

**Board of Conservation and Recreation
Monday, January 6, 2020
Richmond, Virginia**

DRAFT MINUTES

TIME AND PLACE

The meeting of the Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation convened at 10:12 a.m. on Monday, January 6, 2020 at the Department of Conservation and Recreation in Richmond, Virginia.

BOARD OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION MEMBERS PRESENT

W. Bruce Wingo, Chair	Harvey B. Morgan
Patricia A. Jackson, Vice Chair	Esther M. Nizer
Nancy Hull Davidson	Vivek Shinde Patil, PhD
Dexter C. Hurt	Camille Touton
Kay Maybury	

BOARD OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION MEMBERS NOT PRESENT

Angela Henderson, PhD	Clayton Spruill
-----------------------	-----------------

DCR STAFF PRESENT

Clyde E. Cristman, Director
Tom Smith, Deputy Director of Operations
Rochelle Altholz, Deputy Director of Administration and Finance
Jason Bulluck, Director, Division of Natural Heritage
Dave Collett, Acting State Parks Director
Bill Conkle, Park Planner
Lynn Crump, Scenic Resources Coordinator
Michael Fletcher, Board and Constituent Services Liaison
Kelly McClary, Acting Director, Division of Planning and Recreation Resources
Sharon Partee, Director of Finance
Tim Shrader, Eastern Field Operations Director

OTHERS PRESENT

The Honorable Matthew Strickler, Secretary of Natural Resources.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM

With ten (10) members of the Board present, a quorum was established.

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman Wingo called the meeting to order at 10:12 a.m. and asked for a calling of the roll.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM OCTOBER 7, 2019

Ms. Hull Davidson moved for the approval of the minutes from the October 7, 2019 meeting of the Board of Conservation and Recreation. Ms. Nizer seconded and the minutes were approved as submitted.

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

Director Cristman noted the following:

- The first of the Virginia State Parks license plates have been issued. A pre-order of 450 was required. DCR was able to submit orders for 550. After 1,000 plates have been issued, DCR will receive \$10 per plate.
- Melissa Baker has been named the new director of Virginia State Parks and will assume that role in late January. Ms. Baker is the former Director of North Dakota State Parks.
- Thank you to Dave Collett for serving as Acting State Parks Director.
- Deputy Director Isaac Sarver left the agency to work for Senator Mark Warner.

LEGISLATIVE AND BUDGET UPDATE – *Clyde E. Cristman*

Director Cristman advised that the General Assembly would convene on Wednesday, January 8. He noted that there was not a lot of information to report at this point. Committee assignments were not yet known. Some anticipated legislation includes:

- Designations for up to seven scenic rivers. Bills for the Clinch and Maury Rivers have been introduced.
- There is no current legislation specific to state parks. The Valors bill regarding law enforcement did not move forward. It is anticipated that the Virginia Association of Parks will continue to advocate for this.

Director Cristman reminded Board members that, as appointees of the Governor they could advocate for positions outlined in the Governor's budget. He also noted that they were free to advocate for other legislation as private citizens, but not in their capacity as a Board member.

DCR items in the Governor's proposed budget include:

- \$150,000 for State Park highway signs, an increase from \$70,000.
- Funding for Dam Safety and Floodplain management to include a new lead engineer, two positions for floodplain management.
- Two additional positions in the Soil and Water Conservation Division will be supported by federal funds.
- The proposal includes \$47 million the first year, and \$41 million the second for best management practices to keep pollution out of state waters.
- Legislation is in place to reopen Green Pastures Recreation Area to be managed as part of Douthat State Park. From 1940-1964 this was one of the only outdoor recreation areas for people of color. When parks were integrated in 1964, this area was operated as Longdale Recreation Area until it closed last year due to lack of funding.
- The Governor has proposed \$20 million each year for funding the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation.
- Proposed State Parks funding includes \$500K each year for preventive maintenance, and \$556 each year to support operations to include maintenance and wage staff.

- The Governor has proposed a \$144 million bond package for state parks. This would be used for taking care of established properties and developing additional revenue producing facilities.

Director Cristman advised that this was all subject to change once the General Assembly convened.

Mr. Bulluck offered to send information regarding the Natural Heritage request that did not move forward.

Director Cristman noted that staff was working with the Governor's office to schedule the official opening of Seven Bends State Park in Shenandoah County in the spring.

DIVISION OF NATURAL HERITAGE – *Jason Bulluck, Director, Division of Natural Heritage*

Mr. Bulluck gave the report for the Division of Natural Heritage covering the 2019 highlights for the division.

- Many jobs are based around information, developing it, sharing it and putting it to use so that the best decisions are made. The backbone of the work done by Natural Heritage is data and information.
- 2019 Rare Bumble Bee Surveys conducted by Natural Heritage found:
 - 3 new locations for Rusty-patched Bumble Bee (Rockingham (2) and Augusta)
 - Now extant in Augusta, Bath, Fauquier, Highland, Rockingham counties
 - Additional locations found in VA/WV by others
 - 1 new location for Yellow-banded Bumble Bee (Rockingham)
 - The studies were funded by federal dollars, but much of the fieldwork, allowing a broader focus on rare bees, was made possible by a GoFundMe campaign set up by Board Member Vivek Patil.
- Natural Heritage conducted the third year of work with middle school students at Breaks Interstate State Park to conduct field ID, data collection, processing insect collectors, bat banding, and lab techniques.
- With funding from the Division of State Parks, inventories were conducted at High Bridge and James River State Parks.
- Funding from the General Assembly allowed for an assessment of mountain biking trails at First Landing State Park.
- Staff continues to work with ConserveVirginia, the Governor's land conservation initiative. Version 3 will include a water quality component.
- DCR continues to review solar projects. Solar is rapidly expanding across the Virginia landscape.
- The Virginia Pollinator Smart Webpage can be accessed at www.pollinatorsmartva.org and is a source of pollinator information services for solar developers.
- DCR Natural Heritage Stewardship Staff completed 78 critical natural area resource enhancement projects during Fiscal Year 2018. This number included 9 prescribed fire management projects, 21 outreach and education projects, 15 public access improvement projects, 9 habitat restoration projects, 9 rare species monitoring projects, 8 invasive species projects, 3 wildlife management projects, and 4 volunteer workdays.

Natural Area Preserve additions in 2019:

- Magothy Bay – 105.88 acres fee-simple purchase (4/19)
- Camp Branch – 66 acre easement with NRLT (05/19)
- Antioch Pines – 140 acre fee-simple purchase (10/19)
- Buffalo – 6 acre fee-simple purchase (10/19)
- Deep Run – 62 acre fee (DCR), 62 acre easement (PATC & DCR) (10/19)
- Bald Knob – 33 acre fee-simple purchase (10/19)
- Deep Run – 132 acres/two tract fee-simple purchase (12/19)

Mr. Bulluck requested that the Board consider the naming the 65th Natural Area Preserve for property purchased with the funds from the DuPoint South River Settlement. The property is located along the South River in Augusta County. The staff recommended name was Cave Hill Natural Area Preserve.

BOARD ACTION

Ms. Jackson moved that the Board of Conservation and Recreation approve the naming of the 65th Natural Area Preserve as Cave Hill Natural Area Preserve as recommended by DCR staff. Mr. Patil seconded and the motion carried.

GREETINGS FROM SECRETARY OF NATURAL RESOURCES, MATTHEW STRICKLER

Director Cristman welcomed Secretary Strickler to the meeting.

Secretary Strickler expressed his appreciation to the Board as well as that of the Governor. He thanks the Board for their guidance with regard to state parks and natural areas.

DIVISION OF PLANNING AND RECREATION RESOURCES – *Kelly McClary, Acting Director, Division of Planning and Recreation Resources*

Division Update

Ms. McClary gave the update for the Division of Planning and Recreation Resources.

2019 Virginia Outdoors PDC Meetings

- 21 meetings for 21 recreation areas
- 337 partners attended
 - Planning District Staff
 - Local Park Managers
 - Town Managers
 - Tourism Staff
 - Non-Profits

Design and Construction Update

- Total Projects 42
- Total Cost Value: \$54 Million

- Maintenance Reserve: \$5.3 Million
- 2016 Bond Projects
 - 6 complete by 2020
 - All 15 in various stages

Completed Projects in 2019

- Seven Bends Day-Use Development
- Various Dam Risers
- First Landing Restroom at 64th Street
- Multiple Maintenance Projects

Projects Under Construction in 2020

- Pocahontas Cabins
- Hungry Mother Amphitheater Bridge
- High Bridge Trail Center
- New River Trail Foster Falls Hotel
- Widewater Boat Ramp
- Douthat Lakeside Campground Renovations

Projects in Design 2020

- Various Cabin Renovations: Fairy Stone, Douthat, First Landing
- Various Campground Upgrades: Bear Creek, Westmoreland, Claytor Lake
- New River Trail Bridges
- Staunton River Battlefield Bridge

State Park Master Plans – Bill Conkle, Park Planner

Smith Mountain Lake State Park

Mr. Conkle presented the recommended update to the Master Plan for Smith Mountain Lake State Park.

The Smith Mountain Lake State Park Master Plan Executive Summary is an update to the official unabridged master plan document adopted in 2003 by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Board. This 2019 executive summary represents the most recent ten year review mandated in §10.1-200.1 of the *Code of Virginia*

Smith Mountain Lake State Park is on the 20,600-acre Smith Mountain Lake that was created in 1960 when Appalachian Power Company (now American Electric Power) built a dam on the Roanoke River in Smith Mountain Gap. The park, which includes 16 miles of lakefront, opened to the public in 1983.

Mr. Conkle reviewed the phased development plan to be developed over a 30-year timeframe.

A copy of the Executive Summary for Smith Mountain Lake State Park is available at the following link:

<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/document/mp4smexecsum.pdf>

BOARD ACTION

Ms. Jackson moved that the Board of Conservation and Recreation recommend approval of the updated Master Plan for Smith Mountain Lake State Park as presented by staff. Mr. Morgan seconded and the motion carried.

False Cape State Park

Mr. Conkle presented the updated Master Plan for False Cape State Park.

False Cape State Park consists of some 4,321 acres of maritime forests, dunes, marshes, shrub areas, and several islands. It is located in the southeast corner of Virginia, within the jurisdiction of the City of Virginia Beach. The park site is bordered by the state of North Carolina to the south, the Atlantic Ocean to the west, Back Bay to the west, and Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge to the north. The park opened in 1980 with trails, boat docks, and primitive camping.

The 2019 master plan update describes both proposed facilities and improvements to existing facilities. New facilities are sited to minimize impact to the park. DCR must keep a close watch on changing projections for both sea level rise and storm surge impacts on False Cape State Park. This will require management actions to protect the resources and the quality of the park experience.

Mr. Conkle reviewed the phased development plan to be developed over a 30-year timeframe.

A copy of the Executive Summary for False Cape State Park is available at the following link:

<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/document/mp4fcexecsum.pdf>

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Patil moved that the Board of Conservation and Recreation recommend approval of the updated Master Plan for False Cape State Park as presented by staff. Ms. Maybury seconded and the motion carried.

Review of General Assembly comments regarding Leesylvania State Park

Director Cristman advised that comments had been received from legislators regarding Leesylvania State Park. Concerns were expressed with regard to boat landings and associated parking. He reported that DCR continues to review the site to address the concerns. When those concerns are addressed, the master plan will likely be amended.

Virginia Scenic Rivers – Lynn Crump, Scenic Resources Coordinator

Ms. Crump gave the update regarding the Virginia Scenic Rivers Program.

The following rivers qualified for designation in 2019:

- Pound
- Clinch

- Maury
- Roanoke
- Portions of the Upper James
- Staunton
- Grays Creek

Legislation has been introduced for the Clinch and Maury Rivers. Others are expected.

The 50th Anniversary Celebration plans are underway.

- Steering Committee, 6 meetings since 2018
- Marketing plan implementation
- Accomplishments.
- The kick-off event is scheduled for April 22 in the Richmond Area.

The River Management Society conference will be held in Richmond on May 12-15, 2020.

STATE PARKS UPDATE – *Dave Collett, Acting Director, Virginia State Parks*

Mr. Collett noted the following from Virginia State Parks.

First Day Hikes on January 1

- Almost 4,000 people participated in the annual First Day Hikes.
- There were 73 ranger led hikes.

Youth Conservation Corps

- Applications are being accepted through March 5.
- The sessions begin on June 21 and July 19 and run for three weeks.
- The program is designed for youth ages 14-17 to give them a three-week intensive indoctrination into natural resources.

Additional information is available at the following link:

<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/youth-conservation-corps>

FINANCIAL UPDATE – *Sharon Partee, Director of Finance*

Ms. Partee presented a financial update.

The FY2020 Legislative Appropriation was \$134,811,754

Appropriation Transfers and Adjustments were:

Water Quality Improvement Fund Transfers	(76,341,230)
SWCD Dam Repair	(900,000)

Dam Safety/Flood Prevention and Protection	(5,832,147)	
Land Conservation Transfers	(4,500,000)	
Central Appropriations Adjustments	1,663,140	
	(85,910,237)	
FY2020 Total GF Appropriation Available for Operations		<u>\$48,901,517</u>

BOARD BYLAWS – *Chairman Wingo*

Chairman Wingo noted that the Board Bylaws had been previously distributed with staff recommended updates. Many of the updates were clerical amendments such as changing the Board address.

Ms. Maybury expressed a concern that the draft changes were not gender neutral. Staff agreed to make additional edits in that regard.

BOARD ACTION

Ms. Maybury moved that the Board of Conservation and Recreation approve the Board Bylaws as presented by staff with the understanding that the final version would be edited to include gender-neutral language. Ms. Jackson seconded and the motion carried.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS – *Chairman Wingo*

Chairman Wingo appointed Ms. Hull Davidson, Ms. Maybury, and Mr. Hurt to serve on the nominating committee. He requested that they return to the April meeting with a recommended slate of officers.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Smith noted that by the next meeting the new Virginia State Parks Director and the new Director of Planning and Recreation Resources will be on Board. He expressed appreciation to Mr. Collett for serving as Acting State Parks Director and to Ms. McClary for serving as Acting Director of Planning and Recreation Resources.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Board of Conservation and Recreation will be held at Kiptopeke State Park on April 15-16.

ADJOURN

There was no further business and the meeting adjourned at 2:07 p.m.