



STAUNTON RIVER STATE PARK  
1170 Staunton Trail  
Scottsburg, Virginia 24589-9636

# Staunton River State Park MASTER PLAN

## Executive Summary 2014 Update

**Department of Conservation and Recreation**  
Division of Planning and Recreation Resources  
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Richmond, Virginia 23219



# Staunton River State Park

## MASTER PLAN

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2014 UPDATE

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*Presented for review at a public meeting on March 19, 2014; recommended for adoption by the Board of Conservation and Recreation on May 12, 2014; and reviewed for 30 days by the Virginia General Assembly.*

#### **Adopted:**

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/S/

Clyde E. Cristman, Director  
Department of Conservation and Recreation  
July 7, 2014



## STAUNTON RIVER STATE PARK MASTER PLAN - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2014 Update

The Staunton River State Park Master Plan Executive Summary is an update to the official unabridged master plan document adopted on June 9, 2003, by Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Director Joseph H. Maroon. A Master Plan Amendment was approved on February 11, 2008, by DCR Director Joseph H. Maroon. This master plan update is intended to set forth a clear vision for the future (based on phased development). This 2014 executive summary represents the most recent five-year review described in §10.1-200.1 of the *Code of Virginia*. It outlines the desired future condition for Staunton River State Park when it is fully developed.

Staunton River State Park was opened in 1936 as one of the first six state parks in Virginia. The skilled hands of the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) built the original buildings and facilities. Since then, the park has evolved from a CCC demonstration project into a thriving natural resource/recreation facility. As a result, the park has come under increasing dual pressure -- to provide users with more facilities and activities and to enhance and protect the natural resource foundation. Flooding from the construction of John H. Kerr Dam and Reservoir reduced an original 1,766 acres to approximately 1,597 acres of fields and forest; however, with acquisitions and lands leased from the Corps of Engineers, the park's current acreage is 2,335.53 acres. The park provides diverse cultural, historical, and recreational experiences for users. It is a favorite vacation and day-use spot for members of the community and tourists alike.

Staunton River State Park is located at the confluence of the Dan and Staunton Rivers. The park property was known as Fork Plantation in the antebellum South. There were several owners, including H.E. Coleman, and after 1839, Richard Logan. After the Civil War, the plantation fell into ruins, and tenant farmers tilled the land. In 1933, the State Commission of Conservation and Development of Virginia bought 1,196-acres from the Johnson family. In 1935, a Civilian Conservation Corps camp (CCC) was established at "The Fork" to convert the plantation into a State Park, and the property's "modern" history began.

The park is located in southeastern Halifax County in Virginia's south Central Piedmont area; it is 10 miles east of Route 360 via Route 344. The park is within reasonable driving distance of major cities in Virginia and North Carolina: 185 miles from Charlotte, NC, 121 miles from Roanoke, 107 miles from Richmond, 94 miles from Raleigh, NC, 78 miles from Lynchburg and 48 miles from Danville.

This 2014 update places value on connecting Staunton River to other resources in the community. Staunton River is listed as a site on the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' Birding and Wildlife Trail and is close to Staunton River Battlefield State Park and Difficult Creek Natural Area Preserve. Water trails are under development along the Banister, Dan, Hyco and Staunton rivers and throughout the region. The Banister River is a State Scenic River, as are portions of the Staunton River. Route 344 is a designated Virginia Byway. The park is a featured stop along the proposed Beaches to Bluegrass

statewide trail, which will connect the park to the Town of South Boston and The Tobacco Heritage Trail. These trails link to the East Coast Greenway and U.S. Bicycle Route 1. The Staunton River State Park Regional Connectivity Map is an attachment to the full Master Plan document.

Planners from the Department of Conservation and Recreation conducted this master plan update in accordance with §10.1-200.1 of the *Code of Virginia*. As a part of the 2014 master plan process, the 2003 park master plan was reviewed, as well as the 2008 amendment. It was determined that significant changes occurred to the master plan to warrant a full revision. The executive summary and accompanying map have been updated. The phased development plan and costs have been revised to reflect current proposed projects. The park staffing and operations costs data have been also updated to reflect current conditions.

The park purpose statement is: ***“The purpose of Staunton River State Park, an original CCC park built at the confluence of the Staunton River and the Dan River, is to provide water access and traditional outdoor recreation experiences on Buggs Island Lake.”***

The following table depicts park attendance during the period 2005 through 2013.

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
179,904	162,253	169,011	181,620	197,131	139,263	125,235	129,203	122,889

In 2013 Staunton River had 122,889 visitors: 23,359 were overnight guests, while 99,530 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 \$3,344,405. Master plan recommendations designed to increase visitation and improve the visitor experience, once implemented, should have a further positive impact on the region’s economic vitality.

Staunton River State Park received Federal Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF) in 2005 to construct a visitor center. 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.

Staunton River State Park has hosted several successful “dark sky” astronomy events at the park that draw hundreds of visitors to the park and surrounding area. Improvements have and will be made to the park to encourage these events. Local communities surrounding the park have recognized the tourism benefit of these events and have begun to discourage light pollution. It is recommended that Staunton River State Park apply for Dark Park status with the International Dark Sky Association, which would encourage both individual astronomers and clubs to visit the park.

Facilities at Staunton River include 8 cabins, 48 campsites, swimming pool with wading pool, concessions, picnic areas with shelters, restrooms, visitor center, amphitheater, bank fishing areas, boat storage building, boat launching ramps, multi-use trail system, parking areas including horse trailer parking, and playgrounds. Maintenance and management

facilities include park office, staff residences, and a maintenance area as well as a road system, water system, and septic fields.

This 2014 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. New facilities at this park should be designed and built to reflect the original CCC design and layout of facilities. 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 to the greatest extent possible. 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. Virginia State Parks strives to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards.

Building and site design will implement green energy standards using energy-efficient and sustainable materials and process to the greatest extent possible. 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 Conservation and Recreation's Best Management Practices (BMP) Handbook for Erosion and Sediment Control in order to protect water quality. A setback guideline of 100 feet from the reservoir 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.

Additional land acquisition is recommended to enhance park offerings, buffer the park from inappropriate development, or protect valued viewsheds. Future land acquisitions 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.

The proposed developments for Staunton River State Park are presented in priority order; projects listed in Phases I through III are representative of total build-out (complete development of this master plan). The plan outlines the desired future condition of the park over a 20 year planning horizon. Total estimated cost is \$31,595,335.

### **Staunton River State Park Proposed Phasing**

#### **Phase I**

- Enlarge Visitors Center and install exhibits
- Expand/reconfigure Visitor Center parking/entrance
- Stabilize tobacco barn at Visitor Center
- Enhance electrical service at event field near Visitor Center
- New park entrance and internal park road
- Contact station/park office/comfort station at new entrance to park
- Repair/upgrade dam at Edmunds Lake.

Road upgrades to Edmunds Lake  
Bank fishing nodes and hand-carry boat launch at Edmunds Lake  
Picnic area, comfort station and parking north of Edmunds Lake  
Accessible (ADA) nature trail and fishing piers at pond  
Install 2500-feet of shoreline erosion control  
Relocate equestrian day-use parking  
Convert equestrian day-use parking to trailhead, parking, picnic area, and comfort station.  
Staff residence  
Replace bathhouse in campground  
Upgrade campground water and electric service  
Demolish old office building  
Upgrade Captain Staunton Trail for accessibility

**The total estimated cost for Phase I development is \$13,432,349.**

## **Phase II**

Enhance swimming pool with water play area/parking (50 spaces)  
Vault toilet at Staunton River ramp  
Overflow parking area for campers (25 spaces)  
Refurbish boat storage facility  
Canoe landing/launch on Dan River  
Renovate log cabin at Edmunds Lake  
Renovate original shop building and expand maintenance area

**The total estimated cost for Phase II development is \$6,232,496.**

## **Phase III**

Environmental education facility at Edmunds Lake  
Three cabins (6br, 3br, 2br) at current cabin loop  
30-site campground (3 camping cabins) with water and electric hookups  
Relocate and upgrade park amphitheater  
Large picnic shelter at Visitor Center  
Large picnic shelter at Dan River ramp  
Electric service, including parking lot and pier lighting at Dan River ramp  
Boat dock on the Dan River  
Group camp at Edmunds Lake (water/vault toilet/shelter)  
Canoe-in camping with service road

**The total estimated cost for Phase III development is \$11,947,338.**

**The total estimated cost for Phases I, II, and III development is \$31,612,183.**

## **Staffing and Operations**

Staffing and operational costs at Staunton River State Park are presently budgeted at \$720,000 annually, including salaries for five staff positions. Three additional staff positions are identified in Phase 1 which are either vacant positions or would bring the current park staffing to standard base level. At complete build out of the proposed three phases of development, seven additional staff will be needed, as well as an additional \$604,000 in operating funds. In order for the park to operate effectively and efficiently at full build out, the park must be provided with the projected staffing and operating costs for the three development phases. The total budget for Staunton River at full build-out is projected to be \$1,324,000 with 12 staff positions.

## STAUNTON RIVER STAFFING AND OPERATING COSTS

EXISTING (FY 14)	PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	FULL BUILD OUT
<b>STAFFING</b>				<b>STAFFING</b>
Park Manager				Park Manager
	Asst. Park Mgr*			Asst. Park Mgr
Chief Ranger				Chief Ranger
	Educ. Specialist*		Educ. Specialist	Educ. Specialist (2)
Park Ranger (2)	Park Ranger*	Park Ranger	Park Ranger	Park Ranger (5)
			Housekeeper	Housekeeper
Office Manager				Office Manager
<b>SALARY TOTAL</b>				<b>SALARY TOTAL</b>
\$301,000	\$167,000	\$46,000	\$150,000	\$664,000
<b>WAGE TOTAL</b>				<b>WAGE TOTAL</b>
\$162,000	\$45,000	\$2,000	\$78,000	\$287,000
<b>OTPS TOTAL</b>				<b>OTPS TOTAL</b>
\$257,000	\$16,000	\$1,000	\$99,000	\$373,000
<b>TOTAL BUDGET (FY14 dollars)</b>				<b>TOTAL BUDGET (FY14 dollars)</b>
\$720,000	\$228,000	\$49,000	\$327,000	\$1,324,000

NOTE – All costs (salary, wage, OTPS (Other than Personnel Services)) are based on FY14 budget projections.

\* Additional positions which are vacant and/or will bring park to standard base level staffing.



