

**Board of Conservation and Recreation
Thursday, September 21, 2017
Claytor Lake State Park**

TIME AND PLACE

The meeting of the Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation convened at 10:08 a.m. on Thursday, September 21, 2017 at the Water's Edge Meeting Facility at Claytor Lake State Park, Dublin, Virginia.

MEMBERS PRESENT

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| W. Bruce Wingo, Chair | Vivek Shinde Patil, PhD |
| Patricia A. Jackson, Vice Chair | Isaac J. Sarver |
| Vincent M. Burgess | Nancy Hull Davidson |
| Danielle Heisler | Harvey B. Morgan |
| Dexter C. Hurt | |

MEMBERS ABSENT

| | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Andrew C. Jennison | Michael P. Reynold |
|--------------------|--------------------|

DCR STAFF PRESENT

Clyde E. Cristman, Director
Rochelle Altholz, Deputy Director of Administration and Finance
Jason Bulluck, Director, Division of Natural Heritage
Dave Collett, Western Region Operations Manager, State Parks
Bill Conkle, Park Planner
Lynn Crump, Environmental Programs Planner
Chris Doss, Park Manager, Claytor Lake State Park
Micah Fairchild, Director of Human Resources
Michael Fletcher, Board and Constituent Services Liaison
Melissa Jackson, Budget Manager
Sharon Partee, Finance Director
Danette Poole, Director, Division of Planning and Recreation Resources
Craig Seaver, Director, Division of State Parks
Tim Shrader, Eastern Region Operations Manager, State Parks

QUORUM

With nine (9) members of the Board present, a quorum was established.

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman Wingo called the meeting to order at 10:08 a.m. and asked for the calling of the roll. A quorum was established.

WELCOME

Chris Doss, Park Manager, welcomed members and staff to Claytor Lake State Park. He gave an overview of the park's history and facilities.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JANUARY 27, 2017

Ms. Jackson moved for the approval of the minutes of the January 27, 2017 meeting of the Board of Conservation and Recreation. Mr. Patil seconded and the minutes were approved as submitted.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT – *Clyde E. Cristman, DCR Director*

Director Cristman welcomed Board members to Claytor Lake State Park. He introduced the following new staff:

- Micah Fairchild, Human Resources Director
- Melissa Jackson, Budget Manager

Director Cristman recognized Deputy Director Altholz and Ms. Partee for their work regarding the agency audit and the corrective action plan. Out of 93 audit points from the original audit, all but four have been successfully corrected.

Governor McAuliffe has now visited all 37 Virginia state parks. He is the first governor to visit all of Virginia's state parks during his term in office.

Staff from DCR and the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries are investigating a recent bear attack at Douthat State Park. The injuries sustained by the woman in the attack were not life threatening.

STATE PARKS UPDATE – *Craig Seaver, Director, Division of State Parks*

Mr. Seaver gave an over view of year to date attendance in State Parks:

- 2016 – 7,311,112
- 2017 – 7,648,028

Parks have seen record crowds in 2017.

Virginia State Parks have developed partner relationships with several organizations, including:

- REI
- Feed More
- Garden Club of Virginia
- Whole Food Market

Phase 1 of the Garden Club of Virginia Centennial Project Grant Program invested \$129,417 in the following parks:

- Belle Isle
- Fairy Stone
- Leesylvania
- Mason Neck
- Middle Peninsula
- Natural Bridge
- Pocahontas
- Sky Meadows
- Smith Mountain Lake
- Staunton River
- Youth Conservation Corps

“Interpretising”

Mr. Seaver gave an overview of retail operations within the park system. He defined “interpretising” as:

The extension of a guest’s park experience through the offering of themed merchandise displayed and sold in strategic locations that enhances, interprets, and preserves the park experience.”

Mr. Seaver gave an overview of revenue from the park store at Natural Bridge State Park.

Revenues for park sales were \$2,247,458 with an average sale of \$4.06

Revenues for Natural Bridge from September 2017 – August 2017 were \$1,922,438

Sales increased \$460,791 over FY16 or 23.08%.

Round Up Program

In December 2016 DCR started the “Round Up” program allowing guests to round up their purchase to the next dollar amount as a contribution to state parks.

Since inception the program has raised \$18,741.08 for parks.

Social Media Update

Current followers of Virginia State Parks.

- Facebook 107,733
- Twitter 39,200
- Instagram 14,800
- eNews Subscribers 51,825

Mr. Seaver gave an overview of yurt and cabin construction in parks.

Hurricane Irma

Virginia State Parks sent a team of park employees to Florida to assist with the recovery from Hurricane Irma. That team was set to return and a second team was preparing to head to Florida the next day. Mr. Seaver invited any Board members and staff in the area to meet at the Foster Falls parking lot at New River Trail the next morning to send the team on their way.

Mr. Seaver gave an update regarding the Virginia State Park Ranger Academy and the Youth Conservation Corps. He noted that many of the employees in State Parks are approaching retirement age and that the challenge is to raise up younger employees to fill those positions.

Ms. Heisler asked how DCR recruited employees who were not already in the park system.

Mr. Fairchild gave an overview of DCR recruiting programs through conferences, trade shows, and other events.

NATURAL HERITAGE UPDATE – Jason Bulluck, Director, Division of Natural Heritage

Mr. Bulluck gave an overview of the work that DCR Natural Heritage has been doing with regard to the Mountain Valley Pipeline and the Atlantic Coast Pipeline. Significant recent dates include:

Mountain Valley Pipeline

- July 20, 2017 – Final EIA Comments
- July 21, 2017 – Forest Fragmentation Comments
- August 22, 2017 – VA DEQ 401 Certification Comments
- August 29, 2017 – Revegetation Seed Mix Comments to DEQ

Atlantic Coast Pipeline

- August 21, 2017 – Final EIS and Forest Fragmentation Comments
- August 22, 2017 – VA DEQ 401 Certification Comments
- August 31, 2017 – Invasive Species Management Request from Dominion

Over the course of the pipeline discussion, DCR has taken a consistent approach to commenting regarding every alternative route, every modification, every proposed route, and every access road. This has resulted in hundreds if not thousands of pages of original comments and responses to pipeline developers and consultants.

DCR Natural Heritage comments regarding potential impacts on natural heritage resources, rare species, and cave and karst resources.

Comments have been submitted regarding forest fragmentation working with the Virginia Forest Conservation Partnership. This provides a science based voice regarding the impacts to the Commonwealth's remaining cores of intact forests. The goal is to retain the largest tracts of intact forest. While there is no legal backing to say that forests can't be fragmented, DCR is working closely with developers toward mitigation of the disturbances.

Director Cristman noted that, while there is no requirement for developers to consider DCR comments, there have been productive discussions. The developers are also dealing with their own public relations and the need to mitigate some of the disturbances as well as the water quality issues.

PLANNING AND RECREATION RESOURCES UPDATE – Danette Poole, Director, Division of Planning and Recreation Resources

Virginia Treasures

The goal of one thousand *Virginia Treasures* has been surpassed. The numbers now stand as follows:

- Natural, Cultural, and Recreational Treasures 742
- Land Conservation Treasures 595
- TOTAL 1,337

The State Trails Advisory Committee head a joint conference with the Virginia United Land Trust (VAULT) in Williamsburg in April, 2017. Workshops included such topics as developing community trails, greenways, links, tourism, and trail towns. Governor McAuliffe attended and spoke at this conference. A similar conference is being planned for April, 2018 in Roanoke.

Ms. Poole gave an update regarding the 2018 Virginia Outdoors Plan. The theme for the 2018 plan is “Celebrating the Benefits of Outdoor Recreation.” The Outdoors Plan is completed every five years and is required under the *Code of Virginia*. Virginia must submit this plan to be eligible to receive federal land and water conservation funding. The plan addressed the economic and health benefits of being outdoors.

The Outdoor Recreation Inventory was completed with a 92% response rate. This survey included towns for the first time. The results will be posted on the DCR website in October.

The 2017 Virginia Outdoors Survey was conducted between July and September 6, 2017. This is also completed on a five-year schedule. A total of 14,000 surveys were sent out with a response rate of 3,379 (24% response rate). For the first time, a web survey was offered and received 3,415 responses. Information in each type of survey is weighted differently. The results of the survey will be posted on the DCR website in October.

With regard to Design and Construction, Ms. Poole noted that cabin construction at Kiptopeke, Lane Anna, Natural Tunnel, Twin Lakes, and Claytor Lake State Parks was completed over the summer.

Ms. Poole gave an overview of the development of Widewater State Park. Because the area of the land is fragmented, there are particular challenges in the development of the infrastructure for the park. Phase 1A is 50% completed.

Completed park projects include:

- Douthat State Park
 - Electrical renovation in restaurant and campground
- Various parks
 - Multiple roof replacements
 - Multiple HVAC projects

New projects under construction in 2017:

- Occoneechee sprayground
- Seven Bends development
- Chippokes Walnut Valley Farm renovation
- False Cape Water System renovations

Projects in the design phase under the 2016 bond include:

- Pocahontas cabins
- False Cape bulkheads
- Widewater phase 1B
- Grayson Highlands restroom
- New River Trail bridges
- Hungry Mother – amphitheater bridge

2017 Land and Water Conservation Fund Grants were awarded as follows:

| | |
|--|-------------|
| 1. City of Manassas – land acquisition | \$500,000 |
| 2. NOVA Regional Park Authority – acquisition | \$500,000 |
| 3. Covington – Paper Trail and Boat Launch | \$115,352 |
| 4. Westmoreland County – Recreational Complex | \$500,000 |
| 5. Essex County – Rappahannock River Marine Park acquisition | \$500,000 |
| 6. Pending project (awaiting surveys) | \$255,000 |
| | |
| TOTAL AMOUNT REQUESTED | \$2,370,352 |

Virginia Scenic Rivers

Ms. Crump gave an update regarding Virginia Scenic Rivers. She gave an overview of river segments that were designated, those that qualified for designation, and those worthy of being studied.

The new suggested designated section of the Clinch River includes 37.5 miles added to the existing 24.5 miles for a total of 62 miles. The field work was completed in April 2017. The section meets the minimum criteria and is supported by Russell County.

BOARD ACTION

Ms. Jackson moved that the Board of Conservation and Recreation support the designation of the 37.5 miles of the Clinch River in Russell County as a Virginia Scenic River. Mr. Sarver seconded and the motion carried.

Ms. Crump noted that there were currently three existing Scenic River Committees. The *Code of Virginia* authorized the Director of the Department of Conservation and Recreation to establish these committees and to appoint members. The current committees are:

- Catocin Creek (Loudoun County) – protecting scenic attributes in historic bridge renovation
- Goose Creek (Loudoun County) – concerns about impacts of dam on creek (insufficient water levels)
- Historic Falls of the James (City of Richmond) – consideration of scenic values in future development through comprehensive planning process

Ms. Crump distributed a copy of the scenic river evaluation criteria and walked members through an evaluation of the section of the New River that members had seen during an educational trip the day prior to the meeting. A copy of the criteria is included as Attachment A.

Scenic Virginia and DCR have signed a Memorandum of Agreement that includes the following:

- Collaboration on the Virginia Viewshed registry and other efforts to recognize significant viewsheds across the state
- Recommendation of past VOPs
- Used a technical committee made up of visual experts to guide the process
- Signed by both parties on August 1, 2017

Ms. Jackson expressed a concern regarding the Board's involvement with Scenic Rivers. While segments are being added the Board has no active voice in situations such as the James River transmission line. She asked what the Board's role should be in that type of situation.

The Board discussed the establishment of a subcommittee to address scenic river issues. This will be a topic for discussion at the next Board meeting.

Pocahontas State Park Master Plan Update

Mr. Conkle reviewed the update to the Pocahontas State Park Master Plan.

Pocahontas State Park is located on Swift Creek in Chesterfield County. The park was purchased for recreation in 1934 by the National Park Service (NPS) under the Land Program of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. On June 6, 1946, after twelve years of cooperative work between the NPS, the Virginia Conservation Commission and a number of other state agencies, the Swift Creek Recreational Demonstration Area was handed over to the state and became known as Pocahontas State Park. With an abundant 7,919.881 acres of park land, Pocahontas is Virginia's largest state park.

Pocahontas is also the location for the logistics center and sign shop for Virginia State Parks.

Ms. Heisler asked if there were statistics regarding which visitors were local and which were from out of the area.

Mr. Seaver responded that DCR is currently working with Virginia Tech to study those numbers. Normally, about 40% of visitors are from out of state.

Mr. Conkle reviewed the proposed phases of development for the park.

The recommended plan will be submitted to members of the General Assembly for a thirty-day comment period. Following that, the DCR Director will approve the plan as recommended. When approved, a copy of the Executive Summary will be available at this link:
<http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/document/mp4poexecsum.pdf>

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Burgess moved that the Board of Conservation and Recreation endorse the recommended Master Plan Update for Pocahontas State Park as provided by staff. Ms. Davidson seconded and the motion carried.

FINANCIAL UPDATE – *Sharon Partee, Finance Director*

Ms. Partee gave a financial update. She noted that the state fiscal year ended on June 30, 2017. The total FY 2018 General Fund Appropriation available for DCR operations is \$45,169,559. She noted that the agency receives an additional \$25-30,000 not in general funds. The agency also maintains revenue funds generated through state parks.

Ms. Partee reviewed the State Parks Projects fund. There were no changes from the last meeting of the Board.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business to come before the Board.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

NEXT MEETING

Chairman Wingo suggested that the Board meet in late December following the release of the Governor's proposed budget. He asked staff to poll for December 20 or 21, 2017 as a meeting date.

ADJOURN

There was no further business and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

W. Bruce Wingo
Chair

Clyde E. Cristman
DCR Director

Attachment A

EVALUATION CRITERIA

If a stream meets the minimum criteria necessary for field study, it is fully evaluated and ranked according to relative uniqueness or quality. Each river or river segment is evaluated or rated on eleven different factors from which a cumulative score is derived.

1. Stream Corridor Vegetation

0 Points – Natural vegetation within view from the river is more than 75% disturbed by grazing, cropland, timbering, development, etc.

10 Points – Natural vegetation is 50-75% without a buffer of 100 feet wide

20 Points – Natural vegetation is 25-50% without a buffer of 100 feet wide

30 Points – Natural vegetation is 15-25% without a buffer of 100 feet wide

40 Points – Natural vegetation has less than 15% in a buffer of less than 100 feet wide

Describe and estimate as closely as possible the amount of each type of disturbance.

_____ % of shoreline in natural forest with less than 100' buffer

_____ % of visual corridor forested with more than 100' buffer

_____ % of visual corridor in pasture or hay fields

_____ % of visual corridor in cropland

2. Streambed and/or stream flow modifications

10 Points – Between 1 and 5% of the segment being evaluated is impounded or channelized

20 Points – No impoundment or channelization present

3. Human development of visual corridor

Evaluation should be conducted when foliage is in full leaf.

A. City or Town Related

0 Points – More than 10% of visual corridor is devoted to residential, industrial or commercial uses (not including agricultural or recreational developments).

5 Points – Between 5 and 10% of visual corridor is devoted to residential, industrial, or commercial uses (not including agricultural or recreational development).

15 Points – No urban development

B. Rural Development

0 Points – An average of two or more houses, cabins, barns, industrial buildings or clusters* per mile of river evaluated.

5 Points – An average of 1.1 to 1.9 houses, cabins, barns, industrial buildings or clusters* per mile of river evaluated.

10 Points – An average of .5 to 1 house, cabins, barns, industrial buildings or clusters* per mile of river evaluated.

15 Points – From 0 to .5 houses, cabins, barns, industrial buildings or clusters* per mile of river evaluated.

*A cluster is defined as up to five dwellings or other structures located immediately adjacent to one another.

4. Historic Features

0 Points – No known historical significances.

10 Points – Historic sites or structures of state significance within 1,000 feet of river.

20 Points – Historic sites or structures of national significance within 1,000 feet of river.

NOTE: Ten bonus points available for each site or structure of state or national significance that is visible from the river. Maximum 30 points.

5. Landscape

A. Diversity

0 Points – Little diversity – few changes in scenery.

10 Points – Moderate diversity – fair number of natural features visible.

15 Points – High diversity of corridor features (e.g. cliffs, mountains, gorges, vegetative canopies, winding course).

B. Views

0 Points – Low range of views – foreground only.

5 Points – Medium range of views – foreground and middle ground

10 Points – High range of views – background of several miles.

15 Points – Exceptional grandeur – frequent, with wide range of views.

6. Quality of Fishery

0 Points – Game fish population low to nonexistent, abundance of trash fish.

10 Points – Game fish populations moderate. Good fishing opportunities.

20 Points – Game fish populations excellent. Prime fishing opportunities.

30 Points – Nationally significant fishery.

7. Additional Natural Features

Ten bonus points for each occurrence, within 1,000 feet of the river, of a natural feature which is of statewide or greater significance. Maximum of 40 points

8. Water Quality

10 Points – Periodic visible pollution or chronically muddy or turbid

20 Points – Visible pollution rare: turbid or muddy during less than one-third of the six warm season months (May through October)

30 Points – No visible pollution; turbid or muddy only after heavy rains, after which the water clears rapidly.

NOTE: A maximum of 10 bonus points are available for a program recognition of water quality, such as healthy waters or other recognized high quality water program.

9. Parallel Roads

10 Points – Up to five miles of parallel road per 10 miles of stream.

20 Points – Up to a total of one mile of state or county road per 10 miles or river.

30 Points – Up to a total of three-fourths of a mile of parallel county road within 300 feet.

NOTE: Paralleling roads, including railroads, are evaluated by their effect on the aesthetics of a stream, as viewed by the stream users. Roads may be excepted if traffic is inaudible and invisible from the river. Highly objectionable roads more than 1,000 feet from a stream may reduce ratings in individual cases.

10. Crossings

15 Points – An Average of .3 to .4 crossings per mile of river

20 Points – An average of .1 to .3 crossing per mile of river

30 Points – Less than .1 crossing per mile of river

NOTE: Covered bridges, foot bridges and fords may be excepted as crossings, if, in the judgment of the raters, they do not seriously impair the visual quality of the stream area. Bridges at beginning and end of study segment are not counted in the total number of crossings. Residential wire crossings do not count.

11. Special Features Affecting the Aesthetics

The purpose of this category is to list those stream and corridor features which singly or in combination make a resource physically attractive. Check as many as appropriate and place comments explaining your rating at the end of the section.

- Unique or interesting in-stream rock formations
- Culturally significant sites (e.g. mills, covered bridges, navigation structures, etc.)
- Islands
- Rapids
- Waterfalls or cascades
- Primitive areas (e.g. swamps, mature forests, etc.)
- Bluffs, cliff, rock outcrops
- Special geological features
- Remoteness or isolation

[] Other (explain) _____

12. **OVERALL AESTHETIC APPEAL**

10 Points - Low

20 Points - Medium

30 Points - High

40 Points - Exceptional

13. Public Recreational Access

10 Points – Public Boat/Canoe/ Kayak Launch or public use trail along corridor

6 Points – Informal Public Launch Site; e.g., bridge crossing, adjacent road

4 Points – Private access site available to public

0 Points – No public access

NOTE: During evaluation, please check specific types of water-based recreation that occur on segment under evaluation. Boating () Fishing () Swimming () Tubing () Body surfing ()

14. Significant Permanent Protection

NOTE: Special recognition for significant permanent protection of land adjacent to evaluated segment; i.e., conservation easement, protected public land, or other permanent protection.

5 Points – 25% or more of corridor protected through easement or other permanent measure –

TOTAL POSSIBLE SCORE – 385 Points

TOTAL SCORE _____

NOTES/ COMMENTS: