

Virginia's Natural Area Preserve System

Virginia established its Natural Area Preserve System in 1989 to protect lands that harbor some of the best examples of natural communities and rare plant and animal species in Virginia



and the world. In 1990 North Landing River was dedicated as our first Natural Area Preserve. As of July 2006, there are 46 preserves totaling 41,255 acres. Thirty-four of these preserves are owned by the Department of Conservation and Recreation. Public or private owners have dedicated the others to the Natural Area Preserve System. Each preserve is managed for the benefit of the rare plants, animals and natural communities found there.

Natural Area Preserve Locations

1	North Landing River	24	Grassy Hill
2	Bethel Beach	25	Folly Mills Creek Fen
3	Big Spring Bog	26	Dameron Marsh
4	Johnsons Creek	27	Dendron Swamp
5	Poor Mountain	28	Parkers Marsh
6	Wreck and Bone Island	29	Hickory Hollow
7	Bush Mill Stream	30	Cleveland Barrens
8	Pinnacle	31	Chobot Creek
9	Wm. B. Tower Bayshore	32	Deep Run Ponds
10	Northwest River	33	Goshen Pass
11	Craton Ponds	34	Driftout Creek
12	Blackwater Ecological Preserve	35	Bull Run Mountains
13	Onub Sandhill	36	False Cape
14	Antioch Pines	37	Grayson Glades
15	Buffalo Mountain	38	Parremore Island
16	Cumberland Marsh	39	Ellick Woodlands
17	New Point Comfort	40	Unthinks Cave
18	Cape Charles Coastal Habitat	41	Red Rock Mountain
19	The Cedars	42	Mount Joy Pond
20	Cowbane Prairie	43	Cherry Orchard Bog
21	Hughlett Point	44	Mutton Hunk Fen
22	Savage Neck Dunes	45	Clover Hollow
23	Pedar Hills	46	Marks and Jacks Islands

Distribution of Natural Heritage Resources in Virginia

Virginia's Natural Heritage Program

Celebrate and Protect Our Natural Heritage

Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

Natural Heritage Program

217 Governor Street
Richmond, VA 23219



Virginia's Natural Heritage



Background

The Virginia Natural Heritage Program was established to protect the state's diversity of life. The program was started in 1986 as a cooperative effort of the Commonwealth of Virginia and The Nature Conservancy, a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation of natural diversity. In 1988 the program became a component of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) as the Natural Heritage Program.

The Virginia program is a member of NatureServe, the international network of natural heritage programs that includes all 50 states, Canada and much of Latin America. This partnership greatly enhances the quality and utility of our conservation information. The staff supports the Virginia Cave Board and the Virginia Invasive Species Working Group.

The program focuses on the identification, protection and stewardship of natural heritage resources defined in the Code of Virginia as the habitat of rare, threatened or endangered plant and animal species, rare or state significant natural communities or geologic sites, and similar features of scientific interest benefiting the welfare of the citizens of the Commonwealth. The habitats of swamp-pink, the Shenandoah salamander, limestone caves, old-growth forests, freshwater tidal marshes and shorebird nests are but a few examples of these natural heritage resources.

How we work

Tasks required to protect natural heritage resources are divided among five interdependent units of the Natural Heritage Program.

Inventory

The first task is to identify, locate and assess the status of the state's rare plants, animals and natural communities. This job is carried out by the Inventory Section, a staff of dedicated botanists, zoologists and ecologists who conduct extensive research and perform systematic field surveys to locate and document the condition of natural heritage resources.

Information Management

Once this information is collected, the Information Management and Project Review Section assemble it into a central database and a geographic information system (GIS). The group keeps the growing knowledge well organized for use within the Natural Heritage Program as well as by other agencies, private organizations and citizens. The staff plays a vital role in guiding development around significant natural habitats and in providing information for important land use and open space conservation decisions by local, regional and statewide conservation agencies and organizations.

Natural Area Protection

Information gathered in the inventory process is used to evaluate the importance of conservation sites across the state. Conservation sites are prioritized, and the Natural Area Protection Section contacts natural area owners to discuss various ways to protect the special resources on their property. Protection options may include the Virginia Registry of Natural Areas – an honorary designation that recognizes the special nature of the property and the owner's voluntary commitment to protect it – or the use of special designation on federal lands, or legal protection through natural area dedication easements or land purchase. The strongest protection tool is natural area dedication, which is similar to a conservation easement in that it protects a site in perpetuity. Dedicated lands become a part of the Natural Area Preserve System.

Stewardship

The Natural Heritage Program's Stewardship Section manages the state's rapidly growing Natural Area Preserve System. Stewardship staff also works with private landowners and conservation partners, advising and providing technical support to improve management of natural heritage resources. Stewardship activities include conducting ecological studies, biological assessments, invasive species control actions, prescribed burns, hydrology restoration projects, and other actions needed to protect, restore, enhance, and maintain natural communities and rare species' habitats.

To learn more

- Visit our website: www.dcr.virginia.gov/dnh
- Call: (804) 786-7951
- Write: Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
Natural Heritage Program
217 Governor Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Art Credits

Goldenrod, Gray's lily, Swamp-pink and Regal fritillary – Megan Rollins
Fresh tidal marsh – Donna Moore Smith



Department of Conservation & Recreation
CONSERVING VIRGINIA'S NATURAL & RECREATIONAL RESOURCES