

Powhatan State Park Master Plan

Public Comment Meeting

March 31, 2026



Meeting Agenda



- **Introductions** – David Bryan, Chief Planner
- **Why Do We Plan State Parks?**
- **Park Background** – Amelia Hulth, Park Manager
- **Visitor Experience**
- **Market Analysis** –
Josh Bateman, Environmental Program Planner
- **Public Survey Results**
- **Master Plan Goals**
- **Phased Development Plan**
- **Existing & Future Staffing**
- **Next Steps** – David Bryan, Chief Planner
- **Q&A/Public Comment**

Public Comment Meeting

- Additional comments will be received until **April 30, 2026** via email to:
PlanningResources@dcr.virginia.gov
- This presentation will be made available after the meeting and be posted at:
<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/pw-masterplan>

VIRGINIA STATE PARKS

HEART OF APPALACHIA

- BK** - Breaks Interstate Park
- CR** - Clinch River State Park
- NT** - Natural Tunnel State Park
- SW** - Southwest Virginia Museum Historical State Park
- WR** - Wilderness Road State Park

BLUE RIDGE HIGHLANDS

- CL** - Claytor Lake State Park
- GH** - Grayson Highlands State Park
- HM** - Hungry Mother State Park
- NR** - New River Trail State Park
- ST** - Shot Tower Historical State Park

SOUTHERN VIRGINIA

- FS** - Fairy Stone State Park
- MR** - Mayo River State Park *
- OC** - Oconeechee State Park
- SB** - Staunton River Battlefield Historical State Park
- SR** - Staunton River State Park

VIRGINIA MOUNTAINS

- DO** - Douthat State Park
- HF** - Hayfields State Park *
- SM** - Smith Mountain Lake State Park

SHENANDOAH VALLEY

- NB** - Natural Bridge State Park
- SE** - Seven Bends State Park
- SH** - Shenandoah River State Park
- SK** - Sky Meadows State Park

* Under development

CENTRAL VIRGINIA

- BC** - Bear Creek Lake State Park
- HB** - High Bridge Trail State Park
- HL** - Holliday Lake State Park
- JR** - James River State Park
- PO** - Pocahontas State Park
- PW** - Powhatan State Park
- SC** - Sailor's Creek Battlefield Historical State Park
- TL** - Twin Lakes State Park

NORTHERN VIRGINIA

- CB** - Culpeper Battlefields Historical State Park
- LA** - Lake Anna State Park
- LE** - Leesylvania State Park
- MN** - Mason Neck State Park
- SN** - Sweet Run State Park
- WW** - Widewater State Park

CHESAPEAKE BAY

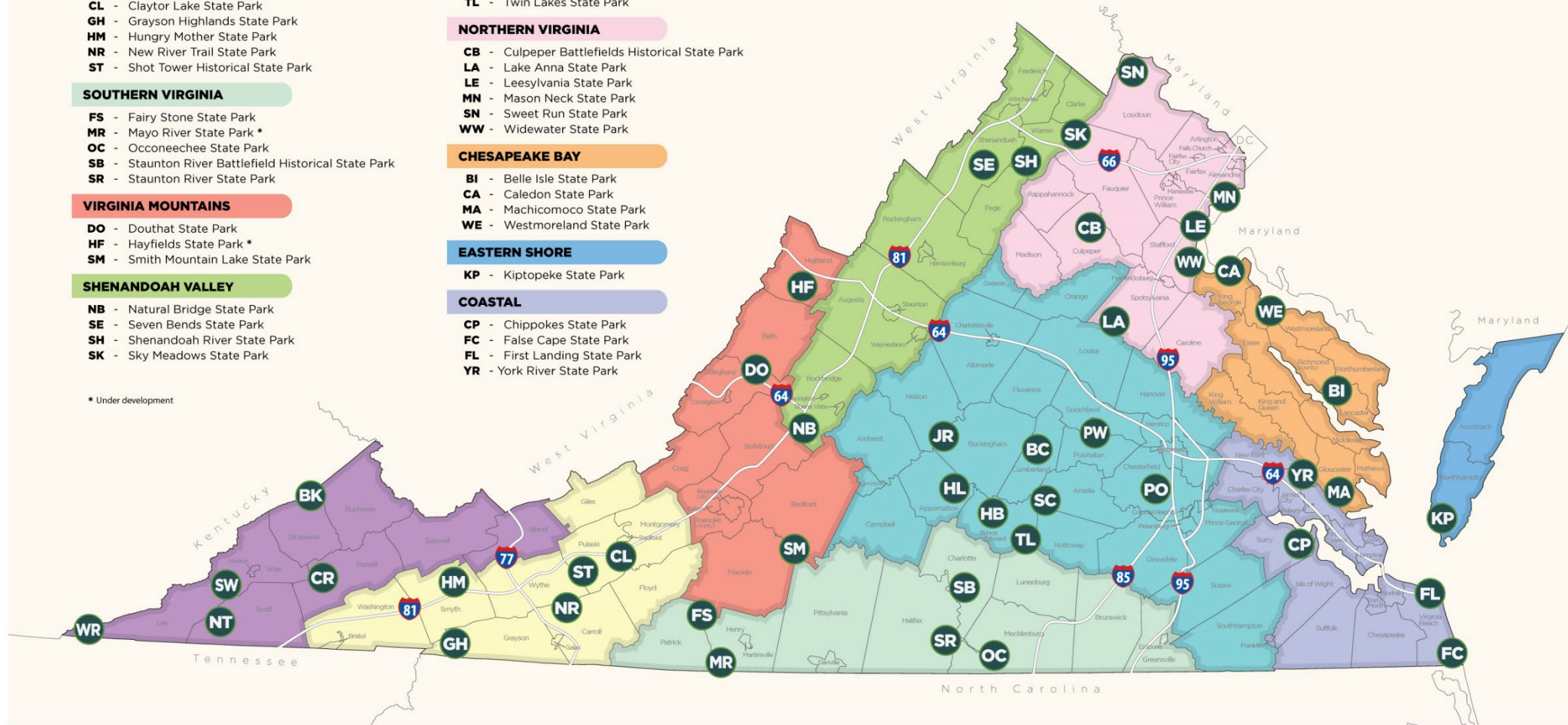
- BI** - Belle Isle State Park
- CA** - Caledon State Park
- MA** - Machicomoco State Park
- WE** - Westmoreland State Park

EASTERN SHORE

- KP** - Kiptopeke State Park

COASTAL

- CP** - Chippokes State Park
- FC** - False Cape State Park
- FL** - First Landing State Park
- YR** - York River State Park



Why Do We Plan?

DCR Periodically Updates Master Plans Because:

- **Things Change:**
 - Trends in the Outdoor Recreation Economy
 - Trends in Community Needs
 - Trends in the Park System



Why Do We Plan?

DCR Periodically Updates Master Plans Because:

- **Visitors Know The Park:**
 - User Satisfaction
 - Safety
 - Convenience
 - Demand for Current Offerings
 - Requests for Future Offerings



Why Do We Plan?

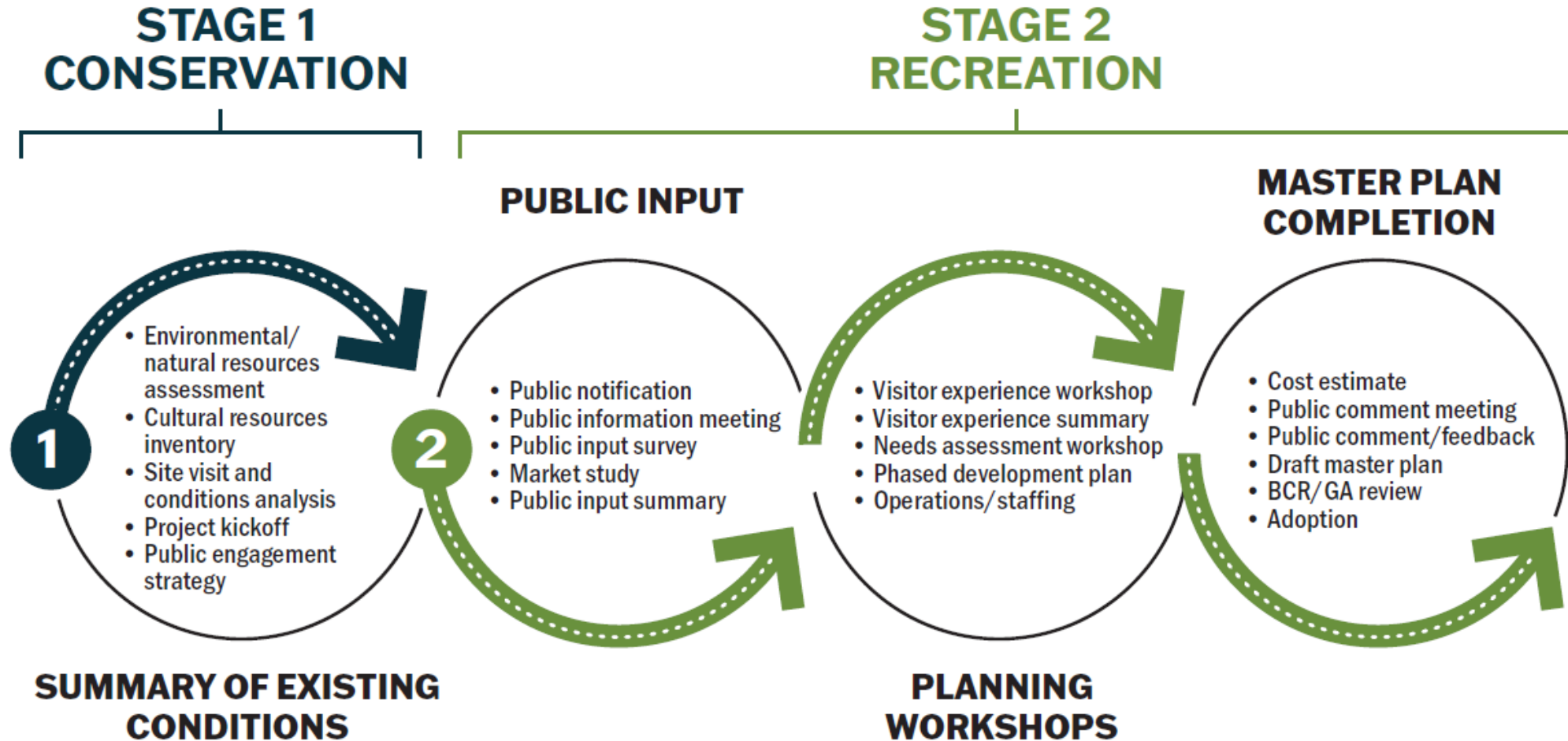
DCR Periodically Updates Master Plans Because:

- **Location, Location, Location:**

- Always learning about park resources (e.g., natural, cultural)
- New facilities need to be sited intelligently based on:
 - Resource inventories
 - Preferred visitor experience
 - The functional interrelatedness and compatibility among amenities and resources



Planning Process



Park Background



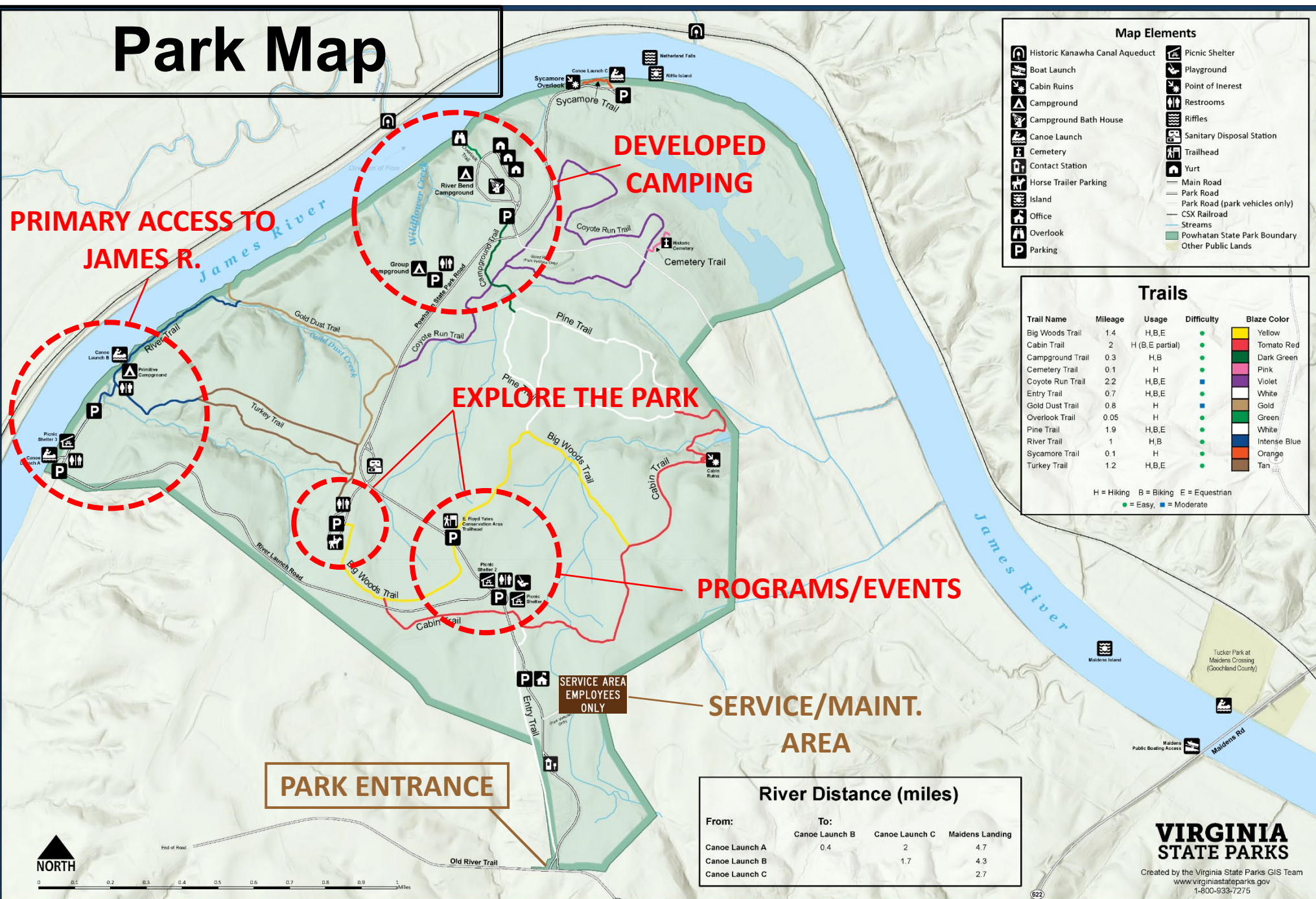
What Does Powhatan State Park Have To Offer?

Much More Than A Riverside Park

- **Explore Varied Landscapes & Habitats:** Various forest types, managed meadows, early successional habitats, freshwater wetlands, James River floodplain
- **Relax on the James:** Paddling, inner tubing, fishing, walking/sitting/picnicking by the river
- **Camp in the Woods:** Primitive, partial hookup, and group campgrounds depending on user preferences with respect to accommodation and luxury level
- **Attend a Park Event or Program:** Pawpaw Festival, Urban Dark Sky, learn about the park's natural and human history, watch wildlife, view Fourth of July fireworks



Park Map



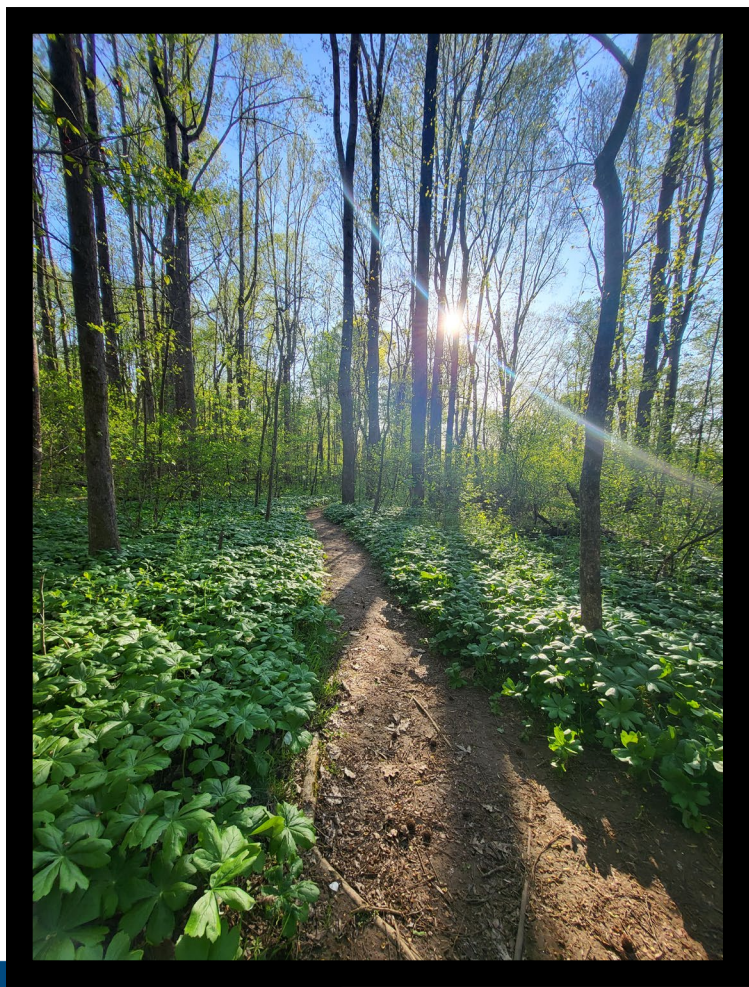
What is “Visitor Experience”?

Visitor Experience (VE) is a broad term used by Virginia State Parks that encompasses the overall journey, activities, and interactions of park users as well as their individual feelings, impressions, and degree of satisfaction with the park.

Virginia State Parks develops a VE element to better understand various audiences/user groups for the purpose of establishing park-specific:

- Interpretive Themes
- Purpose Statement
- Essential Experiences
- Experience Areas Map

Visitor Experience Themes



- **River Theme:**

Along these riverbanks, relics of the past connect us to an era of reliance on the James and remind us that we still depend on it for life and leisure today.

- **Agriculture-to-Meadows Theme:**

Following centuries of plantation, pasture, and plow, the meadows of Powhatan State Park are now a place of healing, restoration, and reflection.

- **Ecosystems Theme:**

From pawpaw groves to Piedmont prairie, Powhatan State Parks' vibrant tapestry of ecosystems provides a sanctuary for people and wildlife alike.

Purpose Statement

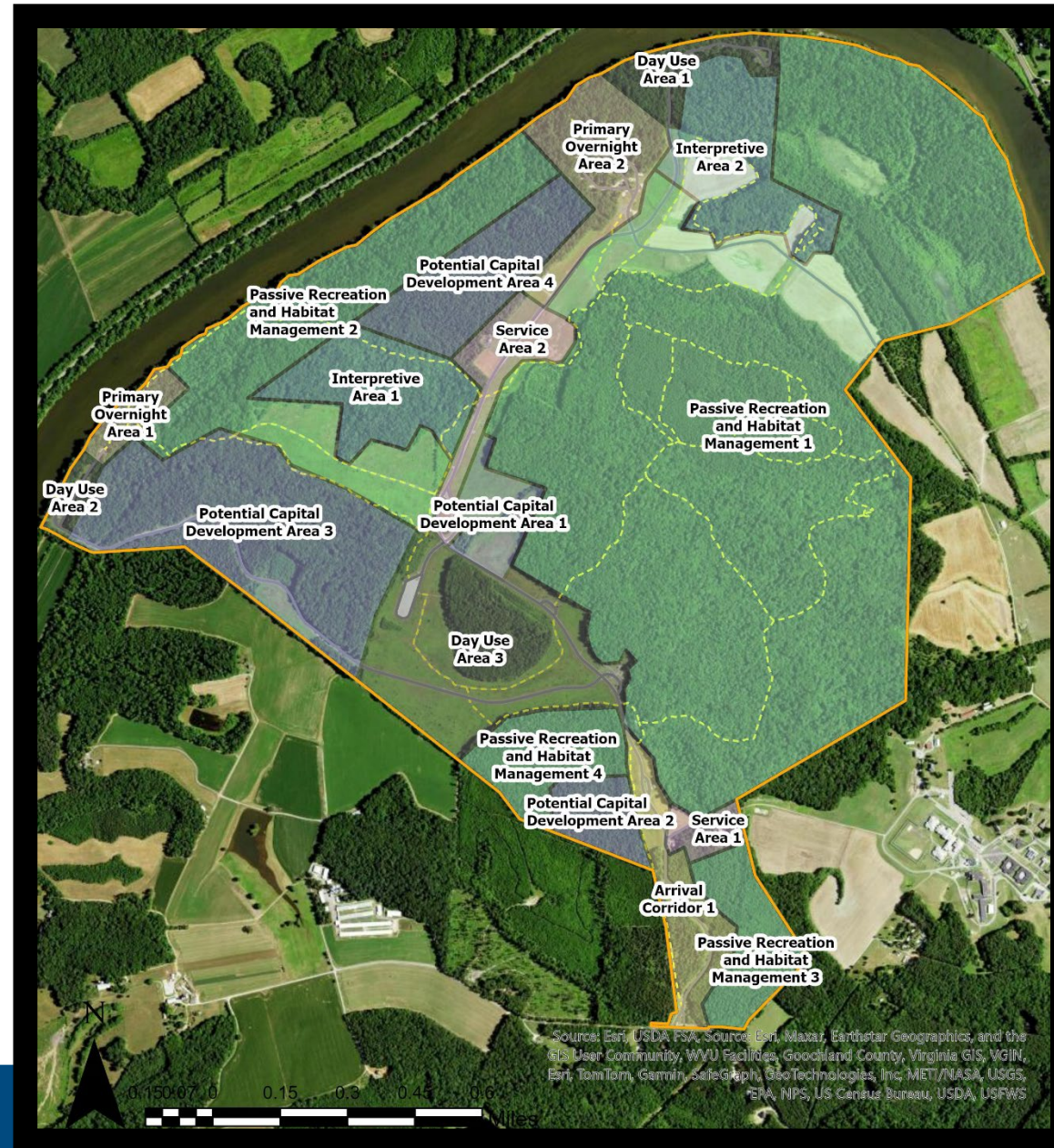
Shaped by the ebb and flow of the James River, **Powhatan State Park** safeguards and interprets the land's story as it transforms from old agricultural fields into a vibrant mosaic of forest, meadow, water and sky, while offering meaningful recreational experiences and demonstrating a promise of sustained stewardship.

Essential Experiences

Defined as the immersive opportunities offered by the park that visitors need to experience to fully enjoy its story and resources

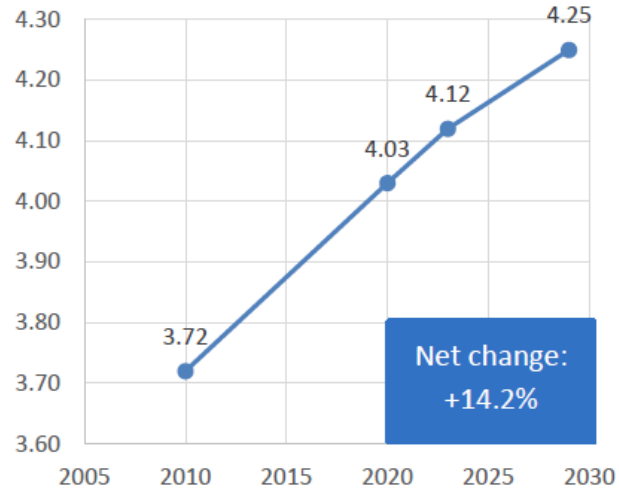
- **Hiking Adventures**
 - Turkey-Gold Dust-River Trails Loop
 - Sycamore Overlook
- **Cultural Programs**
 - Erwin Rope Ferry
 - History of the People Who Lived and Worked on the Park Property
- **James River Float**
 - Within the Park or Downstream to Maidens
- **Primitive Campground**
 - Paddle or Walk In – Right on the River
- **Immersive Wildlife Experiences**
 - Diverse Birding Opportunities
 - Land Transformation – Ag. to Meadows
 - Vernal Pools
- **Pawpaw Festival**
 - Learn About Park Resources
 - Taste the Fruit
- **Fireworks Across the River**

Experience Areas Map

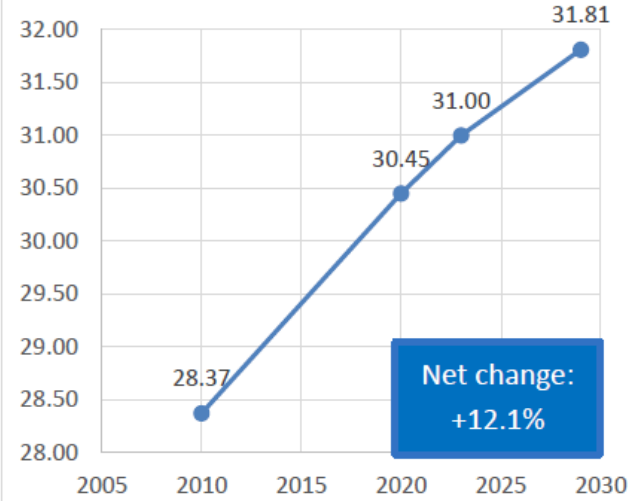


Market Analysis

Primary Service Area



Secondary Service Area



Year	Population Estimate	Year	Population Estimate
2010	3,716,101	2010	28,365,635
2020	4,033,727	2020	30,453,950
2023	4,116,943	2023	30,995,047
2029	4,250,223	2029	31,808,985

Year	Percent of Population 65+	Year	Percent of Population 65+
2010	12.5%	2010	12.8%
2020	16.7%	2020	16.7%
2024	18.2%	2024	17.9%
2029	20.6%	2029	20.1%

Key Takeaways

- **The majority** of the 4.12M inhabitants of the PSA reside in the **Richmond metropolitan area**. Nearly half of Virginia's growth from 2020-2024 occurred the Richmond area.
- Both service areas have seen **significant growth** in the **65+ age cohort**, driving a need to **make park trails and water access facilities universally accessible**.
- The **median household income** in the PSA is **≈ 8% higher** than the national median, creating demand for add-on revenue options such as **boat and bike rentals, shuttle services**, etc.



Key Takeaways



- In the PSA, the popularity of **walking for exercise, jogging/running, hiking, backpacking, birdwatching, mountain biking, freshwater fishing, camping, and boating**, in addition to spending on sports/recreation equipment, exceeded national averages.
- In response to rising average temperatures, the park should consider having robust plans for invasive species control, adding a climate-controlled visitor center, installing additional trails in wooded areas, and installing shade over the playground.
- There is a low number of area campgrounds, creating demand for additional partial hook-up and primitive campsites at the park.



Public Survey Results

Your Comments Count Survey (2025)

Day-Use Activities Conducted

- #1 Hiking (40%)
- #2 Other* (15.6%)
- #3 Bicycling (10.2%)
- #4 Birding (9.9%)
- #5 Picnicking (7.5%)
- * Camping (7.3%)

Satisfaction w/ Day-Use

- #1 Trails (4.59)
- #2 Restrooms (4.58)
- #3 Picnic Areas (4.57)
- #4 Shelter Reservations (4.43)

Overnight Conducted*

- #1 Developed camping (81%)
- #2 Primitive camping (13%)
- #3 Yurt (4.4%)

* No cabins or lodges at PW

Satisfaction w/ Camping

- #1 Campsites (4.84)
- #2 Check-out (4.82)
- #3 Check-in (4.77)
- #4 Hookups (4.72)
- #5 Reservations (4.72)
- #6 Bathhouse (4.7)

Public Survey Results

Your Comments Count Survey (2025)

Distance from park

Within 50 miles: 65%

More than 50 miles: 35%

Best aspect of park visit:

1. Trails
2. Camping
3. Peaceful/quiet/relaxing
4. Cleanliness

Higher than system-wide average:

1. Cleanliness
2. Restrooms

Top words/phrases to describe what you value about this park:

1. Peaceful/quiet/relaxing
2. Clean
3. Scenic/beautiful
4. Trails
5. Nature/natural setting

One thing to add to this park:

1. Trails (all types)
2. Camping
3. Visitor center
4. Cabins

What's the Plan for Powhatan?



Goals

Goal 1.0. Resource Protection – Protect the rich natural and historic resources of Powhatan State Park by preserving its tapestry of forest, meadow, and wetland ecosystems to enhance resiliency and conserve its legacy of habitation, agriculture, transportation, and land use transformation along the south bank of the historic James River.

Goal 2.0. Recreational Opportunities – Increase recreational opportunities and overnight accommodations that enhance visitors' access to activity and leisure on land and water while keeping undeveloped areas of the park intact for their intrinsic natural value and remoteness.

Goal 3.0. Staffing and Facilities – Provide sufficient staffing and facilities to effectively implement the park mission, foster meaningful and lasting interactions with park visitors, and create a memorable experience for people exploring the park.

Goal 4.0. Visitor Satisfaction – Improve and expand visitor facilities and services to enhance recreational experience for park guests and increase access to recreation experiences, maximize visitor satisfaction, and encourage repeat visitation.

Goals

Goal 5.0. Educational/Interpretive Programs – Increase park visitors' knowledge and inspire continued education regarding the park's abundant forests, meadows, wetlands, and skies in addition to the people and events that shaped the park property historically using immersive exhibits, programs, and events.

Goal 6.0: Community Partnerships – Maintain positive working relationships and partnerships with citizen support organizations, businesses, and local governments to establish Powhatan State Park as a regional outdoor destination.

Goal 7.0. Public Engagement – Foster relationships and ongoing communication with local landowners and the public to increase stakeholder engagement and create a shared sense of dedication to the stewardship and protection of the lands and waterways in the county and region.

Phased Development Plan

Phase 1

- Visitor Center
- Replace Canoe Launches A & C with Accessible Launches
- River Bend Campground Expansion
- Demo. Existing Primitive Campground
- Extend River Trail to Launch C
- Expand Parking at E. Floyd Yates Trailhead
- Construct Boardwalk, Observation Decks, and Bird Blinds at Oxbow/Old Quarry Wetland Interpretive Area
- Trail connection to Oxbow/Old Quarry Interpretive Area from Coyote Trail

Phased Development Plan

Phase 2

- Cabins & Lodge Complex, and Cabin Connector Rd.
- Shared-Use Trail on State Park Rd., River Launch Rd., & Cabin Connector Rd.
- Accessible Playground at E. Floyd Yates Trailhead
- Replace Vault Toilet with Restrooms at Equestrian Parking Area
- Maintenance Complex Expansion
- Ranger Residence and Volunteer Lodging

Phased Development Plan

Phase 3

- Meeting Hall/Event Venue
- Riverside Picnic Area near Launch C
- Cabin/Lodge Area Discovery Playground
- Campground Discovery Playground
- Expand Trails on Eastern Side of Park
- Fishing Pods near Launch B

Phased Development Plan



Staffing Needs

Existing

- Park Manager
- Chief Park Ranger – Operations/PS&LE
- Chief Park Ranger – Visitor Experience
- Office Manager
- Park Ranger – Maintenance
- Public Safety & Law Enforcement Position

Phase 1

- Office Assistant
- Park Ranger – Maintenance
- Park Ranger – Resource Management

Phase 2

- Assistant Park Manager
- Education Specialist
- Park Ranger – Maintenance

Phase 3

- Conference & Events Manager

Timeline for Next Steps

- **Tonight:** Public Comment Meeting followed by a 30-day comment period
- **Fall 2026:** Presentation to the Board of Conservation and Recreation (BCR) and additional opportunity for public input
- Following BCR approval, the Master Plan will be circulated to General Assembly members for a 30-day review
- **Winter 2026-27:** Final adoption by the DCR Director

Thank You for Attending!

Please submit any additional comments to
PlanningResources@dcr.virginia.gov
by **April 30, 2026**

Questions?

Please contact Josh Bateman,
Environmental Program Planner, at the
email noted above!

All emails and questions will be taken under
consideration and responses provided.



Visit us on the web for project updates and
presentation materials!

[https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-
planning/pw-masterplan](https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/pw-masterplan)