Greetings to all,

I hope each and every one of you are staying well and able to go out and enjoy the winter weather at your favorite Virginia Park.

2020 was a trying year for all of us. COVID-19 has virtually upended our everyday lives and the lives of all around the world. I consider myself blessed to have a Virginia State Park near my home to visit and explore during such a tumultuous time. It is true what they say, “nature feeds the soul,” and spending time at Bear Creek Lake SP this past year has truly kept me from going completely bonkers.

The 2021 General Assembly is upon us, and once again we have an opportunity to really help our Virginia State Parks.

[**Click here**](http://www.virginiaparks.org/document/vafp-2021-legislative-priorities.pdf) for a list of legislation currently circulating among the legislators supported by the VAFP. I would encourage you to contact your local legislators and ask them to support the bills that support our State Parks. One bill that has thus far made it through the House Floor is HB1804. It passed the House totally unopposed, on a 100-0 vote. HB1804 will now be in the hands of the Senate Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources Committee to approve. HB 1804 directs the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), to develop and make recommendations to fund Virginia State Parks sustainably for the future. HB 1804, if passed, will be a very good starting piece of legislation towards solving Virginia State Parks’ current funding problems.

The Virginia Association For Parks, as well as VirginiaForever and the Virginia League of Conservation Voters fully support HB1804.

PLEASE TAKE A MOMENT NOW, to call or email the Senate Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources Committee members and support HB1804. A list of the members with phone numbers and emails can be found [**here**](http://www.virginiaparks.org/document/2021-senate-agriculture.pdf).

The Virginia Association For Parks fully supports an initiative to have the General Assembly fully fund the budgetary impact of the phased increases to the minimum wage. Non-salaried staff make up 80% of the State Parks workforce so parks will begin feeling the impact of the minimum wage increase this May. Without additional funding to offset each step of the scheduled increase, State Parks will have to significantly reduce services or increase fees.

All of the bills going forward are very important for our parks. I will keep you posted on their progress as they move forward.

Thank you for your support of the Virginia Association For Parks, and the Virginia State Parks.

Stay well,

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