

2016-18 Executive Progress Report

Commonwealth of Virginia
Secretary of Natural Resources

Department of Conservation and Recreation

At A Glance

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) provides opportunities that encourage and enable people to enjoy, protect, and restore Virginia's natural and cultural resources.

Staffing 402 Salaried Employees, 19 Contracted Employees, 452 Authorized, and 885 Wage Employees.

Financials Budget FY 2017, \$125.56 million, 55.06% from the General Fund.

Trends
Legend

↑ Increase, ↓ Decrease, → Steady

Key Perf Areas

↑ State Park Visitor Satisfaction
↑ Virginia Treasures Conserved
↑ Agricultural Acres with Best Management Practices

Productivity
Legend

↑ Improving, ↓ Worsening, → Maintaining

For more information on administrative key, and productivity measures, go to www.vaperforms.virginia.gov

Agency Background Statement

The Virginia General Assembly established the State Commission on Conservation and Development in 1926. The original Commission consolidated the powers and duties of the Water Power and Development Commission, State Geological Commission, State Geological Survey, State Geologist, and the State Forester. In 1938, the Commission became the Virginia Conservation Commission and in 1948 was renamed the Department of Conservation and Development. In 1958, the Department became the Department of Conservation and Economic Development (DCED) and DCED contained divisions that addressed Forestry, Mineral Resources, Parks, Water Resources, Industrial Development, Public Relations, and Advertising. In 1984, the relocation of economic programs within state government resulted in DCED becoming the Department of Conservation and Historic Resources (DCHR).

In 1989, following the establishment of Historic Resources as a separate state agency, DCHR became the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). By the early 1990s, DCR's responsibilities included Stormwater Management, Dam Safety, State Parks, Natural Heritage, and Land Conservation. On July 1, 2013, programs related to stormwater management, permitting, erosion, and sediment control, and the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act, managed by DCR's Stormwater Management Division transferred to the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). The remaining personnel became part of the Division of Nonpoint Pollution Prevention. The Division shortly thereafter reverted to its historical name, the Division of Soil and Water Conservation.

DCR works with localities and farmers to minimize nonpoint source pollution into Virginia's waters and the waters of the Chesapeake Bay. The Agency provides for the proper and safe design, construction, operation, and maintenance of dams. DCR manages 37 state parks of which many have newly constructed or renovated cabins, yurts, camping, meeting facilities, and visitor centers. DCR identifies, inventories, and protects rare plants, animals, and communities and maintains a database of these resources. Additionally, DCR serves as a central contact, repository, and clearinghouse for land conservation interests in Virginia.

Major Products and Services

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION. DCR works to improve water quality in the Commonwealth of Virginia. DCR collaborates closely with the state's 47 local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, farmers, urban and suburban landowners, and other land managers to control runoff pollution. DCR provides tools and information to the 47 local Districts and provides financial assistance to these Districts (operational and technical assistance funds) and farmers (cost-share funds) to protect Virginia's waterways and to facilitate good conservation practices. DCR's nutrient management program strives to ensure that farmers apply nutrients to their fields at the rate needed to meet agronomic needs and thus avoid over application of nutrients. DCR's voluntary Resource Management Plan Program, a component of the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost-Share Program, encourages farmers through a comprehensive plan, to reduce erosion, exclude livestock from streams, establish stream buffers, and use nutrient management planning.

DAM SAFETY AND FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT. DCR, through the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board, requires each owner of a regulated *high, significant, or low* hazard potential dam to apply for an *Operation and Maintenance Certificate*. DCR administers grant funds to provide for engineering studies for spillway or dam rehabilitation design, dam break inundation zone mapping, emergency action plan development and floodplain projects proposed by local governments and private entities in order to advance public safety and infrastructure protection. DCR is responsible for developing and maintaining a web-based flood protection plan and associated tools for the Commonwealth.

STATE PARK/NATURAL AREAS/OPEN SPACE. DCR develops, manages, and protects Virginia's system of 37 State Parks totaling 77,000 acres, 63 Natural Area Preserves totaling 56,000 acres, and more than 700 miles of trails.

NATURAL HERITAGE. DCR is responsible for the identification, protection, and stewardship of Virginia's natural heritage resources, defined as the habitat of rare, threatened, or endangered plant and animal species, or rare or state significant natural communities. DCR maintains a database of this information that enables customers to make informed land conservation decisions, and perform environmental assessments of proposed developments.

PLANNING AND RECREATION RESOURCES. DCR is responsible for creating and updating the Commonwealth's comprehensive outdoor recreation and open space planning document, the *Virginia Outdoors Plan*. The Agency develops and updates master plans for state parks, designs and constructs recreation facilities for state parks and natural area preserves, and provides grants and technical assistance related to land use and outdoor recreation. DCR additionally administers a statewide system of trails, the statewide Scenic Rivers Program, and coordinates with the Virginia Department of Transportation on administration of the Scenic Byways program.

LAND CONSERVATION. DCR administers a statewide land conservation grant program through the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation. The Agency verifies the conservation value of donations of real property interests for which donors request state land preservation tax credits of \$1 million or more. DCR also administers the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Federal program in Virginia.

BOARD STAFFING. DCR provides staffing for various public bodies to include policy and advisory boards and committees, foundations, and numerous standing and ad hoc workgroups. Staff provide on-going support as it relates to activities of the agency, meeting management and logistics, applicable Freedom of Information Act guidance and compliance, and records management. Support and staffing is provided for the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board, the Board of Conservation and Recreation, the Virginia Cave Board, the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation, and technical and advisory committees and workgroups for Scenic Rivers, State Trails, State Park Master Planning, Invasive Species, Agriculture Best Management Practices (BMP) Cost-share Program, Agriculture BMP Engineering, Conservation Planning and Soil and Water District Dam Owners.

Customers

Customer Summary

DCR has a broad range of customers, ranging from millions of state park visitors to Soil and Water Conservation Districts, farmers, dam owners, the land conservation community, local water quality and conservation organizations, and federal, state, and local governments. DCR expects to see continued growth in citizen awareness and interest in nonpoint source water quality programs, land conservation, dam safety and floodplain management, and the use of state parks and natural area preserves.

Customer Table

Predefined Group	User Defined Group	Number Served Annually	Potential Number of Annual Customers	Projected Customer Trend
Recreationalist	Recreational Users (campers, picnickers, hikers, etc.)	10,022,698	11,500,000	Increase
Farm/Forest Owner	Agricultural Producers Participating in Cost-Share and nutrient management planning	6,000	47,000	Increase
Property Owner	Dam Owners	1,973	3,000	Increase
Natural Resources and Earth Science	Users of Environmental Databases and Tools	1,263	2,000	Increase
Taxpayer	Land Preservation Tax Credit Applicants	182	400	Stable
Local or Regional Government Authorities	Local Governments and PDCs including 21 PDCs, 95 counties, 38 cities, 191 towns, and 47 Soil and Water Conservation Districts	392	392	Stable
Property Owner	Downstream Owners Protected by Dam Safety Actions	43,000	65,000	Increase
Organization	Conservation Organizations and Land Trusts	50	100	Increase
Non-Profit Agency (Boards/Foundation),	Stakeholder Groups	30	75	Increase
State Government Employee	Employees of the DCR	1,096	2,218	Stable
Volunteer	Park and Natural Area Volunteers	3,000	12,000	Increase
General Assembly	Legislators and Support Services Staff	100	300	Increase
Organization	Media Outlets	338	338	Stable
Interstate Entity	Breaks Interstate Park	1	1	Stable
Interstate Entity	Chesapeake Bay Program (US EPA, CBC, VA, MD, PA, NY, WV, DE, DC)	1	1	Stable
Interstate Entity	Chesapeake Bay Commission	1	1	Stable
Higher Education Institutions	Colleges and Universities	40	60	Increase
State Agency(s),	State Agencies	40	50	Increase
Federal Agency	Federal Agencies	12	12	Stable
Governor	Administration	1	1	Stable
Governor	State Boards and Foundations	9	9	Stable
Attorney General	Office of the Attorney General	1	1	Stable

Finance

Financial Summary

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) receives funding from a mixture of sources. For fiscal year 2017, DCR received approximately 70 percent from the Commonwealth's General Fund, 7 percent from the federal government, and 23 percent from nongeneral fund revenues.

DCR provides financial assistance to 47 soil and water conservation districts to support agricultural water quality improvements. DCR provides financial assistance to dam owners in the form of grants and loans from the Dam Safety and Flood Prevention and Protection Assistance Fund, administered by the Virginia Resources Authority, and provides land conservation grants and stewardship payments from the Virginia Land Conservation Fund.

DCR manages a capital budget for improvements to and acquisitions of state parks and natural area preserves. Historically, the capital improvement program has been funded primarily via General Obligation Bonds (GOB) and Virginia Public Building Authority Bonds (VPBA).

Fund Sources

Fund Code	Fund Name	FY 2017	FY 2018
0100	General Fund	\$118,994,799	\$49,922,661
0200	Special	\$1,021,003	\$1,021,003
0204	Open-Space Preservation Fund	\$700,000	\$700,000
0215	Natural Area Preservation Fund	\$159,003	\$159,003
0216	Land Preservation Fund	\$373,759	\$373,759
0241	Open Space Recreation And Conservation Fund	\$248,000	\$248,000
0252	Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund	\$5,000	\$5,000
0263	State Park Conservation Resources Fund	\$20,758,639	\$20,758,639
0265	State Park Acquisition And Development Fund	\$100,000	\$100,000
0266	State Park Projects Fund	\$99,999	\$99,999
0275	Public-Private Education Act Fund	\$10,000	\$10,000
0280	Appropriated Indirect Cost Recoveries	\$663,517	\$663,517
0290	Insurance Recovery	\$100,000	\$100,000
0800	Debt Service	\$75,000	\$75,000
0811	9(B) Debt Service - Construction Costs	\$0	\$0
0820	Vpba Projects	\$0	\$0
0908	Sludge Management Fund	\$197,988	\$197,988
0910	Dam Safety/Flood Prevention & Protection Assist Fd	\$40,000	\$40,000
0918	Va Land Conservation Fund - Unrestricted	\$1,900,000	\$1,900,000
0925	Soil/Water Conservation Dist Dam Maint/Sm Repair	\$100,000	\$100,000
0926	Dam Safety Administrative Fund	\$143,139	\$143,139
0934	Virginia Water Quality Improvement Fund	\$1,868,702	\$1,868,702
0935	Va Water Quality Improvement Fund Reserve	\$0	\$0
0936	Virginia Natural Resources Commitment Fund	\$10,000,000	\$10,000,000
1000	Federal Trust	\$11,728,919	\$11,728,919

Revenue Summary

Visitors to the State Parks System pay admission and parking fees. Fees are also charged for services such as cabin rentals, camping, swimming, boat and canoe rentals, and special events. The funds collected are used to support the State Parks System and to meet customer demand for services.

Revenues from the recordation fee are used to support the Virginia Natural Resources Commitment Fund, a sub-fund of the Water Quality

Improvement Fund. The funds are disbursed via Soil and Water Conservation Districts, for agriculture best management practice cost-share, in accordance with state law. The recordation fee revenues dedicated to the Virginia Natural Resources Commitment Fund consist of 50 percent of a \$20 fee collected on every deed.

Performance

Performance Highlights

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION. In Fiscal Year 2017, DCR allocated more than \$59 million in funding and in Fiscal Year 2018 expects to provide approximately \$16 million in funding to Soil and Water Conservation Districts for local operational costs and to assist farmers with implementing effective practices to reduce pollution. DCR works with the farming community, local Districts, and federal agencies to expand and target cost-effective agricultural conservation practices (i.e., livestock exclusion and nutrient management) that improve water quality. DCR continues to pursue necessary levels of funding and technical support to Districts and farmers to meet pollution reduction targets in Virginia's Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan. DCR initiated a significant update to the Soil and Water Conservation District Dam Maintenance, Repair, and Rehabilitation Fund grant program and awarded nearly \$500,000 from the Fund to Districts. On October 31, 2016, DCR submitted the Interim Report indicating how the agency plans to develop the final Report on the Rehabilitation of High Hazard Soil and Water Conservation District Impounding Structures.

DAM SAFETY AND FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT. In Fiscal Year 2017, the Division concentrated on its regulatory priorities and conformance with law to include focusing on certificate and permit issuance, developing key programmatic guidance, and advancing Emergency Action Plan (EAP) approvals. With stabilized and enhanced program funding by the Governor and General Assembly, a detailed operational budget was developed. The Department filled several key positions and will continue to recruit for remaining vacancies. The Division launched a significant project to improve dam safety data capture and management abilities to ensure critical data is available to emergency managers and the public. A substantial update to the Dam Safety, Flood Prevention and Protection Assistance Fund grants program was conducted and approval of \$1.2 million in grants under the new program will be presented to the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board for approval in May of 2017. Completion of the Probable Maximum Precipitation study and implementation of the results saved the dam owner community millions of dollars in dam rehabilitation costs. Working with the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, DCR developed and launched the Virginia Flood Risk Information System. DCR staff also participated in FEMA Joint Field Office operational activities related to storm damage relief.

STATE PARKS. Virginia State Parks enjoy continued support from visitors as witnessed by high customer service ratings reflecting that 91% of visitors rate their visit as excellent or good. Positive feedback has also been received regarding the construction and availability of new cabins and lodges and the on-going expansion of yurts in many of the parks. The Virginia State Parks experience an annual attendance of over 10 million visitors with over half a million of those guests attending ranger-led programs. Virginians demonstrated their commitment and support of Virginia State Parks through their donation of 273,159 hours of their time for volunteer projects.

With the help of detailed user surveys, Virginia Tech designed a new economic impact model providing a solid scientific approach to this annual economic impact statistic. Based on this new model, the total economic impact of Virginia State Parks during 2016 was between \$219.8 and \$259.1 million. For every \$1 of general tax revenue provided to state parks, \$13.61 on average was generated in new money that would not be there if not for the operation of Virginia State Parks.

Lastly, Virginia State Parks celebrated their 80th anniversary in 2016 with tree plantings, a new customer loyalty program and numerous events and activities. With the official opening of Natural Bridge State Park, the Virginia State Park system has grown to a total of 37 parks, with additional parks targeted for future development. Governor Terry McAuliffe became the first sitting governor to tour Virginia's complete park system by visiting all 37 parks. Upon completion of his tour, Governor McAuliffe stated, "*Our State Parks offer unparalleled opportunities for recreation and environmental education, while serving as a reminder of our rich heritage. They also contribute significantly to our Commonwealth's economy by encouraging tourism and commerce in every corner of the state.*"

NATURAL HERITAGE AND NATURAL AREA PRESERVES. DCR remains on the leading edge of biodiversity conservation innovation within the Network of Natural Heritage Programs covering all of Canada, the 50 U.S. States, and 19 Latin American countries. Having met a milestone with the celebration of their 30-year anniversary, the program was also honored with two international awards for their outstanding conservation impact and exceptional efforts to conserve Virginia's native plants, animals, and natural habitats.

The Natural Heritage Program's development of an on-line information portal, *Natural Heritage Data Explorer*, is being replicated in multiple states and provinces. Additionally, the newly completed *Wetlands Catalog* identifies previously unmapped wetlands and prioritizes all of the wetlands across Virginia for conservation and restoration purposes. Staff is developing predicted suitable habitat maps for federally listed species' throughout the Commonwealth; these maps alleviate many sensitive data sharing challenges, puts data in the hands of more partners from planning to development stages, provides additional information to guide field inventory for rare species habitats and, through multiple efficiencies, allows for significant cost savings to the development community.

Field discoveries of new species continue, with 34 species new to science and 340 native species not previously recorded in Virginia found by staff scientists. DCR-Natural Heritage is embarking on the third year using mobile technology to collect field data on rare species and natural communities. This technology enables increased efficiency of DCR staff time in the field, has more readily put valuable reference data in the hands of partners, and enables trained partners to occasionally assist with updates to field observations. DCR has significantly expanded its Natural Area Preserve System, which now comprises 63 preserves and 55,995 acres, supporting 386 different and rare species and natural communities. In April 2017, after decades of hard work by DCR and many dedicated partners, the Crow's Nest Natural Area Preserve was opened to the public, with 1.5 mile road and parking area, and eight miles of interior forest and shoreline trails for hiking, birdwatching and nature observation.

PLANNING AND RECREATION RESOURCES. The Division celebrated their 50th year of providing support through the planning, funding, and development of outdoor recreation facilities across the Commonwealth for enjoyment by its citizens. With the collaborative efforts of strategic partnerships across the Commonwealth, the 2018 *Virginia Outdoors Plan* (VOP) the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is currently under development, with 50% of the cost funded by a federal grant. During this cycle, annual meetings were held with each of the Commonwealth's 21 Planning Districts, the statewide inventory of outdoor recreation facilities was updated, and the Virginia Outdoors Survey was launched. Access to the current plan is available through the DCR website, www.dcr.virginia.gov/vop.

Master plans for state parks are regularly developed and/or updated and work is underway on a master plan for the new Natural Bridge State Park. In response to requests from localities, the Division completed scenic river studies on the Upper James and the Clinch Rivers. During this performance cycle, DCR's Design and Construction section completed several capital construction projects totaling over \$20 million, with numerous other funded construction projects in the planning and design stages. New cabins, yurts, dam rehabilitations and multiple maintenance reserve renovations have been completed. Trail initiatives were advanced with the distribution of quarterly trails e-newsletters. Legislation passed in 2015 directed DCR to establish a State Trails Advisory Committee, to convene the committee at minimum twice per year, and to report to the General Assembly annually on the committee's recommendations for advancement of statewide trails. Reports were submitted in 2015 and 2016, and in 2017, DCR partnered with the Virginia United Land Trust to hold a joint conference on Land Conservation and Greenways.

LAND CONSERVATION. DCR will continue to further the Commonwealth's land conservation progress by assisting landowners, land trusts, and other agencies. This will be accomplished by organizing educational workshops and conferences for land conservation professionals, providing state-of-the-art land conservation planning information, maps, and intranet mapping tools, tracking conserved lands, providing matching grants through the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation, and reviewing state land preservation tax credits as required by state law.

DCR developed the Commonwealth's first comprehensive, continually maintained, Geographic Information System (GIS) data layer for Virginia's protected conservation lands. This database includes mapped boundaries and attributes for public and certain private lands having various conservation, recreation, and open-space roles.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES. DCR's performance measures provide the public with information regarding the ongoing successes of the agency's state park, natural heritage, soil and water conservation, dam safety and floodplain management, recreational resource, and land conservation programs.

Selected Measures

Measure ID	Measure	Alternative Name	Estimated Trend
19950404.001.001	Percent of excellent or good responses on the State Park Customer Satisfaction Survey.	State Park Visitor Satisfaction	Improving
199.0003	Number of "Virginia Treasures" annually conserved or completed.	Virginia Treasures Conserved	Improving
199.0001	Number of agricultural acres with conservation best management practices state-funded through the Department's agricultural cost-share program, in support of statewide water quality goals.	Agricultural Acres with Best Management Practices	Improving
19950314.001.004	Number of dams with Regular Operation and Maintenance Certificates	Number of Dams Regulated	Improving
19950317.001.003	Number of natural heritage resources observed in the field.	Natural Heritage Resources Observed	Improving
199.0002	Number of acres conserved for land conservation purposes within the Chesapeake Bay watershed.	Acres conserved within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed	Improving
19950404.001.004	Agency administrative cost per state park reservation made.		Improving

Key Risk Factors

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION. DCR continues to provide programmatic and financial support to Virginia's 47 Soil and Water Conservation Districts (Districts) in order to reduce nonpoint source pollution, generated from agricultural and urban runoff sources. DCR recognizes that local Districts have limited resources and need both financial and technical assistance from DCR. Within its existing resource base, DCR will continue to provide funding for targeted agricultural conservation practices and provide technical implementation assistance to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of pollution reduction practices. A legislative study is currently underway to consider mechanisms to stabilize agriculture cost-share, technical assistance, and District operational funding. This funding assistance is critical to meet pollution reduction goals outlined in Virginia's federally-approved Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) and other total maximum daily loads. While the statutory deposit to the Water Quality Improvement Fund (WQIF) for FY17 was \$61.7 million, there are no funds allocated for FY18.

Within its available resources for fiscal year 2017 and 2018, DCR is working towards a goal of 100 percent funding for farmers and landowners who signed up in 2015 to implement stream exclusion practices, which entails fencing livestock away from streams and establishing vegetative buffers along streams. Stream exclusion is a key practice under the WIP and provides significant local water quality benefits by reducing bacteria impairments and reducing sediment and nutrient pollution, however additional funding is necessary to move the program forward.

In 2014, DCR launched the Resource Management Plan Program that largely utilizes private planners to develop conservation plans for farms. The Nutrient Management Program is working to include more farmland and increase the participation of non-regulated farms. The Resource Management Plan Program and the Nutrient Management Program are key components of the Chesapeake Bay WIP. Significant participation by producers is required for Virginia to attain necessary water quality nutrient and sediment reductions in the Bay and in other waters statewide. Since the launch of the program, 377 plans have been developed but to date only nine have been certified as fully implemented. The agency's primary focus has been on the development of plans and additional resources are necessary to address the implementation of those plans. The agency currently utilizes two contract planners and the development of an educational and training program would increase the potential availability of additional planners. The agency has convened a stakeholder group to examine the funding, training, and resource needs, as well as explore new incentive for additional expansion of the program. Recommendations will be provided to the Governor and General Assembly prior to the next session.

DAM SAFETY AND FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT. As part of DCR's efforts to protect the public and infrastructure, DCR continues to bring dams of regulated size into compliance and provide information regarding these dams such as emergency action plans and dam break inundation zone maps publicly accessible. Of concern is an inventory of aging dams and dams lying in high-risk areas, which demonstrates the importance of continued and increasing support of Virginia's Dam Safety Program. DCR conducted a probable maximum precipitation study to update information last compiled in the 1970's regarding precipitation events across the Commonwealth. Utilization of this revised information is helping in determining the necessary spillway capacity for dams in order to minimize the potential for their failure during large rainfall events and is resulting in significant rehabilitation cost-savings to dam owners. This is all in order to protect public safety particularly during storm events. In the last two years, 80 dams failed in South Carolina due to heavy rains and hurricane activity and many more failed in North Carolina as well.

There are 12 Districts responsible for 104 dams constructed by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). Since many of these USDA NRCS designed dams are reaching the end of their maintenance agreements with Districts, DCR is currently developing a plan for the rehabilitation of approximately 50 high hazard dams.

STATE PARKS. In September of 2016, Natural Bridge State Park officially opened, bringing the number of state parks in the Commonwealth to thirty-seven. The Commonwealth has also acquired land for five additional parks: Widewater (Stafford County), Seven Bends (Shenandoah County), Middle Peninsula (Gloucester County), Mayo River (Henry County), and Biscuit Run (Albemarle County). Each state park, including those not yet developed, has (or will have) an adopted master plan identifying facilities and infrastructure needed to bring the park to its desired level of development. There are over 300 major capital projects identified in these publicly developed plans.

Increased demand for services from customers has required DCR to use a combination of seasonal and year-round wage employees and volunteers, and DCR continues to look for ways to meet continued demands within existing resources. DCR is working on strategies to open the land-banked park properties for limited public use until funds are available for traditional capital improvements. Additionally, there is a need for continued capital improvements to the State Parks System to address general maintenance and infrastructure improvements. In Fiscal Year 2015, DCR received slightly more than \$2.2 million to address a backlog of general park maintenance issues estimated at \$596,000,000. This level of funding represents an ongoing need to address critical maintenance issues. Furthermore, on numerous occasions, the maximum capacity level for safe operating conditions of the park has been reached resulting in the Park closing park access for additional visitors. This demonstrates a challenge for the Virginia State Park System in meeting public demand with current park offerings.

NATURAL HERITAGE AND NATURAL AREA PRESERVE SYSTEM. Virginia has some of the most biologically sensitive habitats and rare species populations in the world and DCR manages the state's database of these natural heritage resources. Pressures of land use change and invasive species pose significant threats to these resources. Accelerating shifts to Virginia's climate will exacerbate these impacts on sensitive biological habitats, adding another degree of difficulty to maintaining these databases. Managing Virginia's rare species habitats and natural communities, more than ever, require thorough current data on these resources. Currently, about 30 percent of the community and species information in this database is over 25 years old. As these data drive conservation decisions, DCR continues to seek creative solutions to this antiquated data problem. Accelerating shifts to Virginia's climate will have significant impact on sensitive biological habitats, adding another degree of difficulty to maintaining these databases.

Virginia's Natural Area Preserve System, managed by DCR, has grown significantly in the past ten years and this growth has largely occurred due to expansion from resources provided in the 2002 State Park and Natural Areas Bond package. The expanding size of the Natural Area Preserve System has increased demands on existing staff for biological resource management such as invasive species control, managed hunts, prescribed burning, and law enforcement duties. Management complexity has increased due to increased oversight requirements of easements and Natural Area Preserve System boundaries, and the need for increased public access. As public demand for access increases, a corresponding need arises for construction and regular maintenance of boardwalks, bridges, parking areas, gates, signs, and trails.

PLANNING AND RECREATION RESOURCES. Over the past five years, reduction in staffing levels within the Planning and Recreation Resources Division has presented the agency with a significant challenge in maintaining the level of service desired by programs within DCR, and localities across the state. The agency continues to look for innovative ways to address the needs of the Division, to include critical succession planning as 60% of the division's staff are reaching retirement eligibility in the next five years. The Division is focusing on strategies to continue to address and efficiently manage the recreational grant program, State Park master planning requirements, new legislative programs, technical support provided to localities, and an aging infrastructure within the State Park System.

GENERAL OPERATIONS. Limitations on staffing and funding have presented challenges to the operations and programs in state parks (including law enforcement), natural heritage, recreation planning, dam safety, and programs delivered to Soil and Water Conservation Districts. DCR continues to look for innovative solutions to address adequate staffing within its existing general and nongeneral fund resource bases. DCR also has recognized that its information technology platform needs internal restructuring to enhance operations, particularly in light of recent program

changes. This restructuring has already begun within the scope of existing resources.

Agency Statistics

Statistics Summary

The statistics below provide a snapshot of major DCR program activities. For the number of jobs resulting from state park operations, the figure is derived from a model developed by the National Park Service that looks at factors such as park visitation, park spending, and employment.

Statistics Table

Description	Value
Number of dams regulated by the Department to ensure public safety and property protection	1,973
Number of natural areas managed for the benefit of the rare plants, animals and natural communities	63
Number of state parks open to the public	37
Estimated number of jobs resulting from state park operations (from 2010)	3,528
Number of land trusts operating in Virginia	26
Number of written natural heritage information requests answered per year	2,333
Number of species new to science discovered by DCR	32
Number of species new to Virginia discovered by DCR	300

General Information About Ongoing Status of Agency

DCR strives to improve the effectiveness of our natural resource programs to conserve, protect, enhance, and advocate wise use of the Commonwealth's unique natural, recreational, scenic, and cultural resources. The successes achieved by the agency are attributed to the dedicated and knowledgeable staff who focus on soil and water conservation, dam safety and floodplain management, Virginia's state park system, natural heritage, planning and recreation resources, design and construction, public communication and operational and administrative processes and procedures. Achievements have been further attainable due to positive and productive partnerships, leadership support, citizen involvement, and hundreds of volunteers. One example is the successful implementation of Virginia's 1000 Treasures initiative, a goal to identify, preserve, and protect Virginia's most important ecological, cultural, scenic, and recreational assets as well as its special lands. The program, managed by DCR focused on quality, stressing the safeguarding of significant sites and assets and Virginia not only met the goal within 18 months but also has established 1,174 Virginia Treasures thus far.

The agency also recognizes the importance of identifying and addressing challenges that affect progress to ensure we continue to meet and exceed our mission objectives. This is further illustrated by the efforts and commitment of the DCR team to address operational issues identified in an Auditor of Public Accounts (APA) audit in 2014. The agency successfully established new policies, procedures, and processes throughout DCR to implement corrective actions and instituted on going monitoring and testing to maintain a high level of compliance. The results were positively acknowledged by the APA.

In preparation for upcoming years and our desire to continuously improve in the next stages of our conservation and recreation programs, DCR is working on a multi-phase project facilitated by SIR's Institute for Tomorrow to help build *DCR's Strategic Trail Map for Tomorrow*. The agency will focus on key deliverables, current performance and explore on-going challenges to include but not limited to:

- Dam safety and resiliency across the Commonwealth
- Overall water quality and issues related to rivers, streams, and the Chesapeake Bay
- Preservation of natural areas, compliance with latest EPA rulings
- Connectivity opportunities to address visitor and operational concerns
- An aging infrastructure within Virginia State Parks
- Potential impact of funding changes to federally supported conservation programs

Information Technology

DCR relies heavily on Information Technology (IT) for day-to-day central operations that serve all agency divisions and that meet the needs of citizens and stakeholders. Most notably, DCR utilizes IT systems to:

- Implement a SharePoint platform for its intranet communications.
- Model land use practices employed in the clean-up of the Chesapeake Bay.
- Assist Soil and Water Conservation Districts in the implementation of best management practices on farmland and in the use of nutrient and resource management plans for agricultural planning.
- Track payments to Virginia's 47 Soil and Water Conservation Districts for cost-share and operational support.
- Host Agricultural Conservation Planning and Resource Management Planning Modules.
- Support the management of information on rare species and natural communities and protected lands in the area of natural heritage.
- Track all identified dams in Virginia in order to determine hazard status and the level of compliance to protect public safety.
- Maintain Department real estate information.
- Host the State Parks' reservation center.
- Allow all divisions access to Geographic Information Systems (GIS); and
- Facilitate central office operations including, but not limited to, financial reporting and data management; Human Resource data management and reporting; Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) application; telecommunications; and applications development.

There are continued challenges with communications connectivity in many of the Virginia State Parks, which impact operations, customer satisfaction, and safety. DCR is committed to exploring all available options to improve mobile connectivity throughout Virginia State Parks.

Internal Process Automation is an operational necessity for the agency. DCR has designed and built several applications either to address specific business needs where enterprise applications do not exist, or to interface with an existing enterprise application, with more applications being developed. Currently under development is support for tracking state owned assets, financial invoicing, and a repository and workflow for managing employee work profiles.

Workforce Development

DCR's Human Resources Office (HR) is collaborating with colleges and universities statewide to promote the agency to current students for internships, federal work-study and hourly positions. There has also been a focus on attracting students in relevant academic programs, and recent alumni, for positions requiring more direct experience. HR has been working with our Public Communications Office (PCO) to update job recruitment postings in order to better highlight the benefits of employment with DCR. DCR has also begun the process of promoting job opportunities on social media outlets such as LinkedIn, ZipRecruiter, and CareerBuilder using the CareerArc tool managed by PCO.

HR is focusing on improving outreach efforts and developing an agency-wide team to assist with job/career fairs, career days at schools, and

information sessions at colleges and universities. In partnership with PCO, HR is constructing itself in a flexible manner so that it may adapt to the demands of a changing workforce, acquire a diverse applicant pool, and better promote the Department. To bring greater diversity to the environmental field, the Department initiated a Diversity Outreach Internship program. The paid internships offer college undergraduate students the opportunity to be introduced to a career in environmental and natural resources protection. Applicants can choose from internships based on their background and areas of interest in either cultural resources, engineering, naturalist or recreation planning. Internships may also be extended into the school year for college credit.

DCR will ensure that its workforce has the support required to adapt to frequently changing demands, and the problem-solving and analytical skills to respond promptly to requests from other government entities, legislators, and the public.

Physical Plant

The DCR Central Office is located in Richmond and just recently relocated the State Parks' customer service reservation team to the central location. The agency maintains multiple field offices throughout the Commonwealth for Natural Heritage, and the Soil and Water and Dam Safety/Floodplain Management programs. DCR housing is provided as a requirement of employment for conservation officers and other key staff in order to provide constant public safety and security throughout the Virginia State Park system. In addition, the agency is responsible for the development and management of facilities and infrastructure in the State Park and Natural Area Preserve systems. Providing and maintaining adequate funding is necessary for DCR to properly maintain and address an aging infrastructure and address ongoing facility development and expansion.
