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.
Virginia State Parks hosted 8.9 million visits in 2015.  

43% of households visit state parks each year.

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

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 surveyed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>98%</td>
<td>would recommend the park to a friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97%</td>
<td>plan to return</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90%</td>
<td>rate services as good or excellent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Of Virginians surveyed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>73%</td>
<td>support public spending to prevent the loss of natural areas and open spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61%</td>
<td>think parks are good places for people to enjoy and explore nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91%</td>
<td>consider access to outdoor recreation to be important or very important</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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

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

For every $1 of general tax revenue spent on Virginia’s State Parks, $8.26 in “fresh money” is created in the Commonwealth.¹

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

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
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
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.

Of Virginians surveyed

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

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

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).

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 Kampgrounds of America, 2016)
4 “Virginia State Parks Your Comments Count Survey Results, Annual Report for 2015” (Virginia Tech, Magnini, 2016)
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.”
The Virginia Association for Parks lets you be a voice for parks in Virginia. To get involved visit www.virginiaparks.org