

**REPORT OF THE VIRGINIA**

**DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION**

## **LYME DISEASE SIGNAGE**

**TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, CHESAPEAKE AND NATURAL  
RESOURCES AND THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION  
AND NATURAL RESOURCES**



**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA**

**RICHMOND**

**OCTOBER 2022**

## **PREFACE**

This report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of § 10.1-200.01 of the 2022 Virginia Acts of Assembly (House Bill 850; Delegate Reid). Enactment Section A of § 10.1-200.01 stipulates that the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) shall develop and install signage in each state park and interstate park addressing the appropriate steps a visitor can take to prevent tick bites, how to identify Lyme disease, and where to seek treatment. Enactment Section B requires the Department to install the signage in those areas in the Commonwealth that have been identified as most susceptible to Lyme disease and complete the installation of signage in all state parks and interstate parks by January 1, 2028. And lastly, enactment section C directs the Department to report its progress, annually, until it completes the installation of signage.

The following report summarizes staff initiatives and progress since July 1, 2022, for the development and installation of statewide signage on Lyme disease as specified in [§ 10.1-200.01, Section C](#).

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Department's Division of State Parks has been actively working towards the development of instructional resources and materials that will be used in the Virginia state park system for visitors to learn more about how to protect themselves, identify, and treat Lyme disease. The Virginia State Park system currently utilizes informational flyers that are published by the [Virginia Department of Health](#) regarding ticks and tick-borne diseases in Virginia.

## **STAFF PROGRESS REPORT**

### ***Recent Events***

- DCR park staff consulted with Dr. Holly Gaff, PhD and Associate Professor of Biology at Old Dominion University, regarding her research and knowledge about ticks in Virginia. Dr. Gaff's academic work includes leading a research team that focuses on ticks that include the collecting of tick specimens in the eastern region of our Virginia state park system. Discussion centered on the different types of ticks found in Virginia and the various diseases associated with them. Staff learned that the impact of tick-borne diseases exceeds beyond just Lyme disease.

Moving forward, DCR will incorporate this new knowledge in the development of signage for this project that will focus on all disease risks associated with tick bites. Emphasis will be on prevention strategies, identifying symptoms of tick-borne diseases, after-visit self-examination, and where to seek treatment.

- Continuing research efforts, DCR park staff identified several websites that contain helpful information regarding tick bites and tick specimens. These websites will be used, as the signage is developed, to provide the state park visitor with active web links if they wish to obtain more detailed information on ticks and tick-borne illnesses since signage will have limited space to display information.
- In-person collection of ideas, thoughts, and opinions occurred when DCR recently hosted *The Fall Interpretive Managers Workshop* with Virginia state park managers. This workshop featured a session on brainstorming with participants and the question, "What are the most effective ways to convey information to our guests on what they need to know about ticks and tick-borne diseases"?

After the workshop, staff gathered and discussed creating a tick awareness campaign that can be utilized in the state park system, in addition to the mandated signage. The awareness campaign would include interpretive materials including flyers, rack cards, and programming designed to have the greatest impact. A rack card is typically smaller than a brochure and can be used to convey information at a glance by the use of high-impact graphic designs to garner attention in high foot traffic areas.

## **FUTURE GOALS**

Future efforts will focus on working with graphic design staff to create eye-catching signage, flyers, and rack cards. In addition, staff will also focus on the importance of determining the best location to install the signs, flyers, and rack cards within each park to achieve the greatest impact for park visitors' awareness.

## **CONCLUSION**

At this time, DCR park staff has concluded the fact-finding and research portion of this project. Strategically, the next steps in progression will focus on the development of statewide signage on Lyme disease and other tick-borne infections, followed by the installation and placement of the signage in each state park and interstate park.