



REGION **2**
*Cumberland
Plateau*

Introduction

Cumberland Plateau in southwestern Virginia includes the counties of Russell, Dickenson, Buchanan and Tazewell. The region borders Kentucky on the west and West Virginia on the north. This rugged and beautiful mountainous area contains spectacular scenery and unique natural habitats of national and statewide significance. Inhabitants and visitors to the area enjoy a variety of natural resource-based recreational opportunities along with several parks and forest recreation areas.

Regional Focus

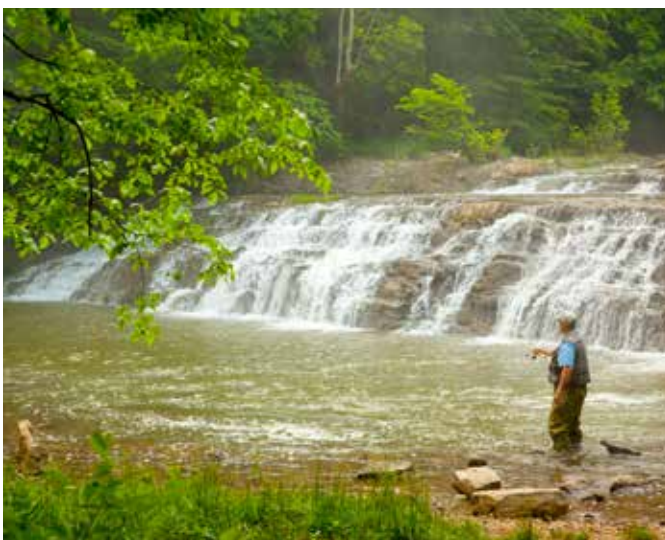
Table 2.1 Most-Needed Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

Cumberland Plateau Recreational Planning Region

activity	% of households in	
	region	state
Water access	55	43
Parks	52	49
Natural areas	49	54
Trails	45	43
Scenic drives (driving for pleasure)	43	29
Historic areas	37	39
Playing fields, sports and golf facilities	15	22

Source: 2017 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey.

For sampling purposes, data from the Cumberland Plateau and LENOWISCO regions were grouped.



Big Cedar Creek | John Henley/Virginia Tourism Corp.

Table 2.2 Top 10 Outdoor Recreation Activities By Participation

Cumberland Plateau Recreational Planning Region

activity	% household
Driving for pleasure	79
Visiting natural areas	74
Walking for pleasure	61
Freshwater fishing	58
Visiting parks (local, state & national)	56
Swimming/outdoor pool	47
Hunting	39
Visiting working farms, petting zoos, corn mazes, etc.	38
Sunbathing/relaxing on a beach	37
Picnicking away from home	35

Source: 2017 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey.

For sampling purposes, data from the LENOWISCO and Cumberland Plateau regions were grouped. Visit www.dcr.virginia.gov/vop to view regional participation rates for more than 100 activities.

Regional Featured Projects

To be considered a regional featured project, a project must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Has statewide or regional significance.
- Addresses top statewide or regional needs identified by the Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey.
- Has involvement and support from multiple jurisdictions in the region.
- Able to be initiated within the next five years.

Featured projects for the Cumberland Plateau region:

- Connect the Cranesnest Trail to Breaks Interstate Park.
- Move forward the Clinch River Valley Initiative in Wise, Russell, Tazewell and Scott Counties.
- Expand the Spearhead Trail system to include the Dante Trail.
- Connect trails to the Haysi Trail Center.



Breaks Interstate Park | Scenic Virginia

- Extend the Pocahontas Exhibition to the downtown Pocahontas Trail and to Bramwell in West Virginia.
- Connect the Laurel Bed Lake Trail to the Channels, Hidden Valley Trail and Clinch Mountain Trail.

Outdoor Recreation Economic Impact

Table 2.3 Per-Capita Spending on Parks and Recreation

Cumberland Plateau Recreational Planning Region

locality	dollars
Buchanan County	37.36
Dickenson County	12.07
Russell County	5.13
Tazewell County	5.54
Town of Bluefield	65.86
Town of Richlands	57.56
Town of Tazewell	86.7
Statewide	71.09

Source: Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts, "Comparative Report on Local Government Revenues and Expenditures," 2016.

Table 2.4 Virginia State Parks 2017 Attendance and Economic Impact

Cumberland Plateau Recreational Planning Region

state park	location	overnight visitors	day-use visitors	total visitors	economic impact
Breaks Interstate	Dickinson County	76,253	337,878	414,131	N/A

Source: Virginia State Parks

Regional Health

Table 2.5 Health Trends

Cumberland Plateau Recreational Planning Region

locality	adult smoking (% of adults)	adult obesity (% of adults with BMI over 30)	physical inactivity (% of adults age 20 or over reporting no leisure time/physical activity)	access to exercise opportunities (% population with adequate access to locations for physical activity)	air pollution - particulate matter (micrograms per cubic meter)
Buchanan County	21	32	34	27	9.3
Dickenson County	18	35	26	38	9.2
Russell County	19	29	27	45	9.2
Tazewell County	18	30	30	52	8.8
Statewide	17	27	21	81	8.7

Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation



White water | Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

Outdoor Recreation Interface with Virginia Tourism

The Virginia State Tourism Plan was completed by Virginia Tourism Corp. in March 2013. In 2017, Virginia Tourism compiled “Nature & Outdoors” recommendations in Appendix 13 for each recreation planning region.

Regional Historic Resources

The Cumberland Plateau region contains an iconic, historic transportation route. It is home to one of only three natural “gaps” in the Appalachian Mountains, one that served as a gateway between Virginia and Kentucky and later as a route west for determined settlers. As in other Appalachian regions, this area’s historic resources reflect the importance of extractive industries and railroad transportation to its late 19th and early 20th century prosperity. Historic districts contain residential and commercial buildings constructed during this period, a time of economic boom. County seats include large, imposing courthouses designed to convey both the power of the law and wealth of the community. Small company towns and the mines that anchored them are found throughout this region. The region is also rich in prehistory, with small encampment sites on ridges and beneath rockshelters and large settlements on the floodplains below.

Appropriate conservation activities may include installation of highway markers to commemorate historic locations and events,

placement of historic properties on the Virginia Landmarks Register or National Register of Historic Places and placement of historic preservation and open space easements. Conservation targets include: 19th century farmsteads, dwellings and commercial buildings/districts; late 19th and early 20th century company towns and coal camps; and significant prehistoric habitation sites. Information about historic buildings, structures and archaeological sites is maintained in the permanent files of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and is available to local planners.

Table 2.6 Regional Historic Resources

Cumberland Plateau Recreational Planning Region

resource	location
Honaker Historic District	Russell County
Dickenson County Courthouse	Dickenson County
Buchanan County Courthouse	Buchanan County
Pocahontas Exhibition Mine	Tazewell County
Burke’s Garden Rural Historic District	Tazewell County

Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

Land Conservation

Table 2.7 Conserved Lands

Cumberland Plateau Recreational Planning Region

locality	easement acres	ownership acres
Buchanan County	0	0
Dickenson County	0	8,821.60
Russell County	12,821.53	8,098.85
Total	29,741.98	

Source: Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Protected Lands Inventory

Natural Area Preserves and Natural Heritage Resources

The Cumberland Plateau region is located in one of the most biologically rich areas in the world. The Clinch River and associated streams support a great variety of mussels, fishes and other aquatic species found nowhere else on the planet. The southern half of the district is underlain with limestone, which supports many rare plants and plant communities above ground and an abundance of caves and cave-dwelling animals below ground. While three natural area preserves have been established here — all in Russell County — much critical habitat remains unprotected.

DCR recommends that conservation activities and land protection efforts in the region focus on unprotected Essential Conservation Sites and all unprotected portions of Natural Area Preserve resiliency areas. Secondly, strategic land conservation should expand upon existing managed areas and seek connectivity via protecting and/or managing intact ecological cores and natural vegetation cover between currently protected lands. Finally, attention on remaining unprotected natural heritage resources within the region should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Conservation targets include:

- Significant caves and karst areas.
- Improve water quality for globally rare aquatic communities.
- Terrestrial limestone communities.
- Establishment of segments of the Virginia Karst Trail on public lands with significant karst areas.

Information about the location of conservation sites and the natural heritage resources they contain, as well as management assistance, is available to local planners from DCR’s Natural Heritage Program. For more on the Natural Heritage Program, see Chapter 11 and Appendix 11.

Table 2.8 Natural Area Preserves

Cumberland Plateau Recreational Planning Region

preserve name	owner	locality
Cleveland Barrens	DCR and The Nature Conservancy	Russell County
Pinnacle	DCR and The Nature Conservancy	Russell County
The Channels	DOF	Russell County (part)

Table 2.9 Natural Heritage Resources

Cumberland Plateau Recreational Planning Region

Number of occurrences of rare species and significant natural communities	563
Number of different rare species and significant community types (natural heritage elements)	210
Number of globally rare natural heritage elements	71
Number of species listed as federally endangered or threatened	21
Number of species listed as state endangered or threatened	27
Number of terrestrial conservation sites identified by DCR	53
Number of conservation sites with little or no protection	41
Number of partially protected conservation sites	11
Number of well protected conservation sites	1

Information as of Feb. 28, 2018. Source: Virginia Natural Heritage Program