

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

**October 1, 2008**

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Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation**

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

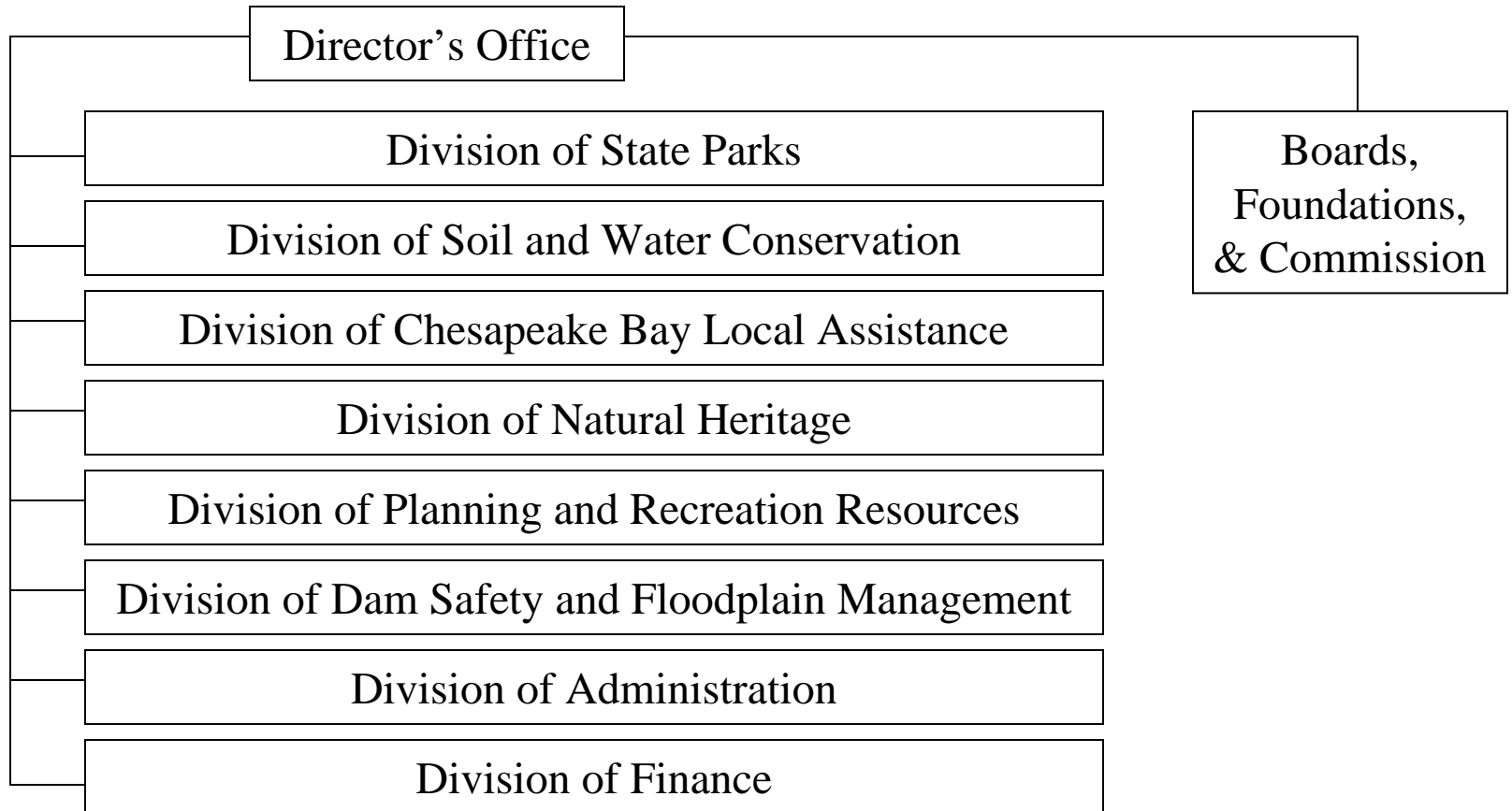
# Agency Mission

- 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 Organizational Chart



# **DCR Boards**

## Policy Boards

- Board of Conservation and Recreation
- Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board
- Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance Board

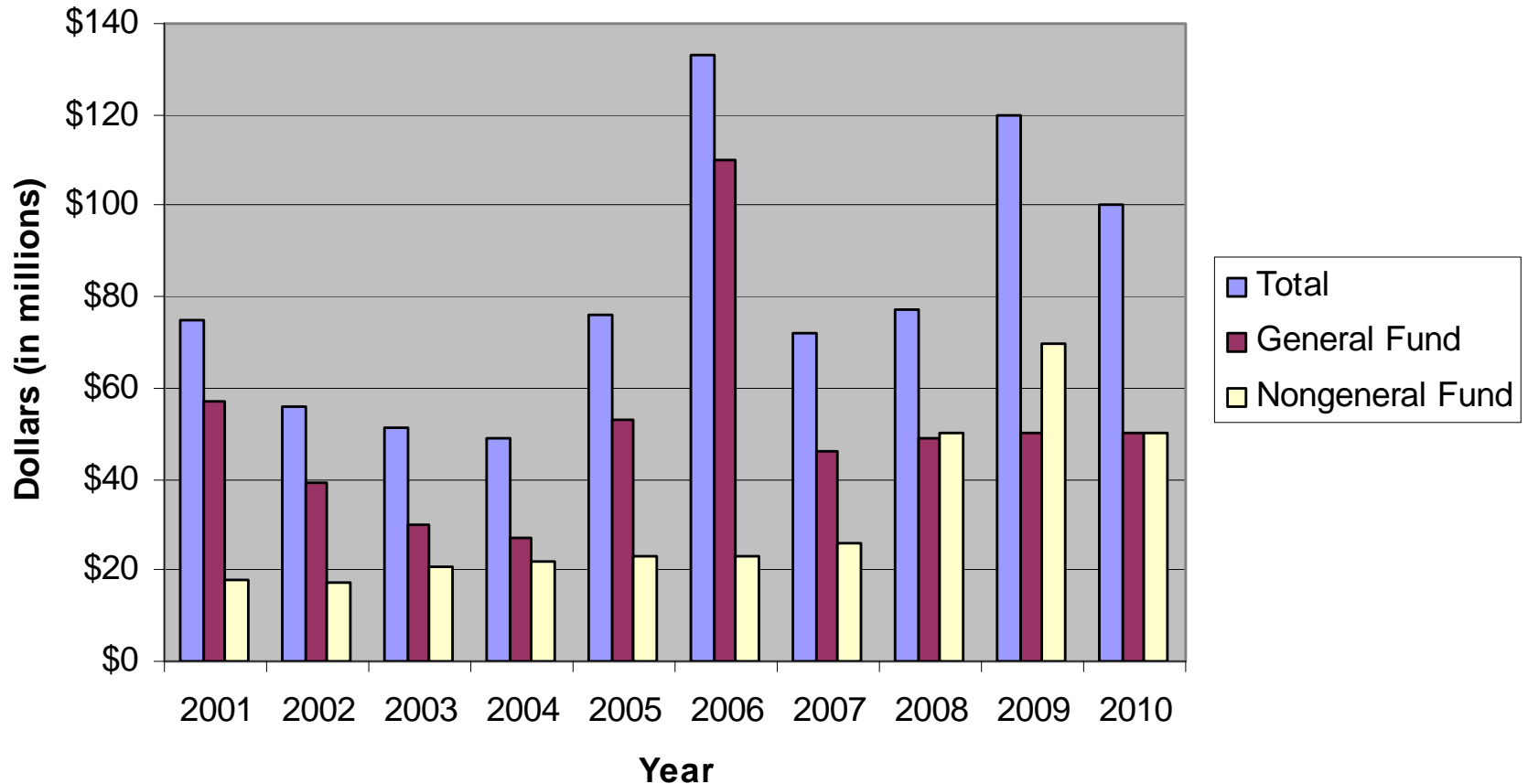
## Foundations

- Virginia Land Conservation Foundation
- Chippokes Plantation Farm Foundation (separate agency)

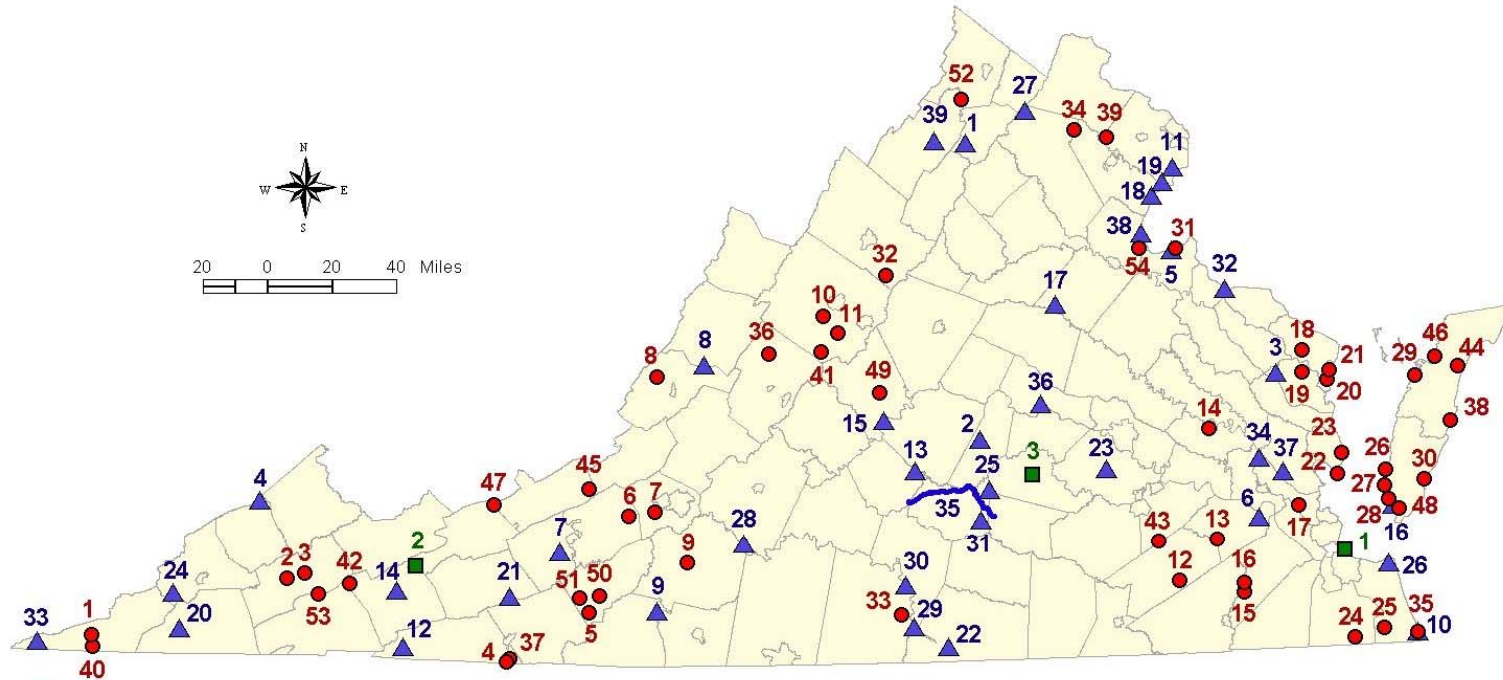
## Other Boards and Commissions

- 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



# Lands Managed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation



**● NATURAL AREA PRESERVES**

- |                                   |                                 |                            |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 The Cedars                      | 19 Hickory Hollow               | 37 Grayson Glades          |
| 2 Cleveland Barrens               | 20 Hughlett Point               | 38 Parramore Island        |
| 3 Pinnacle                        | 21 Dameron Marsh                | 39 Elklick Woodlands       |
| 4 Big Spring Bog                  | 22 New Point Comfort            | 40 Unthanks Cave           |
| 5 Buffalo Mountain                | 23 Bethel Beach                 | 41 Mt. Joy Church Pond     |
| 6 Pedlar Hills                    | 24 Northwest River              | 42 Red Rock Mountain       |
| 7 Poor Mountain                   | 25 North Landing River          | 43 Cherry Orchard Bog      |
| 8 Johnsons Creek                  | 26 Savage Neck                  | 44 Mutton Hunk Fen         |
| 9 Grassy Hill                     | 27 Cape Charles Coastal Habitat | 45 Clover Hollow           |
| 10 Folly Mills Fen                | 28 William B. Trower Bayshore   | 46 Marks and Jacks Islands |
| 11 Cowbane Wet Prairie            | 29 Parkers Marsh                | 47 Chestnut Ridge          |
| 12 Chub Sandhill                  | 30 Wreck Island                 | 48 Magothy Bay             |
| 13 Dendron Swamp                  | 31 Chotank Creek                | 49 Naked Mountain          |
| 14 Cumberland Marsh               | 32 Deep Run Ponds               | 50 Chestnut Creek Wetland  |
| 15 Blackwater Ecological Preserve | 33 Difficult Creek              | 51 Camp Branch Wetlands    |
| 16 Antioch Pines                  | 34 Bull Run Mountains           | 52 Ogdens Cave             |
| 17 Grafton Ponds                  | 35 False Cape State Park        | 53 The Channels            |
| 18 Bush Mill Stream               | 36 Goshen Pass                  | 54 Crows Nest              |

**▲ STATE PARKS**

- |                                 |                               |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 Shenandoah River              | 19 Mason Neck                 |
| 2 Bear Creek Lake               | 20 Natural Tunnel             |
| 3 Belle Isle                    | 21 New River Trail            |
| 4 Breaks Interstate             | 22 Occoneechee                |
| 5 Caledon                       | 23 Pocahontas                 |
| 6 Chippokes Plantation          | 24 Southwest Virginia Museum  |
| 7 Claytor Lake                  | 25 Sailors Creek Battlefield  |
| 8 Douthat                       | 26 First Landing              |
| 9 Fairy Stone                   | 27 Sky Meadows                |
| 10 False Cape                   | 28 Smith Mountain Lake        |
| 11 George Washington Grist Mill | 29 Staunton River             |
| 12 Grayson Highlands            | 30 Staunton River Battlefield |
| 13 Holliday Lake                | 31 Twin Lakes                 |
| 14 Hungry Mother                | 32 Westmoreland               |
| 15 James River                  | 33 Wilderness Road            |
| 16 Kiptopeke                    | 34 York River                 |
| 17 Lake Anna                    | 35 High Bridge                |
| 18 Leesylvania                  | 36 Powhatan *                 |

- |                       |
|-----------------------|
| 37 Middle Peninsula * |
| 38 Widewater *        |
| 39 Seven Bends *      |

**■ OTHER LANDS**

- |                 |
|-----------------|
| 1 Fort Wool     |
| 2 Lick Creek    |
| 3 Tabb Monument |



Map Date: 9/24/08

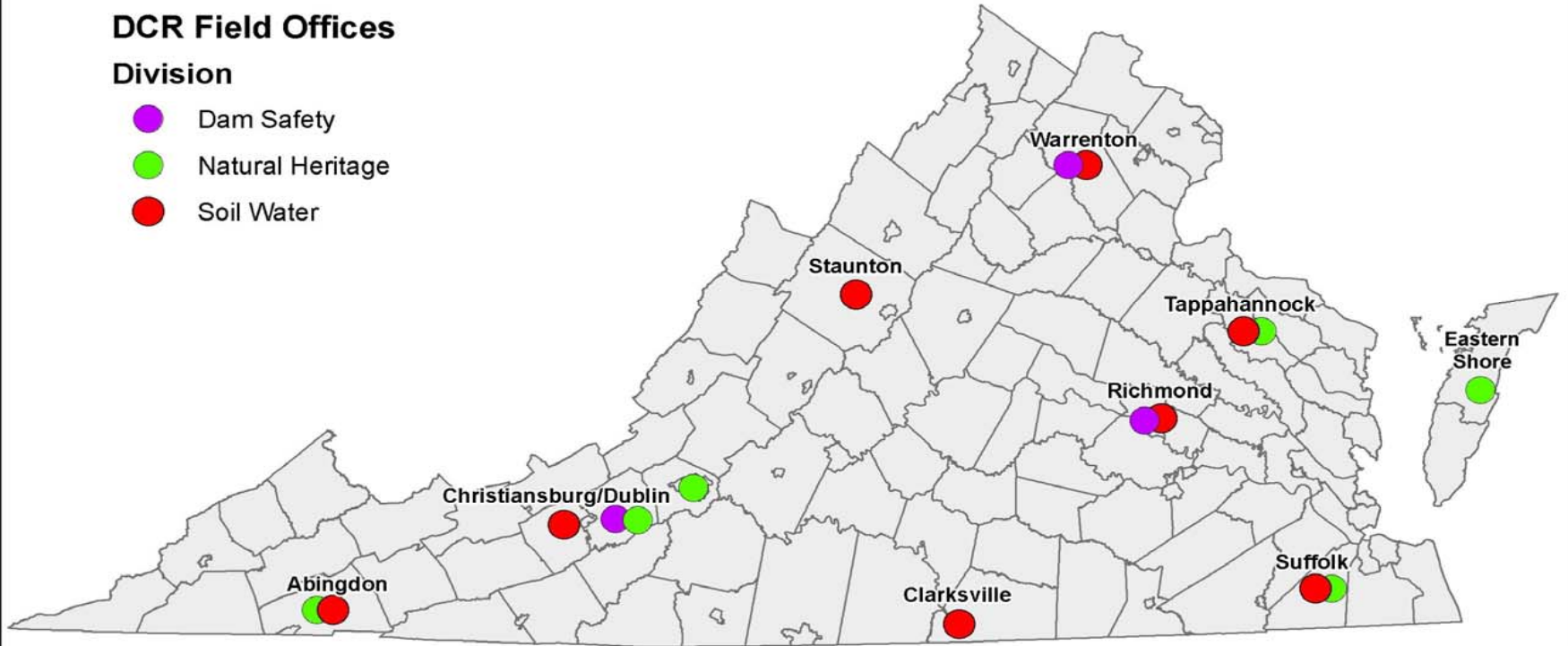
# Department of Conservation and Recreation

## Field Offices and Staff

### DCR Field Offices

#### Division

-  Dam Safety
-  Natural Heritage
-  Soil Water





# 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 1<sup>st</sup> four miles August 2008
- Became 35<sup>th</sup> 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<sup>SM</sup>

# 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
  - Livestock Exclusion (Cows out of streams/Alt. Water Systems)
  - Riparian Buffers
  - Nutrient Management
- 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

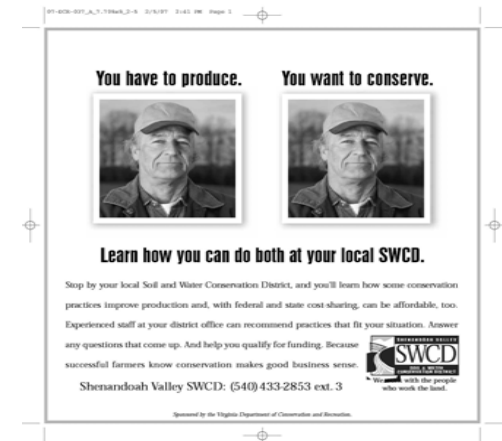
# Nonpoint Source Programs

## 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



**DCR LAND CONSERVATION DATA EXPLORER**

Department of Conservation & Recreation  
Virginia Natural Heritage Program

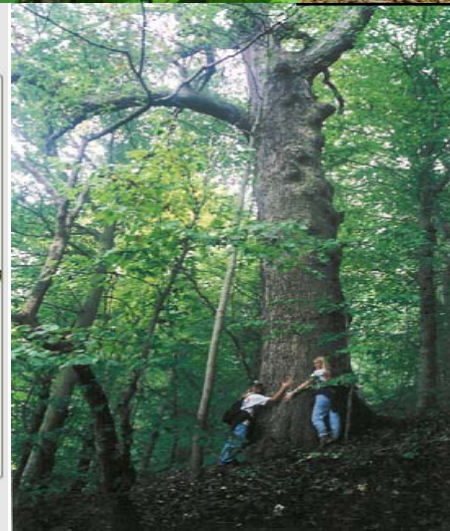
Info Layers Legend Find

Layers

- Reference Layers
  - DRG Quad Grid
  - USGS Place Names
  - VDOT Roads
  - Trails
  - Streams Rivers
  - RMD Streams
  - NWI Wetlands
  - Managed Conservation Lands
- Boundaries
  - Subwatershed Boundaries
  - Digit Watershed Boundaries
  - Counties
  - Physiographic Provinces
  - Planning Districts (PDC)
- VCLMA
- Elevation Layers
  - SYMP Imagery
  - Elevation

Map Results

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# Virginia Natural Heritage Program & Natural Area Preserve System

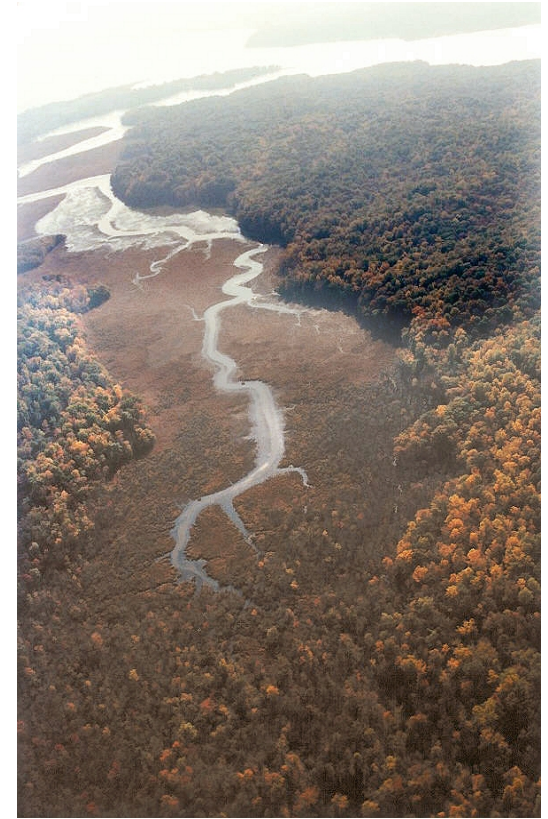
- Established 1986; Named outstanding program in Western Hemisphere 2006
- Virginia ranks 8<sup>th</sup> for globally rare animals and 14<sup>th</sup> for globally rare plants
- Identifies and protects rare plants and animals, natural communities, and karst resources
- Provides information on 8,200 rare 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





**2007  
Virginia Outdoors Plan**

Charting the Course  
For Virginia's Outdoors

"...Johnson and Kopp  
were instrumental in setting  
a better course for state's  
recreation than Virginia."  
—James H. Hunt, Gov.

# 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

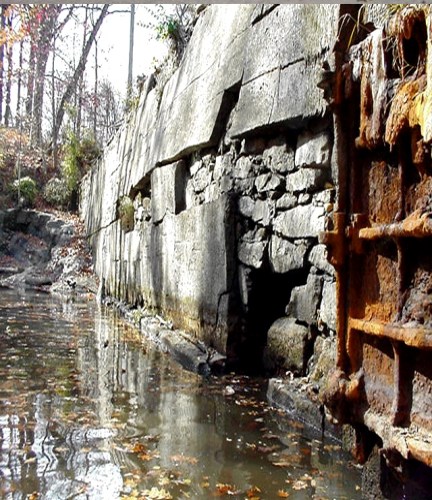
## Outdoors Survey Results

- 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

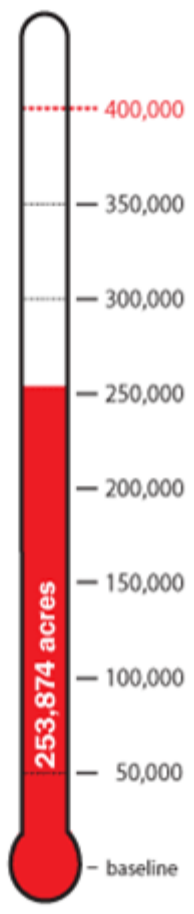
## **Recent Actions**

- 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

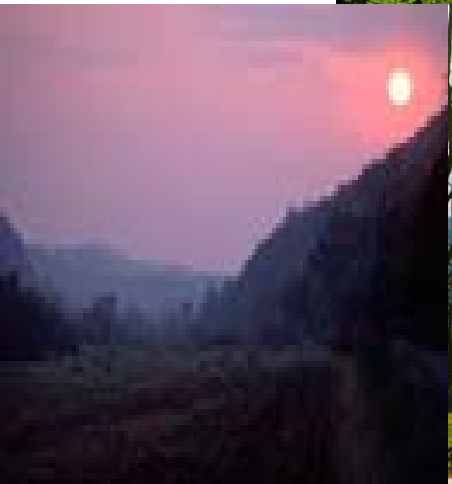
## **Immediate and Future Challenges**

- 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 Progress



# Land Conservation



# 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