronically – **AND public business is discussed** (i.e. topics associated with the work of the Board)
- Includes work sessions, subcommittees, or wherever a gathering is held, regardless of whether minutes are taken or votes are cast



Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

Transparency and Public Access

Public Meetings



Meeting requirements?

- Public notice of the date, time and location at least three working days prior.
- Minutes to include:
 - Date, time, location and members present or absent
 - Motions and certification for any closed meeting
 - Summary of Board discussion and record of votes
- Open – accessible to the public, agenda items available for inspection, members of the public can record meetings and voting must be public.



Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

Transparency and Public Access

Public Meetings



What about closed, electronic, virtual and remote participation?

- **Closed**

- Allowed for limited purposes
- Motion required stating purpose, subject and specific Code authority
- Certify only business identified by motion was discussed
- Any resulting voting must be done in an open meeting

- **Electronic**

- Authorized during a declared State of Emergency
- No physical quorum required at one location
- Allow for public access through electronic communication means
- Provide opportunity for public comment



Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

Transparency and Public Access

Public Meetings



- **All-Virtual (non-emergency)**
 - Board policy required – adopted annually
 - Allow for public access through electronic communication means
 - Provide opportunity for public comment
 - Limited to two times a year or 50% of the meetings held
 - If more than two members at same location, public access is required
- **Remote Participation**
 - Board policy required – adopted annually
 - Advanced notice to Chair
 - Disability or medical condition (self or as a caregiver)
 - Principal residence more than 60 miles
 - Personal matter (limited to no more than 2 times a year)



Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

Transparency and Public Access

Public Meetings



Let's not forget about email.... (*... or texts, chats.. etc.*)

- The Virginia Supreme Court has held that emails may constitute a meeting under FOIA if there is **simultaneous email communication** between 3 or more members.
- Avoid using “reply all” as a general rule.
- Be mindful of the difference between correspondence versus discussion when communicating electronically.



Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

Transparency and Public Access

Public Records



What is a public record?

- Any records owned, prepared by or in possession of a Board member in the transaction of public business.
- Regardless of physical form or how stored.
- Includes notes, text messages, emails, recordings, etc.
- All public records are open to the public unless specifically exempted by Code.



Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

Transparency and Public Access

Public Records



What if I get a records request?

- ANY request for a copy of a public document is a FOIA.
- Request does not have to be in writing, does not have to cite FOIA and does not have to provide a reason.
- Must respond within five working days (a 7-day extension may be invoked).
- Contact the agency FOIA officer as soon as possible so we can assist in facilitating a response.



Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

Transparency and Public Access

Public Records



Consider:

- Keep Board related documents separate from work or personal files.
- Consider maintaining a separate email address specifically for board business.
- Copy the agency's board email on board-related correspondence whenever possible. VCB@dcr.virginia.gov
- Don't hesitate to contact our office with any questions.

Board Resources

DCR Website – Member Resources: <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/cavehome>

Board Email: VCB@dcr.virginia.gov

FOIA Council: <https://foiacouncil.dls.virginia.gov/foiacouncil.htm>

Policy Office Contacts

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Vacant
Senior Policy Analyst



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

VIRGINIA CAVE BOARD

Resolution to

Philip C. Lucas

WHEREAS, the Virginia Cave Board and the broader cave and karst community lost a valued member on April 19, 2026, with the passing of **Philip C. Lucas**; and

WHEREAS, **Philip C. Lucas** donated generously of his time, talent, and leadership to the Board and to countless members of the caving community throughout the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, **Philip C. Lucas** served as the founding president and database manager of the Virginia Speleological Survey (VSS) for over 30 years, managing a database of several thousand caves and making the database available for science, conservation, and exploration while respecting the privacy of cave owners; and

WHEREAS, **Philip C. Lucas** contributed significantly to the understanding and preservation of Virginia's cave and karst resources through decades of service, research, education, exploration, and stewardship; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Cave Board wishes to acknowledge its gratitude and deepest appreciation for devoted service of a person held in high esteem by the members of the Board and the citizens of the Commonwealth.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Virginia Cave Board honors the memory of **Philip C. Lucas**, celebrates his legacy of commitment to cave and karst conservation and remembers his service to the Board and the broader caving community on this 30th day of September in the year 2026; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Resolution be made a part of the official minutes of the Board so that all may know the Board gratefully acknowledges his many contributions to the cave and karst community.

Andrea Futrell, Chair

Nikki Rovner, DCR Director