Presentation to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources and House Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources

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*State Parks * Soil and Water Conservation * Natural Heritage * Outdoor Recreation Planning * Land Conservation * Dam Safety and Floodplain Management * Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance
Agency Mission

- Conserve, protect, and enhance resource lands
- Improve the quality of the Chesapeake Bay and our rivers and streams
- Promote the stewardship and enjoyment of natural, cultural and outdoor recreational resources
- Ensure the public’s safety (conservation officers, dam safety, floodplain mgt.)
Agency Overview

• Award-winning Virginia State Park System
• Lead Water Quality Agency for Nonpoint Source
• Key Role in Chesapeake Bay Protection
• Internationally recognized Natural Heritage Program
• Lead State Outdoor Recreation Planning
• Protect Dam Safety & Floodplain Management
• Integral part of Virginia’s Land Conservation Efforts
DCR Boards

Policy Boards
• Board of Conservation and Recreation
• Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board
• Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance Board

Foundations
• Virginia Land Conservation Foundation
• Chippokes Plantation Farm Foundation (separate agency)

Other Boards and Commissions
• Breaks Interstate Park Commission (federally established)
• Virginia Scenic River Advisory Board
• Virginia Cave Board
• Invasive Species Working Group
• Lower James Historic River Advisory Committee
Department Budget Appropriations
FY 2001-FY 2010

Dollars (in millions)

Year

2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010

Total
General Fund
Nongeneral Fund

Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation
Lands Managed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation

1. The Cedars
2. Cleveland Barrens
3. Pinnacle
4. Big Spring Bog
5. Buffalo Mountain
6. Pedlar Hills
7. Poor Mountain
8. Johnsons Creek
9. Grassy Hill
10. Polly Mills Fen
11. Cowanum Wetlands
12. Cumber Hill
13. Cumberlands Marsh
14. Blackwater Ecological Preserve
15. Antiloch Pines
16. Grafton Ponds
17. Bush Mill Stream
18. Hickory Hollow
19. Hughefield Point
20. Damron Marsh
21. New Point Comfort
22. Bethel Beach
23. North River
24. Northwest River
25. North Landing River
26. Savage Neck
27. Cape Charles Coastal Habitat
28. William B. Trower Bayshore
29. Parks Point Marsh
30. Wreck Island
31. Chotank Creek
32. Deep Run Ponds
33. Difficult Creek
34. Bull Run Mountains
35. False Cape State Park
36. Goosecreek Pass
37. Grayson Glades
38. Pamlico Island
39. Elkport Woodlands
40. Unthanks Cave
41. Mt. Joy Church Pond
42. Red Rock Mountain
43. Cherry Orchard Bog
44. Mullina Hunk Farm
45. Clover Hollow
46. Marks and Jones Islands
47. Chestnut Ridge
48. Magothy Bay
49. Naked Island
50. Chestnut Creek West
51. Camp Branch Wetlands
52. Ogdens Cave
53. The Channel
54. Crow's Nest
55. Mason Neck
56. Natural Tunnel
57. New River Trail
58. Occoreechee
59. Pocahontas
60. Southwest Virginia Museum
61. Sailor's Creek Battlefield
62. Fort Ligon
63. Sky Meadows
64. Smith Mountain Lake
65. Staunton River
66. Staunton River Battlefield
67. Twin Lakes
68. Westmoreland
69. Wilderness Road
70. York River
71. Powhatan

Related Information:
- Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation
- Map Date: 9/24/08
- Additional information available on the Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation website.
Department of Conservation and Recreation
Field Offices and Staff

DCR Field Offices
Division
- Purple: Dam Safety
- Green: Natural Heritage
- Red: Soil Water

Map Date: 9/24/08
Virginia State Parks
Virginia State Parks System

- Established 1936
- 35 state parks; additional land acquired for 4 more
- Award-winning best managed system
- Rated among Nation’s Best Campgrounds, Fishing Spots, Scenic Views, Kid-Friendly Parks by Camping Life Magazine
- More than 7.4 Million visitors in 2007 (record year)
- Account for more than $171M in economic impact

Recent Actions
- Acquired land for future parks and expansions of existing parks (30+ tracts; 5,000 acres)
- Thanks to 2002 GOB, opened 63 new cabins, 192 new campsites, 150 renovated campsites, 3 meeting halls, 2 equestrian facilities, new trails, etc.
- Targeting 2010 to complete all GOB construction projects
- Despite recent progress, re-benchmarking of staff and operational support remains a top priority.
Development of New State Parks

High Bridge Trail

- Authorizing legislation 2004; Master Plan completed 2007
- 34 mile trail: Burkeville to Farmville to Pamplin; includes historic Civil War battle site and “world’s largest bridge”
- Donation of rail-to-trail corridor from Norfolk Southern
- 2007 Session provided $1M to begin
- 2008 Session added $7.5M to complete trail and work on bridges
- Opened 1st four miles August 2008
- Became 35th State Park
- Trail should be completed Summer 2009
Powhatan on the Historic James

- Appropriations Act in 2003 directed transfer from Beaumont Juvenile Correction Center
- 1,563 acres along the James River
- Master Plan completed in 2007
- 2008 Session - $7.5M for initial development
- Proposed as day-use until nearby state road improvements are made
- VDOT completing an assessment of road improvements needed at Route 522 and Route 617
New State Parks

Widewater - Stafford County
- 1,100 acres along the Potomac River
- Bargain sale from Dominion Virginia Power
- Land acquired in 2006 using VA Public Building Authority Bonds
- *Master Plan in final stages of approval*

Seven Bends - Shenandoah County
- 307 acres acquired along the North Fork of the Shenandoah River
- Almost 800 add’l acres donated by private individual & Town of Woodstock
- *Master Plan in final stages of approval*

Middle Peninsula
- 428 acres along the York River acquired (Gloucester County)
- Land acquired in 2006 using GOB funds (below market price)
- *Master Plan to be developed 2009*

Future Possibilities
- Grand Cavern - Augusta County
- Mayo River – Henry County
- Charlottesville area
- Northern Virginia
- Richmond region
Immediate and Future Challenges

- Continue re-benchmarking existing park operations and staffing
  - Identified by 2002 Commission on Future of VA’s Environment
  - Updated 2004 to reflect new GOB facilities & new parks
  - Currently 288 State Park FTE
  - Remaining Need: $10M & 117 Staff (including FTE for new parks)

- Substantial deferred maintenance needs

- New park development (capital funds)

- New park operations and staffing

- Impact of economic downturn

- Reconnecting children and nature
Nonpoint Source Programs

CHESAPEAKE CLUB SM
Lead Nonpoint Source Water Quality Agency

Division of Soil and Water Conservation

• **8 Regional Offices**
  Abingdon, Clarksville, Dublin, Richmond, Staunton, Suffolk, Tappahannock, Warrenton

• **Agricultural Conservation Programs**

• **Developed Land Programs**

• **Key Partners:** State Soil Water and Conservation Board, farmers, local governments, developers, conservation organizations, DEQ, Dept. of Forestry

• **47 Local Soil & Water Conservation Districts:** Vital role in delivery of technical assistance, recruitment & installation of AG BMPs, etc.
Agricultural Programs

- Voluntary BMP Cost-Share Programs (Financial Incentives)
- Targeted 5 Priority Practices
  - Cover Crops
  - Conservation Tillage
  - Riparian Buffers
  - Nutrient Management
  - Livestock Exclusion (Cows out of streams/Alt. Water Systems)
- Nutrient Management Plans are required for livestock operations, poultry farms, biosolid users that are permitted by DEQ
- Poultry initiatives: Litter Transport program; use of feed additives to reduce nutrients
- Funding has been unpredictable and dependent upon state surpluses and year-end contributions
- Funding split: Chesapeake Bay (57%); Southern Rivers (38%); Soil and Water Conservation Districts (5%)
- Implementation of TMDL (impaired waters) clean-up plans
Developed Land Nonpoint Programs

• **Erosion and Sediment Control (statewide)**
  – Reduce sediment-laden runoff from construction sites
  – DCR oversees 164 locally administered programs
  – 78% local programs reviewed are consistent with state law
  – 17,700 trained & certified local staff & contractors

• **Stormwater Management (statewide)**
  – Reduce long-term impacts to water quality & quantity resulting from land development & prevent downstream flooding
  – 2004 legislation consolidated three state level programs into DCR
  – Significant regulatory changes underway; locally run program focus – coordination with E&SC at local level
  – Statewide program allows for opt-in by western localities.
Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act
Division of Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance

- NPS pollution reduction and water quality protection through better land use management
- Applies to only 84 jurisdictions in coastal VA (“Tidewater”)
- All 84 localities have mapped environmentally sensitive lands, adopted Bay Act ordinances that provide additional water quality protection, and have implementation strategies in their comprehensive plans
- 95% of local programs reviewed and found compliant or are addressing compliance conditions
- Phase III to begin in 2009 - Focus on local measures to minimize land disturbance, preserve native vegetation, minimize impervious cover.
- 6 professional planners provide land planning assistance to locality staff in Tidewater Virginia
- Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance Board and staff merged into DCR in 2004
Nonpoint Source Programs

Recent actions
• Targeted limited Ag. Cost Share funds to priority BMPs & areas
• Enhanced oversight of local implementation
• Consolidated state stormwater programs
• Partnership agreements with commodity farm groups
• Media and Outreach campaigns
• Phase III Bay Act

Immediate and Future Challenges
• Nonpoint sources much more difficult to address
• Thousands of diffuse sources
• Mix of incentive and regulatory programs
• Lack of sustained funding
• No funding for Ag BMPs after June 2009
• On-the-ground local technical assistance system
• Over past 20 years, stormwater runoff from developed and developing lands has increased while pollution from wastewater and agriculture have declined.
Natural Heritage Program
Virginia Natural Heritage Program & Natural Area Preserve System

- Established 1986; Named outstanding program in Western Hemisphere 2006
- Virginia ranks 8th for globally rare animals and 14th for globally rare plants
- Identifies and protects rare plants and animals, natural communities, and karst resources
- Provides information on 8,200 rare species & natural community locations to aid land planning and land conservation decisions
- Manages the Virginia Natural Area Preserve System – offering unique recreational, educational and research opportunities
- Despite recent investments, over 60% of State’s sensitive natural areas are unprotected.

Recent Actions
- Acres voluntarily protected have more than doubled (from 20,000 to over 42,000)
- Established 19 new preserves
- Added 32 tracts to existing system
- Today, there are 54 State Natural Area Preserves
Crow’s Nest, Stafford County

• Approximately 2,900 acre peninsula
• Recognized by USFWS as one of the most significant natural areas remaining on East Coast
• Natural and historic significance including 750 acres of wetlands, two globally rare forest types; Native American village settled in 1300’s; Civil War staging area
• Protection sought for over 10 years
• Joint acquisition between DCR and Stafford County to be dedicated as State Natural Area Preserve
• Closed on Phase 1 (1,720 acres) in April 2008
• December 2009 option for Phase 2 (add’l 1,100 acres)
• Located in highly populated region; expectation of public use very high
• Will open once on-site staff and operational support is available
Immediate and Future Challenges

• Staffing needed to better manage growing preserve system and to provide public access
  – North Landing River NAP (VA Beach) remains closed
  – disturbance of rare and sensitive plants
  – reduced active stewardship of state properties
  – trespass and poaching violations

• Board and DCR plan to develop 6 to 8 “showcase preserves” (increased public access; volunteer groups; more active management)

• Growing concerns over invasive species in Virginia
Outdoor Recreation Planning
Statewide Outdoor Recreation Planning

Division of Planning and Recreational Resources

- State Park master planning and design
- Construction oversight of DCR facilities
- Statewide trail planning and technical assistance to localities
- Led efforts to develop Captain John Smith Land and Water Trails
- Administer federal grant programs for state and local outdoor recreation projects and for trails
- Administer state’s Scenic Rivers program
- Serve as liaison for outdoor recreation planning efforts on Federal lands
- Coordinate environmental impact reviews
- Produced 2007 Virginia Outdoors Plan, the State’s premier comprehensive outdoor recreation and open space plan

Immediate and Future Challenges

- Public access to state waters, trails, and access to natural areas are the top 3 most needed outdoor rec. needs
- Opportunities exist for expanding & linking VA’s trail systems
- Can be difficult to navigate state capital process
2007 Virginia Outdoors Plan

Serves as official conservation, outdoor recreation and open space plan

Outdoors Survey Results
• Most popular activities
  69% walking for pleasure
  50% visit historic sites
  40% visit natural areas and parks

• Virginians’ outdoor recreation desires
  49% - increased public access to state waters
  47% - more trails
  40% - greater access to natural area preserves

Key Issues and Trends Covered
• Recommendations to meet outdoor recreation needs
• Green infrastructure planning
• Environmental education
• Healthy lifestyles
• Survey data on Virginia’s outdoor recreation needs
• Funding needs and economic benefits
• State and PDC outdoor recreation needs
• Demographic trends and effects
• Impacts of “nature-deficit” disorder
Dam Safety and Floodplain Management
Dam Safety & Floodplain Management Programs

- Administer Dam Safety Act under State Soil & Water Conservation Board
- 2001 G.A. expanded Act; hundreds more dams under state regulation
- Currently, approximately 620 dams regulated; over 1,700 dams in database
- Participate in natural disaster teams & advise localities on floodplain issues
- DCR is state contact for National Flood Insurance Program

Recent Actions
- Strengthened compliance and dam owner education
- Initiated first comprehensive review of regulations since 1989
- First-ever loan round for dam repairs and floodplain (small fund)
- Passed 2008 legislation (HB 837 Delegate Sherwood) to help address impact of increasing development below dams
Immediate and Future Challenges

• 9 of 19 most severe rainfall events in USA occurred in VA and adjacent areas

• Virginia itself has been the site of 2 of the 5 most intense 12-hour storms in the Country.
  - Page County: 24 inches of rain fall in 24 hours (1955)
  - Nelson County: 27 inches in 9 hours (1969)
  - Madison County: 24 inches (1995)
  - Augusta County: 22 inches in 24 hours (2003)
  - Richmond area: 10 to 14 inches in less than 8 hours (2004)

• Grade of “D” on 2005 Report Card (Amer. Society of Civil Engrs)
• Lack of funding for maintenance and repair
• Aging dam inventory
• Increased # high hazard dams
• Need for repairs to number of state-owned dams
Land Conservation

Land Conservation Progress

- 400,000
- 350,000
- 300,000
- 250,000
- 200,000
- 150,000
- 100,000
- 50,000
- baseline

253,874 acres

200,000 to 250,000 acres

20,000 acres
Land Conservation

- Office of Land Conservation - state assistance; “traffic cop”; publications, training, website

- Work with partner agencies, VOF, localities, land trusts, and landowners wishing to conserve land.

- Lead staff for VA. Land Conservation Foundation grant program

- Maintain most comprehensive land conservation database in VA

- Report on monthly progress made to achieve state land conservation goals

- Manage over 100,000 acres; acquired over 25,000 additional acres since 2002

- Since 2007, responsible for verifying the conservation value of Land Preservation Tax Credit requests of $ 1 Million or more.
Immediate and Future Challenges

• Reaching Governor’s ambitious goal to conserve additional 400,000 acres by 2010 requires redoubling of collective efforts

• Funding for targeted acquisitions and matching grants through the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation is important complement to conservation easements and local PDR programs

• Despite recent changes effective in 2007, Virginia's land preservation tax credit program remains among best in nation.

• DCR oversight of the conservation value of properties involving over $1M in land preservation tax credits may be first such state level review in the nation.
DCR Partnerships

- Working with DEQ and Department of Defense on environmental scorecard for military installations.

- Working with Department of Game and Inland Fisheries on hunting opportunities at State Parks and Natural Areas.

- Joint training with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation on educational forum for lawyers and land conservation advisers.

- Working with Department of Forestry on invasive species, trails, and forestry BMPs.

- Participated with Commissioner of VDACS on Agribusiness Town Hall tour.
Possible 2009 Legislation

• Extend deadline for localities to adopt stormwater programs

• Qualifications for serving on State Soil and Water Conservation Board

• Use of golf carts by State Park staff

• Boundary changes

• Administration of funds within DCR