



Southwest Virginia Museum Historical State Park
Box 742
Big Stone Gap, VA 24219

SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA MUSEUM HISTORICAL STATE PARK MASTER PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2011 UPDATE



Department of Conservation and Recreation
Division of Planning and Recreation Resources
203 Governor Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA MUSEUM HISTORICAL STATE PARK MASTER PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2011 UPDATE

Reviewed by the Board of Conservation and Recreation on June 17, 2011

Approved:

_____/S/
David A. Johnson, Director
Department of Conservation
and Recreation

9/2/2011
Date



SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA MUSEUM HISTORICAL STATE PARK MASTER PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2011 UPDATE

This Southwest Virginia Museum Historical State Park Master Plan Executive Summary is an update to the master plan document adopted in 2009 by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). It is the most recent 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 Southwest Virginia Museum Historical State Park when it is fully developed.

Prior to 2009, the Southwest Virginia Museum did not have a formal master plan (similar to other parks) due to its unique nature. Over the years, various plans for the Museum have directed management and operations of the museum buildings, grounds, collections, and exhibits.

Southwest Virginia Museum is located in the Town of Big Stone Gap in Wise County. The Southwest Virginia Museum is housed in the mansion originally built by Rufus Ayers. The house was constructed over a seven-year period; construction was started in 1888 and completed in 1895. C. Bascom Slemple purchased the house in 1929. C. Bascom and his sister, Janie Slemple Newman, had a love of Southwest Virginia, its people, history, and rich culture. They collected artifacts depicting life in the area; these were originally displayed in the Janie Slemple Newman Museum. Before C. Bascom's death in 1943, he established the Slemple Foundation. It was his wish to create a museum depicting Southwest Virginia's history and culture. The Slemple Foundation has been a major supporter and funder of the special projects at the site since its inception.

This 2011 update places value on connecting the Southwest Virginia Museum Historical State Park to other resources in the community. Strong cooperative opportunities exist between the Museum and the Town of Big Stone Gap, as well as surrounding municipalities. Developing cooperative partnerships with other museums and historic sites is encouraged. The site was listed on the Virginia Landmark Register and the National Register of Historic Places in 2002. It is also listed on the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' Birding and Wildlife Trail. The museum is an affiliated partner of The Crooked Road: Virginia's Heritage Music Trail, and is featured on Virginia's Coal Heritage Trail. The Big Cherry Reservoir and the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests are nearby. A potential trail exists on an abandoned railroad corridor between the Towns of Big Stone Gap and Appalachia. Mountain Empire Community College may offer joint educational opportunities. The Southwest Virginia Museum Regional Connectivity Map is an attachment to the full Master Plan document.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation Planners and State Park Staff conducted this master plan update in accordance with §10.1-200.1 of the *Code of Virginia*. The 2009 Southwest Virginia Museum Historical State Park Master Plan was developed with the assistance of a technical advisory committee, which was comprised of local citizens, business owners, and representatives from federal, state and local government. With the assistance of the advisory committee, a park purpose

statement and goals and objectives were developed. Public input was solicited at the beginning and at the end of the process to ensure that plan recommendations were understood and accepted by the community. This plan outlines the desired future condition of the park over a 20-year planning horizon. As required by the *Code of Virginia*, it must be revisited every five years to ensure that the development objectives outlined in the plan continue to meet the recreational and environmental protection needs of the citizens of the Commonwealth.

As a part of the 2011 master plan process, the 2009 park master plan was reviewed. Following a discussion of changing conditions and new land acquisitions 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 2009 Plan. The phased development plan and costs have been revised to reflect projects that have been completed since 2009, as well as newly proposed projects. A public meeting was held at the museum on April 19, 2011, where the public expressed support for the proposed master plan update. The park staffing and operations costs have also been updated to reflect current conditions. The adopted park purpose statement is stated below:

“The purpose of the Southwest Virginia Museum Historical State Park is to collect, preserve and interpret the history of Southwest Virginia in perpetuity through educational exhibits and programs.”

The following table depicts park attendance during the period 2002 to 2010. Attendance figures increased dramatically in 2010 due to the counting of non-paying day visitors in attendance numbers for the first time.

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
13,148	11,206	10,789	19,669	18,152	23,493	20,306	18,974	54,164

In 2010, the Southwest Virginia Museum Historical State Park had 54,164 visitors; 452 were overnight guests while 53,712 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 \$893,292. 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.

The main feature of the park property is the **mansion**, which is located on West First Street North in Big Stone Gap. Situated in the center of the property, the 11,756 square foot mansion contains exhibits telling the story of the exploration and development of Southwest Virginia. The site was officially dedicated by the state in 1948. Visitors can tour the museum building to discover more about the history and culture of far southwest Virginia, from Native Americans to pioneers of the Wilderness Road and coalminers of the coal boom in the 1880s. Several exhibits feature touch screens and interactive technology. Overall, the park offers a diverse range of year-round educational programming and festivals including a quilt show, music festival, rotating exhibits, festival of trees during the winter months, and “Adventures in History” tours. In addition to education, the site and its staff offer various other services. A multi-purpose room in the basement is available for community use. It accommodates between 30-70 people, depending on the use of tables and chairs. A gift shop is located on the first floor and offers souvenirs and merchandise for purchase and the facility is available for weddings.

The site also has several other structures that support the mission of the park. The **Carriage House** is located in the west corner of the property, The 2,392 square foot building is presently used to store the park's collections that are not on display. Three **storage buildings** are located behind the museum building on the southwest portion of the property. They hold tools and equipment necessary for upkeep of the grounds and buildings. Two of the buildings are 96 square feet in size, and the third is 144 square feet. The **Park Manager's residence** is located diagonally across from the Museum at 9 West First Street North. Owned by the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the 2,196 square-foot house serves as a residence for the manager of the park. There is an additional 160 square-foot storage shed located near the Park Manager's residence.

The **Park Administrative Offices** are located across the street from the Museum, as is the three-bedroom **Poplar Hill Cottage**, which is available for rent. The office building is 4,128 square feet and the public rental cottage is 1,282 square feet. The 418 square feet maintenance building is also located on the southern corner of this property.

Park improvements since the writing of the 2009 Master Plan include ADA lifts to the basement and first floor of the museum building, and the acquisition of an additional parcel (see associated master plan map).

This 2011 master plan update represents both new facilities and improvements to existing facilities. New facilities at this park should be designed and built with consideration to the original historical design and layout of facilities and be 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. To the greatest extent possible, Virginia State Parks strives to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards. 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. These facilities will be carefully sited to minimize impacts to the views within the park and of the park from 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. Parking is an ongoing issue at the Southwest Virginia Museum and creative solutions should be explored to address this issue.

Acquisition of additional park land should be considered to enhance the park or buffer it from inappropriate development. Future land acquisitions will only be negotiated with willing property owners. Designating the site's historic neighborhood as a town historic district should be explored. Placing conservation easements on adjacent property to preserve the historic landscapes, as well as the natural and scenic resources in close proximity to the park, should be encouraged. In working cooperatively with neighboring landowners, the site will be enhanced and protected over time.

The proposed developments for Southwest Virginia Museum Historical 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 20-year timeframe.

PHASE I

Construct new meeting facility with exterior restrooms

- Demolish “Great Room”
- Demolish maintenance shed/garage

Construct new maintenance facility on park property on Cherokee Avenue West

- designed appropriate for residential setting and fitting with neighborhood character.

Construct 2 - 3 ADA parking spaces outside of Museum stone wall

The total estimated cost for Phase I development is \$1,707,545

PHASE II

Construct a Collections Storage Building

Construct 15+/- parking lot

Renovate Carriage House - Convert to galleries

Construct accessible comfort station behind Museum.

Add exterior lighting around the outside wall of the Museum

The total estimated cost for Phase II development is \$5,275,811

The total cost to bring the Southwest Virginia Museum State Park to its desired future condition is \$6,983,356

Staffing and Operations

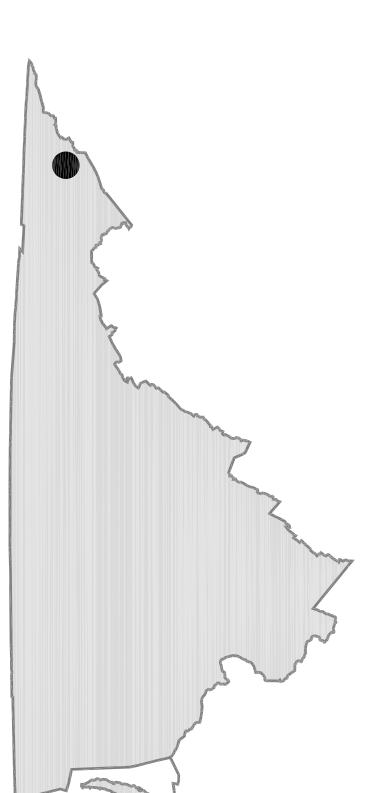
Staffing and operational costs at Southwest Virginia Museum are presently budgeted at \$346,000 annually, including salaries for 3 staff positions. With the current facilities and operational requirements, the park has an identified need for 4 additional positions and \$212,000 in funding. At complete build out of the proposed 2 phases of development, along with an additional \$54,000 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 Southwest Virginia Museum at full build out is projected to be \$612,000 with 7 staff positions.

EXISTING (FY 11)	EXISTING ADDITIONAL NEEDS *	PHASE 1	PHASE 2	FULL BUILD OUT
<u>STAFFING</u>				STAFFING
Museum Director				Museum Director
	Educ. Specialist(3)**			Educ. Specialist (3)
Park Ranger	Park Ranger			Park Ranger (2)
Office Manager				Office Manager
SALARY TOTAL				SALARY TOTAL
\$159,000	\$180,000			\$339,000
WAGE TOTAL				WAGE TOTAL
\$116,000	\$18,000	\$17,000	\$15,000	\$166,000
OTPS TOTAL				OTPS TOTAL
\$71,000	\$14,000	\$16,000	\$6,000	\$107,000
TOTAL BUDGET (FY11 dollars)				TOTAL BUDGET (FY11 dollars)
\$346,000	\$212,000	\$33,000	\$21,000	\$612,000

NOTE – All costs (salary, wage, OTPS (Other than Personnel Services)) are based on FY11 budget projections.

* Existing additional needs represents staff shortages that were identified as part of the 2002 re-benchmarking effort, and/or staff positions and operating costs reduced due to multiple years of state wide budget reductions.

** One Education Specialist position is in process of being filled.

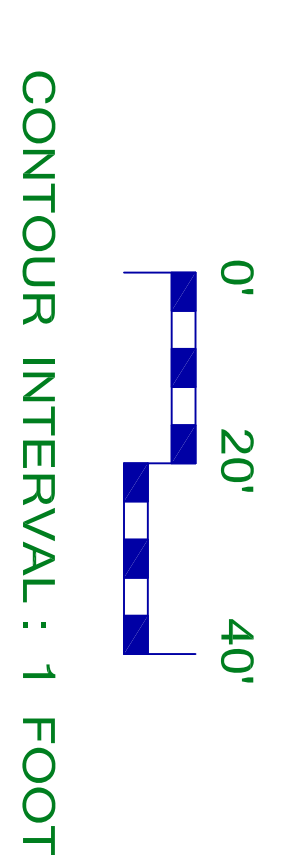


MASTER PLAN FOR

SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA MUSEUM STATE PARK

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

JUNE 2011



- LEGEND**
- PROPOSED FACILITIES
 - EXISTING FACILITIES
 - PARK PROPERTY
 - PARK BOUNDARY
 - - - HIKING TRAIL

