



**Seven Bends State Park**  
2111 South Hollingsworth Road  
Woodstock, Virginia 22664

# **SEVEN BENDS STATE PARK**

## Master Plan Executive Summary 2022 Update

**Department of Conservation and Recreation**  
Division of Planning and Recreation Resources  
600 East Main Street, 24<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Richmond, Virginia 23219



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# SEVEN BENDS STATE PARK

## MASTER PLAN

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### 2022 UPDATE

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*Presented for review at a virtual public meeting on December 15, 2021 then recommended for adoption by the Board of Conservation and Recreation on May 12, 2022, and then reviewed for 30 days by the Virginia General Assembly.*

**Adopted:**



Matthew S. Wells, Director  
July 6, 2022



Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation

**Seven Bends State Park**  
**Master Plan Executive Summary**

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**Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation**

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is the state's lead natural resource conservation agency. DCR protects what Virginians care about - natural habitat, parks, clean water, dams, open space and access to the outdoors.

**What We Do**

DCR enables and encourages all people to enjoy and benefit from Virginia's natural and cultural resources.

**What We Value**

DCR values diversity of nature, culture and communities to ensure a sustainable and equitable future for recreational access and a healthy environment for all Virginians to enjoy.

**Park Purpose Statement**

*“The purpose of Seven Bends State Park, the gateway to the heart of the Shenandoah Valley, is to provide water and land based outdoor recreational and educational opportunities while protecting and interpreting the spectacular scenic viewshed and the unique geological, natural, and historical resources of the storied seven bends area of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River in Virginia.”*

**Introduction**

Seven Bends State Park is located in east-central Shenandoah County near the Town of Woodstock. The park consists of 1,066 acres situated in the geographically unique seven bends area of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River. The majority of the park was assembled from donated land. The Town of Woodstock donated almost 85 acres of what had been the town reservoir site. Dr. James R. Myers donated the largest parcel, approximately 674 acres, which is adjacent to the reservoir site. The third parcel, more than 306 acres known as Camp Lupton, was purchased by the state from the Massanutten Military Academy.

The park's eastern border is shared with the George Washington- Jefferson National Forest, thus expanding the park's potential to meet public outdoor recreational needs by many thousands of acres. The park's western boundary is the North Fork of the Shenandoah River where a four-mile long shoreline provides water based recreational potential. Access to the park is substantially limited by narrow gravel roads and low water bridges.

The park land lies on the western slope of Powell Mountain in the Massanutten Mountain range and is primarily steeply sloped and forested. The park lands along the banks of North Fork of the Shenandoah River are generally comprised of old floodplain terraces. Of the 1,066 acres of park land, approximately 234 acres are open fields that have been farmed as hay and row crops and are currently being maintained through agricultural leases. The land lying along the river are classed as floodplain and the remaining acres are forested uplands.

With one in three Virginians living in Northern Virginia there is a large demand for nearby public access to open spaces and recreational water resources. Seven Bends State Park is ideally positioned to help meet those demands. These include the outdoor recreational activities that have the highest participation rates such as walking for pleasure, fishing, boating, swimming, picnicking, using playgrounds and visiting natural areas, parks and historic sites. Once developed, the Seven Bends State Park will help to meet the needs of a growing population for traditional family oriented outdoor recreation activities.

### **Park Master Plan**

This Seven Bends State Park Master Plan Executive Summary is an update to the official unabridged master plan document adopted by Joseph H. Maroon, Director of the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) November 26, 2008. The master plan was renewed on August 24, 2014 by DCR Director, Clyde E. Cristman. 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. It outlines the desired future condition for Seven Bends State Park when it is fully developed.

The initial master plan for Seven Bends State Park was developed in accordance with the master planning process set forth in §10.1-200.1 of the Code of Virginia. An advisory committee comprised of Shenandoah County residents, adjacent landowners, government officials, user groups, and local businesses worked with agency staff to craft the plan with the guidance of the public. As part of the development of the park master plan, goals and objectives and a park purpose statement were developed.

The draft Seven Bends State Park phased development plan and master plan map were presented at a public meeting on December 21, 2021. Many public comments were made and all were considered in the development of this updated master plan. The draft 2022 executive summary and map were presented to the Board of Conservation and Recreation at their May 12, 2022 meeting and were recommended for adoption. The updated map and executive summary were then placed on the DCR website for a 30-day review by the Virginia General Assembly. Following that review, the updated plan was presented to the DCR Director, Matthew S. Wells, for adoption. Following adoption, the updated executive summary and map were placed online <http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/masterplans> for the public to access.

## **Park Resource Management Plan**

The resource management plan consolidates all known resource information for a park and provides management direction for maintaining and enhancing those resources. The plan identifies the physical, abiotic, and biotic characteristics of the park, and historic and archaeological resources, as well as a description of the legal constraints and limitations of the property. The park is then delineated into the following areas:

- Undeveloped areas, based upon ecosystem types;
- Unique management areas, which are undeveloped areas with a specific purpose or function such as a historic battlefield or open field;
- Developed areas where park facilities are located yet have natural and cultural resources requiring specific management.

The Resource Management Plan has defined management objectives and action recommendations that guide resource management and allow for continuity over time.

### **Natural Resources**

Seven Bends State Park is geographically centered within the Ridge and Valley Physiographic Province. This particular property has been used a number of different ways over the last 200 years, beginning with use for approximately a century as a family farm. In more recent history, part of the property came under the control of the Massanutten Military Academy and was used as a training site for the Academy's students.

The park shares boundaries with a number of different entities. Almost the entire eastern edge of the park borders National Forest land and the western flank of the Massanutten Mountains. The Shenandoah River also serves as a border to the property, running along most of the western edge. The topography of Seven Bends State Park is quite varied, ranging from steep slopes to low level floodplains, with the elevation of the park ranging from a low of approximately 700 feet near the edge of the South Fork to a high of 1500 feet close to the top of Powell Mountain less than two miles away. Accordingly, the slopes can be extreme within the park with many in excess of 35 percent grade.

The majority of the park is underlain by Ordovician shales of the Martinsburg Formation. The higher slopes toward the top of Powell Mountain are underlain by Silurian sandstone and conglomerate, while sizeable floodplains and old alluvial terraces occur locally along the river. Substantial portions of the park on gentler terrain near the river contain current or former agricultural and grazing lands. Much of the park consists of steep, dry, forested slopes with a long history of repeated cutting that began with the nineteenth century iron ore industry in the Shenandoah Valley.

The park is currently 1066 acres and comprised of 8 vegetative community types as follows:

1. Acidic Oak-Hickory Forest (616 acres);
2. Basic Mesic Forest (44 acres);
3. Calcareous Fen (0.6 acres);
4. Low-Elevation Boulderfield Forest (44 acres);
5. Oak/Heath Forest (56 acres);

6. Piedmont/Mountain Floodplain Forest/Swamp (20 acres);
7. Pine-Oak/Heath Woodland (19 acres);
8. Central Appalachian Shale Barren (72 acres).

The shale barrens in particular are noteworthy for their unique woodland vegetation and the presence of ten endemic species as well as other rare plants. In fact, the park contains one of the largest and highest quality complexes of shale barrens seen in the Massanutten Mountains with virtually every west-to-southwest facing slope or ridge spur near the river supporting Central Appalachian Shale Barrens. Most of these barrens are the Northern Type typical of the region, but two small barrens are distinctly calcareous and belong to the Central Appalachian Calcareous Shale Barren association. These natural communities are endemic to the Central Appalachian Ridge and Valley region from southern Pennsylvania to south-central Virginia and eastern West Virginia. They develop on steep, hot shale slopes that have been undercut by streams for millennia, creating barren hillsides of deep, unstable shale fragments interspersed with ledgey shale cliffs and outcrops. The state-rare plant Narrow-leaf blue curls were documented on the barrens. This southeastern species is a barrens generalist, occurring on various types of open outcrops and dry sands of the Coastal Plain.

Due to these unique shale barren habitats and associated species, portions of Seven Bends State Park are currently included as part of the Seven Bends – Massanutten Conservation Site by the DCR Division of Natural Heritage. Conservation sites are tools for representing key areas of the landscape that warrant further review for possible conservation action because of the natural heritage resources, such as rare plants, animals or natural communities, and the associated habitat they support. These sites are given a biodiversity significance ranking based on the rarity, quality, and number of element occurrences they contain. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being most significant, the Seven Bends – Massanutten Conservation Site has been given a biodiversity significance ranking of B2, which represents a site of very high significance. The individual natural heritage resources documented within Seven Bends State Park which DCR recommends to avoid during any proposed park development, including structures and sustainable public use trails, are:

- |  |             |
|--|-------------|
| • Central Appalachian Shale Barren (Northern Type) | G3/S3/NL/NL |
| • Central Appalachian Calcareous Shale Barren      | G2/S2/NL/NL |
| • Narrow-leaf blue curls                           | G5/S2/NL/NL |

Other key natural resources areas of note within Seven Bends State Park include a forested slope subtending the high floodplain terrace of the Shenandoah River North Fork. At the foot of this slope is a seepage wetland that is unique to the park. This wetland was identified as worthy of protection and has excellent potential for an interpretive resource, especially since it is located close to the proposed Visitor Center. This fen-like meadow is saturated by groundwater discharging from the foot of the slope and contains many interesting native plants. Above this slope is an even steeper slope supporting one of the Central Appalachian shale barrens that have been identified as a Natural Heritage Resource.

The open and forested lands provide habitat to a wide variety of common wildlife species that are found on park property, including white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), foxes (*Vulpes* spp.), and wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*). Birds that may be found on the property include woodcock (*Scolopax minor*), crows (*Corvus* spp.), vireos (*Vireo* spp.), warblers (*Dendroica* spp.), whippoorwill (*Caprimulgus vociferus*), and woodpeckers (*Picoides* spp.). Smaller woodland and grassland mammal species found on the site include moles (*Scalopus aquaticus*), shrews (*Blarina* spp.), opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*), groundhog (*Marmota*

*monax*), weasel (*Mustela frenata*), chipmunk (*Tamias* spp.), voles (*Microtis* spp.), mice (*Muridae* spp.), eastern cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus*), and squirrels (*Scirus* spp.).

There is a small pond located at the western part of the large open field section which varies greatly in size depending on local rainfall. Associated wetland species included cattails (*Typha angustifolia*) and swamp loosestrife (*Decodon verticillatus*). Wildlife species found in the area include numerous salamanders, and frogs, such as gray treefrogs (*Hyla versicolor*) and green frogs (*Rana clamitans melanota*), as well as other species found throughout the property.

Finally, it should be noted that the forested areas throughout the park are identified as part of an Ecological Core (C1), on a scale of C1 to C5 with C5 being the least significant, in the Virginia Natural Landscape Assessment (<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/vaconvisvnl>). Mapped cores in the project area can be viewed via the Virginia Natural Heritage Data Explorer, available here: <http://vanhde.org/content/map>.

Ecological Cores are areas of at least 100 acres of continuous interior, natural cover that provides habitat for a wide range of species, from interior-dependent forest species to habitat generalists, as well as species that utilize marsh, dune, and beach habitats. Interior core areas begin 100 meters inside the nearest core edges and continue to the deepest parts of cores. Cores also provide natural and economic benefits of open space, recreation, water quality (including drinking water recharge and protection, and erosion prevention), and air quality (including carbon sequestration and oxygen production).

Impacts to cores occur when their natural cover is partially or completely converted permanently to developed land uses. Habitat conversion to development results in changes that reduce ecosystem processes, biodiversity, population viability and habitat quality due to limited recolonization, increased predation, and increased introduction and establishment of invasive species. Therefore, avoiding or minimizing core impacts is a key mitigation measure that will reduce deleterious effects and preserve the area and connectivity of habitats that are key components of biodiversity at Seven Bends State Park. DCR recommends efforts to minimize edge in remaining habitat fragments, retain natural corridors that allow movement between fragments and design the intervening landscape to support native wildlife (i.e. natural cover versus lawns).

## **Cultural Resources**

Seven Bends State Park represents most of the major stories of the Northern Shenandoah Valley region spanning from the prehistoric era, European settlement, formation of Valley farms and communities, as well as modern day uses of the site.

The history of Seven Bends over the past quarter century is primarily associated with the Dellinger and Funkhouser families. In fact, the Park contains a graveyard with the earliest known grave dating back to 1818 for Ana Dellinger (1766-1818). All told, 21 individuals from the Dellinger and Funkhouser families are known to rest beneath the soil, but by the early 1900s all that was left was 10 of the native slate headstones. Today a bronze plaque remains with the names and dates from ten known individuals as well as “*11 others to fame unknown, but not forgotten*”. In 1948 at a dedication ceremony to unveil the marker Dr. John Wayland, eminent valley historian, observed that “*tombstones not only honor the dead, but give*

*valuable knowledge to the living and a record of the experiences of those early brave and heroic settlers whose sacrifices made possible the comforts later generations now enjoy.”*

The Funkhousers had been in the Shenandoah Valley since the mid-1700s, but it was a hundred years later that they built their farm on the fertile bottomlands on the site now known as Seven Bends State Park, a site by a ford that allowed for easy access to the nearby Town of Woodstock. While the Funkhousers worked the farm until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Lutz family eventually became caretakers and managers of the land.

Starting in the 1930s, approximately 230 acres passed into new hands of the Massanutten Military Academy. The Academy’s dual goals included a farm that would provide the school with fresh vegetables, eggs and dairy products while also allowing for both training and outdoor recreational opportunities for cadets. Originally intended to immerse young boys in a rustic, primitive experience, America’s involvement in the World Wars shifted the focus to a military-type camp which would refine their characters and prepare them for war. Additionally, the site became a training facility for journalists to prepare them for being imbedded with active military units. With the removal of the former Camp Lupton and Funkhouser Farm buildings, the site no longer features historic structures that link the present to the past. However, what they represent can be told through the recreational and educational opportunities offered in the park.

Another key cultural resource on site is the Town of Woodstock’s former drinking water reservoirs. Now abandoned due to limited capacity, at least one of the reservoirs still holds water from a spring-based system that in turn become an important ecological resource for amphibians and other wildlife. While they may be a holdover from the past, the reservoirs represent a link between the park and the town and highlight the importance of water to everyday life.

### **Visitor Experience Management Plan**

The Seven Bends Visitor Experience Management Plan (VEP) is a companion document to the park’s Resource Management Plan (RMP). Together they describe how the Division of State Parks will achieve its dual mission:

***“To conserve the natural, scenic, historic, and cultural resources of the Commonwealth (i.e. RMP) and provide recreational and educational opportunities (i.e. VEP) consistent with the good stewardship of these lands, waters, and facilities that leaves them unimpaired for future generations”.***

The Visitor Experience Management Plan provides a park-wide vision for the future of interpretation, education, recreation and other visitor experience opportunities. The plan addresses all elements of a park that affect visitor experiences, including personal services, media, facilities, and landscapes. It is a conceptual document that lays a foundation for subsequent phases of comprehensive interpretive planning including facility and media planning, design and production, as well as the organization of staff and activities into annual Visitor Experience Implementation Plans.



Each VEP consists of a foundation, experience areas, and the desired future:

- The ***foundation*** section presents information needed to make decisions concerning how visitor experience opportunities will be planned, developed, and managed. Each element of this foundation describes an essential criteria that must be considered to create appropriate actions for inclusion in the desired future section of the plan. It identifies essential stories and experiences of the site, specific audience types and their wants, needs, and expectations, interpretive themes (i.e. essential messages), issues and influences, goals and objectives, as well as park purpose and mission of the agency. These issues are typically discussed and developed through a VEP Foundation Workshop.
- The ***experience areas*** section is also drafted as part of the Foundation Workshop. This component of the plan will delineate, map and name geographic visitor experience areas based on the distinct character of resources and related interpretive opportunities. Experience areas may be categorized by resource type or condition, social environment, type and extent of park development, level of management, or kind and density of visitor use.
- The ***desired future*** section of the VEP describes the mix of personal service, media, facility, and landscape conditions that can effectively communicate park significance to guests and facilitate established visitor experience objectives. All desired future proposals will be tested against criteria presented in the Foundation section of the VEP; appropriate proposals for inclusion in the plan as desired future recommendations should support most, and preferably all, of the foundation criteria.

A Visitor Experience Plan Foundation Workshop for Seven Bends was completed in 2017 before significant changes were made to the Master Plan. Although the desired future section has not yet been completed, solid foundational information was captured.

***Significant resource statements:*** Significant resource statements describe the importance of places, events, people, and things that relate to a park. They capture the essence of the park's importance to our natural and cultural heritage and identify the valuable characteristics of the site. Often these natural and cultural resources carry intrinsic value, including both tangible and intangible characteristics as well as the context in which those characteristics are found. Resource statements thus identify resources with elements that are so attractive, interesting, and engaging that people choose to protect and experience them.

While a resource inventory is often the basis from which significance is determined, the significance statements describe the importance or distinctiveness of the aggregate of resources in a park, including natural, cultural, inspirational, scientific, historic, recreational, and other aspects. The mission of the agency, the purpose of the park, and the significance statements combine to focus management actions and operations on the preservation and enjoyment of those attributes that most directly contribute to the importance of the place. Knowing the park's significance helps set resource protection priorities, identify park interpretive themes, and develop desirable experience opportunities.

Significant resources that have been identified for Seven Bends State Park include the following:

## **History**

The Woodstock reservoirs, abandoned due to limited capacity, have become important ecological resources. While they may be a holdover from the past, the reservoirs represent a link between the park and the town and highlight the importance of water to everyday life.

Seven Bends represents most of the major stories of this region of the Shenandoah Valley spanning from the prehistoric era, European settlement, formation of farms & communities and modern day uses of the site. While none of the historic sites will be anything more than a memory on the land now that the Camp Lupton and the Funkhouser Farm buildings are removed, what they represented can be told through the recreational and educational opportunities offered in the park.

## **Nature**

The park's viewsheds of the town, local agriculture, and geology of the Shenandoah Valley highlight the park's connection to all the main stories of the surrounding communities, facilitating spiritual and emotional connections that enhance economic growth through tourism.

The park offers public access to over three miles of river frontage. This access is ideal for all ages to discover river ecology and history thru exploration and recreational opportunities on and adjacent to the river.

The locations within park lands of rare and unique ecosystems like shale barrens and a calcareous fen means that through management, we can both provide protection to sensitive landscapes and use them for careful and non-invasive education and research.

## **Community**

The park provides direct and relatively easy community access to green space for educational and recreational use as well as economic development. Significant linkage of the park to neighborhoods and schools through road and trail access is extremely important, thereby allowing park staff to develop community relationships and facilitate the next generation of park users. Working with local and state tourism groups to market the park as a unique, natural area for visitors seeking the peace of wild space and unique valley features will bring benefits to both the park and community.

With its diversity of landscapes and resources, including moving and still water, mountains and rolling fields, wooded areas and open space- all of which encourage a wide range of animal life- Seven Bends is ideally suited for multiple passive recreation opportunities such as painting, photography, and wildlife viewing. This same multifaceted landscape benefits active recreation like fishing, wading, boating, and possibly floating, in addition to trail use within the park and the National Forest. While there are other places to access the National Forest trails, the connectors from the park will be easy to understand for hiking guests.

Current and potential visitor *audiences* and their wants, needs and expectations are based on experiential learning by park staff, observations of partners, and the review of comments and suggestions made by previous park guests. Audiences for Seven Bends were grouped into the following three visitor categories, each with associated needs as listed below:

- **General** – Includes all audience types, with the exception of pre-arrival/outreach:
  - A basic level of service, facilities, and landscapes;
  - Directional signage outside the park that is easy to understand;
  - Adequate and appropriate parking;
  - Easy access to the site;
  - A system of signage and informational kiosks that are easy to see and read as well as intuitively placed to provide the best flow for both vehicle and foot traffic;
  - Access to knowledgeable and friendly staff;
  - Information about the park and its programming;
  - A clean space that is well maintained, including restrooms.
  
- **River Users** – Includes visitors with a primary interest in fishing, canoeing/kayaking, NOVA weekenders, day use/weekend use, family groups, adventure racers, accidental tourists, schools and locals:
  - Easy access to the river for multiple use types (such as boat launch, fishing, wading or for educational programs);
  - Info on obtaining permits;
  - Gear rentals (i.e. outfitters/local retailers);
  - Water gauge to make safe and informed decisions about river use;
  - Observation points/pavement for handicapped access;
  - Concessions;
  - Changing rooms;
  - Fishing pods/benches;
  - Education/interpretive signs;
  - Maps showing emergency/access/property boundaries, rules, expected behavior, marked mileage and hazards;
  - Fish advisories;
  - Disposal areas for sharps and monofilament line (DGIF);
  - Remote access for quiet/peace to get away from the main river access points.
  
- **Trail Users** – Includes hikers, backpackers, schools, adventure races, accidental tourists, locals, NOVA weekenders, exercise course, international visitors, hunters, retirees, dog walkers, family/meetings, equestrians, cycle, day use, and long distance hikers:
  - Well maintained trails with multiple levels of difficulty that exist for a reason such as access to vistas, open trails for birding, quiet places that are difficult to reach but offer visual rewards;
  - Trail blazes properly marked;
  - Easy to read trail maps;
  - Trail heads/signs/universal symbols;
  - Destinations such as overlooks/views;
  - Designated horse trails;

- United States Forest Service links and Shenandoah State Park;
  - System for emergencies;
  - Guided trips;
  - Rental opportunities (bikes/horses);
  - Interpretive signs;
  - Boundary markers;
  - Information about hunting seasons.
- **Education** – Includes artists and lovers of geology, history, nature, birding, photography, as well as students, teachers and retirees:
    - Accommodations for special needs;
    - Things to do for retirees including volunteer opportunities as well as targeted activities;
    - Driving trail/self-guided interpretive trail;
    - Nature talks/evening talks;
    - Friends group;
    - Access to site;
    - Facilities/equipment;
    - Staff for group needs;
    - Good directional signage;
    - Environmental education equipment and programming;
    - Programming objectives that meet state Standards of Learning (SOLs);
    - Year round programming;
    - Teacher training/workshops on topics such as backyard classrooms;
    - Local experts/outside resources;
    - Online access to info about the site;
    - Outdoor classroom
- **Special Events/Specific Use** – Includes weddings, meetings, adventure races, winery/brewery enthusiasts, accidental tourists, retirees, nature enthusiasts, water events, astronomy, picnic, camping/primitive, and adventure racing:
    - Level and clean open areas;
    - Trash/dumpsters;
    - Electricity;
    - Wi-Fi/cell coverage or notice ahead of time to what is not available;
    - Shelters;
    - ADA sites;
    - Clear “special use” permit process;
    - Staff to answers questions;
    - Clear communications;
    - Online resources;
    - Information on what the local community can provide.

Interpretive *themes* are overarching ideas that relate the park’s purpose, significant resources, and stewardship ethic to visitors. Themes connect the park’s tangible resources to larger ideas that help guests understand and appreciate values they can personally derive from those resources. They provide guidelines

for making decisions concerning interpretive stories to be told and facilities, landscapes, media and activities required for telling those stories. These are first generation themes, and need to be refined.

The primary theme that was drafted for Seven Bends State Park is: *Where river, ridge, and farmer’s plow transformed the heart of the Shenandoah Valley, Seven Bends State Park provides a place of peace and tranquility for you to discover community and connect with the timeless rhythms of the land.* Secondary topics are all found in the significant resources.

**Attendance, Economic Impact and Park Revenues**

In 2021, Seven Bends State Park had 83,971 day-use visitors. With this level of visitation, it is estimated that the park had an economic impact on the local economy of approximately \$3.7M<sup>1</sup>.

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 <sup>2</sup>	2021
Overnight	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Day-Use	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	77,850	83,971
Total	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	77,850	83,971
Economic Impact <sup>3</sup>	-	-	-	-	\$60K	\$169K	\$288K	\$879K	\$4.0M	\$3.7M

**Demographics**

Shenandoah County is the 40<sup>th</sup> most populated county in Virginia and is bordered by Frederick, Page, Rockingham, and Warren Counties in VA, and Hardy County in WV. According to the 2017 population estimates for the Shenandoah County, the break down by race is as follows: Caucasian 88.9%, Hispanic 6.7%, African-American 1.82%, and Asian .056%. Of the Shenandoah County population, 96.2% are citizens of the United States.

According to the VDOT Shenandoah District, approximately 12,900 cars traverse Route 42 each day.

According to the Virginia Tourism’s Shenandoah Valley Region Travel Profile<sup>4</sup>, of 302 visitors surveyed, 13% visited parks and 11% fished. The top ten states that visitors come from are: Virginia, Maryland, Florida, California, New York, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

**Business Plan**

The purpose of this business plan is to develop realistic expectations for enterprise operations and service development at the State Park. This includes facilities, revenues, and expenditures associated with the park’s operations. Business plans assist park management and staff at the State Park in the decision-making processes regarding the management, operation, and development of park resources. The plan focuses on the financial impacts of management decisions as well as future expectations of new facilities. Information

<sup>1</sup> Virginia State Parks Economic Impact Report 2020, by Vincent P. Magnini, Ph. D.

<sup>2</sup> Seven Bends did not officially open for public access until FY20

<sup>3</sup> Virginia State Parks Economic Impact Reports 2015 – 2020, by Vincent P. Magnini, Ph. D. Calculations of economic impact began when development of the park was started.

<sup>4</sup> Note: The Virginia Department of Tourism Shenandoah Valley profile covers from Rockbridge to Frederick Counties.

in this business plan can be used to inform DCR management and State legislators of financial and economic impacts at the State Park.

The business plan includes the park’s mission, vision and objectives and is meant to serve as a look back at the park revenues and expenditures to determine trends and to predict the future earning potential of the park. It is also a roadmap to find new revenue producing opportunities that include those with minimal expenses that can be budgeted for and those requiring extensive capital improvements.

As a new park, Seven Bends has endless possibilities and opportunities. The competitive advantage to this park is the geographical uniqueness of this stretch of river. At the time of creating this business plan, construction was underway. Currently the preexisting structures on the land have been demolished or stabilized for use. Other than the shelters and comfort stations, no new structures are being added to the property at this time. Two honor parking lots of 44 spaces total are being added and the preexisting trail system is being upgraded.

Based on the target opening date of the park and data available at the time the business plan was written in 2018, and current trends, the five-year estimates for revenues and expenditures are presented in the following table.

**Five year financial estimates for the Business Plan**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>FY2019</b>	<b>FY2020</b>	<b>FY2021</b>	<b>FY2022</b>	<b>FY2023</b>
Anticipated Rev	\$3,450	\$3,897	\$5,195	\$5,230	\$5,266
Anticipated Exp	\$291,635	\$294,551	\$297,496	\$300,471	\$303,476
<b>TOTAL NET</b>	<b>(\$288,185)</b>	<b>(\$291,654)</b>	<b>(\$292,301)</b>	<b>(\$295,242)</b>	<b>(\$298,211)</b>

Actuals for FY21

Actual Revenues FY21	\$26,496
Actual Expenditures FY21	\$260,797
Total Net FY20	(\$234,328)

## **Existing Facilities**

Hand carry canoe access (Lupton and South Hollingsworth)  
Lupton picnic area (6 pads)  
South Hollingsworth picnic area (4 pads)  
Picnic Shelter with vault toilet (Lupton)  
Vault toilet (Hollingsworth)  
Gokotta and Bass Bight accessible trails  
8 miles of trails  
4 miles of river frontage  
Natural play area  
Maintenance area  
Camp Lupton historic site  
White barn

## **Connectivity**

This 2022 update places value on connecting Seven Bends State Park to other resources in the community. There are many federal public lands near the park, including Shenandoah National Park, Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park and the George Washington and Jefferson National Forest. A connection through the park to Forest Service trails allows for overnight hikes and a connection to the Tuscarora Trail, a spur of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail that also connects to the Great Eastern Trail. The North Fork of the Shenandoah River has a number of access points in the area, so people can plan float trips for one or several days centered at the park. Future planning for the proposed Shenandoah Valley Linear Park, a 49-mile rail trail, could provide a network of land and water loop trail opportunities. Nearby historic towns along the Route 11 corridor boast their own museums and parks and numerous other destinations like Shenandoah Caverns (including American Celebration on Parade, Main Street of Yesteryear, and the Yellow Barn), the Meems Bottom Covered Bridge, Route 11 Potato Chip Factory, and the [Virginia Museum of the Civil War & New Market Battlefield State Historical Park](#). The park is within the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District, a national heritage area which preserves and interprets the region's significant Civil War battlefields and related historic sites. The Seven Bends State Park Regional Connectivity Map is an attachment to the full Master Plan document.

## **Land and Water Conservation Fund**

Seven Bends State Park has not received Federal Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF). The LWCF Act of 1965 and amendments thereto, require the Commonwealth of Virginia to maintain all parks that have received LWCF funds to be protected for public outdoor recreation in perpetuity.

## **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

Virginia State Parks strive to be accessible to all Virginians and our guests. State parks are continually upgrading facilities to meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards and working to ensure our programs, services and activities are accessible to people with disabilities.

Seven Bends State Park has the following accessible facilities: Lupton picnic area (6 pads); South Hollingsworth picnic area (4 pads); Picnic Shelter with vault toilet (Lupton); Vault toilet (Hollingsworth); Gokotta and Bass Bight trails; And the natural play area. New facilities, once constructed, will be designed to meet ADA standards.

### **Land Acquisition/Viewshed Protection**

Additional land acquisition is recommended to enhance park offerings, establish connective trail easements/corridors, buffer the park from inappropriate development and/or protect valued viewsheds. Future land acquisitions will only be negotiated with willing property owners. The placement of conservation easements on adjacent property to preserve the natural resources, cultural landscapes, and scenic resources in close proximity to the park will be encouraged. In working cooperatively with neighboring landowners, the park will be enhanced and protected over time.

### **Environmental/Design Guidance**

This 2022 master plan update describes both proposed facilities and improvements to existing facilities. New facilities are sited to minimize impact to the park, and 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. New facilities at this park should be designed and carefully sited to minimize impacts to the views in the park and of the park from adjacent lands and water bodies. Consideration will be given to eliminate excessive, misdirected or obtrusive artificial light in the park in order to maximize the dark sky effect and encourage astronomy and night-sky viewing.

Building and site design will implement green energy standards using energy-efficient and sustainable materials and procedures to the greatest extent possible. Green design initiatives will be considered during the design process for park renovations and new construction. Development activities will comply with requirements set forth by the Department of Environmental Quality's best management practices for erosion, sediment control and stormwater management in order to protect water quality. The 500-year floodplain has been established by DCR as a setback guideline, and trails and water-dependent facilities such as fishing stations, piers and other water dependent facilities will be the only developments permitted within this area.

Recurrent flooding and high water is a threat to parks in low lying shoreline areas. Some low-lying areas will have more frequent flooding, and very low-lying land could be submerged completely. Recurrent flooding can also limit access to the park. Flooding is an important factor to consider when designing, locating and constructing new facilities, and in the decision to renovate existing facilities.

There are two access roads to the park; both have similar challenges to full park development. Both are narrow and steep. Careful consideration will need to be taken to ensure visitor and community safety to access the park. Lupton Tract access is via Lupton Road across a curved low-water bridge, which is under water at most substantial rain events. On the Hollingsworth side of the property, park access is along South Hollingsworth Road across another low-water bridge. This bridge is higher, reducing the frequency of flooding impacts. The approach to this bridge is steep, narrow and has a hard 180-degree U-turn just before arriving at the bridge, precluding standard construction and trailered vehicles from accessing the park along this route. The lack of safe vehicular access to the park will limit development of the park, as recommended in this master plan.



## **Phased Development Plan**

Proposed developments for the 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 cover a 30-year timeframe. The phasing costs are based on 2022 cost estimates. Before construction can begin at the park, improvements need to be completed on the park entrance road to allow safe access to and egress from the park. Consideration should be given to including bicycle and pedestrian accommodations along this road to connect the park to the town.

- **Pre-requisite to phased development--road improvements by VDOT (see [Seven Bends State Park Access Study](#))**

### **Phase I**

Group camp – small shelter, vault toilet, water

Develop infrastructure – water (connect to Woodstock water), sewer, electric (underground), telephone, Internet, internal roads at both ends of the park

Staff residence

Two contact stations with work space and electricity

Visitor center/environmental education center –offices/meeting space, parking, exhibit area/exhibits, wet lab, and student/volunteer housing

Expand maintenance complex

Day-use facilities:

- River bank/fishing platforms (2)
- River-side trail
- Picnic area along the river with large shelter, comfort station and parking
- Expand and upgrade multi-use trail system
- Connect park trails to the GW-Jefferson National Forest
- Picnic shelter (near natural play space)

Protect and stabilize Woodstock Reservoir sites

Develop an interpretive area w/ outdoor classroom, viewing platform and picnic shelter

Renovate white barn

Improve buffers and landscapes, including forest buffer on Hollingsworth side (w/native species)

*The total estimated cost for Phase I development is \$12,534,735.*

### **Phase II**

Complete infrastructure development– water (connect to Woodstock water), sewer, electric [underground], telephone, Internet, internal roads

10 yurts

20 primitive campsites with bathhouse [shared w/ yurts]

Expand maintenance facility on Lupton side

Staff residence

Expand and upgrade multiuse trail system

Trail connecting both sides of park

Preservation and interpretation of cemetery at Camp Lupton

Improve buffers and landscapes throughout the park (w/native species)

*The total estimated cost for Phase II development is \$8,239,680.*

### **Phase III**

Expand and upgrade multiuse trail system

Scenic view observation decks (2)

Expand current picnic area and add parking and comfort station on Hollingsworth side

Improve buffers and landscapes throughout the park (w/native species)

*The total estimated cost for Phase III development is \$1,914,060.*

**The total estimated cost to bring Seven Bends State Park to its desired future condition is \$22,688,475.**

### **Staffing and Operations**

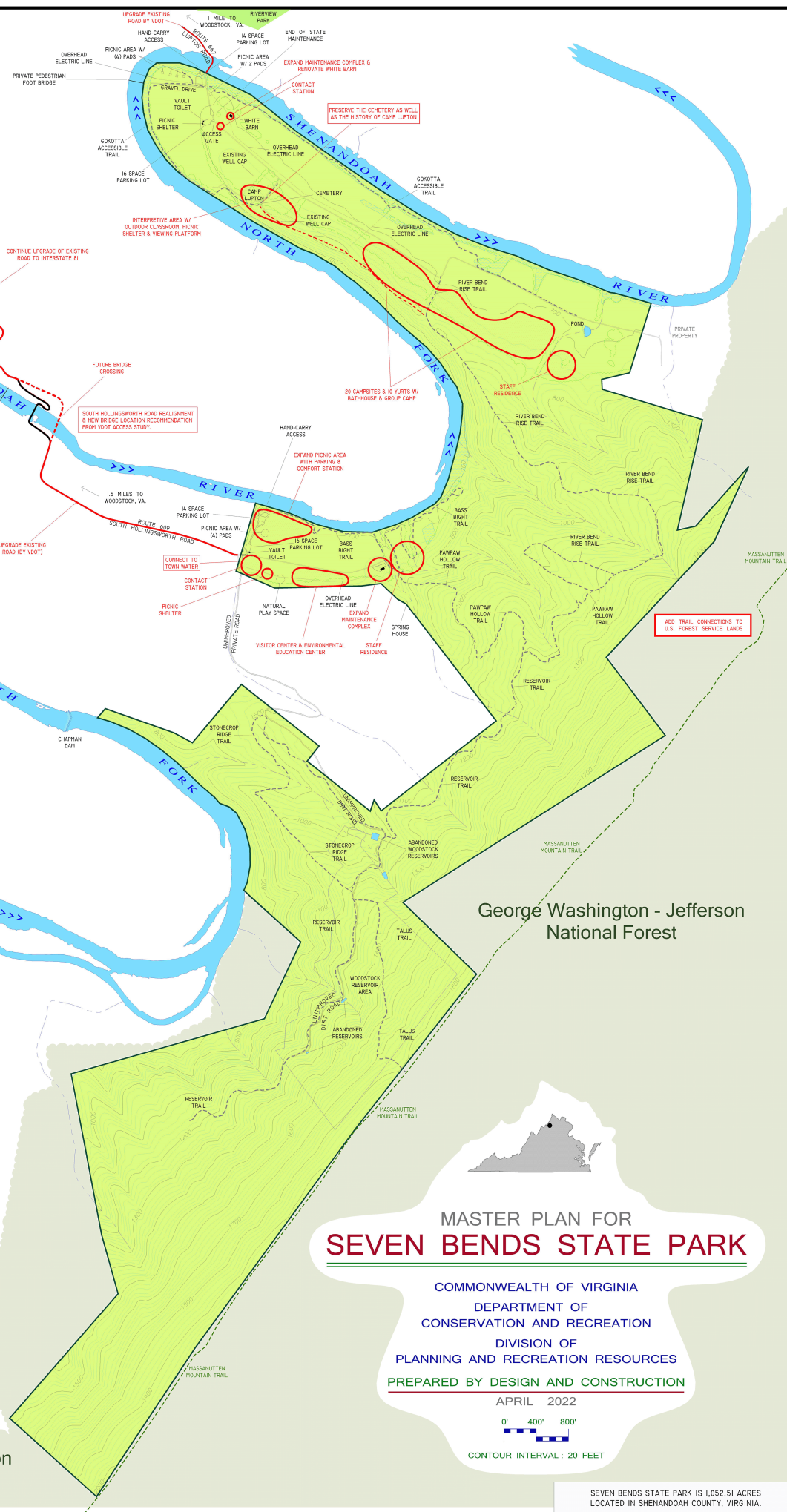
Staffing and operational costs for Seven Bends State Park are based on fiscal year 2022 budget projections. Each development phase has specific staffing needs and operational costs. In addition, each phase will have one-time expenses for vehicles and other equipment associated with new staff and facility operations.

Staffing and operational costs at Seven Bends State Park are presently budgeted at \$402,000 annually, including salaries for 2 staff positions. With the current facilities and operational requirements, the park has an identified need for 5 additional positions. At complete build out of the proposed 3 phases of development, 1 additional full-time staff will be needed along with an additional 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 Seven Bends at full build out is projected to be \$1,151,649 with 8 full-time staff positions.

**SEVEN BENDS STAFFING AND OPERATIONS REQUIREMENTS**

<b>EXISTING (FY 22)</b>	<b>EXISTING ADDITIONAL NEEDS *</b>	<b>PHASE 1</b>	<b>PHASE 2</b>	<b>PHASE 3</b>	<b>FULL BUILD OUT</b>
<b>STAFFING</b>					<b>STAFFING</b>
	Park Manager				Park Manager
Assistant Park Manager					Assistant Park Manager
	Education Specialist (CRVE)				Education Specialist (CRVE)
	Chief Ranger Operations				Chief Ranger Operations
Park Ranger Maintenance		Park Ranger Maintenance			Park Ranger Maintenance (2)
	Park Ranger Natural Resources				Park Ranger Natural Resources
	Office Manager				Office Manager
<b>SALARY TOTAL</b>					<b>SALARY TOTAL</b>
\$124,000	\$434,000	\$76,000			\$634,000
<b>WAGE TOTAL</b>					<b>WAGE TOTAL</b>
\$87,000		\$104,254	\$18,350	\$5,731	\$215,335
<b>OTPS TOTAL</b>					<b>OTPS TOTAL</b>
\$191,000		\$85,682	\$21,564	\$4,068	\$302,314
<b>TOTAL BUDGET (FY22 dollars)</b>					<b>TOTAL BUDGET (FY22 dollars)</b>
\$402,000	\$434,000	\$265,936	\$39,914	\$9,799	\$1,151,649

NOTE – All costs (salary, wage, OTPS (Other than Personnel Services)) are based on FY22 budget projections\* The state park staffing matrix identifies the staffing complement of a park based on size and resources, number and type of facilities, as well as types of programming and activities. The staffing complement will be re-evaluated with the addition of new facilities.



- GENERAL NOTES:**
- THE VISITOR & ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER WILL BE DEVELOPED IN 2 PHASES. PHASE 1 WILL BE OFFICES WITH A SMALL EXHIBITION AREA. PHASE 2 WILL BE MEETING ROOMS, MORE EXHIBIT SPACE, WET-LAB, AND SPECIAL INTEREST HOUSING.
  - VDOT TO UPGRADE HOLLINGSWORTH & LUPTON ROADS. (SEE VDOT STUDY)
  - CREATE FOREST BUFFER ON HOLLINGSWORTH SIDE, IMPROVE BUFFERS & LANDSCAPES THROUGHOUT PARK
  - PLACE ALL UTILITIES UNDERGROUND
  - CREATE TRAIL CONNECTIONS TO USFS LAND
  - DEVELOP MULTI-USE TRAIL CONNECTING BOTH SIDES OF THE PARK
  - STABILIZE RESERVOIR SITES
  - ADD FISHING PLATFORMS ALONG RIVER BANK
  - EXPAND PARK TRAILS
  - CONNECT TRAIL SYSTEM TO TOWN (BY OTHERS)
  - CONNECT TO PROPOSED NORTH FORK SHENANDOAH BLUEWAY (BY OTHERS)
  - OBSERVATION PLATFORMS FOR SCENIC VIEWS

**LEGEND**

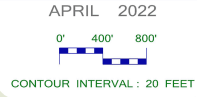
- PROPOSED FACILITIES
- EXISTING FACILITIES
- PARK PROPERTY
- PARK BOUNDARY
- WATER
- EXISTING ROAD
- EXISTING BUILDINGS
- HIKING TRAILS
- WETLANDS
- TREE LINE

George Washington - Jefferson National Forest



**MASTER PLAN FOR SEVEN BENDS STATE PARK**

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



George Washington - Jefferson National Forest

SEVEN BENDS STATE PARK IS 1,052.51 ACRES LOCATED IN SHENANDOAH COUNTY, VIRGINIA.