

**Board of Conservation and Recreation  
September 11, 2013  
Richmond, Virginia**

**Board of Conservation and Recreation Members Present**

W. Bruce Wingo, Chair  
James W. Beamer  
William E. Small  
Sheryl D. Swinson  
Robert L. Wilkerson

Steven L. Apicella  
Daniel F. Rinzel  
Mark E. Smith  
Alexander L. Vanegas

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

Alan D. Albert  
Andrea Young, Vice Chair

**DCR Staff Present**

David A. Johnson  
Bill Conkle  
Joe Elton  
Nancy Heltman  
Craig Seaver  
Michelle Vucci

Jeb Wilkinson  
David C. Dowling  
Michael R. Fletcher  
Shannon Johnson  
Tom Smith

**Others Present**

Bobby Connor, Fort Christanna  
Lauren B. Schmitt, Virginia Campgrounds Association

**Call to Order**

Chairman Wingo called the meeting to order. He asked members and staff to observe a moment of silence in remembrance of the victims of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

**Approval of Minutes from April 22, 2013**

MOTION: Mr. Smith moved that the minutes from the April 22, 2013 meeting of the Board of Conservation and Recreation be approved as submitted by staff.

SECOND: Mr. Beamer

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously

### **Director's Report**

Mr. Johnson welcomed Board members to the new DCR offices. He noted that the Agency held an open house the previous afternoon. He said that it was the first time in many years that all Central Richmond staff were located in the same facility.

Mr. Johnson said that since the April meeting, Powhatan State Park had a very successful opening. Mr. Johnson said that an event also had been held at Pocahontas State Park announcing the Mountain Bike Trail implementation for the 2015 mountain bike races coming to Richmond. Governor McDonnell attended both events.

Mr. Johnson said that the Agency was exploring options for several capital projects including new cabins and the road to Powhatan State Park as well as funds to begin the opening of Widewater State Park in Stafford County.

Mr. Johnson said that discussions have continued with regard to Natural Bridge and the Commonwealth acquiring it for a State Park.

Mr. Johnson said that DCR would not be submitting legislation with regard to parks and natural heritage, but would be regarding dams. He said that there may be other legislation that impacts Agency programs.

Mr. Smith asked about budget submissions.

Mr. Johnson said that was still being developed and that submissions were due to the Secretary of Natural Resources on September 16.

Mr. Smith asked where the Agency was in terms of conservation easements.

Mr. Johnson said that John Mitchell had been hired to promote conservation easements. He said that there had been a lot of interest on some important tracts of land. He said that he believed that the end of the term would show over 200,000 acres preserved. He said that the economy had made the process difficult as land values had dropped as well as income and the need or desire for tax credits.

### **Natural Heritage**

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

Mr. Smith gave an overview of the Natural Heritage program and the information management system. He said that the placement of the program with DCR in 1986 had been very successful. He showed examples of the mapping system and the Natural Heritage Data Explorer.

Mr. Smith said that by being a part of the Natural Heritage Network Virginia gets access to a worldwide network of information. The network helps Virginians and conservation decision-makers throughout the Western Hemisphere to make informed decisions. He said that the system was very helpful in terms of making maps available for conservationists and land trusts.

Mr. Smith said that DCR had been working to update natural resources inventory. He said much had been done in the 1980s and 1990s and that the information needed to be updated.

Mr. Smith said the following species had been found in Virginia in 2013.

- Cuthbert turtlehead
- Central Appalachian Shale Woodland
- Roan Mountain Bluet, found at Grayson Highlands State Park

Mr. Smith gave an update regarding Longleaf Pine Restoration

- Before colonization there were over 1 million acres of longleaf pine-dominated forests across southeast Virginia (and 90 million across the Southeast United States).
- Today there are just ~180 mature seed bearing-age native longleaf pine trees in Virginia.

Mr. Smith said that about 40 plant species occur on power line rights of way that do not occur elsewhere in Virginia. The plants need the open space habitat to thrive. DCR has been working with Dominion Power to survey the lines to determine the species.

Mr. Smith said that South Quay Sandhills Natural Area Preserve is a restoration project that DCR now has. DCR purchased 2800 acres from International Paper. The site is a major location for Longleaf pine restoration. Prescribed burnings will be done and seedlings will be planted. He said for Longleaf pine to be successful, there needs to be fire on the ground about every three years.

Mr. Smith said that at the Cedars Natural Area Preserve in far Southwest Virginia is comprised of 20 parcels of lands and has 32 miles of boundaries. The site covers 1998 acres and has 35 natural heritage resources over an area of 80 miles.

Mr. Smith said that the sales of the *Flora and Fauna of Virginia* book had been very successful. A second printing is scheduled for the spring of 2014. He said that the Library of Virginia was planning a year-long exhibit that would later go on tour around the Commonwealth.

### **Planning and Recreation Resources**

Mr. Conkle gave the update for the Division of Planning and Recreation Resources. He noted that Ms. Poole and the other PRR staff were attending a trails conference.

Mr. Conkle gave an update regarding the Virginia Outdoors Plan. He said that the plan is produced in accordance with §10.1-200 of the *Code of Virginia*. The final draft was sent to the National Park Service for approval in July. The approval was received on August 21<sup>st</sup>. DCR is working with DCR's Public Communications Office to design the layout for the Internet. The release of the plan is anticipated by January 1, 2014.

Mr. Conkle gave an update regarding design and construction projects.

#### New River Trail State Park – Foster Falls

- Maintenance Area Complete
- Office Complete
- Hotel 95% Complete
- Site Work – Received Bids August 27<sup>th</sup>

#### Ongoing Projects

- Rehabilitation of 2 Dams at Pocahontas State Park – design stage
- 5 bathhouse renovations (Maintenance Reserve) – planning stage
- Powhatan Campground – planning stage
- Soil & Water Conservation District Dams
  - Design Phase
  - 35% approval NRCS
- Crow's Nest Pier
  - Design Complete
  - Permitting in Process

#### New Work for 2014

- Cabin Design at 9 State Parks
  - \$7.5 M approved in 2013 General Assembly
- Widewater Phase 1
  - \$7.5 M approved in 2013 General Assembly
- Powhatan Road Project – Rts. 522/617 intersection

#### \$38.2 Million in Capital Projects

- Planning & Design – Widewater Phase 1: \$7.5 M
- Planning & Design – Powhatan Campground: \$3 M
- Planning & Design – Powhatan Road Improvement: \$3 M
- Planning & Design – Approx. 24 cabins at 9 State Parks: \$7.5 M
- Renovation of various bathhouses: MR funds \$2.2 M
- Completion of Soil and Water Conservation District Dams: \$15 M

Mr. Conkle gave an update regarding Virginia Scenic Rivers. He reviewed the field evaluation criteria. Rivers under consideration for designation are:

Cranesnest River – Dickenson County

- 10.7 miles
- Field work April 2013
- Meets minimum criteria
- Support of County
- Primary Assets – remoteness, no development, recreational assets

Banister River Extension – Pittsylvania County

- +/- 25 miles
- Field work May 2013
- Meets minimum criteria
- Support of County
- Primary Assets – natural heritage resources, limited development, remoteness

Tye River – Nelson County

- +/- 12 miles
- Field work May 2013
- Meets minimum criteria
- Primary Assets – natural heritage resources, clean, and limited development

Mr. Conkle said that those three rivers are under consideration for designation. He said that staff was asking that the Board endorse these rivers for designation. He noted that the legislation comes from the local level working with the appropriate legislator. He said that consideration was being given to an extension on the Staunton River. Also, the Rapidan and Middle James Rivers are under consideration.

MOTION: Mr. Apicella moved that the Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation endorse the designation of the Cranesnest River, the Tye River, and the Banister River extension to be named as Virginia Scenic Rivers.

SECOND: Mr. Wilkerson

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously

Mr. Conkle referenced the updates from the three Scenic River Committees.

*Historic Falls of the James* – Worked on the design for the “Falls of the James” Scenic River signs to be installed on bridges in the city, with the approval and full cooperation of the city’s Traffic Engineering Department. Worked with the Director of Richmond’s Parks and Recreation to hire the new James River Park System Manager, Nathan Burell.

*Goose Creek* – DCR participated in a joint meeting with the committee, Fauquier County subcommittee, and interested citizens. The Committee continued to review a couple of land use applications that the County is processing and is working on adding to their membership. The Committee is also monitoring updates on local land use issues regarding the Goose Creek corridor, and reviewing updates regarding the country's response to the Phase II WIP (Chesapeake Bay TMDL).

*Catoctin Creek* – The Catoctin Creek Scenic River Advisory Committee continues to work on its mission to create a community of stewardship for the Catoctin Creek Scenic River corridor. The committee has invited riparian land owners and guest speakers from the watershed as well as County staff to its meetings and is developing plans to catalogue and publish information pertaining to the attributes of the creek.

Mr. Conkle gave an update regarding grants.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

- Approximately \$1 million from 2013 apportionment committed to projects awarded in spring/currently under NPS review

Recreational Trails Projects (RTP)

- Advisory Committee meeting scheduled for September
- Anticipate approximately \$1 million from FHWA for grant round in fall

American Battlefield Protection Program Civil War Trust Partnership

- Since 2000 – 59 grants of \$24,550,640 protecting 89,017 acres
- Currently 17 Active Grants of \$5,338,285 to preserve approximately 2,147 acres

Mr. Conkle gave an update regarding trails. DCR is working on the following:

Coordination of Statewide Trails Network

- Beaches to Bluegrass
- East Coast Greenway
- Tobacco Heritage Trail
- Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail
- Captain John Smith NHT

Quarterly e-newsletters

- Distributed to over 1,300 recipients
- 29% readership

Workshops/Trail Conferences

- Focus on land trails in spring, water trails in fall
- Universal Design for Water Access September 10-11
- Trail development workshop in spring in State Parks (location TBD)

Mr. Conkle presented the State Park Master Plans.

*Biscuit Run*

Mr. Conkle noted that the plan for Biscuit Run was a new plan.

Biscuit Run State Park is located in Albemarle County just south of the City of Charlottesville along Biscuit Run. The park consists of approximately 1,195 acres with frontage on Routes 20 and 631. The Commonwealth acquired the land from Forest Lodge LLC in December 2009. The developer had intended to construct a subdivision, as well as retail and office space, on 828 acres, but instead sold the land to the state for \$9.8 million and tax credits.

The purpose statement for Biscuit Run is:

To provide opportunities for people to engage and learn from the unique natural, scenic, historical, and cultural resources of Albemarle County and the Commonwealth by connecting to urban and rural recreational and educational opportunities consistent with good stewardship of these lands, waters, and facilities that leaves them unimpaired for future generations.

A copy of the full executive summary for the Biscuit Run State Park Master Plan is available from DCR.

Mr. Conkle noted that for the development of a new master plan, a committee must be developed and public meetings held.

Mr. Small asked if there was a needs assessment for cabins.

Mr. Johnson noted that it would likely be years before actual cabins are built. He noted that the legislation as passed in the 2013 General Assembly required that businesses within a ten-mile radius of the park and proposed park developments be notified of the public meetings.

Mr. Apicella noted that he had attended the public meeting regarding Widewater State Park. He said that the local campground owners were very supportive of the proposed park developments.

MOTION: Mr. Beamer moved that the Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation endorse the proposed Master Plan for Biscuit Run State Park and recommend that it be approved.

SECOND: Ms. Swinson

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: Motion carried with Mr. Small voting no.



*Widewater State Park*

Mr. Conkle presented the proposed updates to the Master Plan for Widewater State Park. He noted that the concern from the community was access into the park, particularly along routes 633 and 658. Concern by neighboring landowners is that the roads are not built to handle anticipated boat traffic that would be using the park for access to the river. A full copy of the proposed update to the Master Plan for Widewater State Park is available from DCR.

Mr. Apicella noted that some residents were already concerned with people accessing the park. He said that Phase I of the plan would help in that regard.

MOTION: Mr. Apicella moved that the Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation endorse the proposed updates to the Master Plan for Widewater State Park and recommend that the plan be approved.

SECOND: Mr. Wilkerson

DISCUSSION: Mr. Apicella noted that he had participated in a number of the public meetings. He commended DCR staff for their work in the development of this plan.

VOTE: Motion carried with Mr. Small voting no.

*Pocahontas State Park*

Mr. Conkle presented the proposed amendment to the Master Plan for Pocahontas State Park. A copy of the full amendment is available from DCR.

The amendment proposes the construction of a mountain bike trail system at Pocahontas State Park, to include approximately 32 miles of new trail and a day-use trail head that includes parking, restroom, changing room, and outdoor shower facilities. Trail user training facilities will be constructed adjacent to the primary trailhead to include a skills area to practice elements found within the greater trail system. A trail connector between existing trails and the proposed trail system will be constructed. Additionally, a hand cyclist center will be constructed to provide space for therapists and trainers to work with clients to fit specialized hand tricycles and to facilitate progressive access to the Pocahontas trail system for cyclists unable to operate a traditional mountain bike.

MOTION: Mr. Beamer moved that the Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation endorse the amendment to the Master Plan for Pocahontas State Park and recommend that the plan be approved.

SECOND: Mr. Apicella

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: Motion carried.

Mr. Johnson asked Mr. Conkle to speak to the study regarding moveable soccer goals.

Mr. Conkle said that DCR had been tasked by the General Assembly to study moveable soccer goals. He noted that there were no soccer fields in state parks but that because of the Agency's association with recreation, DCR was requested to do the study.

Mr. Conkle said that there is a movement across the soccer industry and country to make sure that soccer goals are anchored. He said that with moveable goals that were not anchored, children were in danger of the goals falling on them and there had been at least one associated death.

Mr. Conkle said that DCR assembled a working group representing soccer groups in the Commonwealth, the Department of Health, the Department of Education, and others. He said that the group issued a report back to the General Assembly recommending that the issue not be dealt with through legislation but by education and awareness of the problem.

At this time the Board recessed for lunch.

### **State Parks**

Mr. Elton gave the update for State Parks. He introduced Craig Seaver and Nancy Heltman. He also introduced Shannon Johnson who is the new Manager of Marketing for State Parks.

Ms. Heltman said that from September 7 through September 11, State Parks commemorated the attacks of September 11, 2001 with service projects in the park. She showed a video entitled "We will remember" showing service projects in the parks and tributes to those lost in the attacks.

### *Fort Christanna Presentation*

Mr. Elton introduced Bobby Connor of the Brunswick County/Lake Gaston Tourism Association. He said that Mr. Connor was there to present the application for Fort Christanna to be designated as a Virginia Cultural Heritage Site. Mr. Elton noted that the designation as a Cultural Heritage Site was intended:

- To recognize commemorative and historical facilities and sites in Virginia that interpret significant aspects of national, state and regional or cultural history.
- To be included, properties must be open to the public or have a public interpretation role. The facilities do not need to be currently listed on a state or national register. Because the directory will be on DCR's website, which promotes Virginia's award-winning state parks, the directory will also help market the sites and facilities.

- The process requires approval at various levels. Sites must be approved by DCR's Director, the Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation, and the Governor.

Mr. Connor gave a presentation regarding Fort Christanna located in Brunswick County. He noted:

The mission of the Fort Christanna Historical Site is to develop the cultural resource, creating an educational and recreational experience that effectively communicates the history of Fort Christanna, with preservation of the archaeology and sacred nature of the place.

Fort Christanna played an important role in the early history and establishment of Virginia. With the establishment of Fort Christanna, Governor Spotswood wished to maximize the economic possibilities of the colony as well as protect the facilities that had been created. The Indian school, trading post, rangers, the search for ores, and protection of friendly Native American tribes were all thought to be important to the western expansion from Williamsburg. The potential of trade was also a major factor in the development of the fort. The colonists wished to establish trade relations with the Native Americans of the area. Several tribes in Virginia and North Carolina are proud descendants of those students at the Christanna Indian School.

Fort Christanna is on the Virginia Landmarks Register, as well as the National Register of Historic Places. Funding for the site's operation is provided by the Brunswick County Board of Supervisors and from donations from businesses, civic groups, and individuals. There is a high degree of certainty of the continuation of funding, and the site is marketed by area tourism organizations. Currently a non-profit Friends of Fort Christanna, Inc. is being formed to help raise additional funds for upkeep of the site.

Mr. Elton explained that Fort Christanna had applied for designation as a Virginia Cultural Heritage Site. He said that the process required a recommendation from the Board to the Governor for approval.

MOTION: Mr. Smith moved that the Board of Conservation and Recreation endorse the application of Fort Christanna for designation as a Virginia Cultural Heritage Site.

SECOND: Ms. Swinson

DISCUSSION: Mr. Smith asked if there were state or local fiscal obligations with the designation.

Mr. Elton said that there were none at this point. He said that the state maintains the directory. He said that it had been anticipated that there would be more requested designations and that those are anticipated in the future.

Mr. Apicella asked how DCR would deal with a location such as Fredericksburg or Spotsylvania where there are numerous sites.

Mr. Elton said that each site would have to be reviewed, but that it could be viewed as a collection of resources.

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

### *Natural Bridge*

Mr. Elton noted that the Natural Bridge property was for sale and that there was consideration of the land coming to DCR for establishment as a state park. This would not include the additional resources such as the hotel and wax museum. Mr. Elton said that the transfer to the state is still being researched and that one possibility is that a conservation buyer purchase the land and donate the property to the state.

### *Richmond Region Ride Center*

Mr. Elton noted that the Richmond Region Ride Center had been discussed with regard to the update to the Master Plan for Pocahontas State Park.

### *Visitor Center Information*

Mr. Elton said that DCR was working with the Virginia Association for Parks (VAFP) and Imperial Multimedia for the upgrading of park visitor centers. He noted:

- The VAFP role is to help identify sources of funding and to serve as the overall fiscal agent for all funding that comes to the respective state parks and their friends groups toward visitor center exhibits.
- Imperial Multimedia helps facilitate planning meetings and develops exhibit concept plans before funding has been secured, at its own cost, and then proactively engages in fundraising to seek the funding needed to build out the exhibits. Once funding is secured, Imperial Multimedia is contracted through VAFP.
- DCR recognizes and supports this dynamic partnership between VAFP and Imperial Multimedia to generate private sector funding to build out exhibits in state park visitor centers.

Mr. Elton noted that a survey conducted by Virginia Tech's Pamplin College of Business showed that visitors see the educational and entertainment value of new technology-driven displays.

Targeted visitor centers are: Belle Isle, False Cape, Mason Neck, Staunton River, Westmoreland, Caledon, Chippokes, Fairy Stone, Natural Tunnel, York River, Douthat, and Breaks.

### *Youth Conservation Corps 2013*

Mr. Elton gave a report on the Youth Conservation Corps program for 2013.

- 88 crew members
- 11 programs
- 21,120 hours of service valued at \$464,640
- General trail maintenance, new trail construction, scenic vista construction, campsite construction, beach clean-ups, clearing of brush, brick path construction, fence building/repairing, clearing of archaeological sites

### *AmeriCorps*

Mr. Elton noted that this was the third year of the AmeriCorps Interpretive Project. He noted:

- 36 AmeriCorps members were placed in Virginia State Parks
- Each member provided 675 volunteer hours for a total of 24,300 hours
- Members assisted or lead 2,900 programs and impacted over 60,000 park visitors with a message of conservation and stewardship
- In return for their service, AmeriCorps members earned over \$75,000 in Segal Education Awards

### *Virginia Canopy Tours*

Mr. Elton said that a soft opening of Virginia Canopy Tours at Guest/Shenandoah River State Park was scheduled for October 12 and 13.

### *National Gold Medal Award*

Mr. Elton said that Virginia State Parks were again one of four finalists for the National Gold Medal Award for excellence in parks and recreation management. Virginia has been a finalist three other times and won the award in 2001. He said the announcement was schedule for October 8, 2013.

### **Public Comment**

There was no further public comment.

**Other Business**

Mr. Johnson said that he would like to thank Mr. Smith for his years as Chairman of the Board.

There was no further business and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

W. Bruce Wingo  
Chair

Clyde E. Cristman  
DCR Director