Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

Division of State Parks | Division of Natural Heritage

Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff

Annual Report 2021

DCR

Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation

Message From the Chief

In my first year as Chief of the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff, I held listening sessions and introduction meetings with staff and leadership. What I learned was that the employees of the department see themselves as family, not just in a phrase like I have heard stated in other organizations, but in actions. The Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff members are dedicated, highly trained and giving professionals. Daily, they exhibit the true essence of "Community Policing," not through check sheets and expensive media programs, but by caring for their fellow staff, the guests and visitors, and the resources under their care. As you will see in this annual report, each individual gives more than anyone could ask. Each strives to leave the world around them a little better than the day before and serves proudly — Ranger First.

They have conducted public safety and law enforcement operations protecting record numbers of visitors and guests visiting Virginia's State Parks andNatural Area Preserve System, even as the second full year of the COVID pandemic continued. Essentially unnoticed, they responded to calls for service ranging from search and rescue operations to suicidal subjects and domestic assaults as the pandemic raged and the number of visitors and guests reached record levels.

It is an honor to provide information and insight into the hardworking and dedicated staff of Law Enforcement Rangers working to protect the employees, visitors, guests and natural resources overseen by the Department of Conservation and Recreation across the commonwealth. On behalf of the Law Enforcement and Public Safety Staff, I am pleased to present the 2021 Annual Report highlighting the staff's accomplishments, specialized activities and statistical information. We hope you find the report valuable and informative.

Respectfully,

Scott A. Vantrease, Chief
Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff

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OUR VISION

To support the mission of the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Division of State Parks, and the Division of Natural Heritage by providing professional law enforcement and public safety services.

OUR MISSION

To protect the lives and property of our visitors, the community at large, and our employees; to protect the natural and cultural resources of the Commonwealth; to reduce crime, and perform our duties in a manner that promotes confidence in the ethical behavior of our officers.

AGENCY ROLE

The role of the employees with the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff requires versatility, compatibility, and professionalism, combined with a dedication for protecting natural resources and ensuring access to all.

Core Values

VERSATILITY

Sworn and Non-Sworn employees with the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff are responsible for much more than enforcing the law; they are protectors and educators of the public and guardians of the resources. They must possess the ability to perform the other challenges of their position and aid others with theirs. They must be adept in the facets of visitor services and resource protection required by their assignment. Their ability to adapt and overcome challenges while remaining true to accreditation standards, while believing in community policing not as a program but as a way of operating, ensures the safety of the staff, guests and resources, and is a testament to their adaptability and value.

COMPATIBILITY

The role of the law enforcement officer is just one of several roles required of the employees in the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff. Each member must understand the purpose and function of these other roles while integrating them into pursuing our common goal.

PROFESSIONALISM

Sworn and Non-Sworn employees with the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff serve with professionalism. Each member strives to achieve professional accountability at the highest level. The Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff was the first conservation and recreation law enforcement agency in the commonwealth to gain accreditation from the Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission (VLEPSC). With initial accreditation in 2010, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff has maintained accreditation illustrating the organization's commitment to safety, professionalism and the protection of resources and the people of Virginia.

DEDICATION

Each member of the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff must show dedication for protecting the employees, guests and natural resources while ensuring access to all.

Entrusted to us From the Past to Protect for the Future

The Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff proudly serves and is responsible for the safety and security of employees, guests and resources under the care of the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Founded in 1926 by Gov. Harry F. Byrd as the Virginia Conservation and Development Commission, with the assistance of the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Commonwealth of Virginia became the first state to open a system of six state parks, in one day, on June 15, 1936.

As described by Gov. George Perry, we are entrusted to protect resources "built to serve the working man," who "is entitled to more than a bare existence, and so it is the duty of government, either state or national, to help bring to him some of the pleasures the world has to offer. The state parks are for all people, and not only will they afford recreation for our own people, but will attract tourists from other states."

Today, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff protect resources making up 41 state parks opened to the public and three land-banked park sites (exceeding 75,000 acres), over 66 natural area preserves (exceeding 59,000 acres), around 2,100 conservation sites,[1] over 650 miles of trails, 488 miles of shoreline (with 11 beaches and six swimming pools), 2,000 campsites, 300 cabins, two National Natural Landmarks, three museums, two National Historic Landmarks and 34 sites on the National Register of Historic Places. Combined, the infrastructure and equipment responsibilities include over 2,800 buildings and improvements with a replacement value of over $1.246 billion.

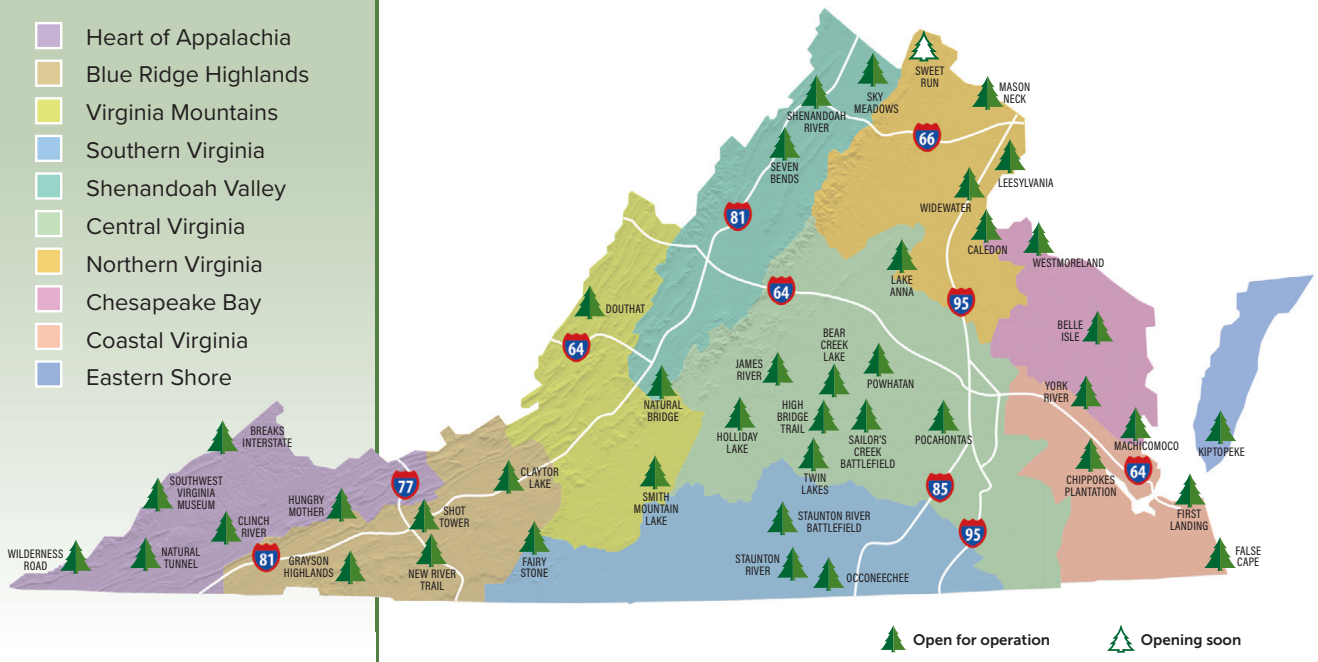
1 https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/ and https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/document/napbook4web.pdf

These resources, combined with others, serve over 7.9 million guests annually[2] and are supported by over 1,600 full-time, hourly, seasonal, host and volunteer staff.[3] As for the impact of Virginia State Parks on the economy, a 2019 report estimated it at $343 million a year[4] and generated an estimated $25.3 million in tax revenue. As DCR moves forward, it enhances visitor experiences through various programs and events and traditional camping, hiking, boating and recreational sporting activities.

From 2019 through 2021, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff protected over 22,618,213 visitors and guests, with an average overnight monthly population of 122,833.

- In 2019, Virginia State Parks had an estimated 6,886,349 visitors and guests, averaging 573,862 visitors per month, with an average overnight monthly population of 120,445.[5]
- In 2020, Virginia State Parks had an estimated 7,805,520 visitors and guests, averaging 650,460 visitors per month, with an average overnight monthly population of 115,590.[6]
- In 2021, Virginia State Parks had an estimated 7,926,344 visitors and guests, averaging 660,529 visitors per month, with an average overnight monthly population of 132,615.[7]

Today's Virginia State Park System



2 Data from DCR Publications "Virginia State Parks by the numbers" Pamphlet and www.virginiastate-parks.gov
3 Information from DCR internal sources as of 07/08/2021.
4 2019 Virginia Tech Study
5 Data from DCR/VSP Park Visitation
6 Data from DCR/VSP Park Visitation – Note: 2020 and 2021 were during the COVID pandemic.
7 Data from DCR/VSP Park Visitation – Note: 2020 and 2021 were during the COVID Pandemic.

Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff Overview

The approximately 100 officers[8] within DCR, more commonly known as Law Enforcement Rangers, are highly-educated and trained individuals responsible for protecting the resources DCR oversees. Law Enforcement Rangers receive training in search and rescue; wildfire management; and are certified as law enforcement officers by the Department of Criminal Justice Services under § 9.1-102. Additionally, Law Enforcement Rangers receive commissioning as Conservation Officers under § 10.1-115 of the Code of Virginia and, where appropriate, hold the same authority and power as sheriffs throughout the commonwealth to enforce the laws of the commonwealth with a focus on DCR matters. Further, Chapter 4 of the Virginia Administrative Code (Chapter 30-90) makes it unlawful to disobey a lawful order of the Law enforcement Rangers.

With the guest resources and overnight facilities under the responsibility of DCR, Law Enforcement Rangers often respond to traditional calls for service, including domestic assaults, thefts, alcohol and drug violations, mental health challenges, welfare checks and traffic-related violations (speeding, driving under the influence and crashes). Additionally, Law Enforcement Rangers respond to non-traditional incidents, including conservation issues (e.g., hunting and fishing violations and aggressive or injured wildlife) and resource issues (e.g., wildfire response and theft or destruction of historic resources under DCR control).

Each Law Enforcement Ranger develops significant and personal knowledge of their park and surrounding community over extended periods while also performing park maintenance tasks such as building, preservation, and resource and boundary management. This approach allows the Law Enforcement Rangers to have unique, park-specific knowledge and familiarity, enhancing the protection of the employees, guests and resources of Virginia State Parks.

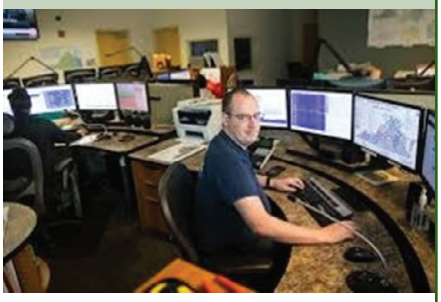
With an average overnight monthly population of 132,316, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff provides services to its guests and visitors, with a population comparison to larger municipal agencies:

- The City of Roanoke, with a population of 99,411,[9] employs 217 sworn officers;[10]
- The City of Suffolk, with a population of 94,374,[11] employs 200 sworn officers;[12]
- The City of Harrisonburg, with a population of 52,072,[13] employs 132 staff (112 full-time sworn officers and 22 full-time civilian employees[14])

8 Actual staffing ranges between 95-110
9 Cities in Virginia by Population (2021) (worldpopulationreview.com)
10 Roanoke's $307 million budget includes money to pay police better | Govt and Politics | roanoke.com
11 Cities in Virginia by Population (2021) (worldpopulationreview.com)
12 About the Department | Suffolk, VA (suffolkva.us)
13 Cities in Virginia by Population (2021) (worldpopulationreview.com)
14 cover page (approved).xls (harrisonburgva.gov)

The Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff is divided into three sections based on the type of activity undertaken. The sections are:

- Office of the Chief
- Patrol Operations Section
- Investigations and Professional Standards Section.



Office of the Chief

The Office of the Chief consists of the senior leadership and administration within the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff and the Joint Communications Center.

Immediate Office of the Chief

Chief of Public Safety and Law Enforcement

Scott A. Vantrease is the current Chief of Public Safety and Law Enforcement and was sworn in as chief in April 2021. Chief Vantrease has been in law enforcement for over 30 years, holding positions in various traditional and non-traditional law enforcement agencies.

Deputy Chief of Public Safety and Law Enforcement

This position is vacant, awaiting approval for hiring.

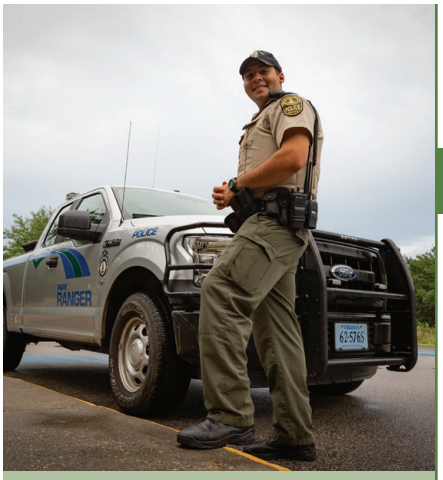
Assistant to Chief of Public Safety and Law Enforcement

C. Clayton Shepherd is the current Assistant Chief of Public Safety and Law Enforcement. Mr. Shepherd joined the department in 2021 with numerous years in law enforcement, security and related positions, most recently as a Background Investigator to the Virginia Department of Health. This is a P14 position allowing a maximum of 1,500 hours annually.

Joint Communications Center

Wherever possible, DCR has leveraged joint resources in fulfilling its public safety and law enforcement mission while ensuring fiscal responsibility for the commonwealth. No better example exists than the joint communications center shared with the Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR). Started in 2018 to improve officer safety while improving the efficiency and functionality of their communications, records, and mapping processes, this communications center covers operates 24/7 across the commonwealth for both agencies sharing a unified Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system and Report Management System (RMS). This system allows Law Enforcement Rangers to contribute data or access related files on all types of information, including warrants, case files, calls for service data and past summons and warning history, even though officers may work miles apart.

The Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff annually covers costs for two positions and licensing and software costs. With peak operations addressing the communications and safety of over 300 law enforcement professionals and utilizing the required STARS radio network overseen by the Virginia State Police, the center provides the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff with state-of-the-art communications and recordkeeping.



Patrol Operations Section

The Patrol Operations Section is responsible for the daily public safety and law enforcement activities under the Division of State Parks and the Division of Natural Heritage. The actions of these Law Enforcement Rangers include patrol, responding to calls for service, and preliminary investigative activity. The focus of enforcement undertaken by the Patrol Operations Section is "educational" enforcement, meaning that the main goal of a law enforcement is to help the violator understand the improper action and its impacts on the safety and well-being of employees, guests and resources.

Statistics and Information

Calls for service reflect incoming emergency and non-emergency requests for service and proactive patrols undertaken by the staff and received by the CAD system. In 2021, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff recorded 7,947 Calls for Service, including traditional law enforcement:

2,484 Community Policing Efforts (To Deter Illegal Activity and Protect Resources)

- 2,288 Foot Patrol Assignments
- 142 Special Assignment Patrols
- 27 Bike Patrol Assignments
- 25 ATV Patrol Assignments
- 2 Watercraft Patrol Assignments

929 Violations of DCR Rules (e.g., Noise, Dumping, Trespassing or COV 10.1-200.3)

171 Medical Calls for Assistance (Traditional and Mental Health including Suicide)

- 2 Drownings

312 Traffic Stops (Vehicle/ATV Violations)

278 Suspicious Vehicles/Persons/Activity

59 Traffic Accidents

13 Bicycle Accidents/Injuries

35 Domestic Disturbance Calls

29 Destruction of Property

74 Drug or Alcohol Violations

33 Stolen Property/Larceny

6 Assault Calls

58 Calls for Missing Persons/Search and Rescue

- 3 on Water
- 55 on Land

48 Alarm Responses

5 Service of Warrants

1 Reckless Handling of a Firearm

294 Assist to Motorists/Public

225 General Calls for Law Enforcement Service

3 Environmental Responses

336 Assists to Other Agencies

41 Complaints on State Property/Personnel

Additionally, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff address resource and conservation issues, including:

37 Boating/Boater Violations

- 5 Careless/Reckless Operation
- 11 General Watercraft Violations
- 10 Distressed Boater Assists
- 7 Boats Found Adrift
- 4 Boating Accidents

90 Wildlife Related Calls

- 7 Injured Protected Species
- 49 Injured/Deceased Wildlife
- 2 Human Injuries from Wildlife
- 14 Nuisance Wildlife (5 Involving Bears)
- 3 Elk Patrols
- 15 Dog Complaints (Injured/Off-Leash)

44 Hunting Related Calls

- 24 Hunting Checkpoints
- 19 Wildlife Violations (e.g., Illegal Hunting/ Trespass to Hunt//Spotlighting/Decoy Hunting on DCR Property)
- 1 Fatal Hunting Accident

58 Fishing Related Calls

- 19 Fishing Violations
- 39 Fishing License Checks

To view Virginia Crime Statistics, visit: https://www.vsp.virginia.gov/?s=Crime+Statistics

While the philosophy within the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff is “educational” enforcement, traditional enforcement methods are also utilized when the situations require. During 2021, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff:

- Issued 381 Summons
- Made 32 Custodial Arrests

The Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff continually works to enhance its data collection. It reports crime information monthly to the Virginia State Police through a uniform system adopted by local, state and federal agencies under the Uniform Crime Reporting Program (UCR), established by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Highlights and Impact

The day–to-day operations of our Law Enforcement Rangers resulted in:

- The recovery of a stolen trailer and personal items from within.
- A traffic stop identified a runaway juvenile from Arkansas, placing the juvenile into protective custody and aligning services to reunite the family.
- Safely interacting and addressing several calls involving armed suicidal subjects.

Making a difference in people's lives is an essential part of why the Law Enforcement Rangers within the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff take on such challenging roles. In certain instances, staff within the Patrol Operations Section demonstrate efforts beyond providing a high level of law enforcement service. Such examples of this dedication during 2021 included many acts of kindness and true community policing. Some examples include:

- During an investigation into two individuals in a park trespassing and utilizing resources, Law Enforcement Rangers identified that the individuals were homeless and working to deal with an incident impacting a child they shared. Law Enforcement Rangers worked to identify housing through a local charity organization and worked with the Department of Social Services staff to address their immediate needs.
- Law Enforcement Rangers were asked to check on the welfare of two registered guests who appeared to be struggling with life impacts, including physical handicaps. Further interactions identified that these individuals had been victims of potential identity theft and elder abuse outside Virginia and were trying to recover their lives. After interacting with these guests, Law Enforcement Rangers worked to identify an opportunity for permanent assisted housing and food assistance through a local assistance program and resources to obtain furnishings for the residence and additional assistance through other local programs.

Investigations and Professional Standards Section

The Investigations and Professional Standards Section is responsible for criminal investigations, administrative investigations (commonly Background and Internal Affairs Matters), training and accreditation activity for the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff. The Investigations and Professional Standards Section is currently allocated four part-time staff supported by secondary responsibilities from the Patrol Operations Section staff.

Criminal Investigations

Criminal Investigators undertake a thorough and comprehensive investigation of alleged criminal matters impacting the Department. Such investigations may range from criminal and conservation matters to death investigations and use the full range of resources available.

In 2021, investigators with the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff undertook 12 Criminal Investigations, including suicides, sexual assaults, child exploitation, drownings and burglaries.

Professional Standards

Professional Standards include all aspects of ensuring the integrity of the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff. Their responsibilities include training, accreditation and internal investigations.

In 2021, no member of the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff failed to meet the training standards and requirements met by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services. This included attending the Basic Law Enforcement Academy, annual law enforcement training and developmental and advanced training, such as obtaining certification as a Field Training Officer.

During 2021, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff worked to continue in our 12th year of accreditation through the Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission (VLEPSC). This effort included preparing for the March 2022 initial cycle assessment, which will start the 3rd full accreditation term. Accreditation has allowed the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff to increase professionalism and integrity. Additionally, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff serves as a leader in statewide agency accreditation, serving as the only accredited law enforcement agency under the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources from 2010 until 2021, when the Department of Wildlife Resources received initial accreditation.

The Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff will effectively process and conduct thorough and appropriate investigations of all complaints against the department or its personnel to maintain the integrity and assure public trust. Complaints investigated through the Internal Affairs process may result in disciplinary actions subject to appeal and grievance procedures.

In 2021, six (6) internal affairs/citizen complaint matters were initiated. Two (2) were closed when the complainants would not respond, and four (4) were completed where the investigation sustained wrongdoing by the employee. Three (3) employees were removed/resigned from their law enforcement positions, and one (1) received counseling.

Of vital importance to any law enforcement organization is the initial background investigation for potential new law enforcement staff. In 2021, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff investigators undertook 24 background investigations to support hiring staff.

Specialized Resources

The dedication of those within the department allows for specialized resources. While involvement with these responsibilities is ancillary and often additional voluntary commitment, they maximize the department's fiscal responsibility to the citizens of the commonwealth. The following specialized resources are available through the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff:

Conservation Officer Working Group

The Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff protects the lives and property of our employees, visitors, and the community at large. It protects the natural and cultural resources of the commonwealth with a focus on State Parks and Natural Area Preserves. Undertaking such a responsibility with professionalism and empathy requires insight, consult and advice, and assistance from across DCR and internal and external stakeholders as appropriate. The Conservation Officer Working Group is a chartered resource providing insight, consultation, advice and assistance to the Chief of Public Safety and Law Enforcement, aiding in identifying best practices and potential resources for the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff.

Training Team

Training is vital to any agency providing public safety and law enforcement services, ensuring a professional and accountable organization. In support of this, the Training Team consists of cadres that ensure this mission, such as the certified staff within the Firearms Cadre, Defensive Tactics Cadre, General Instructors Cadre and others with specialized skills. Training the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff and supporting the training staff of our home academy, these individuals ensure safe and professional training, both mandated and non-mandated.

Field Training Cadre

Those who serve as part of Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff have one of the most diverse responsibilities of any such organization. Being involved in outreach, education, safety and interacting on violations with those who have come to enjoy the commonwealth's natural and recreation resources is not something that any certified law enforcement officer can do. The Field Training Cadre works to uphold the organization's educational and community policing approach. They ensure that staff undertaking this responsibility (transferring from other agencies or graduating from the academy) do so while meeting not only Department of Criminal Justice Services requirements but our internal standards.

Department of Conservation and Recreation

Chief Scott A Vantrease

Accredited: Mar 2010

Accreditation Manager: Inv. Gary Brumfield

Status Reaccredited - 2nd

Next Assessment : by Mar 2022

Honor Guard Cadre

Founded in 2011, the Virginia State Park Honor Guard is a highly complimented cadre that provides honor guard services for special events. During 2021, this included 10 events, including the opening of Clinch River State Park, Green Pastures Recreation Area and the 77th Basic Law Enforcement Class for Cardinal Criminal Justice Academy Graduation. In addition, a highly regarded honor of the cadre is to represent the agency at funerals of law enforcement officers who passed in the line of duty or notable officials with impact to the organization, presenting flags to families in memoriam and appreciation of their loved one's service to the commonwealth and country. In 2021, the Virginia State Park Honor Guard was requested to present the flag and the funeral of one law enforcement officer within the commonwealth.

Accreditation Team

The Accreditation Team ensures compliance with the Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission (VLEPSC) standards. It illustrates the organization's commitment to professionalism and the protection of resources and the people of Virginia. The Accreditation Team undertakes the ongoing monitoring and assurance of requirements to maintain VLEPSC accreditation.[15]

In 2010, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff was the first conservation and recreation law enforcement agency in the commonwealth to achieve accreditation from VLEPSC. Accreditation provides a valuable framework to ensure accountability by the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff and protect the Law Enforcement Rangers by reducing liability. Accreditation enhances our staff's ability to prevent and reduce crime through effective and efficient delivery of services to the commonwealth. The accreditation process has also sculpted General Orders and procedures that will best serve the staff, which serves the people of the commonwealth and those who choose to visit.

Peer Support Team

According to the International Association of Chiefs of Police, Police Psychological Services Section, the goal of peer support is to provide all public safety employees in an agency the opportunity to receive emotional and tangible support through times of personal or professional crisis and to help anticipate and address potential difficulties.[16] The DCR Peer Support Team works with staff across DCR to address such issues — individual, family or professional —through referral or direct contact. The Peer Support Team consists of trained volunteers who understand their responsibilities and work to assist staff in need, whether providing an ear or assisting in identifying services through EAP or professional providers, such as psychologists and therapists. Additionally, members from the DCR Peer Support Team work, coordinate and train with members of the Virginia Law Enforcement Assistance Program (VALEAP) to further their roles and support of DCR staff and peers.

15 Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission – Promoting Professionalism in Law Enforcement Since 1996 (vlepsc.org)

16 Ratified by the IACP Psychological Services Section (Accessed 12/31/2021)

Virginia Emergency Support Team

Under the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, VEST comprises more than 300 credentialed members; the VEST draws its staff from all executive branch state agencies, dozens of non-governmental organizations, and private sector companies such as Verizon and Dominion. Through the Office of the Chief, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff serves as the Division of State Parks Liaison for the Virginia Emergency Support Team (VEST). Additionally, it is the primary contact for any Emergency Support Function (ESF) matters which involve DCR law enforcement response/personnel. DCR is involved in seven (7) ESFs and is often looked to for disaster preparedness, response and recovery assistance. The Department's ESF responsibilities include ESF 3 - Public Works and Engineering; ESF 4 - Firefighting; ESF 5 - Emergency Coordination; ESF 9 - Special Operations; ESF 11 - Agriculture and Natural Resources; ESF 13 - Public Safety and Security; and ESF 15 - External Affairs.

Search and Rescue Working Group

In 2015, to address the ongoing calls and growing use of the department's Search and Rescue Team for search operations, the Search and Rescue Working Group was established. With techniques, technology, and processes continually evolving, ensuring professionalism is vital to saving the lives of those missing. The purpose of this chartered resource is to provide and outline best management practices, identify potential resources and improve response capabilities for the department's Search and Rescue Team. Additionally, the Search and Rescue Working Group aids in the department's coordination with organizations including the Virginia State Police, Virginia Department of Emergency Management, Virginia Search and Rescue Council and others.

Search and Rescue Team

Approximately 100 incidents involving "search and rescue" (SAR) occur in Virginia State Parks and Natural Area Preserves each year. Additionally, search operations for missing juveniles, endangered adults and others require the quick response of trained, professional personnel. Some operations last only a fraction of an hour, others for multiple days. DCR's land holdings are a significant sampling of the commonwealth's terrain and natural resources. Utilizing their specialized knowledge of the associated challenges across the commonwealth, staff from across DCR provide unique insights to SAR operations. DCR personnel are almost always the first to respond, whether an internal operation or in response to a call for assistance from the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM).

During 2021, DCR Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff logged 59 Search and Rescue Operations and responded to 4 as follows:

- **55 - Search and Rescue Operations – Land Incidents (Internal to DCR)**
- **3 - Search and Rescue Operations – Water Incidents (Internal to DCR)**
- **4 – DCR SAR Team VDEM Activations.**

2022 Goals and Strategies

GOAL 1: Enhance Operational Support Law Enforcement Rangers.

GOAL 2: Improve Resources for Mental Health Issues.

GOAL 3: Improve Technology Use in Calls for Service.

GOAL 4: Develop Resources to Improve Response Capabilities.

Enhance Operational Support for Law Enforcement Rangers

The Law Enforcement Rangers within the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff are dedicated, hardworking and highly successful in utilizing true community policing and educational approaches to their responsibilities. What is needed is the development of operational support to address the following challenges:

- The increasing accreditation and administrative requirements involved and the additional burden being faced by existing staff already with numerous responsibilities;
- The need to develop an investigative core to address investigative needs within the parks, including complex crimes, general crimes, suicides, Internal Affairs matters and background investigations;
- A need to address the growing demand for investigative intelligence co-operatively across DCR operations for awareness and insight into potential illicit or illegal activity involving or impacting park operations from illegal hunting activities to narcotics and drugs;
- The increasing operation requirements of a statewide law enforcement agency responsible for ensuring the security of employees and guests annually; and
- There is an increasing need for additional public safety and law enforcement operational support for the State Parks and Natural Area Preserves during peak needs and special events.

This undertaking is not a short-term goal but one that requires development and planning, which assures that the thriving culture in existence is only improved upon by its success.

Improve Resources for Mental Health Issues

The Law Enforcement Rangers within the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff have steadily seen increasing mental health issues on calls for service in alignment with the implementation of Marcus Alert, a statewide framework intended to improve the response to mental and behavioral health crises in Virginia. The governor signed the legislation to begin to put the framework in place in late 2020. To incorporate this framework into the Law Enforcement Ranger's response to a mental health crisis, leadership within the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff will increase interactions with the Department of Criminal Justice Services, the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health, and local Community Service Boards. This increased interaction will improve communication, cooperation, and training of Law Enforcement Rangers for such matters. While this challenge faces all law enforcement in the commonwealth, the uniqueness of the public safety and law enforcement operations within the department will require phased planning and implementation across multiple agencies. Identification and implementation of strategies and approaches will be the initial phase of this goal.

Improve Technology Use in Calls for Service

To improve officer safety, efficiency and records functionality, Law Enforcement Rangers began utilizing a unified Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system and Report Management System (RMS). This system allows Law Enforcement Rangers to contribute data or access related files across the state. With the onset of the COVID pandemic, the use of the system has been highly successful. What is needed to improve the use of technology further is to increase the system's functionality and apply upgrades that will enable Law Enforcement Rangers to complete reporting requirements, increase efficiencies, and return to serving the employees and guests more quickly. This effort will incorporate modifications to the system to aid in report writing, additional training during in-service and increased access to guides to assist Law Enforcement Rangers to identify further the resources and benefits the RMS holds.

Develop Resources to Improve Response Capabilities

The department's Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff is part of a small and unique group of agencies that often cannot access grants and other resources provided for sheriff's offices, municipalities and educational law enforcement. Further, as a state agency, they are not funded by resources allotted for the Virginia State Police. The leadership of the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff will undertake a review of partnerships and cooperative approaches utilizing peers and stakeholders to develop resources to improve response capabilities. This undertaking may include examining excess equipment programs from federal or state agencies, improving relationships with existing law enforcement acquisition services and better-evaluating grant opportunities when they are available.

Service to our Communities, the Commonwealth and the Profession

Not only do our Law Enforcement Rangers undertake outstanding efforts to serve and protect the visitors and guests of Virginia's State Parks and natural area preserves, but we also further our commitment to our communities, the commonwealth we are sworn to protect and the honorable profession we are part of.

In 2021, the Public Safety & Law Enforcement Staff provided 336 instances of assistance and support to multiple agencies at crash scenes, at crime scenes, and when our Law Enforcement Rangers were the lifeline that state and municipal agencies needed most. Being partners and peers within our communities and the commonwealth and furthering our profession is part of our community policing approach.

Service to our Communities

Each of the state parks and natural area preserves is part of various communities, and we owe an obligation to each for their support and assistance. When resources allow, we participate in a wide range of service and outreach activities designed to support the communities we are part of, to say "thank you."

TRUNK OR TREAT

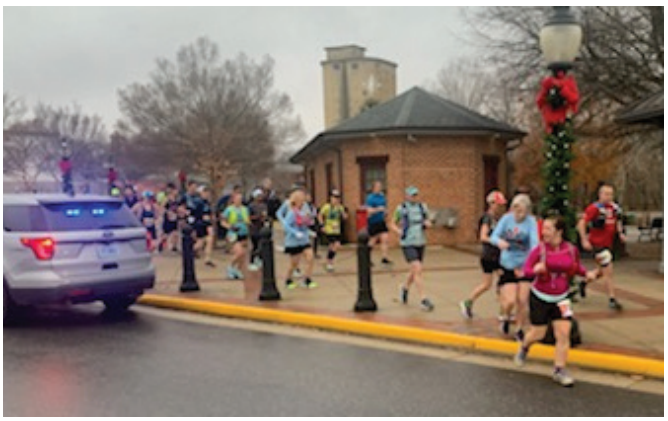
On Oct. 29, 2021, our Law Enforcement Rangers joined their peers with the Surry County Sheriff's Office for Trunk or Treat. It was a great opportunity to share our community policing, and of course some of our candy, with our neighbors.

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

On Aug. 3, 2021, our Law Enforcement Rangers joined their peers in various communities throughout the commonwealth at National Night Out. This event enhances the relationship between neighbors and law enforcement while bringing back a true sense of community. Furthermore, it provides a great opportunity to bring police and neighbors together under positive circumstances.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Other outreach included traffic control for annual race events and the honor of being invited to speak to our neighbors at their special community events.



In one of many instances, a member of the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff presents information to the Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors on Park Operations and issues, supporting inter-governmental cooperation (September 2021).

Service to the Commonwealth

Part of being good stewards and peers is sharing and supporting the commonwealth. To that end, as part of our community policing and partnership efforts, the Public Safety & Law Enforcement Staff routinely interacts and provides support to improve governmental operations and further inter-governmental cooperation.

INTER-GOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

In June 2021, the Town of Farmville suffered a water emergency that drained the town's water reserves. In response, a water distribution was opened for town water system customers to allow households to receive bottled water until service could be restored. Pubic Safety & Law Enforcement Staff responded and aided during distribution.

Service to the Profession

We jointly operate with and support our professional peers and partners. To that end, we attend, partner and present at various professional trainings and support publications whenever the opportunity allows. Whether speaking to classes in schools, criminal justice academies, colleges or furthering the profession through our affiliations with professional organizations, service is part of our community policing approach.

Hosting and attending Search and Rescue Training at Westmoreland State Park in December 2021.

June 2021 Publication for the International Association of Chiefs of Police:

Scott A. Vantrease, "Difficult Conversations: Communication Involving Diversity and Inclusion," Police Chief Online, June 30, 2021.

Welcome New Law Enforcement Rangers

New staff with the Public Safety & Law Enforcement Staff, who require training as outlined by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, attend our home academy – the Cardinal Criminal Justice Academy. Here they work with peers from over 30 agencies across the area to learn valuable skills, including how to de-escalate and address many issues seen in our contacts with visitors and guests. This allows them to learn how to lessen chances for situations to become hazardous to themselves, any subject they may deal with, or the public. This includes receiving certification in Mental Health First Aid. Once each person completes the academy, they are sworn in at a ceremony at Natural Bridge State Park before beginning their field training.

The efforts undertaken by these graduates, completing their training during the ongoing pandemic, speaks to their dedication to DCR and a true demonstration of Ranger First.

76th Basic Law Enforcement Academy

In May 2021, we welcomed Justin Rexrode (Clinch River State Park), James Watling (Natural Area Steward), Bryan Ehrenfried (Widewater State Park), and Tim Knappenberger (Holliday Lake State Park) from Cardinal's 76th Basic Law Enforcement Class.

77th Basic Law Enforcement Academy

In October 2021, we welcomed Brody Dawson (Staunton River State Park), Dustin Haymaker (Natural Bridge State Park), and Victoria Luke (Hungry Mother State Park) from Cardinal's 77th Basic Law Enforcement Class.

IN MEMORIAM

Paul Salyer

Breaks Interstate Park

End of Watch: Thursday, Aug. 14, 1975

Ranger Paul Salyer was shot and killed while investigating a disturbance at a campsite in Breaks Interstate Park. The campsite occupants had been involved in a domestic disturbance the previous night. Ranger Salyer was shot when he went to the campsite to check on the occupants.

Ranger Salyer was a Korean War veteran. For two years, he had served with the Breaks Interstate Park and held a commission as a part-time deputy with the Dickenson County Sheriff's Office. He was survived by his wife, mother, three brothers, and grandmother.[17]

17 Park Ranger Paul Herbert Salyer, Breaks Interstate Park Police Department, Virginia (odmp.org)

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