



Sky Meadows State Park
11012 Edmonds Lane
Delaplane, VA 20144

SKY MEADOWS STATE PARK

MASTER PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2022 UPDATE

Department of Conservation and Recreation
Division of Planning and Recreation Resources
600 E Main Street, 24th Floor
Richmond, Virginia 23219




Sky Meadows State Park MASTER PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2022 UPDATE

Presented for review at a public meeting on May 19, 2021, then recommended for adoption by the Board of Conservation and Recreation on May 12, 2022, and then reviewed for 30 days by the Virginia General Assembly.

Adopted:



Matthew S. Wells, Director
July 6, 2022



SKY MEADOWS STATE PARK MASTER PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is the state's lead natural resource conservation agency. DCR protects what Virginians care about - natural habitat, parks, clean water, dams, open space and access to the outdoors.

What We Do

DCR enables and encourages people to enjoy and benefit from Virginia's natural and cultural resources

What We Value

DCR values diversity of nature, culture and communities to ensure a sustainable and equitable future for recreational access and a healthy environment for all Virginians to enjoy.

How We Do It

DCR accomplishes its mission through funding, expertise, education, acquisition and improved access.

Park Purpose Statement

The purpose of Sky Meadows State Park is: To provide in perpetuity the opportunity for visitors to peacefully enjoy an historic Piedmont farm and natural area on the slopes of the Blue Ridge and Lost Mountain while continuing the agricultural uses of a portion of its open land.

Introduction

The park is located in the Rappahannock-Rapidan Region (Planning District 9) and consists of approximately 1,864 acres in northwestern Fauquier and eastern Clarke Counties near the intersection of Routes 17 and 50. The park, as it exists today, was formed by consolidating three parcels of land, which extend from Route 17 to the top of the Blue Ridge to the west and to the top of Lost Mountain to the east. The original parcel of 1,132 acres was a gift from the Paul Mellon Foundation in 1975. A 248-acre corridor containing over three miles of the Appalachian Trail was added in 1987. The third parcel, a 462-acre farm, known as the Maxwellton property, was donated to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation in 1988 and subsequently transferred to the Commonwealth. On March 17, 2004, Sky Meadows State Park was placed on the Virginia Landmarks Register, and on May 24, 2004, it was entered in the National Register of Historic Places.

Donations of land to Sky Meadows for use as a state park carry deed restrictions and other limitations, which have provided direction for developments within the park. These legal constraints and deed restrictions are set forth in the deeds of gift from the Virginia Outdoor Foundation, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, and in a letter titled Sky Meadows Agreement, dated October 10, 1975. A three-mile portion of the Appalachian Trail is within Sky Meadows State Park and is managed by the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club and park personnel. Various rights-of-way and protective easements exist for that portion of the Appalachian Trail located on park property. The park also has partial ownership of an easement from Route 50 to Lost Mountain. This easement leads to the Columbia Gas Company pipeline and affords emergency access to the eastern portion of the property.

Park Master Plan

This Sky Meadows State Park Master Plan Executive Summary is an update to the official unabridged master plan document adopted in 2004 by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). It is the most recent ten-year review as described in §10.1-200.1 of the *Code of Virginia*. This master plan update is intended to set forth a clear vision for the future (based on phased development), while fulfilling the narrative text requirements of Chapter IV of the Virginia Capital Outlay Manual and §10.1-200.1 of the *Code of Virginia*. It outlines the desired future condition for Sky Meadows State Park when it is fully developed.

The original Sky Meadows State Park Master Plan was developed in 1981. The 2004 and 2011 updates refined the mission and direction of the park for the next planning cycle and ensured that the master plan was consistent with the requirements of §10.1200.1 of the *Code of Virginia*. Existing development has been in concert with the original master plan, which stated that the mission of Sky Meadows is to provide minimal impact recreation, thus allowing people to feel a part of the land, a part of the site, and a connection with the agricultural practices which formed this unique pastoral landscape over time.

The 2004 Sky Meadows State Park Master Plan update began in April 2002. The State Parks Director appointed an Advisory Committee to assist with identifying the appropriate amount of development for the park. The committee helped formulate goals and objectives, which will guide future park operations and development. After much discussion, the committee recommended that future development continue to be guided by the original park mission, which is reinforced in the goals and objectives of this plan. The DCR staff also conducted two public meetings to solicit input from the general public. The comments received at those meetings supported the recommendations of the advisory committee that the existing scenic and historic setting of the park be preserved.

As a part of the 2022 master plan update process, DCR staff conducted a review of the 2004 Sky Meadows State Park master plan and the 2011 update. Following a discussion of changing conditions in the park, it was determined that enough significant events and changes had occurred to warrant a public meeting prior to the final revision of this master plan. The desired future condition of the park has shifted since the writing of the 2011 update of the plan, including the relocation of the park entrance road, construction of a visitor center, renovation of the Mount Bleak House, establishment of a discovery center, new park office and other proposals listed in the phased development plan and depicted on the attached master plan map. The phased development plan and costs have been revised to reflect

projects that have been completed since 2011 and to include proposed projects. The park staffing and operations costs have also been updated to reflect current conditions.

The draft 2022 executive summary and map were presented to the Board of Conservation and Recreation at their May 12, 2022 meeting and were recommended for adoption. The documents were then placed on the DCR website for a 30-day review by the Virginia General Assembly. Following that review, the updated plan was presented to the DCR Director Matthew S. Wells for adoption. Following adoption, the updated executive summary and map were placed online <http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/masterplans> for the public to access.

Natural, Cultural and Historic Resources

The park resource management plan consolidates all known resource information for a park and provides management direction for maintaining and enhancing those resources. The plans identify the physical, abiotic, and biotic characteristics of the park, and historic and archaeological resources, as well as a description of the legal constraints and limitations of the property. The park is delineated into undeveloped areas based on the ecosystems found in these areas. Unique management areas are undeveloped areas with a specific purpose or function such as a historic battlefield or open field; and developed areas where park facilities are located yet have natural and cultural resources requiring specific management. The plan has defined management objectives and action recommendations that guide resource management and allow for continuity over time. As proposed development is implemented, additional inventories and considerations will be required to ensure the protection of the unique natural, cultural and historic resources of this park.

Natural Resources

Sky Meadows is located in the Ridge and Valley Physiographic Province. The park is 1,864 acres and comprised of 3 distinct natural community types including Basic Mesic Forests, Basic Oak-Hickory Forests, and Piedmont/Mountain Small Stream Alluvial Forests. Additionally almost half of the park consists of Unique Management Areas that are made up of early successional pollinator habitat and agricultural land managed jointly with the Virginia Department of Corrections for beef production. There are seven ponds on the park property, all are man-made reservoirs using earthen dams. Six are small impoundments in the pastures. The seventh, a three-acre fishing pond, is located near the intersection of Route 17 and the maintenance shop access road. There are also two small wetland ponds that were developed in 1995 on the eastern side of Route 17.

According to the information from the Division of Natural Heritage, the Sky Meadow Fields Conservation Site is located within the property. Conservation sites are tools for representing key areas of the landscape that warrant further review for possible conservation action because of the natural heritage resources and habitat they support. Conservation sites are polygons built around one or more rare plant, animal, or natural community designed to include the element and, where possible, its associated habitat, and buffer or other adjacent land thought necessary for the element's conservation. Conservation sites are given a biodiversity significance ranking based on the rarity, quality, and number of element occurrences they contain; on a scale of 1-5, 1 being most significant. Sky Meadows

Conservation Site has been given a biodiversity significance ranking of B3, which represents a site of high significance. The natural heritage resources associated with this site are Rusty Patched Bumblebee (G1/S1) and Loggerhead Shrike (G4/S2).

The Rusty patched bumble bee (*Bombus affinis*) is listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) effective March 21, 2017. Since the late 1990s, the Rusty patched bumble bee has declined throughout its historical range including Virginia and is anticipated to be extinct in all ecoregions by 2030. Threats to the Rusty patched bumble bee include disease, pesticides, climate change, habitat loss and small population dynamics.

Loggerhead shrikes (*Lanius ludovicianus*) breed throughout most of the United States and southern Canada, through Mexico and into Central America (NatureServe, 2009). In Virginia, there are records throughout most of the state; however its current strong hold seems to be the Shenandoah Valley. It usually nests, forages, and perches in open fields and pastures where there are scattered trees for nesting and telephone wires or fences for perching (Hamel, 1992). Essential habitat requirements include open country with scattered trees or shrubs and conspicuous perches. A thorny shrub, such as hawthorn, is a favored nesting site. Loggerhead shrikes sometimes impale their food on thorny shrubs, barbed-wire fences, and other suitable objects to be eaten later or to feed to their young. The Loggerhead shrike is currently classified as threatened by the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (VDWR).

Threats to the Loggerhead shrike include loss of open habitats through reforestation and conversion to cropland, and the removal of hedgerows (Fraser, 1991). They may experience negative impacts from insecticide use and predation (NatureServe, 2009). The Blue Mountain Conservation Site is within the western area of the park. The natural heritage resource associated with this conservation site near the park boundary is the Schaum's false snail-eating beetle (*Sphaeroderus schamuii*) G4/S2) Yellow avens (*Geum aleppicum*) (G5/S SH), a rare vascular plant species has also historically been documented along the western ridge of the park.

Sky Meadows State Park includes two Ecological Cores (**C1 and C4**) as identified in the Virginia Natural Landscape Assessment (<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/vaconvisvnl>), one of a suite of tools in Virginia ConservationVision that identify and prioritize lands for conservation and protection. Mapped cores in the project area can be viewed via the Virginia Natural Heritage Data Explorer, available here: <http://vanhde.org/content/map>. Ecological Cores are areas of unfragmented natural cover with at least 100 acres of interior that provide habitat for a wide range of species, from interior-dependent forest species to habitat generalists, as well as species that utilize marsh, dune, and beach habitats. Cores also provide benefits in terms of open space, recreation, water quality (including drinking water protection and erosion prevention), and air quality (including carbon sequestration and oxygen production), along with the many associated economic benefits of these functions. The cores are ranked from C1 to C5 (C5 being the least ecologically relevant) using many prioritization criteria, such as the proportions of sensitive habitats of natural heritage resources they contain.

In 2018, the park collaborated with the American Chestnut Foundation to plant over 1,600 American chestnut seedlings in a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program parcel. The

hope is these seedlings, which have been backcross bred for blight resistance, will continue to flourish resulting in a long-range partnership with future plantings.

A 3-mile portion of the Appalachian Trail passes through Sky Meadows State Park. Sky Meadows and the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club maintain the 235.85 (not including easement) acres of land along the Appalachian Trail.

Cultural Resources

The cultural resources of the park can be traced back to the era when the region was actively farmed. Sky Meadows has many outbuildings dating from the late 18th century. The log house, constructed in 1798, is the oldest standing structure in the park. The frame and stone constructed Mount Bleak House was built in the mid-19th Century. Other historical sites include the Snowden Manor and outbuilding ruins, the site of Sherman's Mill, and two staff residences. Old stone walls crisscross the park. The park is located one half mile south of Paris, Virginia on Route 17. Paris is a village at the junction of Route 17 and Route 50. The village was established in 1810 and was a transportation center for travelers going to Winchester, Alexandria, and Fredericksburg. It was a commercial center for area farmers until the early 1900's. The Boston Mill Road, a country lane that once connected Paris with the gristmills along Crooked Run, travels through the park. The area near the Paris crossroads has been an active farming and trading center since the chestnut-oak forests were cleared in the late 1700's.

Park Visitor Experience Plan

The park visitor experience management plan (VEP) is a companion document to the park resource management plan. Together they describe how the Division of State Parks will achieve its dual mission:

“To conserve the natural, scenic, historic, and cultural resources of the Commonwealth (resource management plan) and provide recreational and educational opportunities (visitor experience management plan) consistent with the good stewardship of these lands, waters, and facilities that leaves them unimpaired for future generations”.

The visitor experience management plan provides a park-wide vision for the future of interpretation, education, recreation and other visitor experience opportunities. The plan addresses all elements of a park that affect visitor experiences, including personal services, media, facilities, and landscapes. It is a conceptual document that lays a foundation for subsequent phases of comprehensive interpretive planning: facility and media planning, design and production; organization of staff and activities into annual visitor experience implementation plans.

The plan consists of three parts; the foundation, the experience areas, and the desired future. The ***foundation*** presents information needed to make decisions concerning how visitor experience opportunities will be planned, developed and managed. Each element of this foundation describes an essential criteria that must be considered to create appropriate actions for inclusion in the desired future section of the plan. It identifies essential stories and experiences of the site, specific audience types and their wants, needs, and expectations, interpretive themes (essential messages), issues and influences, goals and objectives as well as park purpose and mission of the agency. ***Experience areas*** are drafted as part of the

foundation workshop as well. This component of the plan will delineate, map and name geographic visitor experience areas based on distinct resource character and interpretive opportunities. Experience areas may be categorized by resource type or condition, social environment, type and extent of park development, level of management, or kind and density of visitor use. The *desired future* section of the visitor experience management plan describes the mix of personal service, media, facility, and landscape conditions that can effectively communicate park significance to guests and facilitate established visitor experience objectives. All desired future proposals will be tested against criteria presented in the Foundation section of the visitor experience management plan; appropriate proposals for inclusion in the plan as desired future recommendations should support most (preferably all) of the foundation criteria.

A Visitor Experience Plan for Sky Meadows is in progress. Following is a summary of the foundation that will be used to build action items for the park.

Significant resource statements, for this plan, were broken down into essential stories.

- Because of its location at the interface of the Piedmont and Valley-Ridge provinces, Sky Meadows provides visitors opportunities to experience a unique “island” of diversity of ecosystems, plants, and animals and the evolution of the Park’s landscape over time through various land management techniques.
- Sky Meadows State park provides multiple opportunities to experience, understand, and appreciate the social and economic aspects of daily life in different eras with particular emphasis on Colonial to post American Civil War life in the Piedmont region.
- Sky Meadows State Park is an active farm that gives visitors the opportunity to interact with and experience agricultural practices from Colonial times to present linking the public to their past, informing their present and guiding their future.
- From the solitude of back country roads and trails, to the panoramic vistas of Historic Crooked Run Valley, to the glimpses of the heavens in the dark skies of the park, Sky Meadows State Park offers its visitors peace and rejuvenation to refocus emotional and intellectual energy for effective everyday living.

Audiences were grouped according to their wants, needs and expectations:

- Guests seeking wide open space need access to areas that are not inhibited by things like trees, buildings, and fences. They want areas that are open, easy to access, and that offer uninhibited views. Their expectations may include access to large grassy areas, easy parking, evening hours, and open hills with wind, restroom facilities, and a shop that stocks specific supplies.
- While, guests that are looking to get in touch with nature need to have access to various ecological habitats, a diverse population of flora & fauna to explore, and trails to use. These guests want areas that both are accessible and still remote, informational resources like flora/fauna guides, and passable trails. Their expectations may include access to various wildlife habitats, being able to locate & see specific species, standard park infrastructure (restrooms, water, parking), and access at various times of year.
- Our guests that are looking for an escape from the city need quiet, secluded areas, and trails to find what they are looking for. These guests want cleared/accessible trails,

accesses to the backcountry, vista, and camping areas. Their expectations may include access to trail maps, parking, restroom facilities, clear trail markers/blazes, and a camp store.

- History buffs come to the park with a need to explore the park's history, and its historic structures. They want access to the structures, information about the park history, and knowledgeable rangers. These guests expect to find information about the parks history, and history of the land, and people who lived here. They also expect clean restroom facilities, access to historic structures/buildings, brochures/pamphlets/books about the history of the area.
- Those interested in volunteering need access to information about volunteer opportunities, how to register, who to talk to. They want easy registration, clearly defined roles/projects, training, and to know they are fulfilling a need. These guests expect guidance, communication, access to supplies, and ranger support.

Interpretive *themes* are overarching ideas that relate the park's purpose, significant resources, and stewardship ethic to visitors. Themes connect the park's tangible resources to larger ideas that help guests understand and appreciate values they can personally derive from those resources. They provide guidelines for making decisions concerning interpretive stories to be told and facilities, landscapes, media and activities required for telling those stories. These are first generation themes, and need to be refined.

The primary theme that was drafted is: ***Sky Meadows State Park holds a vital and integral place in the Historic Crooked Run Valley's pastoral landscape, while preserving rich natural diversity and providing peaceful recreation and personal rejuvenation.***

Secondary themes are divided into four main focal points:

- Sky Meadows State Park invites exploration of its rich diversity of plants and animals resulting from historic and current management of the land and the impact of human activities.
- Represented in the landscapes, structures, and programs of Sky Meadows State Park, the history of the Crooked Run Valley from the 1700's to the present connects visitors to the cultural framework of the continuing American experience.
- Sky Meadows State Park, a working farm utilizing farming techniques and tools of both the past and present, invites visitors to experience day-to-day life on an historic middle class Piedmont farm.
- The scenic vistas, pastoral and wooded trails, and clear expansive skies of Sky Meadows State Park provide an escape from the pressures and routines of daily life to connect with quiet, peaceful surroundings in a way that restores the mind, body and spirit.

Visitor experience objectives describe physical, intellectual, and emotional experiences that will be available to people interested in visiting or learning about Sky Meadows State Park. They state visions for the park's future conditions to be achieved through planning, design, development and operation. Based on agency mission, park purpose, resource significance, management goals, and interpretive themes, objectives provide guidelines for making decisions concerning desirable visitor experience opportunities.

Visitor experience opportunities will be planned, designed, produced, and offered to enable guests to interact with park resources in ways that are both meaningful them and sustainable for the park.

Attendance, Economic Impact and Park Revenues

In 2020 Sky Meadows State Park had 260,896 visitors, 13,996 were overnight guests, while 246,900 were day use visitors. With this level of visitation, it is estimated that the park had an economic impact on the local economy of approximately \$10.0M¹.

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Overnight	5,857	5,561	6,872	7,979	7,230	7,133	4,482	5,739	4,721	13,996
Day-Use	162,088	149,700	186,858	186,747	201,715	210,672	264,458	214,469	181,984	246,900
Total	167,945	155,261	193,730	194,726	208,945	217,805	268,940	220,208	186,705	260,896
Economic Impact ²	-	-	-	-	\$2.7M	\$5.1M	\$5.8M	\$5.2M	\$9.0M	\$10.0M

Demographics

Fauquier and Clarke Counties, where Sky Meadows State Park is located, are the 29th and 99th most populated counties in Virginia, respectively. Fauquier and Clarke Counties are bordered by Culpeper, Rappahannock, Stafford, Loudon, Warren, Prince William, and Frederick Counties in Virginia and Jefferson County in West Virginia. According to the 2019 population estimates for Fauquier County, the breakdown by race is as follows: Caucasian 80.4%, Hispanic 8%, African-American 7.3%, and all other 4.3%. Of the Fauquier County population, 92.4% are citizens of the United States. For Clarke County, the breakdown is as follows: Caucasian 86.5%, Hispanic 5.2%, African-American 4.8%, and all other 3.5%. Of the Clarke County population, 92.4% are citizens of the United States.

According to the VDOT Northern Virginia District traffic report, approximately 10,000 vehicles travel I-66 past exit 23, 7,300 vehicles exit the ramp onto US Route 17 and 8,800 travel Winchester Road/US Route 17 each day past the entrance to the park.

According to the Virginia Tourism Northern Virginia Region Travel Profile³, of 1,083 visitors surveyed, 11% visited state parks/monuments, and 15% rural sightseeing. The top ten

¹ Virginia State Parks Economic Impact Report 2020, by Vincent P. Magnini, Ph. D.

² Virginia State Parks Economic Impact Reports 2015 – 2020, by Vincent P. Magnini, Ph. D.

It is germane to note that economic impact modeling is not solely driven by total park attendance counts. A number of other inputs are also included in the modeling. Such inputs include, for example: park capital improvement expenditures, park operational expenditures not covered by visitor revenues, the ratio of in-state versus out-of-state visitors, the ratio of overnight versus day visitors, and the most recent IMPLAN economic multipliers. These modeling inputs account for the year-to-year fluctuations in the economic impact figures reported in the above Table with two exceptions:

- o In 2015, custom visitor spending profiles had not yet been constructed in Virginia; therefore, the research team used recent spending profiles from West Virginia State Parks as a modeling proxy. The use of this proxy is explained on page 5 of the 2015 economic impact report.
- o In 2017, an additional “average” column was added to the annual economic impact report. The “average” column presents the mean between “adjusted” and “unadjusted” outputs. This column was added in an attempt to gain additional consistency among media outlets reporting the annual results. Prior, some outlets were reporting adjusted outputs and others were reporting unadjusted outputs.

states that visitors come from are Virginia, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, New Jersey, Florida, California, Georgia, and West Virginia.

Business Plan

The purpose of the business plan is to develop realistic expectations for enterprise operations and service development at the State Park. This includes facilities, revenues, and expenditures associated with the park’s operations. Business plans assist park management and staff at the State Park in the decision-making processes regarding the management, operation, and development of park business operations. The plan focuses on the financial impacts of management decisions as well as future expectations of new facilities. Information in this business plan can be used to inform DCR management and State legislators of financial and economic impacts at the State Park.

The business plan includes the park’s mission, vision and objectives and is meant to serve as a look back at the park revenues and expenditures to determine trends and to predict the future earning potential of the park. It is also a roadmap to find new revenue producing opportunities that include both minimal expenses that can be budgeted for and more involved capital improvements.

At Sky Meadows the staff has identified an opportunity to repurpose a dairy barn into an interpretive education opportunity that will also offer a meeting space for the park. There is also a need for a visitor center that would offer interpretive exhibits, office space, meeting space and a larger gift shop. Based on historic data and current trends, the five-year estimate for revenues and expenditures is presented in the following table.

Five year financial estimates for the business plan

Fiscal Year	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025
Anticipated Rev	\$310,648	\$212,144	\$222,057	\$232,832	\$244,172
Anticipated Exp	\$642,073	\$651,554	\$658,068	\$664,651	\$671,296
TOTAL NET	(\$331,425)	(\$439,410)	(\$436,011)	(\$431,819)	(\$427,124)

NOTE: Amounts in expenditure do not include capital or maintenance projects, which are budgeted separately.

Actuals for FY20

Actual Revenues FY20	\$481,637
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³ Note: The Virginia Department of Tourism Northern Virginia Region profile covers ten counties and six cities, from Arlington to Spotsylvania. The majority of the park is located in Fauquier County and for that reason the Northern Virginia Travel Profile was used.

Actual Expenditures FY20	\$578,344
Total Net FY20	(\$96,707)

Existing Facilities

Sky Meadows State Park has minimal support structures at this time. Most of these are historic buildings that have been converted for current use, including: a Visitor Center, one restroom with running water, two residences, a volunteer bunkhouse, office, and farm pole sheds used to house park equipment and supplies. There are numerous other outbuildings, barns and silos (32 total) all of which contribute to the historic value of the property. Since acquisition, a maintenance building, road improvements, parking spaces and a contact station were added. Complementing the horse trail is a barn containing twelve stalls. Originally, a riding concession was envisioned, but after several failed attempts, there is no apparent private interest in this concession. Several of the barns and other buildings are used by the Virginia Department of Corrections, which has an agreement with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to graze cattle and raise hay on approximately 700 acres of land within Sky Meadows.

Sky Meadows State Park has over sixteen and one-half miles of hiking trails, almost seven miles of bridle trails, and approximately three miles of the Appalachian Trail within its boundaries. These are earthen trails, with gravel spread on those with poor drainage and high erosion potential. Below is a list of current facilities at Sky Meadows State Park:

- Mount Bleak House
- Farm Sheds
- Log Cabin
- Ice House
- Wagon Barn
- Dairy Barn
- Park Office
- Visitor Center (with comfort station)
- Contact Station
- Staff Residences (2)
- Maintenance Area (with sheds)
- Hiking Trails (16.5 Miles)
- Equestrian Trail (7 miles)
- Appalachian Trail (3 miles)
- Birding Trail Site
- Timberlake Bunkhouse
- Farm Corral
- Bank Barn
- Silo Feeder Barn
- Loafing sheds (2)
- Turner Pond, and other farm ponds
- Campground (15 sites Tent Only and 1 AT Hiker Site with SST)
- AT Hiker Camping site

Group Camps (2) Slater and Washington
Stable with parking
Fishing Pier
Picnic Area with shelter and SST

Connectivity

This 2022 update focuses on connecting Sky Meadows to other resources in the community. Through the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, the park connects many other trails including those within the Thompson Wildlife Management Area. The park adjoins the Journey Through Hallowed – Ground National Heritage Area, and the Journey's bike route connects to the park. The Skyline Drive and Shenandoah National Park are not far from the park. Blandy Experimental Farm, also known as the State Arboretum of Virginia, is also nearby. There are other historic sites within and in close proximity to the park, including Civil War battlefields, and historic sites in Millwood, Middleburg, Warrenton, Purcellville and Leesburg. Trails at Bull Run Mountain State Natural Area Preserve, Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve and Blue Ridge Regional Park are also within a short drive, as is the western trailhead for the Washington & Old Dominion Trail. Goose Creek and sections of the Shenandoah and Rappahannock rivers are designated State Scenic Rivers, and paddlers enjoy the Shenandoah River Blueway and Rappahannock River Water Trail. Sky Meadows is listed as a site on the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' Birding and Wildlife Trail. The Sky Meadows State Park Regional Connectivity Map is an attachment to the full Master Plan document.

Land and Water Conservation Fund

Sky Meadows State Park received Federal Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF) in 1981 for park facility development. In compliance with the LWCF Act of 1965 and amendments thereto, the Commonwealth of Virginia is required to maintain the park for public outdoor recreation in perpetuity.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Virginia State Parks strive to be accessible to all Virginians and our guests. State parks are continually upgrading facilities to meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards and working to ensure our programs, services and activities are accessible to people with disabilities.

The following facilities have been identified as accessible at Sky Meadows State Park: Picnic Shelter/Table; Gift Shop/Restrooms/Visitor Center; Fishing Pond Trail with Piers; Picnic Pads with parking; And the Restroom at the Fishing Pond.

Land Acquisition/Viewshed Protection

Additional land acquisition is recommended in this park to enhance park offerings, establish connective trail easements/corridors, buffer the park from inappropriate development or protect valued viewsheds. All lands acquired by sale or donation will only be negotiated with willing property owners. The placement of conservation easements on adjacent property to preserve the natural resources, cultural landscapes and scenic resources in close proximity to the park is encouraged. In working cooperatively with neighboring landowners, the park will be enhanced and protected over time. In the future, if land adjacent to the park becomes available, efforts should be made to preserve the property through donations, PDR's, easements, or fee acquisition. All the agencies that own adjoining land should work to preserve the unique viewshed of Gap Run and the Crooked Run Valley, one of the most scenic areas of the northern Piedmont.

Sky Meadows is one of four Virginia State Parks designated as an International Dark Sky Park by the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA). The park achieved the designation by establishing an outdoor lighting policy that minimizes light pollution, conducts outreach to the local community, and hosts and promotes programs for guests to enjoy stargazing.

Environmental Design Guidance

This 2022 master plan update describes both new facilities and improvements to existing facilities. New facilities at this park should be designed and built with consideration to the scenic and historic setting that is Sky Meadows and in keeping with the prescriptive management areas as defined by the Park Resource Management Plan and guidelines of the Park Visitor Experience Plan. All future phases of park construction will be developed in an environmentally sensitive manner. Building and site design will implement green energy standards using energy-efficient and sustainable materials and process to the greatest extent possible, as well as outdoor lighting that complies with the IDA Light Management Plan. These facilities will be carefully sited to minimize impacts to the views within the park and of the park from the adjacent lands. Development activities will comply with the requirements set forth by the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Best Management Practices (BMP) Handbook for Erosion and Sediment Control in order to protect water quality.

This 2022 master plan update describes both proposed facilities and improvements to existing facilities. New facilities are sited to minimize impact to the park, and in keeping with the prescriptive management areas as defined by the Park Resource Management Plan and the guidelines of the Park Visitor Experience Plan, when available. These facilities will be carefully sited to minimize impacts to the views in the park and of the park from adjacent lands and water bodies. Consideration will be given to eliminate excessive, misdirected or obtrusive artificial light in the park in order to maximize the dark sky effect and encourage astronomy and night-sky viewing.

Green design initiatives will be considered during the design process for park renovations and new construction. Development activities will comply with requirements set forth by the Department of Environmental Quality's best management practices for erosion, sediment control and storm-water management in order to protect water quality. A setback guideline of 100 feet from the shoreline has been established by DCR, and trails and water dependent

facilities such as fishing stations, piers and other water access facilities will be the only developments permitted within the 100-foot setback.

Additionally, Sky Meadows State Park holds a vital and integral place in the Historic Crooked Run Valley's pastoral landscape, thus it is vital that all restorations and renovations should be sensitive to the historic structures and not detract from the Valley's landscape and "sense of place".

There are potential challenges of overuse and crowded conditions, which may require management actions to protect the resources and the quality of the park experience. Issues related to resource carrying capacity and social carrying capacity should be evaluated prior to developing new facilities.

DCR strives to meet environmental challenges by providing facilities and programs that help reduce the waste stream and reduce each park's impact on the environment. Making recycling easier for visitors is a goal, as is taking advantage of developing technologies such as electric car charging stations and solar panels on park structures.

Phased Development Plan

The proposed developments for Sky Meadows State Park are presented in priority order. Completion of all of the projects in this list will represent total build-out (completion of the master plan), and covers a 30-year timeframe.

Phase I

Expand comfort stations in historic area

Reconfigure Turner Pond/Lost Mountain/Route 17 intersection, particularly for safe ingress and egress for Turner Pond, to include safe hiking/biking/equestrian crossing

Complete restoration/rehabilitation of historic structures, per the 2019 Structural Assessment

Enhance the Mount Bleak House Historic Area:

- Stabilize and renovate Mount Bleak House

- Stabilize and renovate dairy barn for programs and interpretation

- Stabilize and renovate farm structures for agricultural use and interpretation

- Replace wire fencing with period fencing and restore stone walls in historic area.

- Place utility wires underground in historic area

Reconfigure Edmonds Lane/Picnic Area road intersection for safe ingress/egress

Construct a maintenance shop

Stabilize and restore Wayside Cottage (c. 1781)

Resurface picnic area roads and park office driveway/parking areas

The total estimated cost for Phase I development is \$10,194,346

Phase II

Construct visitor center (with exhibits) and park office (5000 sf) on Edmonds Lane

Construct a new contact station with comfort station

Enhance picnic area with utilities and comfort station

Stabilize and renovate Bank Barn for maintenance storage

Dredge/restore dam and drainage at Turner Pond (to correct erosion/infill)
Construct roads in conjunction with new visitor center

The total estimated cost for Phase II development is \$8,675,640

Phase III

Staff residence
Repurpose current horse barn as a comfort station
Resurface Turner Pond road/parking area to maintenance shop.

The total estimated cost for Phase III development is \$1,890,460

**The total cost to bring Sky Meadows State Park to its desired future condition is
\$20,760,446**

Staffing and Operations

Staffing and operational costs for Sky Meadows State Park are based on fiscal year 2021 budget projections. Each development phase has specific staffing needs and operational costs. In addition, each phase will have one-time expenses for vehicles and other equipment associated with new staff and facility operations.

Staffing and operational costs at Sky Meadows State Park are presently budgeted at \$706,000 annually, including salaries for 5 staff positions. With the current facilities and operational requirements, the park has an identified need for 4 additional positions. At complete build out of the proposed 3 phases of development, 1 additional staff will be needed and along with an additional \$321,000 in operating funds. In order for the park to operate effectively and efficiently at full build out, the park requires the projected staffing and operating funds identified in the budget as “existing additional needs” and the funds for the 3 development phases. The total budget for Sky Meadows at full build out is projected to be \$1,347,000 with 10 staff positions.

SKY MEADOWS STAFFING AND OPERATIONS REQUIREMENTS

EXISTING (FY 21)	EXISTING ADDITIONAL NEEDS *	PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	FULL BUILD OUT
STAFFING					STAFFING
Park Manager					Park Manager
Chief Ranger					Chief Ranger
Chief Ranger Visitor Experience	Park Ranger Visitor Experience				Visitor Experience (2)
Park Ranger	Park Ranger (2)		Park Ranger		Park Ranger (4)
Office Manager					Office Manager
	Assistant Park Manager				Assistant Park Manager
SALARY TOTAL					SALARY TOTAL
\$337,000	\$320,000		\$76,000		\$733,000
WAGE TOTAL					WAGE TOTAL
\$240,000		\$40,000	\$30,000	\$2,000	\$312,000
OTPS TOTAL					OTPS TOTAL
\$129,000		\$89,000	\$77,000	\$7,000	\$302,000
TOTAL BUDGET (FY21 dollars)					TOTAL BUDGET (FY21 dollars)
\$706,000	\$320,000	\$129,000	\$183,000	\$9,000	\$1,347,000

NOTE – All costs (salary, wage, OTPS (Other than Personnel Services)) are based on FY21 budget projections

* The state park staffing matrix identifies the staffing complement of a park based on size and resources, number and type of facilities, as well as types of programming and activities. The staffing complement will be re-evaluated with the addition of new facilities.



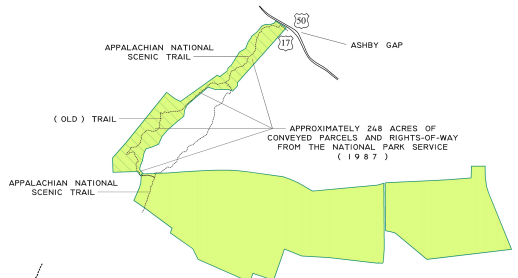
MASTER PLAN FOR SKY MEADOWS STATE PARK

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION
DIVISION OF PLANNING AND RECREATION RESOURCES
PREPARED BY DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

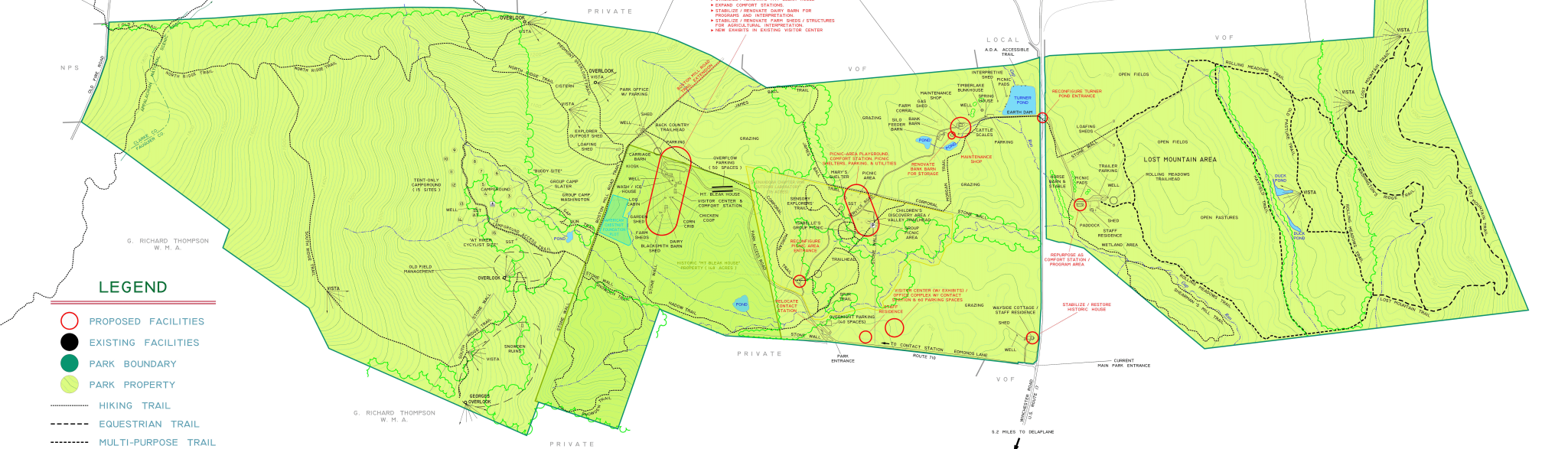
MARCH 2022



- ADDITIONAL PROPOSED ITEMS:**
- EXPAND EXISTING PARK TRAILS AND EXPLORE NEW TRAIL CONNECTIONS OUTSIDE THE PARK
 - FINISH ASG ACCESS THROUGHOUT THE PARK
 - REPLACE WIRE FENCING WITH HISTORICALLY APPROPRIATE FENCING / BORDERS
 - RECONFIGURE PARK ROADS AND PARKING AREAS
 - PLACE UTILITIES UNDERGROUND, ESPECIALLY IN DESIGNATED HISTORIC AREAS
 - COMPLETE RESTORATION / REHABILITATION OF EXISTING HISTORIC STRUCTURES FOR THE 2019 STRUCTURAL ASSESSMENT



SEE ABOVE REGARDING ADDITIONAL * CONVEYED PARK PROPERTY



LEGEND

- PROPOSED FACILITIES
- EXISTING FACILITIES
- PARK BOUNDARY
- PARK PROPERTY
- HIKING TRAIL
- EQUESTRIAN TRAIL
- MULTI-PURPOSE TRAIL

SKY MEADOWS STATE PARK IS 1859.68 ACRES LOCATED IN CLARKE & FAUQUER COUNTIES, VIRGINIA.