



Widewater State Park

101 Widewater State Park Rd,
Stafford, VA 22554
(540)288-1400 | widewater@dcr.virginia.gov

Autumn 2026 Newsletter

Unexpected Cynia Moth Native Plant Garden

SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER

Our Mission Statement

"The purpose of Widewater State Park is to provide premiere water and land based educational and outdoor recreational opportunities while protecting and interpreting the unique natural, historical, and cultural resources of the peninsula of land cradled between Aquia Creek and the Potomac River in Stafford County."



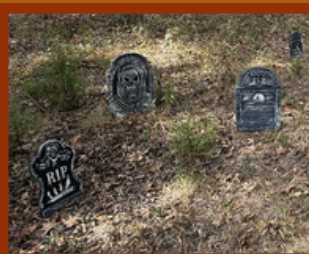
IN THIS ISSUE



Broader Paths

See what has been going on at the park, important updates, and other highlights from the past few months.

[Read more](#)



Programs

Check out some of the education and recreation programs we are presenting this season!

[Read more](#)



Volunteering

Review the volunteer opportunities at Widewater and any special projects we currently have underway.

[Read more](#)





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Broader Paths for Greater Accessibility

Eagle Scouts Widen Native Plant Garden Paths



In early Summer, Eagle Scout Sean Gould directed other scouts in widening the paths of the native plant garden as his Eagle Scout project.

15 volunteers, three weekends, and the removal of hundreds of bricks resulted in all of Widewater's native plant garden paths being widened for ADA accessibility. They also replaced the decorative brick border, which was deteriorating from weathering, with unobtrusive garden edging.

Thanks to Sean and his scout team, Visitors using wheelchairs, strollers, and walkers can now navigate the garden paths with plenty of room.

Volunteer Highlight

Sean Gould

Sean is an Eagle Scout with troop 840. He approached staff earlier this year as he wanted to complete his Eagle Scout Service Project at the park. After some discussion, he chose widening the native plant garden paths to be ADA accessible.

Though quiet and soft spoken, Sean proved to be a good leader who organized his volunteers and provided energizing pep-talks when the going got tough on some hot days.

The staff at Widewater are grateful for he and his volunteers contribution to the betterment and accessibility of Widewater State Park facilities. Thank you, Sean!





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Autumn 2026 Programs



Homeschool

Homeschool is back in session, and this year we've doubled the programs for a broader age range. Take a hike, learn to use a microscope, and more!



Archery

Will you take up the bow and try your hand at the sport of archery? These programs are designed as introductory lessons for first time participants.



Junior Duck Stamp

Every third Saturday from September through February, visitors are invited to learn about wetlands, waterfowl, and the history of duck hunting at the park.



Trek n' Treat

Come one, come all, for a spooky hike this Fall! Join a guided hike, or grab a pamphlet on your own, to walk Long Pond trail and get some treats at the end.

Click the Widewater State Park web link to view all of the upcoming programs!

[Widewater State Park](#)



F.A.Q.'s

Is there an age limit for Homeschool?

No; this year, homeschool is divided into class groups so you can bring your child to the best suited program.

Are archery program registrations on Eventbrite?

No; this year, all fee-based programs require registration and payment to be made at the Visitor Center, either in-person or by calling at (540)288-1400.

Registration for a program ended, can I still attend?

You can call the Visitor Center and speak to an interpretive ranger to see if there are openings available.

Can I bring my dog to programs?

That depends on the program. They must remain on leash at all times and be child, adult, pet, and wildlife friendly.



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Homeschool Highlight



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September
Food Webs

October
Spooky Species

November
Agriculture

December
Forces of Nature

September - February
Junior Duck Stamp Education Program

Come learn about plants, animals, and explore the great outdoors !

 When: Every Monday and Wednesday, 11am & 1pm
*Junior Duck Stamp is every third Saturday, 2pm-3:30pm

 Ages: 11am - K-4th grade; 1pm - 5th - 8th
*Junior Duck Stamp - All ages

 Program Fee: None, unless noted online for specialty programs.

 Registration: None, unless noted online for specialty programs.

**Note: These programs are open to all visitors, not just homeschool.*



Scan the QR code to
learn more!





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Homeschool Highlight



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September : *Food Webs*



9/14 & 9/16- Producers



9/21 & 9/23- Consumers



9/28 & 9/30- Scavengers &
Decomposers

October : *Spooky Species*



10/5 & 10/7- Bats



10/12 & 10/14- Skeleton Crew



10/19 & 10/21- Creepy Critters



10/26 & 10/28- Haunted Hike

November : *Agriculture*



11/2 & 11/4- Seeds



11/9 & 11/11- Vascular & Nonvascular
Plants



11/16 & 11/18- Farming at Widewater

December : *Forces of Nature*



11/30 & 12/2- Solar Power



12/7 & 12/9- Wind & Rain



12/14 & 12/16- Winter Wonderland

September - February : *Junior Duck Stamp Education Program*



9/19- Introduction: The Call of the Wild
Duck



10/17- Unit 1: What is... a Waterfowl?



11/21- Unit 2: A Day in the Life: Preening,
Dabbling, & Other Unusual Behaviors



12/19- Unit 3: Raising a Family in a
Wetland



1/16- Unit 4: Going the Distance:
Migrating Across Continents



2/20- Unit 5: Learning from the Past;
Taking Action for the Future

All the topics listed will be covered, plus many more! Hikes and outdoor activities will be held every day. Please check the weather and program page prior to coming to the park for any potential cancellations.

Contact Chief Ranger Hillborn with any questions at (540)288-1400 or ellen.hillborn@dcr.virginia.gov.



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Volunteer Categories



Natural Resource Management

Invasive species removal, shoreline cleanups, native plant garden upkeep, and BioBlitz surveys are just some of the volunteer opportunities at Widewater State Park. Whether you are an animal or plant person, there is plenty to be done to protect our natural resources.

Left: Volunteers removing invasive Japanese Stilt Grass from the upper Long Pond Trail.

Trail Maintenance

If there is one thing parks always need assistance with year-round, it's trail building and maintenance. Corridor pruning, litter cleanup, and erosion mitigation are just a few of the tasks we could use a helping hand (or two) with so our trails remain safe and accessible.

Right: Volunteers assist park staff with clearing leaves and debris from the under-construction Beaver Dam Trail.



Educational Programming

Come teach visitors about our migratory birds, show new fishermen your special casting trick, guide an evening firefly hike, or showcase your fire-building skills to a Scout group. No matter your passion, you can share it with the guests at the park!

Left: Families enjoy roasting s'mores before going on a guided black light night hike.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Shelter Beautification

If you have experience in masonry work, we could really use your help! Our four shelters are long overdue for their pillar bases to have decorative stonework applied to them.



We have the materials, but could use extra hands and know-how. Pictured is one pillar base that has been completed.

Native Plant Garden

A labor of love and the elements, our native plant garden has begun to take on a more distinctive personality thanks to our Master Gardeners and Naturalists who come out and tend the garden beds. If you like gardening, or teaching about gardening, this volunteer opportunity can be the perfect fit for you!





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Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities

September 19th, 9am - 12pm : Waterway Cleanups

September 25th, 9am - 12pm : Japanese Stilt Grass Removal

October 3rd, 1pm- 2:30pm : Volunteer Appreciation Event

October 11th, 10am - 2pm : Trek n' Treat Trail Setup

October 17th, 2pm - 3:30pm : Federal Duck Stamp Class

October 24th, 9am - 12pm : Beaver Dam Trail Maintenance

November 1st, 10am - 2pm: Trek n' Treat Trail Takedown

November 21st, 9am - 12pm : Beaver Dam Trail Maintenance

November 21st, 2pm - 3:30pm : Federal Duck Stamp Class



Save the Date! : Volunteer Appreciation Event



Join our rangers and other volunteers in celebrating all of the hard work from the past year!

Date: Saturday, October 3rd

Time: 1pm - 2:30pm

Make sure to **register for the event** so we know you are coming.

Registration

A complete list of Autumn 2026 volunteer opportunities are outlined in the registration form.

Click on the link below, or scan the QR code, to access the Autumn 2026 Volunteer registration form.

**[Widewater State Park](#)
[Volunteer Opportunity Sign-Ups](#)**





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Interested in Volunteering for Virginia State Parks?

Step 1 : Make a VSP Volunteer Account

Go to the [Virginia State Parks Volunteer web page](#) and click "Apply Now" to access the volunteer application. Make sure to fill out every section! Once it has been submitted, an email will be sent to your parks' Volunteer Coordinator to let them know about your application.

You can also find out about volunteer opportunities on this page and read about the benefits that come with being a VSP volunteer.



Step 2 : Attend a Volunteer Orientation

Every park is different, and not all have Volunteer Orientations. At Widewater, our volunteer orientation is monthly on **every second Sunday at 2pm in the Visitor Center**. September 13th, October 11th, and November 8th will be our Autumn 2026 orientations. If you haven't been to an orientation, you are encouraged to attend one, even if you have already begun volunteering!

Step 3 : Submit Your Background Check

At orientation, you will be given a paper background check to fill out and return to your Volunteer Coordinator at the meeting. If you are not able to make a meeting, you will also receive a welcome email after submitting your application with the background check attached as a PDF for you to fill out and return via email. It is important that your signature on the background check is done with a blue or black pen as **digital signatures are not accepted!**

Step 4 : Volunteer!

Once your background check comes back as approved, you are ready to volunteer at any Virginia State Park! Check in with your Volunteer Coordinator, on the park program page, and in this newsletter for current volunteer opportunities at Widewater State Park.



Meet Your Volunteer Coordinator

Ellen Hillborn
Chief Ranger of Visitor Experience
Widewater State Park
(540)288-1400
ellen.hillborn@dcr.virginia.gov