

**Board of Conservation and Recreation
Hungry Mother State Park, Marion, Virginia
June 17, 2011**

MINUTES

Board of Conservation and Recreation Members Present

Mark E. Smith, Chair
Alan D. Albert
Jennifer Wagner
Andrea Young

W. Bruce Wingo, Vice Chair
Richard Formato
David Watts

Board of Conservation and Recreation Members Not Present

Gwen Mason
Stephen Murray
Robert L. Wilkerson

George R. Melnyk, Sr.
Sheryl W. Swinson

DCR Staff Present

David A. Johnson, DCR Director
David C. Dowling
Joe Elton
Danette Poole
Bill Conkle
Tom Smith

Call to Order and Introductions

Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 2:52 p.m. A quorum was declared present.

Mr. Smith thanked Hungry Mother State Park for their hospitality.

Approval of Minutes from March 18, 2011

MOTION: Mr. Albert moved that the minutes of the March 18, 2011 meeting of the Board of Conservation and Recreation be approved as submitted.

SECOND: Ms. Young

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously

Director's Report

Mr. Johnson gave the Director's report. He thanked members for making the trip to Hungry Mother State Park. He said that the events on Saturday would be highlighted with the attendance by the Governor. He said that media for the events surrounding the 75th Anniversary had been extraordinary.

Mr. Johnson said that the Department, including the Divisions of State Parks and Natural Heritage had been very busy. He noted that he and Chief Deputy Wilkinson had made a commitment to visit all of the State Parks in their first year and that they had been successful in that goal. He said that he hopes also to visit all of the Natural Heritage sites during his term. He said that the primary goal of these visits was to meet and communicate with staff.

Mr. Johnson said that in his visits he had heard common themes: 1) Staff loves their job and are very much attuned to customer service; 2) Parks are important community assets; 3) The needs have been identified; 4) The identity of the buildings have been tied to bonds. He said that in the future there was a need for a more normal capital process.

Chairman Smith said that there was a need for more consistent funding over time.

Mr. Watts asked if the budget process would accommodate a more normalized process.

Director Johnson indicated that was a conversation that should be pursued.

Mr. Johnson noted that DCR has offered free park admission to veterans for the remainder of the year.

Mr. Johnson said that DCR had reorganized the Divisions of Soil and Water Conservation and Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance into the Division of Stormwater Management. He said that a number of senior managers in that Division had accepted an offer of enhanced retirement.

Mr. Johnson said that another significant retirement was that of Warren Wahl. He said that because of that, there had also been the opportunity for some reorganization within the Division of State Parks.

Mr. Johnson noted that the groundbreaking for the new marina at Occoneechee State Park had occurred that morning. Mr. Wilkinson attended that event with Lt. Governor Bolling.

Mr. Johnson said that discussions were continuing regarding Fort Monroe. He said that there had been discussions regarding the possibility of a joint federal/state park.

Mr. Watts said that it would be a travesty if Fort Monroe was not preserved. He said that anything that would accommodate joint management would be beneficial.

Mr. Watts also inquired about budget cuts. Mr. Johnson indicated that DCR had received additional funding and positions for both State Parks and Natural Heritage.

Mr. Watts also inquired regarding park staff salaries how do ladders work.

Mr. Johnson said that salaries are an issue taken up on an Agency wide basis. He said that a study was completed before he came to the Agency but that no action was taken due to the lack of funding. He said that he had asked for the salary study to be revisited.

Ms. Young asked if there had been any resolution regarding the naming of park facilities. Mr. Elton said that there was a policy regarding the naming of parks. He said that there was additional latitude with the naming of buildings.

Ms. Young clarified that she specifically was referring to paid names as means of a fundraiser. Mr. Elton indicated that DCR had partnered with sponsors in the past. He said that Dominion has partnered with the Agency regarding a number of projects. Monies were partnered through the Virginia Association of Parks.

Mr. Wingo inquired of Mr. Watts what the federal policy was regarding naming facilities.

Mr. Watts explained the federal policy. He indicated that DCR should just be aware of the options.

Mr. Albert noted that a gift to a government is just as deductible but folks do not see it the same as giving to a trust.

Mr. Elton commended Norfolk and Southern for their corporate support of State Parks over the years.

State Park Master Plans

Mr. Conkle presented the State Park Master Plans.

Lake Anna State Park

Mr. Conkle noted that the Executive Summary was an update to the official unabridged master plan document adopted in 1998 and renewed in 2004. A full copy of the Executive Summary is available from DCR.

Bill Conkle introduced himself and indicated that he would be presenting the master plans. Two major themes have been trails and accessibility and these will be highlighted in each of the plans.

Lake Anna State Park is located about 20 miles west of I-95 in Virginia's central Piedmont, is within fifty miles of the four expanding population centers of Charlottesville, Fredericksburg, Richmond and Northern Virginia. It is located in southern Spotsylvania County within the George Washington Regional Commission area (Region 16). The 13,000 lake was created as an impoundment on the North Anna River to supply water for the North Anna Nuclear Power Station. The lake is managed by Virginia Dominion Power.

Mr. Conkle addressed the proposed changes to the Master Plan. He said that DCR held two public meetings to receive input from the community.

At Mr. Watts' request, the Board agreed that staff should 1) add a paragraph on the relationship of the property and lake and 2) Page 4 - Purpose of Lake Anna is to ... "add in perpetuity".

Mr. Albert made an inquiry on the boat ramp and the impacts of water level changes. Mr. Conkle indicated this should not be a problem.

Mr. Watts also mentioned the issue of tournament use of several of DCR park ramps and it is an issue the Department may need to grapple with in the future.

Mr. Albert inquired on the source of funding. Ms. Poole indicated the 2002 bonds are being used.

Grayson Highlands State Park

Mr. Conkle reviewed the Executive Summary for Grayson Highlands State Park. He said that one of the challenges for this Park was water supply due to the low water table. A full copy of the Executive Summary for this park is available from DCR.

Grayson Highlands State Park is located in western Grayson County in the Mount Rogers Planning District. The park lies in the mountains of southwest Virginia, approximately one mile north of the North Carolina state line and 8 miles west of Volney, Virginia on State Highway 58. The park is approximately 50 miles east of Bristol, and 135 miles southwest of Roanoke.

Mr. Watts noted that on Page 3 of the Executive Summary that the purpose did not include the ecosystem.

Mr. Conkle agreed to work with the Division of Natural Heritage to include that reference. The Board concurred.

Mr. Albert mentioned the proximity to the Virginia Creeper Trail. Mr. Conkle noted that the Department did focus on connectivity, including connections to the Highlands Horse Trail. He also noted that the Department had developed a connectivity map.

Southwest Virginia Museum Historical State Park

Mr. Conkle presented the Executive Summary for Southwest Virginia Museum Historical State Park. He noted that there had been recent improvements and acquisitions at the Museum.

Southwest Virginia Museum is located in the Town of Big Stone Gap in Wise County. The home was purchased by C. Bascom Slemph in 1929. Mr. Slemph and his family had a wish to create a museum depicting Southwest Virginia's history and culture. The Slemph Foundation has been a major supporter and funder of the special projects at the site, since its inception.

Mr. Conkle discussed the need for additional meeting and maintenance facilities. He also noted the need for additional collection storage and parking.

Mr. Albert noted the reference to an abandoned rail line and made an inquiry of Mr. Wingo.

Sky Meadows State Park

Mr. Conkle presented a background summary of Sky Meadows State Park as well as recent improvements made. Mr. Conkle outlined the park needs and recommended improvements.

Sky Meadows State Park is located in the Rappahannock-Rapidan Region (Planning District 9) and consists of approximately 1,864 acres in northwestern Fauquier and eastern Clarke Counties near the intersection of Routes 17 and 50. On March 17, 2004, Sky Meadows State Park was placed on the Virginia Landmarks Register, and on May 24, 2004, it was entered in the National Register of Historic Places.

Mr. Albert inquired about the conveyance of lands from the National Park Service to DCR. Mr. Conkle explained the history of the lands and the Appalachian Trail.

MOTION: Mr. Wingo moved that the Board of Conservation and Recreation recommend that the Director approve the updated Master Plans for Lake Anna, Grayson Highlands, Southwest Virginia Museum, and Sky Meadows State Parks as presented by staff.

SECOND: Ms. Wagner

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously

Ms. Poole thanked Mr. Conkle for handling the mastering planning efforts. She mentioned that DCR will have six or seven more at the fall meeting. She outlined the ongoing process at Biscuit Run State Park.

Ms. Poole noted that DCR just released a recreational trail grant round. She discussed the approval process. She noted that the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grand round process will begin in the fall.

Ms. Poole noted that Mecklenburg and Lunenburg Counties have requested a scenic river study of the Meherrin River. She noted that DCR is also beginning the survey for the next edition of the Virginia Outdoors Plan.

Ms. Poole said that staff was making repairs on the storm damage to Staunton River State Park. She also noted that Powhatan State Park had been approved for the first phase of development.

Regarding Powhatan State Park, Mr. Smith inquired about the house at the Route 522 intersection. Mr. Elton said that VDOT had completed a study. He said that DCR was working with Senator Watkins and Delegate Ware regarding funding for local road improvements. He said that the road improvements must be completed before the second phase of the project begins.

Ms. Poole noted that Lt. Governor Bolling and Mr. Wilkinson had participated in the groundbreaking for the new marina at Occoneechee State Park that morning.

State Park Update

Mr. Elton gave the State Parks update. He introduced David Collette, the Regional Manager. Mr. Elton also outlined the schedule for the anniversary weekend.

Mr. Elton gave an overview of the history of Hungry Mother State Park. He said that LWCF funds have supported a number of parks. He said the lack of LWCF funding was unfortunate.

A full copy of Mr. Elton's presentation is available from DCR.

Mr. Elton discussed Operation Bright Destiny and the reorganization of the Division of State Parks.

Ms. Wagner mentioned the desire for a statue for the CCC to be placed at Hungry Mother State Park.

Ms. Young thanked Mr. Elton for sending out invitations to federal, state, and local politicians to attend events.

Natural Heritage Update

Mr. Tom Smith gave the Natural Heritage update. A full copy of Mr. Smith's presentation is available from DCR.

2011 is the 25th anniversary of the Natural Heritage Program.

The Natural Heritage Network in 2011 includes all 50 U.S. states and territories, the Navajo Nation, Canada and 11 Latin American countries.

DCR participates in an international network of natural heritage programs. The network helps Virginians make informed decisions and helps carry DCR's efforts and information to conservation decision-makers throughout the Western Hemisphere.

Virginia is the primary state in the development of a National Conservation Easement Database.

Virginia is also one of two pilot states in development of a model Climate Change Management Handbook for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Refuge System.

Natural Heritage staff answered 2328 written information requests in 2010.

Protection projects this past year include:

- One New Preserve
 - Mill Creek Springs Natural Area Preserve, Montgomery County; 221 acres
- Six new tracts added to NAPs
 - Chub Sandhill, Sussex County
 - Pinnacle, Russell County
 - Cedars, Lee County
 - Crawford Knob, Nelson County
 - Cape Charles, Northampton County
 - Unthanks Cave, Lee County
- \$1.64 million spent in calendar year 2010 and 2011

- 60 Natural Area Preserves
 - 50,492 acres, 584 mapped locations of 372 unique species and communities

Natural Area Preserve Management Success

- Longleaf Pine Restoration – once covered 1-1.5 million acres south of the James; today 120 trees. 114,000 native Virginia longleaf seedlings on 225 acres of DCR NAPs.
- Migratory Songbird Habitat – 360 oak saplings and 2350 wax myrtles planted at Mutton Hunk Fen NAP.

Challenges

- Lost three Natural Area Law Enforcement Operations Stewards; 1 filled & 2 vacant
- Five new FTE from 2011 to be filled
- Eastern Shore staff without office
- Crow's Nest remains closed

Virginia Land Conservation Foundation Update

Mr. Dowling gave an update regarding the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation. Handouts included the Virginia Land Conservation Bi-Monthly Report, the VLCF Funding Summary for the May 2011 Grant Round, and the 2011 Grant Program Manual.

Ms. Young inquired if any Natural Area Preserves were within State Parks. Chairman Smith indicated this is the case at False Cape. She then inquired regarding coordination with State Parks on migratory bird habitat. Mr. Tom Smith said this is being done.

Mr. Wingo inquired about the law enforcement losses in the Natural Heritage Program. Tom Smith indicated that some were money related.

Agency Logo Trademarking Issue

Mr. Dowling distributed information regarding the DCR agency logo trademarking issue. A copy of this information is available from DCR.

The logo was registered with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office on October 19, 2010.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Conservation and Recreation is scheduled for October 14, 2011. The location is to be determined.

Adjourn

There was no further business and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark E. Smith
Chairman

David A. Johnson
DCR Director