

2018-20 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 428 Salaried Employees, 19 Contracted Employees, 465 Authorized, and 1310 Wage Employees.

Financials Budget FY 2019, \$169.29 million, 70.29% from the General Fund.

Trends
Legend

↑ Increase, ↓ Decrease, → Steady

Key Perf Areas

↑ State Park Visitor Satisfaction
↑ 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

Background and History

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. Throughout the years, the Commission experienced several name changes along with varied degrees of responsibilities.

The most recent change, in 1989, resulted in the development of what is known today as the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Currently, DCR responsibilities include:

- Working with localities and farmers to minimize nonpoint source pollution into Virginia's waters and the waters of the Chesapeake Bay.
- Providing for the proper and safe design, construction, operation, and maintenance of dams.
- Managing 38 state parks of which many have newly constructed or renovated cabins, yurts, camping, meeting facilities, and visitor centers.
- Coordinating recreational and environmental programs throughout Virginia to include: Trails; Virginia Scenic Rivers; State park master planning; and State park design and construction.
- Focusing on science-based conservation to protect Virginia's native plant and animal life and the ecosystems upon which it depends. Identifying, inventorying, and protecting natural communities and rare plants and animals.
- Serving as a central contact, repository, and clearinghouse for land conservation interests in Virginia. Developing land conservation data and online mapping tools, and providing up-to-date information to enable timely conservation decisions.

Major Products and Services

DCR's services can be categorized into the following focus areas:

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION.

- DCR collaborates closely with the state's 47 local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, farmers, urban and suburban landowners, and other land managers to improve water quality and control runoff pollution.
- DCR provides tools and information to the 47 local Districts in conjunction with providing operational and technical financial assistance to protect Virginia's waterways and to facilitate good conservation practices.
- DCR oversees the voluntary Resource Management Plan Program, a component of the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices

Cost-Share Program, which encourages farmers through a comprehensive plan, to reduce erosion, exclude livestock from streams, establish stream buffers, and use nutrient management planning.

- The agency also helps implement conservation measures by teaching citizens and businesses lawn care techniques that keep pollution from reaching nearby streams and faraway waterways, such as the Chesapeake Bay.

DAM SAFETY AND FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT.

- DCR provides regulatory oversight for the Commonwealth's Dam Safety Program.
- 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 created, maintains and updates the Dam Safety Inventory System (DSIS), a web-based program that allows dam owners, emergency officials and DCR staff to have current electronic data related to dams.
- DCR provides support to local communities to help ensure compliance with NFIP requirements and other flooding related outreach and communications.
- DCR created and maintains the Virginia Flood Risk Information System (VFRIS) which is a web-based program that allows users to quickly locate and see if property is within the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA).

STATE PARK MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS

- DCR continuously develops, manages, and protects Virginia's system of 38 State Parks totaling 77,000 acres, to include 2060 campsites, 293 cabins, pools, beaches, restaurants, day-use areas, special event venues, equestrian areas, liveryes, mountain bike centers, museums, educational and interpretive programs, yurts, boat launches, retail operations, a chairlift, wastewater and water systems, and 700 miles of trails.

NATURAL HERITAGE.

- DCR is responsible for the stewardship of Virginia's Natural Heritage Resources which are the habitat of rare, threatened, or endangered plant and animal species, or state significant natural communities.
- Services provided by DCR include a database of Virginia's natural heritage resources along with an array of GIS-based models and map products that enable customers to make informed land conservation decisions, and perform environmental assessments of proposed developments.
- DCR also manages the Commonwealth's Natural Area Preserve System totaling 63 Natural Area Preserves providing long-term protection and outdoors recreation access to some of the state's most ecologically important lands.

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*.
- DCR 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.

- 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.)	10,474,134	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	2,000	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 and Performance Management

Finance

Financial Summary

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) receives funding from a mixture of sources. For fiscal year 2019, DCR received approximately 60 percent from the Commonwealth's General Fund, 10 percent from the federal government, and 30 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 2019	FY 2020
01000	General Fund	\$79,394,004	\$134,811,754
02040	Open-Space Preservation Fund	\$700,000	\$700,000
02153	Natural Area Preservation Fund	\$159,003	\$159,003
02164	Land Preservation Fund	\$371,956	\$505,356
02199	Dcr Special Revenue Fund	\$804,763	\$804,763
02410	Open Space Rec And Conservatn	\$248,000	\$248,000
02520	Chesapeake Bay Restoration	\$5,000	\$5,000
02630	St Park Conservation Resources	\$24,693,642	\$24,950,829
02650	State Park Acquisition And Dev	\$100,000	\$100,000
02661	State Park Projects Fund	\$99,999	\$99,999
02750	Public-Private Educ Act Fund	\$7,232	\$7,232
02800	Appropriated Idc Recoveries	\$365,574	\$365,574
02900	Insurance Recovery	\$100,000	\$100,000
08199	Debt Service-Dcr	\$0	\$0
09080	Sludge Management Fund	\$100,000	\$100,000
09107	Dam Sfty/Flood Prev&Prot Asst	\$40,000	\$40,000
09170	Va Land Conservation - Restrict	\$312,500	\$0
09180	Va Land Conservation-Unrestrict	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
09199	Dedicated Special Revenue-Dcr	\$509,955	\$317,124
09254	Sl/Wtr Cons Dst Dam Mnt/Sm Rpr	\$100,000	\$100,000
09261	Dam Safety Administrative Fund	\$142,500	\$142,500
09340	Va Water Quality Improve Fund	\$1,868,702	\$1,868,702
09360	Va Natural Resources Commitmnt	\$10,000,000	\$10,000,000
10000	Federal Trust	\$12,932,770	\$12,932,770

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

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

Allocated Funding - In Fiscal Year 2019, DCR allocated over \$27 million in funding and in Fiscal Year 2020 expects to provide approximately \$68 million in funding to Soil and Water Conservation Districts for local operational costs and to assist farmers with implementing effective practices to reduce pollution

Updated Grant Program - Increased funding over the last several years provided to the Soil and Water Conservation District Dam Maintenance, Repair, and Rehabilitation Fund grant program has resulted in the completion of needed maintenance to District-owned dams. In December 2018, The Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board awarded over \$523,000 from the Fund to Districts.

Improvement to the Dam Safety Information System (DSIS) – DCR has made continual improvements to capture dam safety data and

enhance management abilities to the database to ensure critical data is available to emergency managers and the public.

Migration of Virginia Flood Risk Information System (VFRIS) - DCR is migrating VFRIS from VIMS to DCR for greater flexibility in updating and providing information to communities.

Completed the Review of Grant Applications - In May 2019, the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board (Board) approved more than \$5,668,000 in grants from the Dam Safety Flood Prevention and Protection Assistance Fund Grants Program. This allocation included \$5.1 M in directly appropriated projects to the City of Lynchburg for College Lake Dam and to the Town of Chatham for Cherrystone Dam #2.

Established New Training - DCR critical staff from the Dam Safety and Floodplain Management division participated in a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) National Level Exercise simulating a category five hurricane making landfall on the coast of Virginia.

Enhanced Customer Service at Virginia State Parks - State parks received high customer service ratings reflecting that 91% of visitors rate their visit as excellent or good.

Enhanced Lodging at Virginia State Parks - Positive feedback has also been received regarding the construction and availability of new cabins, yurts, and lodges and the on-going expansion of yurts in many of the parks.

Initiated Volunteerism - Virginians demonstrated their commitment and support of Virginia State Parks through the donation of 272,281 hours of their time for volunteer projects.

Positive Numbers on the Economic Impact Report - The Virginia State Parks Economic Impact Report 2018 by the Pamplin College of Business at Virginia Tech revealed the annual scope of state park system benefits to be \$267 million in economic impact and 3,858 jobs. Every \$1 of general fund support for state park operations brings in \$14.06 in fresh money to the Commonwealth.

Initiated the Opening of New State Parks - Widewater State Park in Stafford County, the 38th state park in Virginia, opened to the public in November 2018. Two additional state park properties, Seven Bends State Park in Shenandoah County, and Machicomoco, located on a property formerly targeted for development along Timberneck Creek and the York River in Gloucester County, are both under development and are anticipated to be open in calendar year 2020. Sweet Run State Park in Loudoun County is currently under development and the acquisition for the Clinch River State Park in Southwest Virginia is underway.

Green Initiatives in State Parks - Virginia State Parks implemented numerous best management practices to include changing the retail product lines in park gift shops to reflect environmentally friendly products, removing small individual soap containers in cabins and replacing with centralized dispensers and currently installing bottle filling stations to reduce plastic bottle use. State Parks received numerous awards at the Virginia Green Travel Awards in 2019.

Alternative Energy - The first electric vehicle charging station was installed at First Landing State Park and work continues to grand-fund additional stations at other parks. Park vehicle fleet now include numerous electric vehicles.

Environment Education and Interpretation - Park visitors have access to quality interpretive programs on the natural world, outdoor recreation, history and culture, either by attending ranger-led programs or self-guided programs. In 2018, 18,861 programs were offered with program attendance of 485,593. Many programs meet Virginia's standards of learning, so schools visit parks for special programs or DCR staff go to the classroom to introduce students to park experiences. The Library of Virginia and Science Museum offer a program that allows families to check out backpacks that include supplies to facilitate nature exploration in libraries and includes a park pass for visiting a park at no cost.

Youth and Career Development Programs. The Youth Conservation Corps brings youth, ages 14-17, to live and work in a state park for three weeks in the summer. State Parks strive to interest youth and young adults in conservation and stewardship as well as possible careers in Natural Resources. This program, in its 20th year, has an alumnus of nearly 3,000 youth. Additionally, the Virginia Service and Conservation Corps uses the federal Americorps program for college age and young adults to work for five to nine months in resource management, interpretation, volunteer recruitment and general park operations.

Innovations Continued - 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.

Pioneering Development - The Natural Heritage Program's pioneering development of an on-line information portal, *Natural Heritage Data Explorer*, is being replicated in more than a dozen states and provinces. In Virginia, this tool is currently being further innovated with the addition of predictive suitable habitat models for all state and federal threatened and endangered species in the Commonwealth.

Updated Maps and Models - Multiple models comprising the Virginia ConservationVision conservation planning tools have been updated. A revised Virginia Natural Landscape Assessment maps remaining intact habitat cores throughout the state, ranks and prioritizes these cores based on ecological integrity analysis and maps key interconnecting corridors between the highest ranked cores.

Continued Field Discoveries of New Species - 35 species new to science and 350 native species not previously recorded in Virginia have been found by staff scientists. DCR-Natural Heritage is embarking on the fifth year using mobile technology to collect field data on rare species and natural communities.

Efforts Achieved in Public Access to Trails and Natural Preserve Areas - In December 2017, a 3.5 mile hiking trail and parking area were completed in the town of Cleveland, Virginia, accessing Cleveland Barrens Natural Area Preserve, including an ADA-accessible viewing area for the scenic Tank Hollow Falls. In addition, by the end of 2018 after three years of hard work by DCR and many dedicated partners, the Bald

Knob Natural Area Preserve will be opened to the public, offering an interpretive trail focused on rare natural communities and the largest known population of Piedmont Flameflower in the world.

Published the 2018 Virginia Outdoors Plan – With support from the Planning and Recreation Resources staff, and in the collaborative efforts of strategic partnerships across the Commonwealth, the 2018 *Virginia Outdoors Plan* (VOP) was completed and published as a web document. The VOP is the Commonwealth's official open space, recreation, and conservation plan. The plan was completed with 50% of the cost funded by a federal grant.

Completed Capital Construction Projects - During this performance cycle, DCR's Design and Construction Section completed several capital construction projects totaling over \$6 million, with numerous other funded construction projects in the planning and design stages. An historic renovation of an 18th century plantation called Walnut Valley Farm at Chippokes State Park has been completed and opened to the public and two pool bathhouse renovations at Westmoreland and Pocahontas State Parks have been completed. Multiple maintenance reserve renovations have also been completed.

Promoted Scenic Rivers Program - DCR continues efforts to enhance the awareness of the Virginia Scenic Rivers Program. An undated website with a focus on the 50th anniversary of the program in 2020 has made information about designation easily available. This, along with staff outreach efforts, has resulted in an increase in inquiries about possible designations and extensions. Richmond, VA was selected by the national River Management Society (RMS) for the location of their next Symposium, to be held in partnership with DCR, VCU and RMS at VCU May 12-15, 2020, entitled Mountain Streams to Metro Canals, <https://www.river-management.org/symposium>. At this time DCR has received seven inquiries for evaluations to designate scenic rivers in time for the 50th anniversary celebration in 2020.

Virginia Scenic Viewshed Registry - DCR, through a partnership with Scenic Virginia, has coordinated with them to hire Virginia Tech to develop a statewide viewshed nomination and recognition program for scenic viewsheds. At this time, Virginia is only one of a few states that will have such a program. The program has been recognized by Scenic America as a possible protocol for other states.

Advancing State Trails - through the work of the State Trails Advisory Committee, and DCR's partnership with the Virginia United Land Trust to hold a joint annual conference on Land Conservation and Greenways. Performance Highlights include: State Trails Sign Plan published to encourage consistency along multijurisdictional trails, publish quarterly Greenways and Trails E-newsletters to keep trail planners and advocates informed (open rates are consistently above 30%), developed a trails track and coordinated field trips on trails during the annual Land Conservation and Greenway conferences, developed a State Connecting Trails map, story map itineraries for attractions near state parks and inventoried scenic assets along the Potomac Heritage Trail through task agreements with the National Park Service, continue to improve the trails and trailheads database with input from trail providers

Administered Recreational Grants —In 2018, DCR administered 11 recreational grants, totaling over \$3.2 million in federal funding. These grants will be managed by DCR staff over the next three years to ensure completion of the engineering and construction phases of each project. To date, DCR has administered 322 Recreational Trail Program grant projects and 445 Land & Water Conservation Fund projects.

American Battlefield Protection Program Coordination –DCR continues cooperation with the NPS, American Battlefield Trust and other non-profits utilizing American Battlefield Protection Program funding. In FY 2019 DCR passed through 12 grants for approximately \$6.8 million protecting 566+/- acres of battlefield lands. DCR collected \$15,000 in fees for serving as the governmental sponsor for these ABPP grants. DCR currently has 20 active grants in the amount of \$4.9 million, scheduled to protect 1069 +/- acres of battlefield lands. DCR anticipates passing through an additional 12 grants in FY 2020 and anticipate 12 new grants resulting in \$12,000 in revenue to recover administration costs.

Continued Progress with Land Conservation Efforts - DCR continues 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.

Launched a New Database - DCR developed and launched 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.

Diversity and Inclusion - DCR initiated Diversity and Inclusion training and increased awareness among personnel and within recruitment efforts.

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
199.0001	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.

Continued Support for Virginia's Soil and Water Conservation Districts - 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. Adequate 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. For FY19, there was a deposit of \$22.5 million to the Water Quality Improvement Fund (WQIF); there was a statutory deposit in FY20 of \$73,757,699.

Implementation of Stream Exclusion Practices - With an additional appropriation of \$5.8 million in FY19, full funding was provided for the 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 Watershed Implementation Plan (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.

Necessary Water Quality Nutrient and Sediment Reduction - During 2017, the Nutrient Management Program worked with Virginia's golf courses to ensure that golf courses have nutrient management plans in place, or are finalizing their plans, to reduce the risk of excess fertilizer polluting nearby streams or groundwater. The Resource Management Plan Program and the Nutrient Management Program are key components of the Chesapeake Bay WIP. Since the launch of the Resource Management Plan Program, 466 plans have been developed; to date 100 have been certified as fully implemented. While the agency's primary focus has been on the development of plans, additional resources have been directed towards assisting farmers with fully implementing their plans and achieving certification. Additional resources are necessary to address the implementation of those plans.

DAM SAFETY AND FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT.

Increasing Support of Virginia's Dam Safety Program – In an effort to promote public safety, particularly during storm events, DCR has focused on continuing to bring dams of regulated size into compliance. 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 to protect the public and infrastructure.

Increasing Support of Virginia's Floodplain Management Program - In an effort to increase resilience to flooding, DCR Floodplain Management has focused on outreach and education regarding flood awareness and the importance of flood insurance coverage. DCR has worked closely with the Secretary of Natural Resources and Special Assistant to the Governor for Coastal Adaptation and Protection in the implementation of EO24.

STATE PARKS.

Staffing and Operational Shortfalls – The last major re-benchmarking of the Virginia state park system was made in 2004. Since that time, numerous properties and facilities have been added to the system along with a significant growth in visitation. In 2018 a comprehensive review of operational and staffing needs identified 254 additional classified positions at a cost of \$27,000,000 are needed to bring up operations and staffing to a sufficient level. \$25,424,251 is needed to support park and program operations, \$274,064,000 for Capital Infrastructure and \$224,471,464 for Capital Development. Many park structures date back to 1936 and are in need of repairs. It is critical to comprehensively address staffing and

operational shortfalls, and to provide capital support to fully develop the Virginia state park system. Failure to do so will lead to the inevitable reduction of services and closure of park sites, lowering the quantity and quality of park visits that individuals, both in state and out-of-state, so thoroughly enjoy. This will directly affect revenues that currently support over 57% of park operations.

Growth of the Virginia State Park System - Virginia started with six parks in 1936 and has now grown to 38 operational and staffed locations by 2019, with three more properties in various stages of development. Parks have become a year-round, 24/7 operations and managing a park is very much like running a small town. There are educational programs, water and sewer systems, emergency and public safety operations, physical plant operations, community and public relations, marketing, and complex administrative functions (procurement, revenue management, recruitment and hiring, etc.) that require a broad skill set within a park staff that may only consist of 2-10 full time employees. A series of bond-supported capital programs since 1992 have greatly expanded the number of parks and the number of campgrounds, cabins, visitor centers, conference facilities, swimming areas, trails, and other facilities within the system. However, staffing and operational funding for this expansion has been only partially provided, and supplemental funding that had been gained was often given back during the recent economic recession.

Sustaining Operations - The park system has worked hard to carry its own weight as well. Over the past few decades the agency has reassessed fees, added revenue producing facilities, recruited private concessionaires, and instituted a major retail merchandize program. As a result, in FY18 the Division of State Parks derived 57% of its operating budget from visitor revenues and only 43% from General Funds. State Parks conducted a comprehensive fee review of cabins, camping and parking in 2018 and implemented market reasonable fee increases in April 2019. While the agency will continue to review fees and pursue revenue opportunities as they arise, most of the potential for developing additional visitor revenue has already been realized, and fee increases may deter future visits to the parks. The amount and value of general fund contributions has remained fairly level through the last 10 years. However, due to inflation and additional regulatory requirements, this funding does not meet existing staffing, operational or maintenance needs.

NATURAL HERITAGE AND NATURAL AREA PRESERVE SYSTEM.

Antiquated Data - Managing Virginia's rare species habitats and natural communities, more than ever, require thorough current data on these resources. At this time, more than 30 percent of the community and species information in the Natural Heritage Resources database is over 25 years old and thus deemed historic and sub-optimal for use in land use and conservation decisions. This challenge and this decay of the data that have driven the success of this DCR Division over the past 30 years cannot be overcome without an increased general fund budget for staff and operating expenses for the Natural Area Preserve System. Accelerating shifts to Virginia's climate are and will amplify the impacts on sensitive biological habitats, adding another degree of difficulty to maintaining these databases, resources and the preserve system.

Growth of the Virginia's Natural Area Preserve System – Significant growth in the past ten years of the Natural Area Preserve System 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 also 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.

Aging Workforce and Infrastructure - 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 as well as by localities across the Commonwealth. As funding has not kept pace with minimum operating costs for the division, the division's budget is currently subsidized by funding from State Parks. A loss of this supplemental funding would most likely result in layoffs and reduced services. The agency continues to look for innovative ways to address the needs of the division, to include critical succession planning as over 50% of the division's staff are at or 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, and an aging infrastructure within the State Park System.

GENERAL OPERATIONS.

Staffing and Funding - 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.

Information Technology - DCR has recognized that its information technology platform needs continued development to enhance operations, and to improve broadband and cellular connectivity in Virginia State Parks.

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	2,055
Number of NFIP participating communities	290
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	38
Number of state parks under development	4
Estimated number of jobs resulting from state park operations	3,528
Number of land trust operating in Virginia	26
Number of written natural heritage information request answered per year	2,284
Number of species new to science discovered by DCR	32
Number of species new Virginia discovered by DCR	300
Number of overnight reservations sold in state parks	234,612
Number of attendees to educational and interpretive programs	478,137
Number of volunteer hours in state parks	272,281

Management Discussion

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.

The agency recognizes the importance of identifying and addressing challenges that affect progress to ensure we continue to meet and exceed our mission objectives. The agency is constantly looking for new ways to improve efficiencies such as implementing a new Asset Tracking inventory system, improving broadband connectivity in rural state parks, and implementing environmentally friendly initiatives that reduce costs. The agency recognizes it needs to diversify its workforce to reflect the current public that DCR serves.

In preparation for upcoming years and our desire to continuously improve in the next stages of our conservation and recreation programs. The agency continues to 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.
- Improve mobile connectivity throughout Virginia State Parks that impacts operations, customer satisfaction and safety.

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. DCR is participating in the Virginia Management Fellows program. HR has been working with our Public Communications and Marketing Office (PCMO) 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. This initiative is supported by the agency Diversity and Inclusion committee that is focused on recruitment and retention. In partnership with PCMO, 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 includes the State Parks' customer service reservation team . 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.
