

Virginia State Parks

Beyond the trees ... a city of activity.

Virginia State Parks are like small, self-sufficient cities scattered across the state. Park staff wear many hats and are responsible for managing a wide variety of specialty areas and departments at each park site. The parks provide services and recreational opportunities Virginians have enjoyed for more than 83 years.

As attendance has increased significantly in recent years – more than 10 million visitors annually – funding for staffing, operations and maintenance has remained flat.

Almost 57% of the Virginia State Parks budget comes from visitor fees and revenue. Taxpayer support helps keep parks affordable and accessible for all Virginians.

More funding is needed to ensure a sustainable future for Virginia State Parks.



State Park Operations and Staffing Needs — \$50.17 million

STAFFING – \$27 MILLION

State parks operate at almost half the recommended level of full-time staff. Hourly wage employees fill vital roles protecting resources and facilities and providing visitors with programs and services. Without the benefits associated with full-time positions, state parks struggle to attract and retain quality applicants. Funding is needed to fill 254 positions, which includes salaries, benefits, insurance and support services.

OPERATIONS – \$9.1 MILLION

Because of inadequate funding, deficiencies climb each year as inflation and costs rise for basic operating necessities of wages, utilities, supplies and materials. Virginia State Parks, as a system, is seeing significant signs of neglect in needed facility maintenance, equipment replacement, and the elimination of staffing and services just to stay solvent. In addition to vehicles and other equipment, the annual operating funds requested but not funded averages \$1.82 million per year. At the end of FY19, state parks added 15 new cabins and 46 yurts that also need operational funding.

EQUIPMENT AND VEHICLE REPLACEMENT – \$7.25 MILLION

State parks has more than 340 vehicles. One-third of the fleet, 113 vehicles, have more than 110,000 miles. Many others are more than a decade old. Worn-out vehicles must be replaced with modern, alternative energy vehicles. Other unmet equipment needs include rental equipment for concessions, mowers, tractors, backhoe attachments and utility terrain vehicles.

PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE – \$5 MILLION

Annual financial investments are needed to keep aging facilities, park infrastructure, and equipment operational. Funding for small, critical repairs now will help prevent small problems from becoming large and costly and exacerbating an already unsurmountable deferred maintenance situation. State parks maintain more than 1,300 structures, comprising approximately 1.25 million square feet. The average building age is approaching 40 years and almost one-third are more than 50 years-old.

YOUTH CORPS PROGRAM FUNDING – \$623,000

The Youth Conservation Corps is an award-winning, three-week residential work program that focuses on environmental stewardship, youth achievement and community service. This year 650 people applied for 180 slots. Stable funding will allow 25 YCC programs in state parks each summer. Without this funding, the YCC program will terminate in 2020.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT – \$1.2 MILLION

Trail use is the number one activity of park guests. More sustainable trails are needed for millions of hikers, bikers and horseback riders. Virginia State Parks have a variety of ecosystems that provide needed habitat for declining pollinator populations, migratory songbirds and many other species. These habitats are excellent outdoor classrooms for hundreds of thousands of children each year.



PARKS DEPARTMENT

Hiking, Camping, Picnicking, Boating, Reunions, Events, Swimming, Cabins, Playgrounds, Fishing, Bicycling, Equestrian



GENERAL SERVICES

Fleet Management, Signage, Equipment Repair and Maintenance, Construction Management, Risk Management



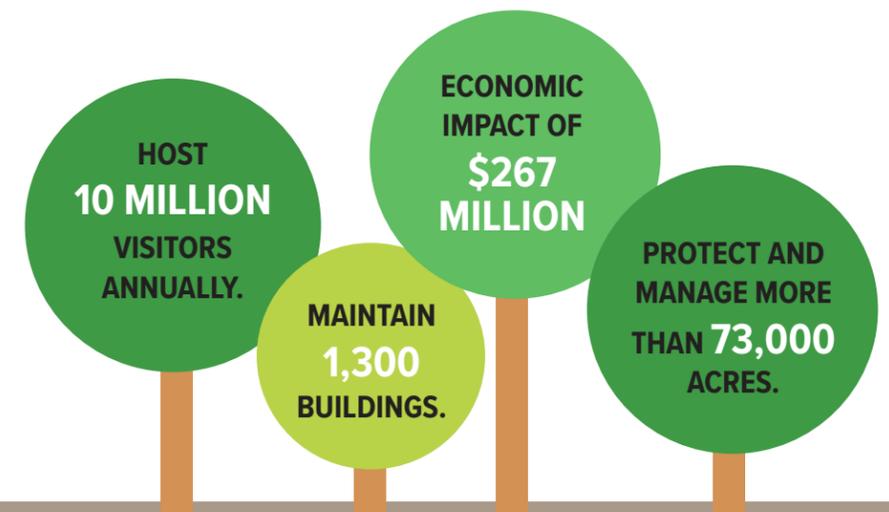
EDUCATION

Environmental Education, Park Interpretation, Visitor Center and Exhibits, Geocaching, Brochures and Publications, Education Centers, Outreach Programs



BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

Mowing and Landscape, Building Repairs, Routine Maintenance, Trail Construction and Maintenance, Daily Cleaning and Inspection, Roads and Parking Areas



ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Ecosystem Management, Invasive Species Control, Erosion Control, Timber Operations, Prescribed Burning, Wildlife Management, Energy Conservation, Recycling

Virginia State Parks

Capital Improvements

So much goes into creating and maintaining a new Virginia State Park – master planning, environmental impact studies, clearing land, building roads, laying water and sewer pipes, running electrical and phone lines, and then the construction of parking lots, restrooms, buildings, canoe launches, and campgrounds and cabins. New park development is accomplished through a phased approach. The establishment of new parks helps communities in economic development efforts. Maintenance of state parks are a long-term investment.



Current Needs — \$289.59 million

RENOVATION OF EXISTING CABINS – \$19.7 MILLION

Cabins need critical improvements. Several of the cabins were built in the 1930s. Others were built in the 1950s and 1970s. Improvements will preserve these historic facilities, ensure future park revenues and provide affordable vacation opportunities to thousands of visitors.

DEFERRED MAINTENANCE – \$65 MILLION

The system is showing its age in facility maintenance and equipment replacement. A backlog of more than 134 projects includes major facility, systems and infrastructure repairs and renovations. Deferred maintenance projects must be addressed. Funding for the past several years has not kept up with the growing list of critical projects.

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AND REPAIR – \$102.6 MILLION

Major infrastructure needs of utilities, roadways and facilities can be found in every state park. These projects support the provision of services and revenue generation in parks and are vital for the experience of visitors. Existing bathhouses, infrastructure, buildings and staff residences are in need of repair. Many facilities are ancillary to revenue-generating programs and are critical to park operations. Projects include bathhouse renovations, water and electrical upgrades, drain field replacements, connection to municipal utilities, and construction or renovation of staff residences.

NEW REVENUE GENERATING CABIN PROJECTS – \$39.7 MILLION

This request would provide for new cabins at Powhatan, Pocahontas, Holliday Lake, Belle Isle, First Landing, and Bear Creek Lake state parks.

BELLE ISLE MANSION – \$3 MILLION

Funding is needed to perform repairs to the house built in 1759.

EDMUNDS LAKE DAM – \$1.5 MILLION

Edmunds Lake, at Staunton River State Park in Scottsburg, Virginia, was acquired in the mid-1990s, and the principal spillway was not functioning at that time. Funding has not been available since the acquisition to make necessary repairs. As a result, significant erosion to the auxiliary earthen spillway occurred during Hurricane Michael in 2018. The outfall channel eroded down to bedrock, and mass wasting of soil was significant. The lake possesses a valuable fishery and offers a unique recreational opportunity.

LAND ACQUISITION – \$22.1 MILLION

They aren't making any more green space. Virginia State Parks protect and preserve land, including acquisitions mentioned in the existing General Assembly Language Item C-25: Hungry Mother, Mayo River, New River Trail, Seven Bends, False Cape, Wilderness Road, Sailor's Creek Battlefield, High Bridge Trail and Shenandoah River state parks. In addition, parks to be added to the approved list by the General Assembly are Middle Peninsula, Kiptopeke, Natural Bridge, Caledon and a site in Highland County.

WESTMORELAND ROAD REPAIR – \$10 MILLION

STATE PARK SHORELINE EROSION CONTROL – \$13.8 MILLION

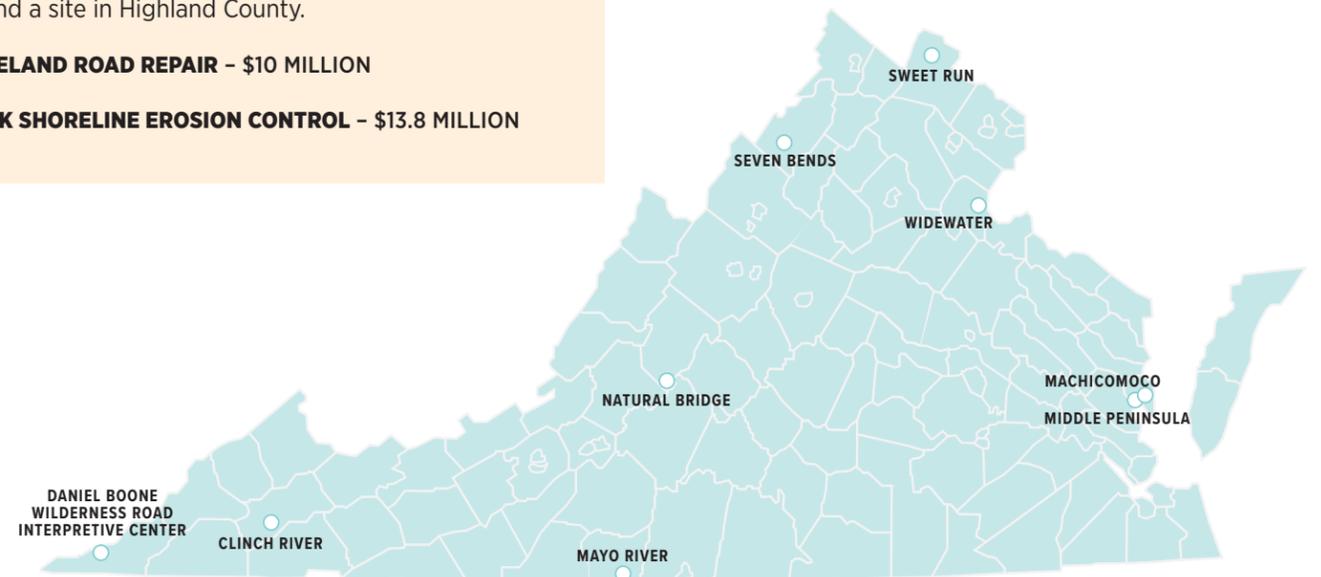
State Parks Under-Development Operation and Staffing Needs — \$2.3 million

Clinch River State Park Maintenance and Operations	\$391,300
Machicomoco State Park	\$509,955 (NGF)
Mayo River State Park	\$325,694
Sweet Run State Park	\$462,986
Natural Bridge State Park	\$516,271
Daniel Boone Wilderness Road Interpretive Center	\$159,252

Future Needs — \$123.8 million

To open or further develop new state parks, these public investments are needed.

Clinch River – Phase I	\$26.2 MILLION
Machicomoco – Phase II (formerly Timberneck property)	\$20.32 MILLION
Mayo River – Phase I	\$19.8 MILLION
Middle Peninsula – Phase I	\$11.94 MILLION
Natural Bridge – Phase I	\$23.98 MILLION
Seven Bends – Phase I	\$6.8 MILLION
Sweet Run – Phase I	\$13.84 MILLION
Widewater – Phase II	\$27.21 MILLION



HISTORIC RESOURCES

Battlefields, Archeological Sites, Artifact Collections, Designated Landmarks, Historic Property Policy, Historic Surveys

PUBLIC UTILITIES

Public Water and Wastewater Systems, Electric Grid, Highway Maintenance, Refuse Collection, Dam Safety, Stormwater Management

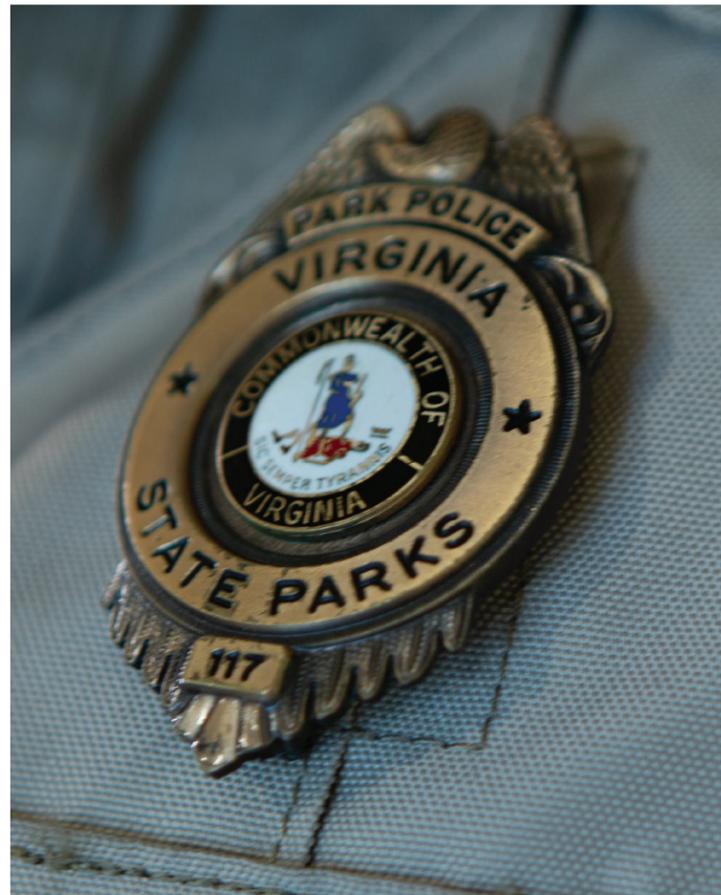
REAL PROPERTY

Park Boundary, Easement and Encroachment Management, Acquisitions, Covenants, Landowner Liaison

Virginia State Parks

Community Policing Since 1936

Virginia State Parks and Natural Area Preserves are kept safe by Conservation Officers – officers who need to be treated like their law enforcement peers by being included in the Virginia Law Officers’ Retirement System (VaLORS).



Virginia Law Officers’ Retirement System (VaLORS) – \$480,000

Conservation officers in Virginia State Parks and the Virginia Natural Heritage Program are under the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, a law enforcement agency accredited by the Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission (VLEPSC) since March 2010.

The officers are recognized by the General Assembly as law enforcement officers in the Code of Virginia, §9.1-101 and §10.1-117 and are included in six other code sections that acknowledge the daily threats law enforcement officers face.

DCR conservation officers complete the 22-week Basic Law Enforcement Training at the Cardinal Criminal Justice Academy in Salem, Virginia. They train alongside officers from 34 jurisdictions including Roanoke, Blacksburg, Radford, Christiansburg, Virginia Tech and other county sheriff departments. DCR conservation officers are also instructors at the academy. **DCR conservation officers are not members of the Virginia Law Officers’ Retirement System (VaLORS), whereas their classmates at the academy, from different jurisdictions, receive additional hazardous-duty retirement benefits.**

The DCR law enforcement program is regulated by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). Upon graduation from the academy, conservation officers complete DCR’s Field Training Program, which consists of 160 hours of mentoring by a senior field training officer and completion of 95 DCJS objectives.

A 2008 report by Virginia’s Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission, “Review of State Employee Total Compensation,” supported including DCR conservation officers in VaLORS.

In 2018, officers helped other agencies 47 times, performed more than 100 arrests, made 147 traffic stops and recorded a total of 656 incidences.

Also in 2018, the conservation officers for Breaks Interstate Park, who are equal to other state park officers and are trained and commissioned through DCR, received law enforcement retirement benefits. This creates an inequitable application across the ranks of DCR conservation officers.

Conservation officers protect and preserve the lives and property of our citizens and their guests while protecting the commonwealth’s irreplaceable natural and cultural resources. They are among Virginia’s best-trained law enforcement officers. Throughout their history, they have practiced community policing in state parks and natural areas, and they’ve provided comfort and peace of mind to outdoor enthusiasts. The retention of highly trained and qualified officers in whom DCR has invested is critical to the sustainability and future of Virginia State Parks and Natural Areas.



PUBLIC SAFETY

Law Enforcement, Emergency Planning, Emergency Response, CPR and First Aid, Continuity of Operations, Investigations, Search and Rescue, Safety Inspections, Forest Firefighting

HUMAN RESOURCES

Recruitment and Hiring, Employee Management, Training and Skills Evaluation, Payroll, Employee Safety and OSHA

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Park Friends Groups, Community Organizations, Park Volunteers, Federal, State, and local Government Liaison, Festivals and Parades, Charity Events, AmeriCorps, Youth Conservation Corps

