

**REPORT OF THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND
RECREATION**

**2023 ANNUAL REPORT OF DIVERSITY,
OPPORTUNITY, AND INCLUSION**

TO THE GOVERNOR AND MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY



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COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

Laura Ellis
Deputy Director for
Administration and Finance

June 28, 2024

The Honorable Glenn A. Youngkin, Governor of Virginia
Members of the General Assembly

Dear Governor Youngkin and Members of the General Assembly:

We are pleased to provide you with the agency's 2023 Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion annual report, prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Virginia § 2.2-602 relating to the duties of agencies and their appointing authorities; diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic plans. Specifically, "each agency shall establish an infrastructure to effectively support ongoing progress and achievements by reporting diversity, equity, and inclusion goals in coordination with the Governor's Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and the General Assembly" and "each agency shall submit an annual report to the Governor and the General Assembly by July 1 of each year assessing the impact of the strategic plan on the populations served by the agency and on the agency's workforce and budget."

As the agency continues its mission-focused conservation work in protecting what Virginians care about – open space, clean water, natural habitat, safe infrastructure and access to the outdoors – we will also remain diligent in our service to a diverse Commonwealth, ensuring opportunities and inclusion for all Virginians. We trust that this report fulfills the required statutory obligations and demonstrates the agency's commitment to the importance of diversity, opportunity, and inclusion efforts.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matthew S. Wells".

Matthew S. Wells, Director

cc: Laura Ellis, Deputy Director for Administration and Finance
Tara Adkins, Human Resources Director
Attachment 1: Lisa McGee, Policy and Planning Director

Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion

2023 Annual Report

Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

2023
ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Plan Goal 1: Recruit and retain a diverse workforce

Objective 1: Recruit and hire a diverse workforce at every level of leadership

- DCR partnered with HBCU Hampton University for a job fair specific to creating diverse applicant pools.
- DCR completed its Public Safety and Law Enforcement strategic plan for recruitment.
- DCR was selected to participate in the Direct-Hire 2nd Chance pilot, which connected previously incarcerated individuals with job opportunities within the division of State Parks.

Objective 2: Retain and promote a more compositionally diverse workforce.

- DCR's SkillBridge program, sponsored by the division of State Parks, hosted interns nearing the end of their military service. Six interns completed their internship in 2023. Five of the six interns gained full time employment with DCR.
- Through the Park Ranger Career Development Program, the division of State Parks employed 12 interns in the 2023 summer for 12-weeks, providing first-hand experience in park operations as an entry-level Park Ranger.

Plan Goal 2: Create and sustain an agency culture that affirms and respects diversity and employs inclusive practices throughout daily operations.

Objective 1: Create and sustain a climate that is supportive, respectful, and that values and integrates differing perspectives and experiences.

- Natural Tunnel State Park installed an EnChroma viewfinder, the first of its kind in the Commonwealth. EnChroma is a specialty viewfinder equipped with special lenses designed to help those with red-green color vision deficiency experience colors. In honor of International Colorblind Awareness Month, DCR's division of State Parks partnered with EnChroma to give away two pairs of outdoor colorblind glasses with deutan (green sensitivity) lenses.
- DCR is in the process of standing up a two-year pilot program to provide all-terrain power wheelchairs at specific Virginia state parks to enhance state park accessibility for individuals with limited mobility.

Plan Goal 3: Focus community engagement activities on those that provide measurable, direct, equitable, and sustained benefit to all of Virginia's diverse communities.

Objective 1: Improve outcomes and experiences for populations the agency or department serves directly.

- Machicomoco State Park, the first Virginia state park dedicated to Virginia's Native tribes, celebrated its 3rd annual Indigenous Peoples Day. The park has several interpretive sites that detail the Indigenous history of the region, a map of significant Native sites in the area, and a walking trail featuring plants important to the local tribes.
- The Office of Resilience Planning engaged the public in the development of a Community Outreach and Engagement Plan that will inform and shape the creation of the Coastal Resilience Master Plan and the Virginia Flood Protection Master Plan.
- The Dam Safety and Floodplain Management division conducted 58 community and public engagement assistant events, providing technical expertise in identifying, preventing, and resolving floodplain management issues.

Objective 2: Improve outcomes and experiences for underrepresented groups in the agency or department's larger community.

- Bi-annually the Virginia Outdoors Foundation's Get Outdoors (GO) Fund provides grants for projects that increase access to safe open space in Virginia's communities, especially those that are underserved. The intent of the program is to serve as a flexible, adaptable tool to be used to address communities' needs. DCR was a recipient of a GO grant to bring underserved Hispanic youth in the northern Virginia region to area state parks, and in 2023, DCR finalized the last component of the grant which totaled \$20,000.
- DCR distributed over \$42 million in Community Flood Preparedness Fund grants in 2023 to low-income geographic areas, representing ~ 2/3 of all grant awards since its inception. The purpose of the grant program is to provide support for regions and localities across the Commonwealth to reduce the impacts of flooding.

Agency Goal 1: Recruit and retain a diverse workforce.

- Seek out opportunities to expose diverse talent to the agency, as well as, continuing to promote internal transition and/or promotional opportunities for current staff.
- Continue to provide skills training and career development opportunities for internal staff, as well as potential staff through internships.
- Continue to provide accessibility for entry level positions through a condensed application process.

Agency Goal 2: Establish Agency Succession Planning

- Initiate and develop succession plans for key leadership positions where retirement is anticipated in the next few years.

Agency Goal 3: Focus community engagement activities on those that provide measurable, direct, equitable, and sustained benefit to all of Virginia's diverse communities.

- Continue to improve outcomes and experiences for populations the agency or department serves directly.
- Continue to improve outcomes and experiences for underrepresented groups in the agency or department's larger community.
- Implement the Office of Resilience Planning's Community Outreach and Engagement Plan.

