

Virginia State Parks **are...**



Important to Virginians



A wise investment of public money



Important for quality of life



In need of help



Underfunded by almost any measure



A partner with private enterprise



**Mandated by the Virginia Constitution
and state law, embodied in the
Department of Conservation and
Recreation mission.**



Important to Virginians

Virginia State Parks hosted 8.9 million visits in 2015.¹

43%
of households
visit state parks
each year.²



1,300
volunteers and groups
donated **227,467**
hours of work worth
\$5.9 million.³

Notes

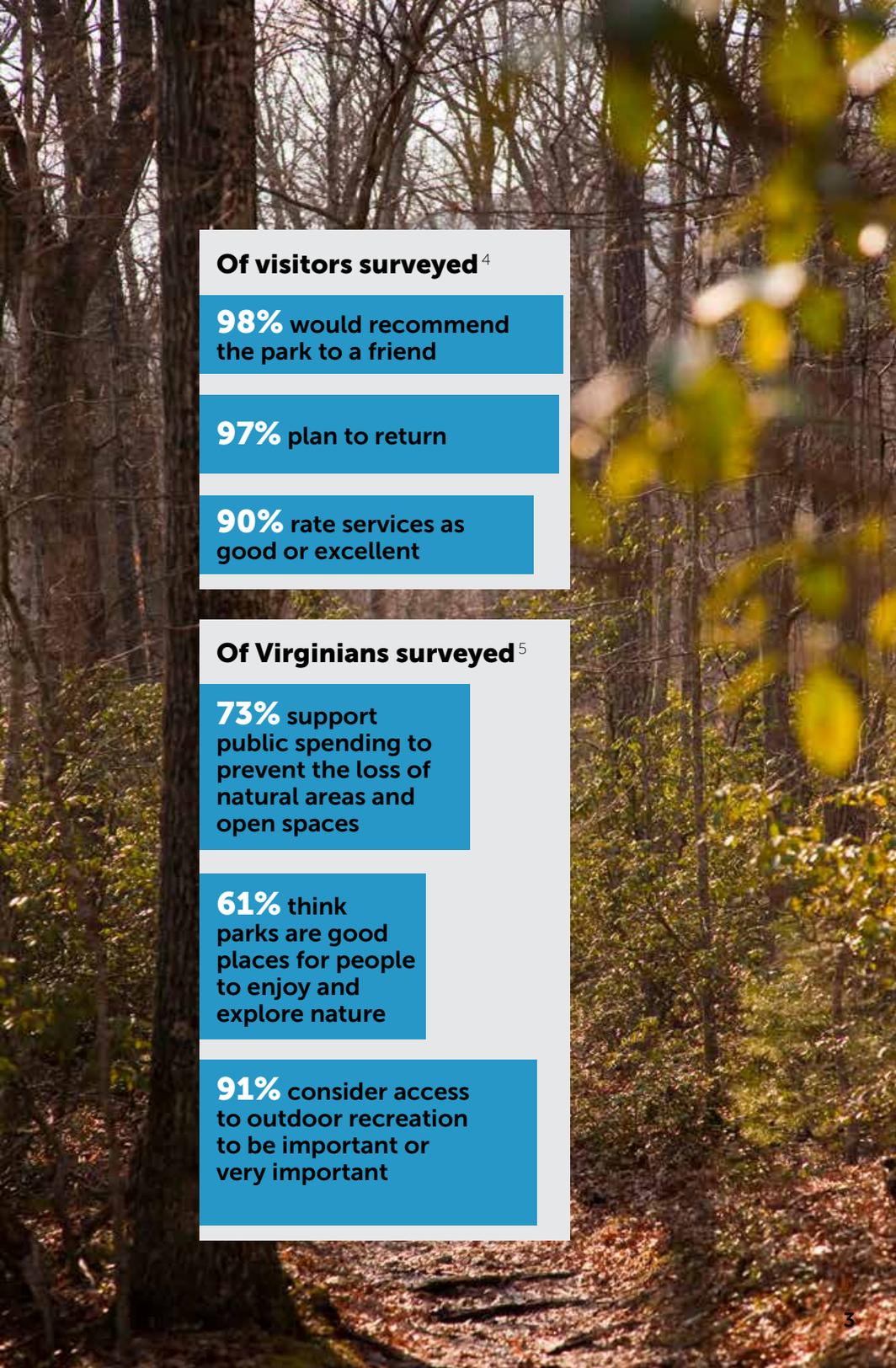
¹ 2015 Annual Virginia State Parks attendance, internal document

² 2006 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey (DCR)

³ DCR calculations from Volunteer Database using the national standard: www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time.

⁴ "Virginia State Parks Your Comments Count Survey Results, Annual Report for 2015" (Virginia Tech, Magnini, 2016)

⁵ 2011 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey (DCR)



Of visitors surveyed⁴

98% would recommend
the park to a friend

97% plan to return

90% rate services as
good or excellent

Of Virginians surveyed⁵

73% support
public spending to
prevent the loss of
natural areas and
open spaces

61% think
parks are good
places for people
to enjoy and
explore nature

91% consider access
to outdoor recreation
to be important or
very important

A wise investment of public money

The total economic significance of Virginia State Parks during 2015 was \$222.8 million.¹

Virginia's State Parks generate half of their operating costs from visitor fees.²



Virginia's State Parks attract **\$171 million** in "new money" to the state each year at a cost of about **\$18 million** in general funds.²

Notes

¹ "Virginia State Parks Economic Impact Report 2015" (Virginia Tech, Magnini)

² "Virginia State Parks Economic Impact Report 2015" (Virginia Tech, Magnini); 2016 VSP operating budget

³ "The Impact of Parks on Property Values: Empirical Evidence from the Past Two Decades" (John Crompton, 2005)



For every **\$1** of general tax revenue spent on Virginia's State Parks, **\$8.26** in "fresh money" is created in the Commonwealth.¹



On average, property values adjacent to state parks increase by **20%**.³



Virginia State Parks create **2,571** private and public jobs.¹

Important for quality of life

Studies indicate that direct exposure to nature can relieve the symptoms of attention-deficit disorders, improve resistance to stress and depression, increase self-esteem, stimulate cognitive development and creativity, and reduce myopia and lower child obesity.¹

Parks are attractive to businesses seeking to relocate or build new facilities—businesses and industries want to locate where their employees want to live.²

State parks fill a critical niche where outdoor resources are protected and people have the opportunity to use and interact with these resources.

Notes:

¹ “Benefits of Connecting Children with Nature” (North Carolina State Univ., 2012)

² Conclusion drawn from several sources including “How to Bring Business to Small Towns” (Billie Jo Jannen, Demand Media) and “What Attracts Entrepreneurs to Non-Metro Communities” (William Shuffstall, Penn State Extension Service, 2016)



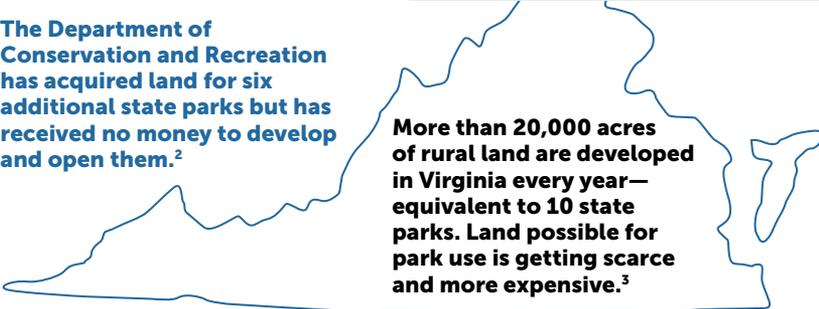
In need of help

Of Virginians surveyed¹

just
22%

feel natural and open spaces are adequately protected.

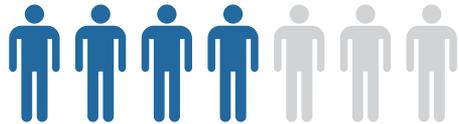
The Department of Conservation and Recreation has acquired land for six additional state parks but has received no money to develop and open them.²



More than 20,000 acres of rural land are developed in Virginia every year—equivalent to 10 state parks. Land possible for park use is getting scarce and more expensive.³



in needed capital improvement projects to meet current and near-future demands have been identified.²



According to completed state park master plans, an **additional 205** full-time positions are needed to maintain quality services, facilities and programs for park visitors.²



Fewer than half of all state parks have an employee dedicated to educational programming for the public and school groups.²

Notes

¹ 2011 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey (DCR)

² Internal DCR documents

³ Extrapolated from "Virginia Performs" page on "Virginia.gov" website

Underfunded by almost any measure

Unlike many states, Virginia's parks have no dedicated funding sources such as special taxes on real estate transactions, taxes on recreational equipment or activities, etc.¹

In the past 25 years, the number of staffed Virginia State Parks has increased by **25** percent as park attendance grew by **127** percent.²

Virginia State Parks has lost 10 percent of general funds over the past 25 years when calculated on a per park basis (adjusted to 2015 dollars).³



Virginia State Parks operates annually on only **\$2.37** in general funds per person in Virginia.⁴ (That's around 7 cents per person, per park.)⁵

Virginia ranks **42nd** in the U.S. in per capita state spending on the state park system.

Virginia ranks **44th** in the U.S. in the portion of the state budget dedicated to state parks.¹



Notes:

¹ "2015 Annual Information Exchange" (National Association of State Park Directors, 2016)

² Annual state park attendance records

³ Calculated using historic state park budget information plus standard inflation calculator based on Consumer Price Index

⁴ Calculated by dividing 2015 state park general fund expenditures by state population

⁵ Assumes 36 state parks

A partner with private enterprise

A mix of public and private campgrounds in an area is likely to draw more customers to both.²

Most campers prefer a mix of private and public campgrounds, but they prefer public campgrounds by a two to one margin.³

Of Virginians surveyed¹

84% say it is important or very important to have camping in a state park.



Choice of campground is primarily driven by the activities the campers seek and public campgrounds provide more of those activities (especially the primarily preferred activity, hiking).²



When park campers were asked where they would go if that state park did not exist, they were five times more likely to say they would go to another state park than a private campground.⁴

Notes

¹ 2011 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey

² "Determinants of Campground Success: A Review of Research" (Virginia Tech, Magnini, 2013)

³ "2016 North American Camping Report" (Cairn Consulting for Campgrounds of America, 2016)

⁴ "Virginia State Parks Your Comments Count Survey Results, Annual Report for 2015" (Virginia Tech, Magnini, 2016)

Mandated by the Virginia Constitution and state law, embodied in the Department of Conservation and Recreation mission

Virginia Constitution, Article XI, Section 1: States it is the policy of the Commonwealth to “conserve, develop, and utilize” natural resources and lands and to protect air, land, water and historic sites from damage for the enjoyment and welfare of Virginians. **Section 2:** Authorizes the legislature and state agencies to take actions, acquire land, and enter into public or private agreements, etc. for these purposes.

Code of Virginia, 10.1-200: Gives the Department of Conservation and Recreation authority to “facilitate and encourage the public use of parks and recreational areas, ... including, but not limited to: parks, forests, camping grounds, fishing and hunting grounds, scenic areas, waters and highways, boat landings, beaches and other areas of public access to navigable waters.”

DCR Mission: “To provide opportunities that encourage and enable people to enjoy, protect and restore Virginia’s natural and cultural treasures.”





Virginia

Association *for* Parks

The Virginia Association for Parks lets you be a voice for parks in Virginia. To get involved visit www.viriniaparks.org

