

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

**2024 ANNUAL REPORT OF DIVERSITY,  
OPPORTUNITY, AND INCLUSION**

**TO THE GOVERNOR AND MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**



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Matthew S. Wells  
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**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION**

July 1, 2025

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 2024 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, reading "Matthew S. Wells".

Matthew S. Wells, Director

**Attachment**

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

# Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion

## 2024 Annual Report

### Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

#### 2024 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

##### **Plan Goal 1: Recruit and retain a diverse workforce**

Objective 1: 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.

- DCR continues to advertise for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Chance program, which connects previously incarcerated individuals with job opportunities within the division of State Parks.
- DCR had 25 employees transfer internally to other positions, 27 internal wage employees accept full-time employment, and 10 internal promotions.

Objective 2: Continue to provide skills training and career development opportunities for internal staff through sponsorships, as well as for potential staff through internships.

- DCR's SkillBridge program, sponsored by the Division of State Parks, hosted interns nearing the end of their military service. Three (3) interns completed their internships in 2024.
- Through the Park Ranger Career Development Program, the division of State Parks employed 13 interns in the 2024 summer for 12 weeks, providing first-hand experience in park operations as an entry-level Park Ranger. Seven (7) interns gained employment with the agency.
- Partnering with colleges and universities, DCR sponsored seven (7) college internships.

Objective 3: Continue to provide accessibility for entry-level positions through a condensed application process.

- DCR had 302 wage recruitments posted through the Agency's condensed application process, receiving 4,750 applications.

##### **Plan Goal 2: Establish Agency Succession Planning**

Objective 1: Initiate and develop succession plans for key leadership positions where retirement is anticipated in the next few years.

- DCR is actively identifying key leadership positions with anticipated retirements to support effective succession planning.

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

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

- DCR Park Rangers led a total of 12,287 educational and interpretive programs for 288,943 people. This total includes 400 in-park SOL-based events and 194 outreach events for 41,810 school-aged children and their teachers/chaperones. These programs reach all grade levels and many offer field experiences in our parks, which include hiking, water quality testing, dip netting, cave tours, kayak/canoe programs, and hands-on history programming. Outreach events include the Chilhowie Elementary School Storytelling Festival, high school career days, Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences with partner organizations, a Theater and Forensics camp, and more.

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

- During FY25, DCR's Floodplain Management division conducted a robust suite of outreach, training, workshops, and post-disaster recovery support. 65% of the Division's engagements were held in socially vulnerable areas, and 44% of in-person trainings were facilitated in rural localities. Funds were administered to increase resilience to flooding in localities across the Commonwealth through the Community Flood Preparedness Fund, which includes a cumulative total of \$97,909,201.28 awarded to low-income geographic areas.

Objective 3: Implement the DCR Office of Resilience Planning's Community Outreach and Engagement Plan.

- In April 2024, DCR finalized and released the [Community Outreach and Engagement Plan: A Stakeholder Engagement Framework for the Commonwealth's Flood Resilience Master Plans \(COEP\)](#) in accordance with the 2022 Acts of Assembly, [Chapter 494](#), enactment clause 3. In the COEP, DCR lays out an approach for conducting outreach and engagement in its flood resilience planning efforts, establishes goals and expected outcomes for outreach and engagement, and commits to developing specific outreach and engagement strategies for the Coastal Resilience Master Plan (CRMP) and the Virginia Flood Protection Master Plan.
- DCR developed and implemented a stakeholder outreach and engagement strategy based on the COEP to inform the development of the Coastal Resilience Master Plan, Phase II. Outreach and engagement conducted for the plan included more than 50 engagement activities with more than 200 individuals and about 70% of the identified primary stakeholder organizations. DCR hosted community meetings in Richmond, Warsaw, Tappahannock, and Chesapeake to reach areas with both high flood vulnerability and high social vulnerability. These meetings brought together members of the public with DCR staff, consultants, and other local, regional and state organizations to share information about the plan and other flood resilience resources.

**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 benefits 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.

