

Annual Report 2022

# Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff

Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation  
Division of State Parks | Division of Natural Heritage





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## OUR PURPOSE

Through an educational law enforcement approach, to protect the lives and property of our employees, visitors, and the greater community to which we belong; to preserve the natural and cultural resources of the Commonwealth; while performing these responsibilities entrusted to us with honesty, integrity, and professionalism.

## OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Preserving the Past – Protecting the Future

## 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.

## Message From the Chief

On behalf of the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff, I am pleased to present the 2022 Annual Report highlighting the accomplishments, specialized activities, and statistical information of Virginia's Law Enforcement Rangers.

These Law Enforcement Rangers tirelessly serve Virginia and are dedicated, highly trained, and caring professionals. They are truly the original community policing professionals putting educational law enforcement and diversionary approaches into action throughout their history, predating many formal programs.

This year I was honored to be present as the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff received its fourth accreditation certificate from the Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission. This is reflective of the professionalism and dedication of the staff, which is one of the longest standing state level accredited law enforcement agencies in Virginia. Every day they work to ensure protection for the employees, visitors, guests, and natural resources overseen by DCR across the commonwealth. Each Law Enforcement Ranger gives of themselves, striving to leave the world around them a little better than the day before and serving — Ranger First.

We hope you find the report valuable and informative.

Respectfully,



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



# 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.



# Our Sacred Trust

## WHO AND WHAT WE PRESERVE AND PROTECT

The Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff have a sacred trust, to preserve the past and protect the future. Law Enforcement Rangers work to protect the over 7.9 million guests annually<sup>1</sup> as well as the over 1600 full-time, hourly, seasonal, host, and volunteer staff<sup>2</sup> that work to allow the State Parks and Heritage areas to remain available for use. Further, the Law Enforcement Rangers preserve resources (historical, natural, cultural, and heritage) for generations to come while working to make them available for appropriate use by all. These resources provide a positive economic impact for Virginia. A 2022 report estimated that Virginia’s State Parks have an impact over \$364 million a year<sup>3</sup> while generating an estimated \$25.6 million in tax revenue.

The resources protected by Virginia’s Law Enforcement Rangers include 41 state parks opened to the public and three land-banked park sites (exceeding 76,000 acres), over 66 Natural Heritage Preserves and Areas (exceeding 59,000 acres), around 2100 conservation sites<sup>4</sup>, over 700 miles of trails, three marinas, a commercial fishing pier, three sewage treatment plants, 30 amphitheatres, over 1600 campsites, 300 cabins, four National Landmarks, three museums, 33 sites on the National Register of Historic Places, 36 lakes and ponds and miles of coastal shoreline. Combined the law enforcement responsibilities for Law Enforcement Rangers include infrastructure and equipment which includes over 1,427 buildings and improvements with a replacement value of over \$1.246 billion.



<sup>1</sup> Data from DCR Publications “Virginia State Parks by the numbers” 2022 Pamphlet and [www.virginiastateparks.gov](http://www.virginiastateparks.gov)

<sup>2</sup> Information from DCR internal sources as of 07/08/2021.

<sup>3</sup> 2022 Virginia Tech Study

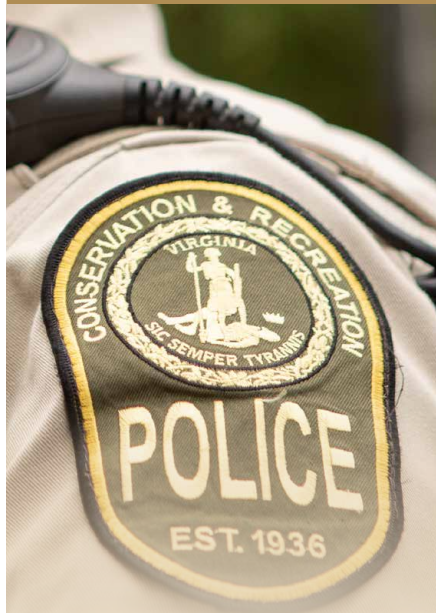
<sup>4</sup> <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/> and <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/document/napbook4web.pdf>

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

Investigations and Professional Standards



## Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff Overview

The approximately 100 officers<sup>5</sup> 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.

DCR's Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff serves as a full-service agency with DCR's Law Enforcement Rangers responsible for performing general law enforcement, criminal investigations, and traffic enforcement<sup>6</sup> and are available and responds to matters 24 hours a day. 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).

Aligned with many other law enforcement officers, DCR's Law Enforcement Rangers have access to essential and modern law enforcement equipment including shotguns, patrol rifles, radar units, and portable breath units. These law enforcement professionals operate marked and unmarked patrol units fully equipped with the latest technology including Computer Aided Dispatch and statewide communications. Additional law enforcement related services and programs include a Bicycle Patrol Team, Search and Rescue Team, Training Cadre, Honor Guard, and Peer Support Team.

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 and Natural Heritage Areas.

<sup>5</sup> Actual staffing ranges between 95-110

<sup>6</sup> VLEPSC 2022 Accreditation Report



# 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

**Charles Conner** is the current Deputy Chief of Public Safety and Law Enforcement and was promoted to Deputy Chief May 2022. Deputy Chief Conner has been in law enforcement for over 18 years, and with Virginia State Parks for over 32 years starting his career at Douthat as a seasonal employee in June of 1990 between his junior and senior year of high school.



### 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

Patrol Operations 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 Patrol Operations 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

The following data reflects the information compiled for the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff for the calendar year 2022. The Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff continually works to enhance and improve its data collection and reporting. Crime information is reported 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.

#### Calls for Service

Calls for service reflect incoming emergency and non-emergency requests for service and proactive patrols undertaken by law enforcement and received by the CAD system. In 2022, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff recorded 6,726 Calls for Service, including traditional law enforcement:

#### 2,506 Community Policing Efforts (To Deter Illegal Activity and Protect Resources)

- 1,795 Foot Patrol Assignments
- 636 Special Assignment Patrols
- 6 Bike Patrol Assignments
- 65 ATV Patrol Assignments

#### 1,069 Violations of DCR Rules (e.g., Noise, Dumping, Trespassing or COV 10.1-200.3)

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

- 5 Drownings

#### 486 Traffic Stops (Vehicle/ATV Violations)

#### 348 Suspicious Vehicles/Persons/Activity

#### 78 Traffic Accidents

#### 37 Drug or Alcohol Violations

#### 41 Stolen Property/Larceny

#### 11 Assault Calls

#### 106 Calls for Missing Persons/Search and Rescue

- 6 on Water
- 100 on Land

#### 45 Robbery/Burglary Alarm Responses

#### 8 Service of Warrants

#### 1 Reckless Handling of a Firearm

#### 272 Assist to Motorists/Public

#### 798 Targeted Law Enforcement Patrols

#### 334 Assists to Other Agencies

#### 73 Complaints on State Property/Personnel

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

### 37 Boating/Boater Violations

- 3 Careless/Reckless Operation
- 4 General Watercraft Violations
- 18 Distressed Boater Assists
- 8 Boats Found Adrift
- 4 Boating Accidents

### 62 Wildlife Related Calls

- 5 Injured Protected Species
- 31 Injured/Deceased Wildlife
- 3 Human Injuries from Wildlife
- 8 Nuisance Wildlife (2 Involving Bears)
- 9 Dog Complaints (Injured/Off-Leash)

### 167 Hunting/Fishing Related Calls

- 76 Hunting Checkpoints
- 46 Hunting/Fishing Violations (e.g., Illegal Hunting/Trespass to Hunt/Spotlighting/Decoy Hunting on DCR Property)
- 3 Fishing Violations
- 42 Hunting/Fishing License Checks

### Educational Law Enforcement Activities

The Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff prioritizes educational law enforcement when interacting with violations and the public. Such actions can include educational interactions, warnings (verbal or written), or diversionary actions, such as issuing DCR Citations which do not require the person to enter the judiciary/court system in exchange for a civil fine unless appealed. During 2022, based upon community policing and agency data, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff:

- Issued 1351 DCR Citations

### Traditional Law Enforcement Activities

While the philosophy within the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff is “educational” enforcement, traditional enforcement methods are also utilized when the situations require. Custodial Arrests result in the individual making an appearance and entering the court system. Summons are issued and require entry into the courts. During 2022, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff:

- Issued 227 Summons
- Made 52 Custodial Arrests

**To view Virginia Crime Statistics, visit:**

**<https://www.vsp.virginia.gov/?s=Crime+Statistics>**



## Crime Prevention Activities and Programs

Efforts undertaken by the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff in 2022, included a review of agency crime prevention activities and programs. These efforts requires a special balance. Traditional approaches to public awareness strategies do not always fit the environment staff works so diligently to maintain.

### Parker Redfox”

A friendly symbol of Virginia State Parks since joining the agency in 2014, Parker Redfox, the Virginia State Parks mascot is a natural choice to help spread our crime prevention message. After careful consideration, he was “sworn in” to the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff this year. Honorary Law Enforcement Ranger Redfox adds crime prevention to his many duties, in the same way that our Law Enforcement Rangers perform multiple tasks.

Through public appearances, Parker Redfox will provide a face and personality to remind employees and guests of important public safety and crime prevention information.

### Suicide and Crisis Awareness and Assistance Program

With the implementation of 988 for mental health assistance, and with calls for mental health and suicide related needs regularly occurring, Law Enforcement Rangers from New River Trail State Park worked with the Office of the Chief and publicly available resources from the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline to create and implement a signage program in the park where those struggling or considering suicide may see the signs and seek help. The new signs provide a “988” number for dialing and texting, chat access through 988lifeline.org, and a QR code which can be scanned. The belief is that if even one person is helped, the program will be a success.



A graphic for the 988 Suicide &amp; Crisis Lifeline. It features a blue square with the number "988" in large white font, and "SUICIDE &amp; CRISIS LIFELINE" in smaller white font below it. To the right, the text "There is hope" is written in pink, above a logo of two hands holding a heart. Below the main text, it says "Talk with us." followed by icons of speech bubbles and a question mark. To the right of these icons, it says "If you or someone you know needs support now, call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org". At the bottom center is a QR code.

## Highlights and Impact

The day-to-day operations of our Law Enforcement Rangers resulted in responding to emergency and non-emergency calls for service. 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 2022 included many acts of kindness and true community policing. Some examples include:

### **VDEM Commends Law Enforcement Ranger in Search and Rescue Operation**

In November 2022, VDEM forwarded their appreciation and commended search and rescue team members from Virginia State Police and a Law Enforcement Ranger with DCR's Division of State Parks. During the search for a 16-year-old despondent male. Early on in their task, the team identified a track that was consistent with Vans shoes that the subject was believed to be wearing. After coordinating with other teams and following numerous tracks the Law Enforcement Ranger located the deceased subject and secured the scene for investigators. VDEM extended their compliments to those involved citing that the "Commonwealth of Virginia, however, is very fortunate to have these officers holding the thin blue line, and doing what they do so that others may live, or at least know."

### **Multi-Agency Coordination Saves Life**

In January 2022 the Joint DCR/DWR Communications Center received a request for mutual aid from the Appomattox Sheriff's Office to assist in locating a suicidal individual in the Appomattox/Buckingham State Forest or at Holiday Lake State Park who was believed intending to harm himself. Due to the weather conditions, responding deputies were unable to travel on the snow- and ice-covered muddy roads in the state forest. Law Enforcement Rangers and Conservation Police Officers responded and coordinated with Appomattox County Sheriff's Office. Working together, law enforcement quickly located the vehicle with the exhaust fumes being run into the vehicle through a hose. The excellent teamwork, response, communication and coordination likely saved the individual's life.

### **Use of Narcan by Law Enforcement Ranger Saves a Life**

In July 2022, a Law Enforcement Ranger noticed an individual in a suspicious location within the park. Upon closer investigation the individual was found to be unresponsive with shallow breathing. After additional evaluation the individual was given two (2) doses of Narcan and slowly began to recover. Upon arrival of medical the individual was transported for additional care. If not for the reaction by the Law Enforcement Ranger and use of his training, the individual may have lost their life.



## Investigations and Professional Standards

Investigations and Professional Standards 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. Investigations and Professional Standards is currently allocated four part-time staff supported by secondary responsibilities from Patrol Operations 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.

During 2022, Law Enforcement Rangers conducted investigations involving various criminal activity including:

- Burglary
- Stolen Property/Larceny
- Unattended Deaths
- Sexual Assault/Battery
- Arson

### Professional Standards

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

#### Agency Training

In 2022, 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 or the Department. 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 or Instructor.



## Agency Accreditation

During 2022, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff worked its fourth accreditation certificate from the Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission. This is reflective of the professionalism and dedication of the staff, which is one of the longest standing state level accredited law enforcement agencies in Virginia. Accreditation has allowed the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff to increase professionalism and integrity.

## Internal Affairs

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 2022, three (3) internal affairs/citizen complaint matters were initiated. One (1) was closed when the complainants would not respond, and two (2) were investigated and determined to be unfounded.

Of vital importance to any law enforcement organization is the initial background investigation for potential new law enforcement staff. In 2022, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff investigators undertook 40 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:

### Law Enforcement Ranger 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 Law Enforcement Ranger 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 Cadre

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.

## 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 2022, this included 6 events, including the opening of Seven Bends State Park. 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.



Department of Conservation  
and Recreation

Chief Scott A Vantrese

Accredited: Mar 2010

Accreditation Manager: Inv. Gary Brumfield

Status Reaccredited - 4th Award

Next Assessment : by March 2026

## 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<sup>7</sup>.



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<sup>8</sup>. 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,



<sup>7</sup> Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission – Promoting Professionalism in Law Enforcement Since 1996 (vlep.org)

<sup>8</sup> Ratified by the IACP Psychological Services Section (Accessed 12/31/2021)

such as psychologists and therapists. Additionally, members from the DCR Peer Support Teamwork, coordinate, and train with members of the Virginia Law Enforcement Assistance Program (VALEAP) to further their roles and support of DCR staff and peers.

- In February 2022, members of DCR's Peer Support Team responded in coordination with VALEAP in providing assistance to those involved in the response and related investigation of the tragic shooting death at Bridgewater College of Campus Police Officer John Painter and Campus Safety Officer J.J. Jefferson.

## 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" 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.

Responding to such calls and 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 2022, the DCR Search and Rescue Team responded to 27 VDEM activations as follows:**

- **6 - Search and Rescue Operations – On DCR Property.**
- **21 - Search and Rescue Operations – VDEM Assists.**



## 2023 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.

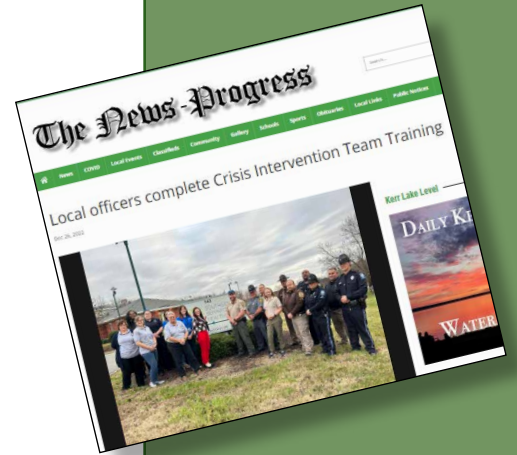
- During 2022, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff partnered with the Virginia Fusion Center coordinating with the Virginia State Police to receive relevant intelligence information. This partnership has been successful at sharing information increasing awareness for Law Enforcement Rangers on a wide range of information, such as wanted and missing individuals.



## 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.

- During 2022 efforts continued in furthering this effort included communications with the Department of Criminal Justice Services to understand and provide enhanced training in this area. Currently, there are several Crisis Intervention Team trained Law Enforcement Rangers on Staff, with more attending training as resources allow.



## **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. 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.

- During 2022, testing and acquisition of a mobile resource that will allow Law Enforcement Rangers to access and utilize CAD resources through state owned mobile devices was identified and tested with implementation anticipated in 2023.

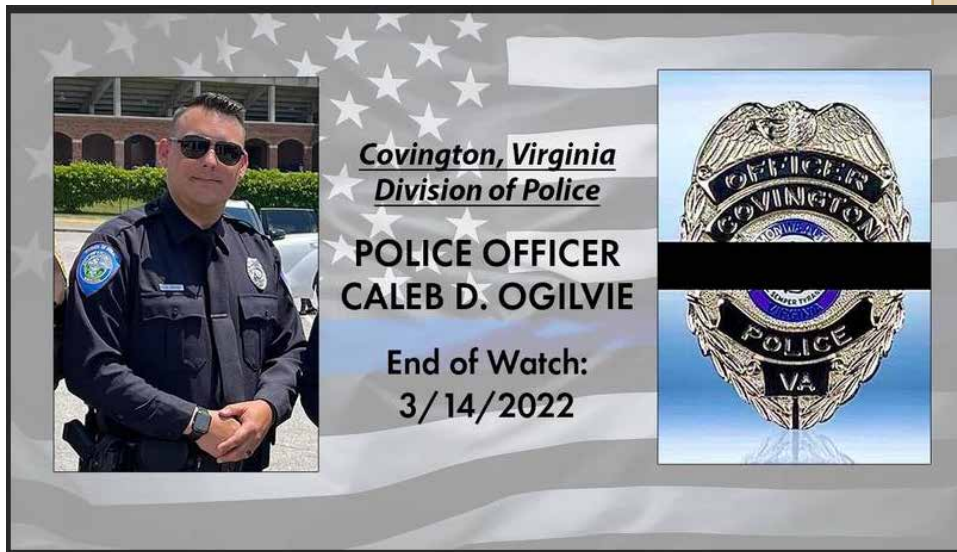
## **Develop Resources to Improve Response Capabilities**

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. During 2022, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff provided 334 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.

- In March 2022, Law Enforcement Rangers were part of the initial response to and investigation of the Officer involved shooting and death of Officer Caleb Ogilvie, who was killed while responding to a domestic shooting incident at Covington Farm and Fuel. Additionally, Law Enforcement Rangers responded to a request for assistance by the Allegheny County Sheriff's Office to serve as primary law enforcement coverage with the Virginia State Police in the county and City of Covington during the subsequent funeral.



*It is with honor and respect for an agency we work closely with that in this annual report we honor Officer Ogilvie and the Covington Police Department.*

## 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.”

### NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

In August 2022, 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

Law Enforcement Rangers regularly provide support to our law enforcement peers. From assisting with traffic stops and emergency calls, to searches for fugitives, in many instances Law Enforcement Rangers provide support when no other may be available, ensuring the safety and well-being of communities, citizens, and peers.

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Outreach and community support is important. This year it included seeking out future Law Enforcement Rangers, ensuring a safe opportunity to enjoy fall festivities, making new friends who also “love our parks” and our Law Enforcement Rangers, or coordinating a rest for a Wounded Warrior bike ride.





## 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 and Law Enforcement Staff routinely interacts and provides support to improve governmental operations and further inter-governmental cooperation and information sharing.

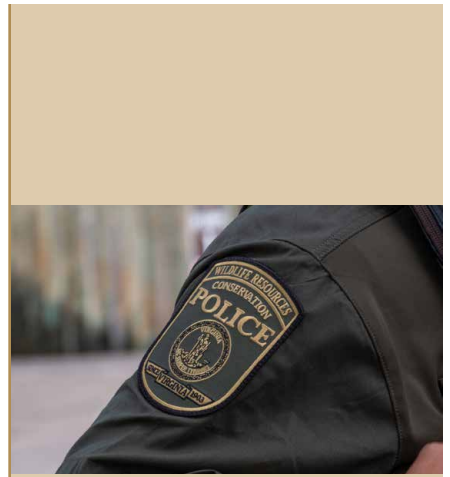
### INTER-GOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

In July 2022, the Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff with the Department of Wildlife Resources and Virginia Marine Police coordinated an overview of law enforcement within the Natural and Historic Resources Secretariat for the Public Safety and Homeland Security Secretariat and others, furthering inter-governmental cooperation and information sharing.

## 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.

Conducting joint training with peer agencies to improve joint response and enhancing skills for both agencies. This includes within the parks for such operations as search and rescue, and in the community for such exigent situations as responding to school shootings.



January 2022 Publication for the International Association of Chiefs of Police:  
Scott A. Vantrese,  
“Tech Talk: After All, It’s Only Evidence – The Need to Address and Handle Digital Evidence Appropriately “  
*Police Chief Online, January 2022.*

## Welcome New Law Enforcement Rangers

New staff with the Public Safety and 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.



### 78<sup>th</sup> Basic Law Enforcement Academy

In May 2022, we welcomed Brian Eads (Leesylvania State Park), William Ellson (Kiptopeke State Park), Taylor Willis (Mason Neck State Park), and Tanner Bradley (Claytor Lake State Park) from Cardinal's 78th Basic Law Enforcement Class.



### 79<sup>th</sup> Basic Law Enforcement Academy

In October 2022, we welcomed Cody Headley (Widewater State Park), Kalen Gilliam (Pocahontas State Park), Scott Schwarzer (Public Safety and Law Enforcement Staff), and Zachary Talbert (Sky Meadows State Park) from Cardinal's 79th 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.<sup>9</sup>



<sup>9</sup> Park Ranger Paul Herbert Salyer, Breaks Interstate Park Police Department, Virginia (odmp.org)



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