



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

October 1, 2023

Description: Annual report on the progress of developing and posting, in each state park and interstate park, signage addressing the appropriate steps a visitor can take to prevent tick bites, how to identify Lyme disease, and where to seek treatment.

Progress to Date: Pursuant to the Code of Virginia § 10.1-200.01 et al., the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) State Parks staff have been actively working on the development of tick-related and tick-borne disease prevention signage that will be posted in each state park and interstate park. Progress since last year's report in moving forward to achieve this endeavor:

1. Staff participated on the statewide Inter-Agency Tick-Borne Disease Committee. The Committee approved the work developed to date for Virginia State Parks and recommended that signage and materials for visitors include which ticks are prevalent at each park.
2. Added benefits from participating on this statewide committee included networking with other interested parties.
3. As mentioned in last year's report, we have expanded the scope to cover all ticks and tick-borne diseases found in Virginia known to impact humans.
4. We have identified diverse audiences in our parks and the most appropriate strategies to reach each audience. Programs and materials are being designed to best meet these strategies.
5. Our 42 Virginia State Parks currently have 130 tick awareness flyers posted across the state. A new flyer was rolled out in March to expand the posted locations until the permanent signage is developed.
6. Guests who interact with staff for programs and information will receive tick information as part of program introductions (we cover safety and other important information). Tick activity sheets will also be designed to assist youth in identifying ticks and being aware of the dangers.
7. Tick awareness programming for Virginia State Parks will begin in 2024. The new statewide Junior Ranger booklet that will be introduced in 2024 includes tick safety. Dr. David Gaines, State Public Health Entomologist with the Virginia Department of Health, is presenting three virtual training sessions to Virginia State Park staff on tick information, tick-borne diseases, and ideas on how to share the information with the public on April 26, April 30, and May 7. The annual State Park Spring Interpretive Workshop in May will feature a discussion on tick safety information, and staff will receive business card-sized tick ID/removal cards (from the National Capital Lyme Disease Association) for distribution to the public. Gift shops and camp stores are developing tick-related merchandise to prepare guests and increase awareness. Merchandise items include a Virginia State Parks-branded tick removal tool, tick repellent, and field guides with tick information.
8. Parks with a significant population of Spanish-speaking guests will feature signage, flyers, and other materials in Spanish.
9. Signage and flyers will focus on key information and pictures with URLs, which will direct visitors to more detailed information. Studies indicate that most people don't stop to read a sign with words.
10. While developing permanent signage in the parks will take some time, we will start incorporating flyers and other printed materials (including the tick Identification cards provided by the National Capital Lyme Disease Association) into visitors' materials in 2024, with the installation of permanent signage anticipated in 2025.