2020 Special Session I

Budget Bill - HB5005 (Chapter 56)

Department of Conservation and Recreation

Item 374	First Year - FY2021	Second Year - FY2022
Leisure and Recreation Services (50400)	**$74,050,589**	**$73,177,420**
Preservation of Open Space Lands (50401)	$16,650,193	$16,650,193
Design and Construction of Outdoor Recreational Facilities (50403)	$894,593	$894,593
State Park Management and Operations (50404)	$50,006,739	$49,873,570
Natural Outdoor Recreational and Open Space Resource Research, Planning, and Technical Assistance (50406)	$6,499,064	$5,759,064
Fund Sources:		
General	$37,572,732	$36,699,563
Special	$27,511,003	$27,511,003
Dedicated Special Revenue	$3,717,124	$3,717,124
Federal Trust	$5,249,730	$5,249,730

Authority: Title 10.1, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 4.1, and 17; Title 18.2, Chapters 1 and 5; Title 19.2, Chapters 1, 5, and 7, Code of Virginia.

A.1. Included in the amounts for Preservation of Open Space Lands is $10,000,000 the first year and $10,000,000 the second year from the general fund to be deposited into the Virginia Land Conservation Fund, § 10.1-1020, Code of Virginia. No less than 50 percent of the appropriations remaining after the transfer to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation's Open-Space Lands Preservation Trust fund has been satisfied are to be used for grants for fee simple acquisitions with public access or acquisitions of easements with public access. This appropriation shall be deemed sufficient to meet the provisions of § 2.2-1509.4, Code of Virginia.

2. Included in the amounts for Preservation of Open Space Lands is $1,500,000 the first year and $1,500,000 the second year from nongeneral funds to be deposited into the Virginia Land Conservation Fund to be distributed by the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation pursuant to the provisions of § 58.1-513, Code of Virginia.

3. The Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation shall review the Hayfields Farm property, consisting of approximately 1,034.7 acres more or less in Highlands County, Virginia, Tax Parcel #68A17 and #68A18A, located at 524 Hayfields Lane in McDowell, and make recommendations to the Chairs of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committees by October, 1 2020 on its suitability as a recreational area pursuant to §10.1-200 et. seq., Code of Virginia, for development as a state or regional park. In its review, the agencies shall consider (i) management of the area or park by a combination of public and private entities; (ii) potential user activities at the area or park including but not limited to camping, fishing, hiking, bird watching, equestrian activities, and biking; and (iii) operation of the area or park with only those improvements minimally necessary for activities listed herein and consistent with the preservation and

protection of the property's conservation values and natural resources.

B. Included in the amounts for Preservation of Open-Space Lands is $1,752,750 the first year and $1,752,750 the second year from the general fund and $1,900,000 the first year and $1,900,000 the second year from nongeneral funds for the operating expenses of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (Title 10.1, Chapter 18, Code of Virginia).

C.1. Out of the amounts appropriated for State Parks Management and Operations, up to $275,000 the first year and $275,000 the second year from the general fund shall be paid for the operation and maintenance of Breaks Interstate Park.

2. The Breaks Interstate Park Commission shall submit an annual audit of a fiscal and compliance nature of its accounts and transactions to the Auditor of Public Accounts, the Director, Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the Director, Department of Planning and Budget.

3. The Breaks Interstate Park Commission shall, following the modernization of the Breaks Interstate Park electrical system, enter into negotiations to transfer control of the electrical system serving the park to a local regional electric utility.

D. Notwithstanding the provisions of § 10.1-202, Code of Virginia, amounts deposited to the State Park Conservation Resources Fund may be used for a program of in-state travel advertising. Such travel advertising shall feature Virginia State Parks and the localities or regions in which the parks are located. To the extent possible the department shall enter into cooperative advertising agreements with the Virginia Tourism Authority and local entities to maximize the effectiveness of expenditures for advertising. The department is further authorized to enter into a cooperative advertising agreement with the Virginia Association of Broadcasters.

E. Upon completion of the construction of the Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail Interpretative Center, the Division of State Parks may accept transfer of the facility, 153 acres of land, and $450,000 for maintenance of the completed facility for operation as a satellite facility to Natural Tunnel State Park. It is the intent of the General Assembly that at such time as the facility, property, and cash are transferred to the Division of State Parks that positions and ongoing funding for the operation of the satellite facility shall be provided.

F. The department is hereby authorized to enter into an agreement with the non-profit organization that currently owns Natural Bridge to open and operate the facility as a Virginia State Park. Included in the amount for this item is $376,364 the first year and $376,364 and five positions from the general fund to increase the operational capacity of Natural Bridge State Park including additional visitor experience, retail, and maintenance functions.

G. Notwithstanding any other provision of the Code of Virginia, as a condition of the expenditure of all amounts included in this Item, the department shall not initiate or accept by gift, transfer or purchase with nongeneral funds any new lands for use as a State Park or Natural Area Preserve without a specific appropriation for such purpose by the General Assembly. However, the department is authorized to acquire land as expressly set out in Items C-27 and C-27.10 of Chapter 854, 2019 Acts of Assembly, as well as in-holdings or lands contiguous to an existing State Park or Natural Area Preserve as expressly set out in Items C-40 and C-41 of this act and as provided for in Section 4-2.01 a.1. of this act provided further that acquisitions authorized in Items C-40 and C-41 will not cause the department to incur additional operating expenses. It is not the intent of these provisions to prohibit any acquisitions resulting from mitigation settlements or to prohibit any additional operating expenses resulting from such acquisitions.

H.1. Included in the amounts for State Park Management and Operations is $590,944 the first year and $590,944 the second year and six positions from the general fund for the initial start-up and ongoing operational costs for Phase I of Widewater State Park in Stafford County. It is the intent of the General Assembly that, as soon as practicable upon completion of Phase 1A, that the Department shall provide public access and proceed to regular revenue generating operations at the Park.

2. The Department of Conservation and Recreation shall collaborate with Stafford County Public Schools, the Friends of Widewater State Park and other interested stakeholders regarding the Science and Environmental Center at Widewater State Park planned to be constructed as part of Phase III in order to ensure the facility is adequate to meet the needs of the community, curriculum collaboration opportunities with local schools, and other needs; determine whether any design changes would further community environmental education goals; determine the availability of any grant, charitable or co-funding opportunities with Stafford County and/or Virginia higher educational institutions; determine the feasibility and costs of any design changes or the necessity of any Master Plan changes; and produce recommendations, if any, relating to such objectives.

I. Included in the amount for this Item is $198,752 the first year and $198,752 the second year and two positions from the general fund to support the limited operation of Seven Bends State Park.

J. Included in the amount for this Item is $150,000 the first year and $150,000 the second year from the nongeneral fund amounts appropriated in Item 451 A. for recreational access which shall be used to fabricate and install Supplemental Guide Signs for Virginia State Parks.

K. The department is hereby authorized to enter into an agreement with the United States Forest Service that owns the Longdale Day Use Area to operate the facility as the Green Pastures Unit of Douthat State Park, an extension of Douthat State Park.

L. The Department of Conservation and Recreation shall review the Brandy Station and Cedar Mountain properties and make recommendations to the Chairs of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committees by October 1, 2020 on their suitability as a historical and recreational area pursuant to §10.1-200 et. seq., Code of Virginia, or development as a state or regional park. In its review, the Department shall consider (i) management of the area or park by a combination of public and private entities; (ii) potential user activities at the area or park including heritage tourism, primitive camping, fishing, bow hunting, boating, equestrian activities, biking and historical and military education; and (iii) operation of the area or park with only those improvements minimally necessary for activities listed herein and consistent with the preservation and protection of existing historic, cultural, archaeological, and natural resources.

M. Included in the amounts for this item is $160,800 the first year and $160,800 the second year and two positions from the general fund to support staffing and operations at Mason Neck State Park.

N. The Director, Department of Conservation and Recreation, shall assess the feasibility of costs of (i) connecting Mason Neck State Park to a public water supply, and (ii) replacing equipment and providing necessary upgrades to the Park's current well water system. The Director shall report the findings and recommendations of the assessment to the Chairs of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committees no later than October 15, 2020.

O. Included in the amount for this item, $740,000 the first year from the general fund is provided to the City of Danville to develop Riverfront Park. This amount shall be matched by a local appropriation of at least $740,000 prior to any disbursement from this Item.

P. The Department of Conservation and Recreation shall, no later than November 1, 2021, provide to the Chairs of the House Committee on Appropriations and the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations an assessment of the feasibility for development of a linear park along the Shenandoah Valley rail corridor from Front Royal to Broadway, Virginia. The assessment shall include the potential timeline for abandonment of existing Norfolk Southern rail sections B51.0 to B84.0 and CW84.0 to CW99.5, anticipated annual user revenues, and all start-up and ongoing costs of operation as a satellite facility of Seven Bends and Shenandoah State Parks. The Departments of Transportation and Rail and Public Transportation shall provide any technical assistance as may be required in developing the cost assessment.