



**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION**

October 31, 2025

The Honorable L. Louise Lucas  
Chair, Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee  
Pocahontas Building, Room E619  
900 East Main Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

The Honorable Luke E. Torian  
Chair, House Appropriations Committee  
Pocahontas Building, Room W1312  
900 East Main Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

**RE: Department of Conservation and Recreation Lease of Lands Report (FY 2025)**

Dear Senator Lucas and Delegate Torian:

This annual Lease of Lands and Other Properties report is being submitted to satisfy the relevant sections of the requirements of § 10.1-109 of the Code of Virginia:

- A. *The Director is authorized, subject to the written recommendation of the Department of General Services to the Governor and the written approval of the Governor, following review as to form and content by the Attorney General and the provisions of this article, to lease to any person for consideration, by appropriate instrument signed and executed by the Director, in the name of the Commonwealth: (i) any lands or other properties held for general recreational or other public purposes by the Department, for the Commonwealth, or (ii) any lands over which the Department has supervision and control, or any part of such lands where such lease is for the purposes of recreation, agriculture, or resource management and is consistent with the purposes and duties of the Department. Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision (ii), whenever land is acquired by purchase or otherwise for public recreation and conservation purposes under the administration of the Department, the Director is authorized to lease the land or any portion of it back to the owner from whom the land is acquired upon terms and conditions in the public interest. No lease granted under this section shall be for an initial term longer than ten years, but any such lease may contain provisions for lease renewals, either contingent or automatic at the discretion of the Director, for a like period upon the same terms and conditions as originally granted. If written notice of termination is received by the Director from the lessee or if use of the lease is in fact abandoned by the lessee at any time prior to the end of the initial term or any renewal, the Director may immediately terminate the lease.*
- B. *The Department shall include information about leasing activities carried out pursuant to this section in an annual report to the General Assembly.*

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Division of Natural Heritage, currently leases acreage for hunting, agriculture, and residential uses on four (4) Natural Area Preserves across the Commonwealth, totaling an annual revenue of \$10,866.00. The Division of State Parks also has four (4) additional leases for property management purposes and a public utility lot for a water well, totaling an annual revenue of \$1,002.00.<sup>1</sup> The Real Property Office manages two (2) other leases on agency-owned lands that are not designated as natural area preserves or state parks. Please see the chart below:

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>LOCALITY</u>	<u>LESSEE/ CONTRACTOR</u>	<u>START DATE</u>	<u>END DATE</u>	<u>RENEWAL OPTIONS</u>	<u>LEASE ADMINISTRATOR</u>	<u>ACREAGE</u>	<u>ANNUAL RENT PER ACRE</u>	<u>ANNUAL RENT AMOUNT</u>	<u>RENT DUE DATE</u>	<u>USE</u>
Deed Run Ponds Natural Area Preserve	Rockingham	Robert W. Morton	10/1/2019	Upon Lessee's Death	N/A	Lesley Starke, Natural Areas Stewardship Chief (804) 371-6204	124.80	\$ -	\$ -	N/A	Hunting
Antioch Pines Natural Area Preserve	Isle of Wight	Michelle Hedgepeth Billips	1/1/2022	12/31/2025	One 1-year renewal option	Lesley Starke, Natural Areas Stewardship Chief (804) 371-6204	32.70	\$ 53.06	\$ 1,735.00	Dec. 15	Agriculture
Lyndhurst Ponds Natural Area Preserve	Augusta	Kenneth Troyer	8/1/2021	12/31/2025	N/A	Lesley Starke, Natural Areas Stewardship Chief (804) 371-6204	83.00	\$ 110.00	\$ 9,130.00	Biannual (June 15 & Dec. 15)	Agriculture
Difficult Creek Natural Area Preserve	Halifax	Phyllis Carden	12/14/2022	12/13/2025	Year-to-year renewal options	Lesley Starke, Natural Areas Stewardship Chief (804) 371-6204	1.39	\$ -	\$ 1.00	Dec. 14	Residential
Claytor Lake State Park	Pulaski	Environmental Chemical Corporation	10/17/2024	2/28/2025	None - lease has been terminated	Brian Fuller, DCR Real Property Manager (804) 678-8533	Designated Portions of Park	\$ -	\$ 8,000.00	Oct. 31	Equipment Staging & Debris Sorting
Culpeper Battlefields State Park	Culpeper	American Battlefield Trust	6/6/2024	12/31/2027	Three 1-year renewal options	Drew A. Gruber, Culpeper Battlefields SP Manager (826) 253-5365	262.96	\$ -	\$ 1.00	Jan. 1	Open-Space, Historic Interpretation
Machicomoco State Park	Gloucester	The Fairfield Foundation	9/24/2020	9/24/2069	N/A	Adam Newland, Machicomoco SP Manager (804) 346-6032	3.88	\$ -	\$ 1.00	N/A	Historic Restoration & Interpretation
Natural Tunnel State Park	Scott	Scott County Public Service Authority	11/1/2024	10/31/2123	N/A	Robert Chapman, Natural Tunnel SP Manager (276) 594-2391	0.25	\$ -	\$ 1,000.00	Monthly	Public Utility Water Well Lot
Smith Mountain Lake State Park	Franklin	Franklin County	2/13/2002	2/13/2032	Three 30-year renewal options	James Wright, Smith Mountain Lake SP Manager (540) 297-6066	37.34	N/A	N/A	N/A	County Park
Stratton Park	Chesterfield	Chesterfield County	8/25/2006	8/24/2036	Three 30-year renewal options	Brian Fuller, DCR Real Property Manager (804) 678-8533	167.106	N/A	N/A	N/A	County Park
Biscuit Run Park	Albemarle	Albemarle County	1/4/2018	1/3/2117	N/A	Brian Fuller, DCR Real Property Manager (804) 678-8533	1189.3	N/A	N/A	N/A	County Park

DCR reported on four (4) natural area preserve leases for FY2024, and they continued into FY2025 with no changes. One of the two elderly tenants in the Difficult Creek Natural Area Preserve lease has passed away; therefore, this lease will be terminated upon the surviving tenant's vacating of the premises.

DCR reported on three (3) State Park leases for FY2024, two (2) of which continued into FY2025 with no changes: (i) Machicomoco State Park and (ii) Smith Mountain Lake State Park. One (1) lease was terminated at the Falkland State Conservation Area adjacent to Staunton River State Park, due to the passing of the elderly tenant. Three (3) new state park leases have been added to this year's report: (i) Culpeper Battlefields State Park, (ii) Claytor Lake State Park, and (iii) Natural Tunnel State Park.

On June 6, 2024, DCR acquired 262.96 acres from the American Battlefield Trust ("ABT") and the Brandy Station Foundation, which constituted the first phase of the new Culpeper Battlefields State Park. Several improvements

<sup>1</sup> State Parks manage several agricultural contracts on multiple state parks. These are administered through our Procurement Division and are not administered under § 10.1-109. These are procured and executed as service contracts, and therefore, are not considered as leases. For FY2024, State Parks earned a total of \$120,482.86 in revenue from 11 contracts encompassing 1,492.16 acres.

also conveyed with the land, including a parking area, interpretive signage, and a pedestrian trail. ABT had operated and managed the property during its ownership to allow public access and historic interpretation. While DCR is implementing operations for the effective management of the park and associated resources, DCR agreed to lease the property back to ABT to facilitate continued public use. This lease is in accordance with Item C.51-10 C of Chapter 2 of the 2022 Special Session of the General Assembly, which is the enabling clause for Culpeper Battlefields State Park and requires the agency to “execute agreements with local land preservation organizations to maintain park land and trails at current levels until December 31, 2027.”

On October 17, 2024, DCR entered into a lease agreement with the Environmental Chemical Company (ECC) at Claytor Lake State Park. In the aftermath of the devastating flooding along the New River caused by Hurricane Helene, a significant amount of debris collected and settled in Claytor Lake. The Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) identified the boat ramp, docks, and large parking lots at Claytor Lake State Park as the most logical place to stage barges, cranes, trucks, and rollback dumpsters for debris cleanup from the water, and to sort and transport the debris to appropriate offsite permanent disposal locations. DCR negotiated a land lease of \$8,000 to offset the impacts to non-general fund revenue collection from impacted facilities. In addition, DCR negotiated restoration to the premises, and by May 2025, the contractor had repaved parking lots and roads throughout the park, repaired docks and boat ramps, and restored the shoreline around the marina. As this was a temporary, emergency use, this lease has already been terminated.

On November 1, 2024, DCR entered into a lease agreement with the Scott County Public Service Authority (“Scott County PSA”) to provide access and permission for the Scott County PSA to use an abandoned well lot located on Natural Tunnel State Park property as a supplement to the County’s public water supply. Scott PSA is responsible for all operations and maintenance of the well site. Scott County PSA agreed to provide monetary credit to the Park’s water supply fee at a rate of \$1,000.00 annually as compensation for use of the land.

We continue to appreciate the ability to lease our lands to meet our land management objectives, and we thank the General Assembly for its support in our mission.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew W. Smith", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Andrew W. Smith  
Acting Director

cc: Kendra Brown Shifflett, Legislative Fiscal Analyst, Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee  
David Reynolds, Legislative Fiscal Analyst, House Appropriations Committee  
Toni M. Walker, Associate Director, Department of Planning and Budget  
Frank N. Stovall, Deputy Director, Department of Conservation and Recreation  
Lisa McGee, Director of Policy, Planning and Legislative Affairs, Department of Conservation and Recreation  
Brian G. Fuller, Real Property Manager, Department of Conservation and Recreation  
Charlie Marston, Real Property Specialist, Department of Conservation and Recreation